



TOURISM INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION OF **CANADA**

ASSOCIATION DE L'INDUSTRIE
TOURISTIQUE DU **CANADA**

WRITTEN SUBMISSION FOR THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND
THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN CANADA



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RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Addressing the Perception Gap through Sectoral Training.

To combat the perception challenge and improve career longevity, federal support for Tourism HR Canada (THRC) is essential. Programs delivered by THRC are designed to:

- Promote tourism as a career by showcasing the diversity of roles and clear progression pathways beyond entry-level positions.
- Develop high-value skills by offering industry-recognized training that elevates the skills of young workers for highly skilled roles in management, technology, and specialized tourism fields.

Investing in these programs is key to transforming tourism from a "first job" into a "first-choice career."

2 Expanding Access to Entry-Level Roles via the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) Program

The Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program is an important tool for filling immediate, seasonal, and entry-level vacancies—the very roles that have lagged in recovery. To maximize the absorption of young workers, the CSJ program must be:

- Expanded in scope with increased funding to support a greater number of positions in youth-intensive sub-sectors (e.g., food, beverage, recreation).
- Made more flexible to ensure the program structure aligns with the seasonal demands and labour market realities of tourism businesses across the country.
- Streamlined application process for the CSJ, enabling small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector to more efficiently apply for the program, reducing administrative burden and increasing approval times.



Tourism Builds
CANADA

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada is facing a dual employment challenge. Youth unemployment has reached a 25-year high of 13.1 percent, while key sectors, such as tourism, continue to face high job vacancy rates. The tourism sector, which employs over 25 percent of Canada's working youth, plays a key role in hiring young workers and offering career development opportunities.¹

Despite this, the post-COVID recovery and perception challenges have limited the sector's ability to create, and fill needed entry-level and highly skilled roles. The sector's important role in hiring young Canadians is being weakened, cutting an important path for youth into the workforce.

This submission outlines current employment trends, sector challenges, and strategic opportunities to support Canada's tourism sector and its continued employment of youth in every corner of the country.

To address rising youth labour participation and gaps in tourism occupations, TIAC recommends targeted investments in key sector supports and federal programs. This includes strengthening Tourism HR Canada (THRC) and prioritizing tourism positions through the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program. These measures will provide jobs to young Canadians and grow the tourism sector's economic contribution.

2. TOURISM'S ROLE IN CANADA'S ECONOMY

Canada's tourism sector plays a vital role in driving economic growth, supporting cultural exchange and strengthening nation-building. Tourism is at the heart of communities across Canada, reaching our bustling urban centres to our country's beautiful rural landscapes and seascapes. Tourism helps Canadians connect with one another, promotes indigenous heritage, and advances reconciliation. Through targeted support the Government of Canada can ensure tourism remains a thriving sector for economic growth, global connections, foreign direct investment, and shared experiences.

Canada's tourism sector supports over 265,000 businesses and a workforce of over 2 million people, including 737,900 youth.² In 2024, tourism generated \$130 billion in economic activity and contributed \$50.8 billion to Canada's GDP.³

[1] Tourism HR Canada. Emerit, Rapid reSearch Tool: Labour Force Survey Data for Canada's Tourism Sector, accessed October 2025.

[2] Ibid

[3] Statistics Canada. Table 36-10-0230-01 Tourism demand in Canada. Current prices, unadjusted; Statistics Canada. Table: 36-10-0234-01. Tourism gross domestic product. Current prices, unadjusted.

With close to \$32 billion of annual spending coming from international visitors, tourism is also our country's second largest service export industry representing over 14 percent of Canada's total service export revenue.⁴ The sector also provides a strong return on investment, with government revenue attributable to tourism equaling up to 27 percent of visitor spending annually. This makes tourism a major contributor to Canada's economy.

