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DRAFT - Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Wednesday February 4, 2026
Zoom

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order at **11:32 a.m.**, immediately following the *Traveller Trends 2026* webinar hosted by Explorers' Edge in partnership with Context Research Group. A quorum was confirmed.

Attendance

Present: Gabriela Hairabedian (Chair), Tristan Berry, Sarah North-Harris (Vice Chair), James Murphy (CEO) Didier Dolivet, Darren Smith

Regrets: Dave Anderson, Jackie Leung

Declaration of Conflicts of Interest - The Chair called for declarations of conflict of interest. None were declared.

Approval of Agenda

A motion was made to approve the agenda as circulated.

Motion: Approved.

Moved by: Dolivet

Seconded by: Smith

Carried.

Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes of the October 8, 2025 Board meeting were reviewed.

Motion: That the minutes of October 8, 2025 be approved as presented.

Moved by: Smith

Seconded by: North- Harris
Carried.

Traveller Trends 2026 – Board Discussion

The Board engaged in a detailed discussion following the *Traveller Trends 2026* webinar delivered earlier in the day by Context Research Group. The CEO summarized key takeaways, noting heightened concern across the tourism sector related to economic uncertainty and future travel demand. While Ontario remains a trusted and welcoming destination, operators are experiencing softness in domestic markets and continued declines in U.S. visitation compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Board members shared operational insights, including stronger performance in lower-cost accommodations, increased price sensitivity among travellers, and shorter booking windows. It was noted that while travel intent remains strong in survey data, this does not always align with actual visitation, particularly at border crossings.

The discussion highlighted growing alignment between high-value travellers and regenerative, sustainable, and experience-led tourism. Indigenous experiences were identified as an important enhancement to overall visitor stays rather than a standalone demand driver. Sustainability initiatives and guided cultural experiences were viewed as increasingly relevant to market expectations.

The Board acknowledged strong engagement from industry in the webinar, interpreting this as a signal that operators are seeking leadership, data, and guidance during a period of uncertainty.

CEO Report – Organizational Update

The CEO provided a comprehensive update on organizational activities since the October Board meeting. He reported that the Regenerative Travel Agency is now operational, including a TICO-licensed framework and reservation platform. Several pilot packages have been launched, with early results demonstrating both market interest and revenue potential. The focus is shifting from awareness-based marketing toward bookable, yield-generating products, while recognizing that building consumer trust in the organization as a travel seller will take time.

Progress was reported on Indigenous tourism initiatives, including the Indigenous Youth Tourism Entrepreneurship Strategy and positive response to Indigenous participation at the Regional Tourism Summit. Sustainability programming continues to gain traction, with increasing attendance at learning sessions led by staff.

The Partnerships Program remains highly active, with 42 partnerships currently underway. The CEO advised that staff are reviewing the program structure with the intention of moving toward fewer, more strategic partnerships that align with experience creation, workforce development, sustainability, and bookable product development.

Workforce challenges were discussed at length. The Board noted the growing impact of reduced post-secondary hospitality programming and agreed that high school engagement represents a promising opportunity. Ideas discussed included early exposure to tourism careers, experiential learning, and positioning the region as a destination for school-based travel experiences that may also support future workforce recruitment.

Transportation and Access

The CEO provided an update on regional transportation initiatives. Ontario Northland rail service continues to face infrastructure-related delays, with no confirmed launch date. The Air Canada Landline initiative remains under development with no finalized business plan. Active discussions are underway with FlixBus regarding potential integration of bookable experiences to support regional access, particularly in Parry Sound, and to leverage FlixBus's established European market presence.

Financial Operations and Governance

The Board received an update on financial operations following recent staff transitions. The CEO confirmed that Grow CPA LLP has been engaged to provide accounting, audit, and financial oversight services, and that an investment advisor has been retained to support longer-term financial planning. This structure is intended to strengthen governance, improve financial reporting, and support the organization's growing operational complexity.

The need for a formal Investment Policy was identified and will be brought forward for Board consideration at a future meeting.

Approval of Audited Financial Statements (FY 2024–2025)

The Board reviewed the audited financial statements and Final Report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2025. The CEO confirmed there were no material concerns raised by the auditor.

Motion: That the audited financial statements for FY 2024–2025 be approved.

Moved by: Smith

Seconded by: North-Harris

Carried.

Board Appointments

The CEO presented the proposed slate of incoming Directors: Kate Hood, Ken Schulz, and Brent Ellison. Their professional experience and community involvement were noted.

Incoming Slate of Directors

- Kate Hood, General Manager, North Ridge Inn
- Ken Schulz, General Manager, Rocky Crest Resort
- Brent Ellerson, Marketing Communications Manager, Algonquin Outfitters
- Darren Smith, Lake of Bays Brewing
- Didier Dolivet, JW Marriott The Rosseau
- Gabriela Hairabedian, Four Seasons Algonquin Cabins
- Jackie Leung, Fern Glenn Inn
- Sarah North-Harris, Camping in Ontario
- Tristan Berry, Parry Sound KOA

Motion: That the proposed Directors be approved and advanced to the February 18, 2026 Annual General Meeting.

Moved by: Hairabedian

Seconded by: Tristan

Carried.

Other Business

No additional business was brought forward.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at **12:44 p.m.**
