Chair's Address – TIAM Advocacy Forum 2025 October 2025

1. **Where We've Come From**
   It's worth taking a moment to remember where we were just a year ago.

   Last fall, TIAM was still building its foundation. We were volunteer-led, figuring out how to organize ourselves, and working to establish TIAM's voice.

   Fast forward to today — and we're recognized by government, by our partners, and by industry as the credible, independent voice for Manitoba's tourism sector.

   That's a big shift — and it didn't happen by accident. It happened because of consistent advocacy, strong partnerships, and a dedicated Board and membership that care deeply about moving this industry forward.

2. **Building Relationships that Matter**
   A big part of this past year has been about relationships.

   With the help of Chadwick Consulting advising TIAM on government relations, TIAM has established access to senior leaders within the highest levels of government.

   Since last fall, TIAM has met with Ministers:
   - Kennedy - Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism
   - Sala - Minister of Finance
   - Moses - Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation
   - Marcelino - Minister of Labour and Immigration
   - As well as Premier Kinew

   That March 17th meeting with the Premier was a milestone. TIAM walked in with one simple message: tourism isn't a cost centre — it's an economic driver. Tourism creates jobs, it fuels tax revenue, and it helps tell the story of Manitoba to the world.

   That message landed and helped shape the narrative leading to a 30% funding increase in the 2025 provincial budget for Travel Manitoba and carve-outs for Indigenous Tourism Manitoba. At the same time,

TIAM continues to advocate for direct support for Winnipeg Economic Development and Tourism in their leadership of major events acquisition in the province. And more importantly, it positioned TIAM as a trusted voice — for tour operators and for the government.

We also advanced the concept of a Tourism Working Group — bringing together departments like Labour, Immigration, Natural Resources, and Economic Development. It's a practical way to get everyone pulling in the same direction on issues like workforce and infrastructure.

3. **Evidence-Based Advocacy**
One of the Government's first asks of TIAM was: "Show us the numbers."

So, we got to work on that. We began championing the Value of Tourism — putting data behind what we've always known intuitively. Investments in tourism result in a meaningful return on investment — not just in visitor spending, but also in tax revenue, job creation, and community vitality.

Travel Manitoba, Winnipeg Economic Development and Tourism, and Indigenous Tourism Manitoba all joined us in calling for hard data. We're now seeing that message echoed by Ministers, by the Premier, and even being worked on to a larger degree with a national working group in which TIAM is a part; the Provincial and Territorial Tourism Industry Association.

We're in the early stages of working with partners on a Return on Investment study specific to Manitoba — something we expect to inform next year's budget cycle.

And through our PrairiesCan export-readiness project, we've helped dozens of tour operators — and in partnership with Indigenous Tourism Manitoba (ITM) is championing a related export-readiness project with Indigenous tour operators — all to prepare operators in Manitoba for new markets and new opportunities. Phase Two of that program is slated to launch this winter.

We're encouraged by the new leadership at Riding Mountain National Park — a positive shift that opens the door to renewed collaboration between Parks Canada, the tourism industry, and the communities of Clear Lake Country. The progress we've seen is proof of what grassroots advocacy, grounded in data and respectful dialogue, can achieve when industry and community stand together for fair, sustainable policy.

4. **Standing Up During Crisis**
If the past year has proven anything, it's that tourism in Manitoba is resilient — but not invincible.

The wildfires this summer were a stark reminder of how vulnerable our industry can be to forces beyond our control.

TIAM, with leadership from Chadwick, took a proactive role — attending provincial wildfire briefings, drafting updates for members, and sending formal letters to Ministers Moses and Kennedy to ensure that tourism voices were heard during emergency planning and response.

It's not flashy work, but it's critical — and it showed that TIAM can be counted on in a crisis.

5. **Organizational Progress**
Behind the scenes, TIAM has made huge progress in how the organization operates. TIAM has:
• Hired a dedicated bookkeeper to ensure professional financial management and reporting.

- Launched Wild Apricot for membership tracking and communication.
- Completely rebuilt tiamanitoba.ca — it's now live, modern, easier to navigate and manage.
- Held membership strong at about 75 organizations, even with the headwinds presented by wildfires and inflation.
- Begun to diversify revenue beyond membership dues — through sponsorships, events, and grants.

That's healthy growth. It gives TIAM more stability and allows the organization to focus on what matters: advocacy and impact.

6. **Partnerships and National Presence**
   Manitoba's tourism voice is also being heard beyond our provincial borders.

   Through the Provincial Territorial Tourism Industry Association, TIAM is influencing national policy on workforce, immigration, aviation policy, and federal funding models.

   This past summer at the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's - Prairie Regional Roundtable in Saskatoon, I emphasized how our sector needs to reposition tourism as a career of choice, not just a summer job. That position turned out to be a Shared Prairie Priority: to invest in training, mentorship, and inclusive hiring to attract and retain the next generation of tourism professionals. Through the Saskatoon roundtable, we also reinforced the importance of interprovincial collaboration — improving transportation, digital connectivity, and infrastructure that supports visitors across the Prairies. Manitoba is proud to be part of that conversation.