3. TOURISM AS A KEY DRIVER OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Tourism is a major part of Canada's labour market as an important entry point for the workforce for many young Canadians – with over half of all Canadians having worked in the sector.⁵

In recent years, the Canadian economy has seen an increase in the number of youth (aged 15-24) in the national labour force – from 1.47 million in 2019 to over 3.08 million in 2024 – but this growth has not been matched with sufficient job creation. Due to this, youth unemployment in Canada has reached, 13.1%, a 25-year high.⁶

Tourism is one of the country's most youth-focussed sectors. Youth aged 15-24 made up over 30 percent of Canada's tourism workforce in 2024 – more than double the share of youth working in roles across the broader economy.⁷ Between 2019 and 2024, Canada's youth tourism labour force grew by 122 percent, outpacing the total youth labour force growth by nearly 16.2 percent.

This highlights tourism's role as a key area of work for young people, providing over 677,000 jobs for youth in Canada, particularly in the food & beverage and recreation & entertainment sectors. Given a Canada-wide youth workforce of 2,682,500 in 2024, tourism represents a quarter of employment in Canada for youth aged 15-24.⁸

While tourism continues to employ a growing share of young workers, the sector's youth employment has shifted. Last year, 71.9 percent of youth roles were part-time, compared to 49.6 percent in the broader economy. This increase highlights the sector's seasonal nature and the limited availability of year-round or full-time positions.⁹

The unemployment rate for youth seeking work in tourism was nearly five percentage points lower than the national youth average in 2024, suggesting tourism continues to serve as key area of employment for young Canadians.

[4] Statistics Canada. Table 36-10-0230-01 Tourism demand in Canada. Current prices, unadjusted.

[5] Tourism HR Canada, Perceptions of Tourism as a Place of Employment: 2024 National Survey Report, May 2025.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Tourism HR Canada, Tourism Outperforms the General Economy When It Comes to Young Workers, May 2024.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Emerit, Rapid reSearch Tool: Labour Force Survey Data for Canada's Tourism Sector, accessed October 2025.

3.1. Tourism Provides Skills and Career Development Opportunities

For many Canadian youths, a role in tourism represents an accessible first job that helps build social employability skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem solving, preparing them to collaborate effectively and succeed in a variety of workplace settings.¹⁰ Survey data confirms the long-term value of this early experience:

- 74 percent of Canadians that worked in tourism cite improvements in their communications and interpersonal skills; and,
- 58 percent underscore improvements in leadership and critical thinking.¹¹

These core competencies are essential across all aspects of Canada's economy, and these benefits position tourism as a core contributor to Canada's continued workforce development.

Working in the tourism sector offers early job experience, social employability skills, and training that supports long-term career success – both inside and outside of the industry. In a 2024 survey, 85 percent of Canadians who have worked in tourism received some form of training, with 67 percent agreeing that that the training was highly relevant to their future career success.¹²

This data explains why youth are attracted to tourism roles: flexibility, accessibility, and alignment with their interests. At the early career level, students can easily pursue tourism roles during breaks from school, capitalizing on seasonal demand and flexibility. In 2024, 36 percent of Canadians who had worked in tourism cited seasonal opportunity during school as a key motivator for taking on these roles.¹³

[10] Tourism HR Canada, Perceptions of Tourism as a Place of Employment: 2024 National Survey Report, May 2025.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Tourism HR Canada, Perceptions of Tourism as a Place of Employment: 2024 National Survey Report, May 2025.

[13] Tourism HR Canada, Perceptions of Tourism as a Place of Employment: 2024 National Survey Report, May 2025.

4. TRENDS IN THE TOURISM LABOUR MARKET

Despite the increase in young people seeking work, the tourism sector struggles to fill vacancies and transition them into long-term careers.

The sector faces a perception challenge: potential workers do not see pathways from entry-level roles to highly skilled careers. This is worsened by a high job vacancy rate that signals a sector in urgent need of a stable, long-term workforce. The combination of high national youth unemployment and high sector vacancy highlights a mismatch between perception and available supports.

4.1. The Unmet Demand for Roles

Tourism businesses across Canada are facing acute workforce shortages. The sector's post-COVID labour market recovery remains uneven, with employment levels in industries such as accommodations and food & beverage services still lagging pre-2019 levels.

