



3 Taylor Road, Bracebridge, ON P1L 1S6
1-800-835-7303
Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka,
Parry Sound & South Algonquin
www.explorersedge.ca



Draft - Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Tuesday March 24, 2026

Hybrid Meeting

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order by **Sarah North-Harris** at **10:09 a.m.**

Attendance

Present: Sarah North-Harris (Vice Chair), Darren Smith (Treasurer), Gabriela Hairabedian, Ken Schulz, Jackie Leung, Brent Ellison James Murphy (CEO)

Regrets: Tristan Berry, Didier Dolivet

Conflict of Interest

The Vice Chair reviewed conflict-of-interest expectations, with particular emphasis on future discussions regarding the Partnership Program. Board members were reminded to declare any conflicts and recuse themselves from related discussions as required. No specific conflicts were declared at the outset of the meeting.

Approval of Agenda

A motion was made to approve the agenda for the March 24, 2026 Board of Directors meeting.

Motion: Approved.

Moved by: Smith

Seconded by: Hairabedian

Carried.

Approval of Previous Minutes

To approve the minutes of the February 18, 2026 meeting.

Motion: That the minutes of February 18, 2026 be approved as presented.

Moved by: Schulz

Seconded by: Leung

Carried.

Governance and Board Update

Board Leadership Transition - The Board recognized and thanked Gabriela Hairabedian for her service as Chair over the past two years, noting her leadership during a significant transition period for the organization. Gabriela will continue to support the organization in the role of Past Chair.

Executive Committee - The Board discussed executive structure and the role of the Vice Chair. It was noted that:

- Sarah North-Harris agreed to move into the Chair position.
- Darren Smith would remain Treasurer.
- The Vice Chair position remained open for nomination/discussion.
- Brent indicated interest in being considered for the Vice Chair role.

A motion was made to approve the new Executive Committee of Chair, Sarah North Harris, Vice Chair, Brent Ellerson & Treasurer, Darren Smit.

Motion: Approved.

Moved by: Schulz

Seconded by: Leung

Carried.

Governance Context, discussion highlighted:

- ongoing board and organizational transition;
 - the move to a closed-membership governance model;
 - continued onboarding of a new chartered accountant/bookkeeper/controller;
 - the need for strong governance, financial oversight, and support for strategic priorities including Indigenous tourism, inclusion, sustainability, and workforce development.
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Strategic and Organizational Discussion

Indigenous Youth Tourism Entrepreneurship Strategy - An update was provided on the Indigenous Youth Tourism Entrepreneurship Strategy. Staff reported that the work is progressing positively with engagement across nine First Nations and support from FedNor. The Board heard that this work is relationship-based, long-term, and rooted in listening, trust-building, and economic reconciliation. Related opportunities, including potential Indigenous tourism product and package development, were also referenced.

Partnership Program - The Board discussed rising demand for the Partnership Program, noting that the program was expected to be oversubscribed and that this year would require more careful allocation decisions than in previous years. Staff emphasized the need for stronger conflict-of-interest awareness and potential board involvement or liaison support as difficult decisions are made.

Ministry / RTO Environment - The Board received context on the broader provincial tourism environment, including changes within the Ministry and the continued evolution of the regional tourism model alongside municipal accommodation tax structures. Explorers' Edge's role as a destination development organization, with responsibilities beyond marketing alone, was reaffirmed.

Staff and Portfolio Updates - The Board formally acknowledged staff promotions:

- Jennifer Montpetit to Director of Strategic Partnerships and Development
- Jake Good to Brand Narrative Manager

Marketing and Digital Content - Jake provided an update on regional marketing work, including content development, website cleanup and transition, and the need to modernize Explorers' Edge's digital presence. He noted increased team energy and collaboration, along with efforts to better represent all six sub-regions and keep pace with changing digital expectations.

Partnerships and Development - Jennifer provided an overview of her work on the Partnership Program and wider regional development activity. She noted strong demand, extensive outreach and meetings, and the growing range of applications spanning product development, planning, accessibility, inclusion, and tourism experience development. She also spoke to her involvement in the Indigenous tourism strategy and 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion work.

Sustainability Programming - Rebecca Francis updated the Board on sustainability programming, including the GreenStep certification cohort and the growing reach of the "Positive Impact Series." She reported that operator participation is increasing and that efforts are underway to engage both certified businesses and operators interested in more accessible sustainability support.

Travel Agency / Product Development Update - A brief verbal update was provided regarding the Windermere package. Staff noted that the package did not generate bookings and that, even if minimum sales had been reached, it likely would have run at a loss. The exercise nonetheless generated useful lessons regarding pricing, timing, packaging structure, and how transportation and add-ons are presented within the booking platform. A fuller recorded update was to be circulated.

Upcoming Work / General Updates - Board members were advised of the following:

- continued work on transportation and access opportunities, including regional mobility and package integration;
- growing interest in AI-related programming following strong response to the AI symposium;
- Women in Tourism programming and future Diva Dialogues activity;
- Big Applause Awards deadline reminder;
- a recorded deck/update would be circulated following the meeting to cover items not fully reached due to time.

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting.

Moved by: Smith

Carried.