   Then, last month in Ottawa Jamie Dumont from Chadwick Consulting represented TIAM at the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's "One Hill of a Party" advocacy event, ensuring Manitoba's issues — including lake access in Riding Mountain National Park as well as labour shortages — were on the radar of national decision-makers. Informally, at that event Jamie connected with the Federal Secretary of State for Tourism Minister Valdez, MP Patrick Weiler who is co-chair of the Tourism Caucus, Chair and Vice-Chair of TIAC, Indigenous Tourism Industry Association of Canada president Keith Henry, and CEO from the Culinary Tourism Alliance.

   TIAM also continues to strengthen relationships with Travel Manitoba, Winnipeg Economic Development and Tourism, as well as with Indigenous Tourism Manitoba. Along with TIAM, these four organizations all accomplish distinct and important work — and that's a good thing. We complement each other. Together, we're stronger.

7. **Policy and Advocacy Wins**
   Just to put some numbers to it: Over the past 12 months, TIAM has produced:
   - 12 monthly government-relations reports,
   - 10 formal letters to Ministers and the Premier,
   - 6 policy briefs on key issues,
   - and numerous media statements, budget analyses, and member updates.

   That's a serious body of work for an organization as new as TIAM.

   And it's work that has raised TIAM's visibility tremendously. TIAM is now invited to be a part of important conversations — not just knocking on the door to get in.

8. **Looking Ahead**
   As we look to the year ahead, our focus is on building permanence — moving from recognition to influence.

   Here are five priorities we'll be advancing into 2026:

   1. Provincial Tourism Strategy Implementation — we'll work to ensure industry has a leadership role, not just a consultation seat.
   2. Sustainable Funding for TIAM — it's time to explore a multi-year base funding model or matching program to ensure stability.
   3. Data and ROI Study — quantifying tourism's contribution to GDP and tax revenues to strengthen our advocacy.
   4. Workforce Development — pushing for a cross-departmental labour committee and supporting the new RRC Polytech hospitality program.
   5. Emergency Preparedness — embedding tourism in provincial crisis planning frameworks so operators aren't left behind.

   If TIAM keeps its foot on the accelerator, then next year's report won't just be about progress — it'll be about more measurable outcomes!

9. **Appreciation**
   Before I close, I want to offer a few thank-yous.

   To Minister Kennedy, Deputy Minister Jeff Hnatiuk, and Director, Sport & Tourism Policy for Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism Julia Tétrault, thank you for your ongoing partnership and your open door.

   To Chadwick Consulting — Jamie, Katie, Tom, and now Lori — thank you for your expertise, your hustle, and for helping make sure tourism is top-of-mind at the Legislature.

   To Lilian Tankard, thank you for being the glue that holds together this organization! Literally, none of us would be here if it weren't for Lilian's expertise. I personally appreciate Lilian - you keeping me focused on the next mission-critical item on the TIAM to-do list.

   To Tineke from Tin Can Creative and Elbert from Handcraft Creative both of whom have developed and manage tools for TIAM to communicate more effectively with membership and stakeholders. Thank you!

   To TIAM's executive committee; Shaun Jeffrey from Manitoba Restaurant & Foodservices Association, Karly McRae from Lakehouse Properties, Ashley Smith from Turtle Village, and Pit Turenne from Aikens Lake. The EC has our own text thread going and there are a lot of times when as leaders in our own businesses we've all got our own plates spinning — and the TIAM EC thread is on absolute fire. And these four folks have been extremely supportive. I appreciate the strategic leadership you've afforded to me and to TIAM. Thank you!

   To every board member for TIAM — volunteer board members, might I add. I appreciate your diligence and dedication to TIAM's growth. None of you have to stick around, but you do. This isn't patronage; this is hard work, and you're here for it. Thank you!

   And to every TIAM member who has contributed and/or benefitted from TIAM's success. Responding to surveys, taking phone calls, sharing your priorities… TIAM is only as strong as the people behind it, and

you've shown up again and again.

And Ida and the team at the Fort Garry Hotel. Thank you to the service team supporting our event! Thank you!

As well, a quick story, we were intentional about the term Advocacy Forum:
A) Because TIAM's primary purpose is advocacy and
B) Forum because the term denotes dialogue and conversion.

10. **Closing Thought**
    I'll close with this:

    Tourism in Manitoba has turned a corner. Tourism is no longer asking for a seat at the table — tourism in Manitoba has earned a seat at the table.

    The challenge now is to use that seat wisely: to keep telling our story, backed with data, with purpose, and with pride.

    Because at the end of the day, tourism isn't an expense — it's an investment.

    An investment in communities, in jobs, in culture, and in the future of Manitoba.

    Thank you all for your leadership, your partnership, and your passion. Let's keep pushing — together. Onward into the fog!