

DESTINATION CANADA SHOWCASES THE VALUE OF TOURISM

At the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Annual Conference

July 2024

Calgary

Alberta

Welcome to FCM's 2024 Annual Conference and Trade Show.



Bienvenue au congrès annuel et salon professionnel 2024 de la FCM.



Earlier this year, Destination Canada and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)—the national voice for municipal governments, representing over 2,100 Canadian municipalities—announced a first-of-its-kind, three-year partnership to highlight the value of tourism for communities and promote the power of collective destination stewardship and development. This partnership seeks to not only enhance the economic landscape of Canada but also enrich the socio-cultural and environmental fabric of its communities.

Hosted in Calgary, Alberta, from June 6 – 9, 2024, the FCM's annual conference was a beacon of hope and inspiration. Over 3,100 delegates, from sprawling urban centers to quaint rural towns, gathered to share their visions and strategies for a future where tourism and community development go hand in hand.

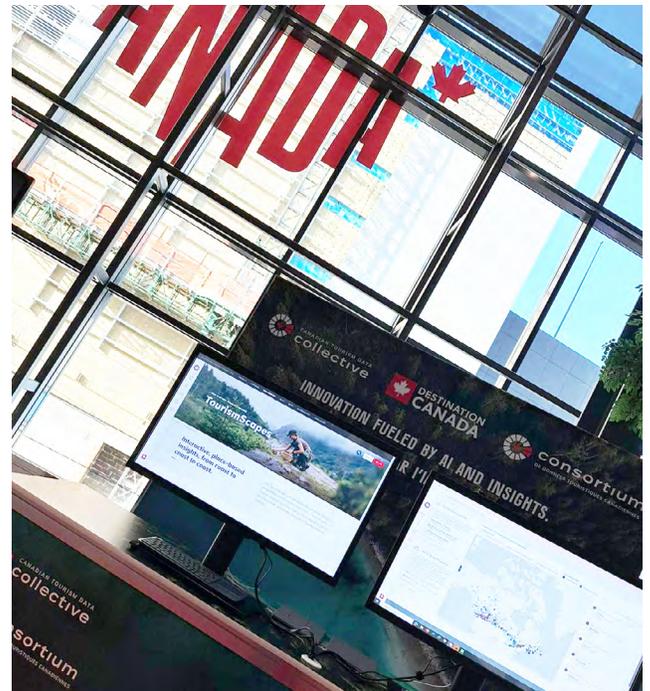
The opening plenary set the tone with a traditional Indigenous welcome from Elder Clarence Wolfleg Sr. and uplifting remarks from Calgary Mayor Jyoti Gondek. These moments underscored the deep connections and respect for the land and its people, resonating with the delegates' shared mission. Carole Saab, FCM CEO, encapsulated this sentiment in her introduction of the conference theme, "Redefining Our Future," urging everyone to envision a future where Canadians enjoy the best services and an enhanced quality of life. We at Destination Canada believe this can be achieved through intentional, inclusive tourism development.

Throughout the conference, stories of resilience and innovation emerged. Prime Minister Trudeau's address and subsequent Q&A session highlighted the importance of a [Municipal Growth Framework](#), a vision for equitable funding and sustainable growth for local governments. Sessions on sustainability, climate change, and diversity emphasized the interconnectedness of these issues with tourism, painting a picture of a holistic, forward-thinking approach to community and economic development.