In Q2 of 2025, the job vacancy rate for tourism businesses in the accommodation and food services sector – a driver of youth tourism employment – was 4.1 percent, approximately 46 percent higher than the average job vacancy rate across sectors. These shortages span the entire tourism ecosystem, not just entry-level roles, potentially impacting the long-term prospects of youth entering the sector.¹⁴

Employers in the tourism sector continue to experience labour shortages. This threatens to damage Canada's global tourism reputation and undermine its competitiveness. Employment in several top TEER¹⁵ occupations in the tourism sector has yet to return to levels seen pre-pandemic. This includes highly skilled occupations across tourism's five industries. Analysis shows major employment level changes for the top TEER roles in tourism between pre-pandemic (2019) and 2024, and year-over-year change between 2022/23 and 2023/24, seen in Figure 1. In several highly skilled tourism careers the total employment has declined or stagnated in recent years.

[14] Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0400-01 Job vacancies, payroll employees, and job vacancy rate by industry sector, quarterly, adjusted for seasonality.

[15] The Government of Canada uses a system of TEER (Training, Education, Experience and Responsibilities) categories as part of its National Occupation Codes that corresponds to the type and/or amount of training, education, experience and responsibility typically required to work in an occupation. There are 5 TEER categories. Categories 0 through 2 typically require advance education, training and years of experience.

Figure 1. Employment Change in top TEER Tourism Occupations

Top TEER Occupations in Tourism ¹⁶	Employment Change 2019-24 (%)	Employment Change 2022-23 (%)	Employment Change 2023-24 (%)
Accommodation Service Managers	-29.9	3.1	-4.8
Air Pilots, Flight Engineers, and Flying Instructors	13.9	29.8	20.4
Air Traffic Controllers and Related Occupations¹⁷	-24.6	-14.8	13
Aircraft Mechanics and Aircraft Inspectors	-1.1	-17.9	15.4
Conference and Event Planners	-20.9	10.2	-1.9
Deck Officers, Water Transport	-4.3	-21.2	-15.4
Human Resources Professionals	53.8	-24.5	116.2
Recreation, Sports & Fitness Program & Service Directors	117.9	-16.4	66.7
Restaurant and Food Service Managers	-13.9	-10.4	-3.9

High youth engagement accompanied by persistent vacancies, and declining employment in tourism's high-skilled careers points to a broader perception and workforce development challenge. While many youth are entering the sector, many are not pursuing the potential career paths that it offers. This presents significant challenge for tourism industries that greatly impacts workforce stability.

With targeted supports, tourism can evolve from a major first-job sector into a powerful, long-term career engine that addresses the youth unemployment crisis.

[16] Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0023-01 Labour force characteristics by industry, annual (x 1,000).

[17] Employment data for air traffic controllers is economy wide as opposed to only in the tourism sector due to a lack of available data.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS: TARGETED YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

To address the dual crisis of youth unemployment and job vacancies, the Government of Canada must support tourism businesses in attracting, training, and retaining young workers. This requires targeted investment in proven programs.



RECOMMENDATION 1

ADDRESSING THE PERCEPTION GAP THROUGH SECTORAL TRAINING

To combat the perception challenge and improve career longevity, federal support for Tourism HR Canada (THRC) is essential. Programs delivered by THRC are designed to:

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RECOMMENDATION 2

EXPANDING ACCESS TO ENTRY-LEVEL ROLES VIA THE CANADA SUMMER JOBS (CSJ) PROGRAM

The Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program is an important tool for filling immediate, seasonal, and entry-level vacancies—the very roles that have lagged in recovery. To maximize the absorption of young workers, the CSJ program must be:

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6. CONCLUSION

The tourism sector stands ready to play an important role in addressing Canada's youth unemployment crisis. Tourism is a proven entry point to the national workforce, delivering essential skills, economic stability, and long-term career success.

Without targeted support, the sector's high vacancy rates and perception challenges will continue to limit youth employment. By investing in THRC and expanding the CSJ program, the Government of Canada can strategically support youth employment, stabilize an important national industry, and ensure tourism remains a thriving sector for economic growth across the country.