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## Tourism Engagement Session — Outcome Brief

Facilitated by Explorers' Edge • May 29, 2026

Thank you for participating in today's tourism engagement session. This brief summarizes the key themes, poll results, and next steps that emerged from your collective input. It is shared to keep you informed and to support continued collaboration between your municipality and Explorers' Edge.

### Session at a Glance

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Total participants joined	<b>68</b>
Surveys completed (5 polls)	<b>Up to 45 responses per question</b>
Session date	<b>May 29, 2026</b>
Facilitating organization	<b>Explorers' Edge</b>

### What You Told Us

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#### How participants see tourism in their communities

When asked for the first word that came to mind about tourism in their municipality (45 responses), the most common themes were:

- Lakes - the single most cited word (8 votes), underscoring water as the region's defining asset
- Money, Water, Family - each selected by 2–3 participants, reflecting both economic and lifestyle dimensions
- Outdoor recreation, nature and wilderness featured prominently through words such as outdoors, fishing, canoe, wilderness, and Algonquin Park
- A strong undercurrent of growth mindset: words like economic growth, essential, enhancing, and growth and opportunity

### Where tourism development is most needed (next 2–3 years)

39 participants selected their top priorities. Results:

Priority Area	Votes	% of Respondents
Events and shoulder-season visitation	20	51%
Trails, waterfronts and outdoor recreation	18	46%
Workforce attraction and retention	9	23%
Youth entrepreneurship & small business	10	26%
Downtown and main street vitality	6	15%
Transportation and visitor movement	5	13%
Data to support planning and investment	5	13%
Indigenous-led / community-led tourism	3	8%

### Where intergovernmental alignment is most needed

41 participants identified which issue most requires better alignment between municipal, provincial and federal partners:

Issue	Votes	% of Respondents
Infrastructure and visitor services	20	49%
Rural transportation	13	32%
Housing and workforce	13	32%
Small business and operator support	12	29%
Data and investment readiness	3	7%
Emergency management and community safety	2	5%

### Immediate practical actions (next 6–12 months)

32 participants identified the most actionable near-term step their municipality could take:

Action	Votes	% of Respondents
Connect local operators, events and community assets	15	47%
Improve signage, parking or visitor movement	12	38%
Identify tourism-ready assets and gaps	11	34%
Support visitor data collection	5	16%
Support shoulder-season events or experiences	4	13%

## **Municipal readiness to work with Explorers' Edge**

Participants described their municipality's current readiness as follows:

- Ready now - we have projects or priorities to discuss: the most common response, indicating strong appetite for immediate engagement
- Interested, but need help identifying the right opportunity: a significant cohort open to partnership but seeking guidance
- We have tourism assets but need better data: recognized potential constrained by information gaps
- We have visitor pressure points that need attention: a smaller but important group signalling capacity concerns
- We are not sure where tourism fits yet / This is not a current priority: a minority indicating they are at an earlier stage

## **Community Voices: Key Themes**

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In the open-text surveys, participants shared candid insights about their communities. The following themes emerged consistently:

### **1. Seasonality and the shoulder-season challenge**

Multiple respondents identified the heavily seasonal nature of tourism as a central concern, with summer and cottaging dominating and other seasons underserved. Expanding into shoulder seasons was called out as both the priority and the opportunity.

### **2. Resource and capacity constraints**

Several communities reported limited staff, infrastructure and financial resources to support tourism growth. Phrases like "limited resources to support tourism," "workforce challenges" and "need help!" were common - signalling an explicit request for Explorers' Edge support.

### **3. Accommodation and product gaps**

Lack of accommodation inventory and tourism products was flagged repeatedly. Communities noted they are "working around the lack of accommodations" and need more diverse lodging and food service offerings to retain visitors longer.

### **4. Unique local assets with untapped potential**

Participants highlighted a rich variety of local assets - Eagle Lake fishing derby, dog sled races, lawn tractor races, the Seguin Trail, Algonquin Park entrance, beach days, and a graphite mine - that could anchor stronger visitor experiences with the right support and promotion.

## 5. Regional connectivity

Several responses pointed to the value of inter-community transportation, regional visitor guides, and coordinated marketing. Ideas included last-mile transportation solutions, regional touring packages, and a shared events calendar across municipalities.

## Regional Opportunity: What Participants Envision

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When asked what regional tourism opportunity the District of Parry Sound should be thinking about collectively, participants offered the following directions:

- Shoulder-season expansion - events, experiences and packages that extend the visitor season beyond summer
- Last-mile and inter-community transportation solutions to improve visitor movement
- Regional stay-and-play packages in collaboration with accommodation and activity operators
- A regional tourism visitors' guide identifying assets across the District on daily, weekly and occasional timelines
- Shared promotion of community events across all municipalities via a unified web presence
- Trail and outdoor experience enhancement, including improving routes like Killarney and the Seguin Trail
- Canoeing, camping and wilderness tourism product development
- Regional tours, including emerging assets like the graphite mine

## Questions Raised

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One question was submitted during the session:

*"Is there collaboration with the geographical area covered by Discovery Routes?"*

Explorers' Edge will follow up on this question directly. If you have additional questions from the session, please reach out using the contact information below.

## What Happens Next

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Based on today's session, Explorers' Edge will consider:

- Review the collective input and identify cross-municipal patterns to inform regional strategy
- Follow up individually with municipalities that indicated they are ready to engage on specific projects
- Begin exploring regional opportunities around shoulder-season events, transportation, and product development
- Share relevant data, research and tools with communities that identified data gaps as a barrier
- Schedule follow-up touchpoints with municipalities that requested guidance on identifying the right opportunity

We encourage each municipality to use this brief as a starting point for internal conversations about tourism priorities and to identify a lead contact for ongoing engagement with Explorers' Edge.

## Alignment with Explorers' Edge

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The survey results align strongly with Explorers' Edge's strategic role as a regional convener, product-development partner, and intelligence-driven tourism organization. Participants identified clear priorities around shoulder-season visitation, trails and outdoor recreation, workforce, youth entrepreneurship, transportation, visitor movement, and better data, all of which connect directly to EE's plan to move beyond awareness marketing and support practical, community-benefit tourism development. The strong municipal interest in connecting operators, identifying tourism-ready assets, improving visitor flow, and building regional packages confirms that EE's role is to help municipalities turn local assets into coordinated, bookable, data-informed tourism opportunities that strengthen the visitor economy across the District of Parry Sound

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### Contact Explorers' Edge

For questions about this brief or to schedule a follow-up conversation, please contact your Explorers' Edge regional liaison. Visit [exploredge.ca](https://exploredge.ca) for resources and regional tourism information.

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*This brief was prepared from engagement data collected during the May 29, 2026 session. All participant responses were anonymous.*