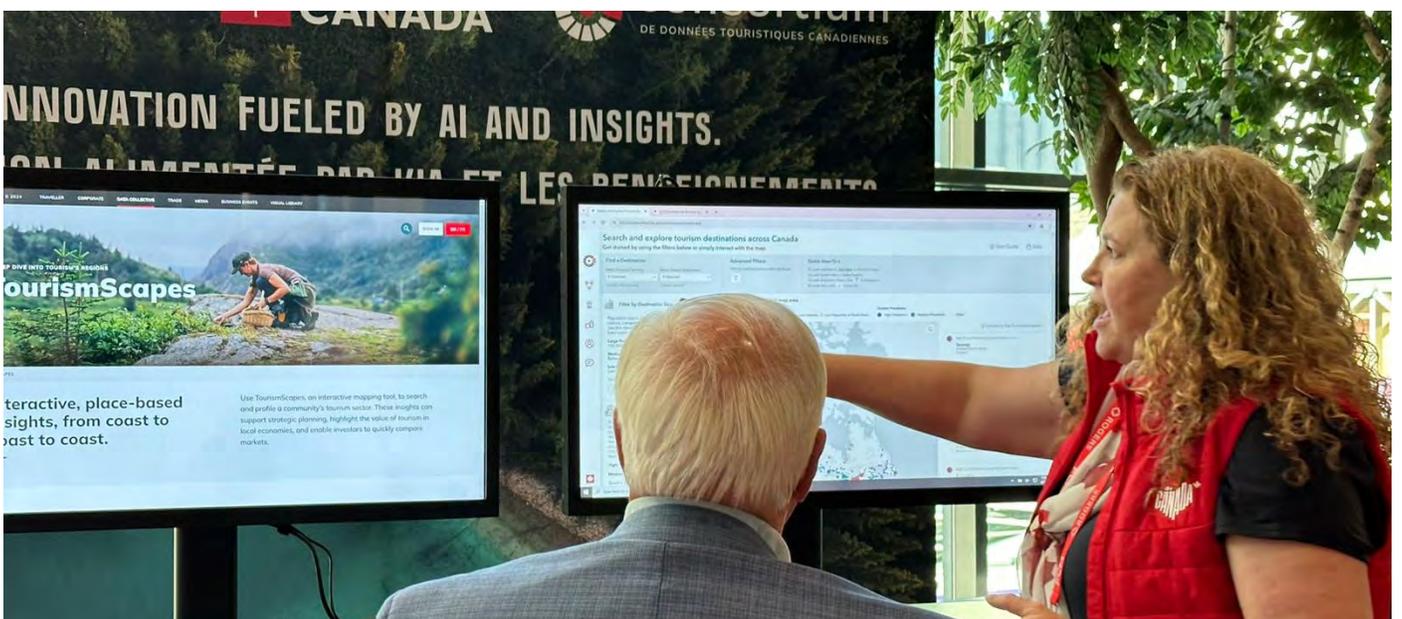
The partnership's rationale is firmly rooted in data and community-centered destination development. The conference revealed several key insights that underscore the logical benefits of integrating tourism with municipal growth strategies. Data-driven decision-making emerged as a cornerstone for both sectors. The [Canadian Tourism Data Collective](#), an innovative platform launched by Destination Canada, exemplifies this approach. This centralized, secure platform facilitates access to reliable and timely tourism data, empowering communities to make informed decisions that drive growth and revenue.

Destination Canada's [TourismScapes](#) dashboard further illustrated the potential for leveraging existing tourism assets. This interactive map visualizes the scale and distribution of Canada's tourism sector, providing valuable market profiles for over 5,000 communities. By highlighting opportunities and challenges, it equips local governments with the tools needed to attract visitors and enhance the local economy.

Moreover, the [Wealth & Well-Being Index](#), a comprehensive measurement framework introduced at the conference, offers a new lens through which to assess tourism's true value. This index goes beyond traditional metrics, capturing tourism's contributions to the prosperity and well-being of local residents across six key pillars: economy, employment, enablement, engagement, environment, and experiences. This holistic approach ensures that the benefits of tourism are measured not just in economic terms, but also in how they enhance the quality of life for all people of Canada.



The credibility of this collaboration is bolstered by the leadership and expertise of the organizations involved. Destination Canada, with its proven track record in tourism promotion and development, and the FCM, as a respected advocate for municipal governments, bring a wealth of knowledge and resources to the table. This partnership is a testament to their commitment to fostering sustainable growth and enriching the lives of Canadians.



Maureen Riley, Vice President of Industry Engagement at Destination Canada, underscored this commitment in her opening address at the “Ask the Expert” session. She emphasized the rare, transformative power of tourism to touch every community in Canada.

Riley highlighted the ambitious goals of [Destination Canada's Tourism 2023: A World of Opportunity Strategy](#), aiming to increase tourism revenues to \$160 billion annually by 2030 and reclaim Canada's position as a top global destination.

The panel discussion, moderated by Riley, featured leaders from tourism-forward communities who shared their experiences and best practices. **The panelists included:**

Corrie DiManno

Mayor
[Town of Banff](#), Alberta

Arryn McNichol

Director of Corporate and
Legislative Services
[County of Prince Edward](#), Ontario

Stephanie Clovechok

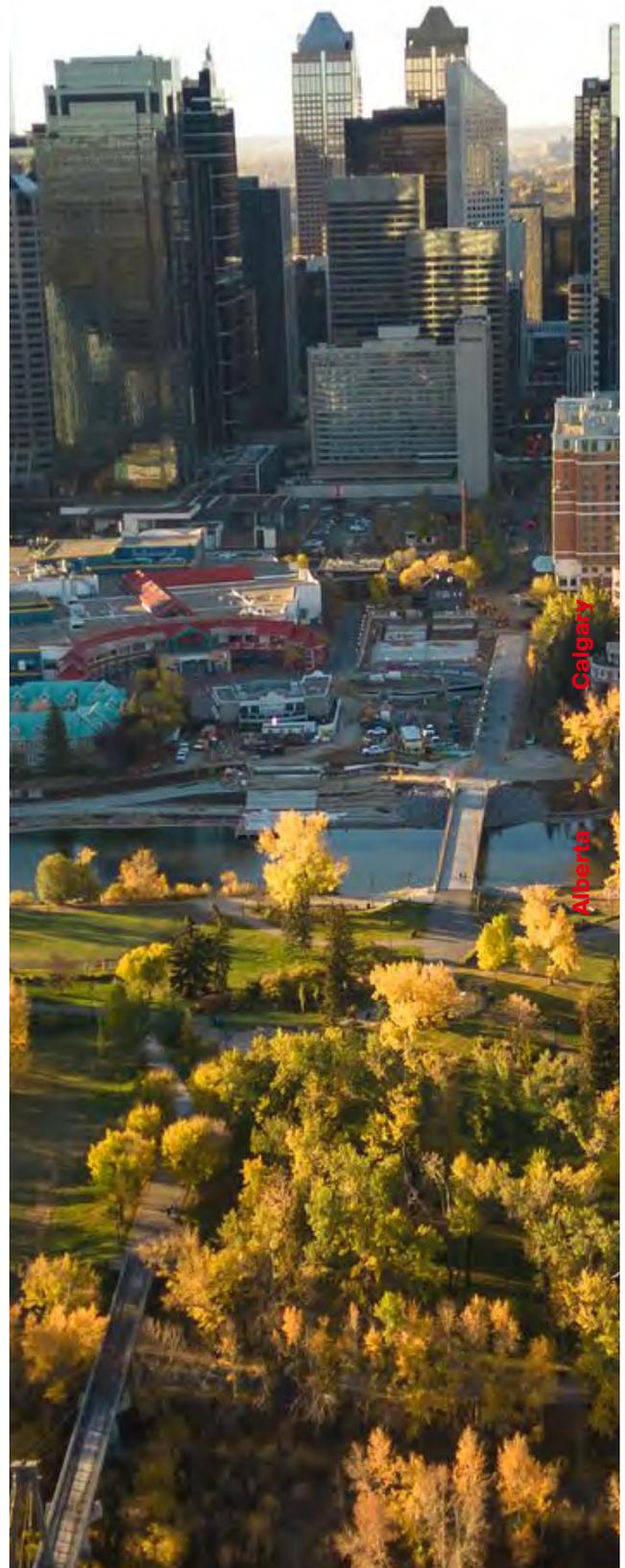
CEO
[Discover Saskatoon](#),
Saskatchewan



Mayor DiManno kicked off the discussion by outlining the development of Banff's [Lead Tourism for Good 10-year Vision](#), a comprehensive document created through a partnership between Banff & Lake Louise Tourism, the Town of Banff, and Parks Canada. This vision "addresses environmental sustainability, community wellbeing, cultural integrity, and economic prosperity" and was formed through extensive community engagement. DiManno emphasized, "It was really important that we had wide perspectives because we wanted folks to buy into the process. Ultimately, we want everyone to feel ownership over these goals." Reflecting on the pandemic's impact, DiManno remarked, "The process [of developing the 10-year Vision] really showed that strength of working together...it's how we've now learned to come together to have one clear vision and to share data and information."

Stephanie Clovechok from Discover Saskatoon echoed the importance of community involvement, highlighting the [Legacy Builders Project](#). This initiative "acknowledges the absolute excellence that exists" in Saskatoon by leveraging the expertise of local leaders to attract significant events. Clovechok shared, "has us reaching out into the community and unearthing the storytellers, all of the people who are leading the world in some sense." She noted, "Without those individuals, we would not have the opportunity to bring these events to Saskatoon," underscoring the project's impact on local prosperity. During the pandemic, Clovechok said, "We took a pause to say, 'who are we and how are we representing the destination and its people?' because ultimately, the community is at the heart of every tourism organization."

Arryn McNichol discussed Prince Edward County's establishment of [Visit the County](#), a Destination Management Organization launched in 2022. Since then, it has collaborated with municipal staff to develop a comprehensive tourism strategy. "We've set up engagement with a number of these individuals through town halls, social media, information sessions, and similar channels," McNichol explained. Highlighting the importance of embracing local uniqueness, he stated, "Prince Edward County is made up of a number of different unique communities with unique identities and tourism assets. Embrace the unique assets and identify that each [tourism community that makes up your destination] is different."



The panel agreed on the significance of community engagement in tourism decision-making. Moderator Maureen Riley emphasized starting with people, saying, “Start with your people, start at the policy tables, make sure you’re asking questions about where your tourism people are and how can you easily enable the visitor economy and create a system that doesn’t enable barriers for organizations like ours.” She stressed the necessity of Indigenous partnerships, as “you cannot steward a destination without Indigenous partnership.”

One of Mayor DiManno’s points summed up the entire session perfectly, as she noted “the community cannot be supported without tourism and tourism cannot be supported without the community.”

These stories of collaboration and innovation serve as powerful examples of how communities can harness the potential of tourism to drive sustainable growth. The emphasis on community engagement, fostering unique collaborations, implementing measurements beyond economic values and the alignment of tourism strategies with local needs and values ensures that the benefits of tourism are felt by all residents.





There are priorities that are salient to both organizations for the benefit of communities:



Affordable Housing:

Developing tourism strategies that include affordable housing initiatives ensures that residents benefit alongside the tourism sector. Joint housing projects can attract labor and business investment.



Labor Shortages:

Strengthening the tourism workforce through inclusive employment opportunities, career development, and job security addresses labor shortages and supports sustainable community growth.



Infrastructure and Amenities for Residents and Visitors:

Investing in effective transportation, quality accommodation, food services, and digital communication is essential for both residents and visitors. Well-maintained infrastructure supports tourism and enhances the quality of life for local populations.



Sustainable and Economic Development:

Focusing on environmental integrity and sustainable practices ensures long-term benefits for both communities and the tourism industry. Collaboration among municipalities, tourism operators, Indigenous communities, senior levels of government, and Provincial and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) fosters cohesive and strategic development.



Community Agency:

Ensuring communities have a voice in the development and implementation of tourism strategies promotes inclusiveness and local pride. This approach aligns with the values and needs of the community, ensuring that tourism development benefits all residents.

The collaboration between Destination Canada and the FCM represents a bold, visionary approach to community development. By integrating tourism with municipal growth strategies, this initiative aims to create a more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future for Canadian communities. The insights and strategies shared at the FCM's annual conference demonstrate the transformative power of tourism and the importance of collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and community engagement.

As Destination Canada and the FCM continue to work together, they will promote how municipalities can leverage the tourism economy for growth and prosperity. This partnership is not just about economic gains; it is about enriching the social and cultural fabric of our communities, ensuring that all Canadians benefit from the opportunities that tourism brings.

Tourism serves as a powerful medium for storytelling, allowing communities to showcase their pride and unique sense of place. This sentiment captures the essence of the partnership, emphasizing the mutually beneficial relationship between tourism and community development. Looking ahead, the collaboration between Destination Canada and the FCM will undoubtedly become a model for how communities across the country can thrive through the transformative power of tourism.

