



Canadian Association of Tour Operators

## REGULAR MEMBERS MEETING

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

4:00 PM

Location: Virtual

## MINUTES

### Presence

Brett Walker, CATO Chair (Colette) David Green, CATO Vice -Chair (G Adventures) Melissa Snape, (Colette) Johanne Dhue, (Sunwing) Hugo Rocha, (Hola Sun Holidays) Tony Sanders, (Travel Brands) Peter Lacy, (Goway) Emma Cottis, (Goway) Dave Cecco, (West Jet Vacation) Conor Duffy, (ROYAL Irish Tour) Ravi Kumar, (Huntington Travel) Leanna Haus, (West World Tours)	André Netto, Visit Brasil Carolina Stolf, Brazilian Tourism Board Lynda Falcone, Visit Britain Anja Brokjans, GNT0 Canada Melissa Snape, Olivier Weibel, Switzerland Tourism Cole Irwin, Travel South Dakota  <u>Guests from BDO:</u> Rob Barton & Amanda Kelly
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### 1. Chair opening remarks

Brett Walker, CATO Chair, welcomed all participants and said that he is looking forward to a good and productive discussion, among others, on the new Report produced by BDO on the 2023 Economic Impact Analysis (EIA).

BDO, Rob Barton and Amanda Kelly, are invited to present the results and key outputs of this **EIA 2023 Report**, then followed by comments and questions by the members. It is noted that 81 % of CATO members have responded, and that ATOQ response have been removed considering the low response rate and that the data was too insignificant to be aggregated in the Report. The survey conducted was much shorter than the 2021 EIA. So, eight questions focussing on three categories: general information, revenue and expenditure including employment.

Here are some highlights as shown in the presentation:

- Increase of the total full-time equivalent staff positions by 37% from 2020.
- Direct Full-time Employment in 2020 was 2,571, and now at 3,702 in 2023. 72% or 2,675 were held by women, an increase of 46.8% from 2020.

- Total Employment, direct and indirect, was at 13,344 in 2020, down to 3,197 in 2021, and up to 21,824 in 2023, resulting in a 64% increase from 2020.
- Direct Labour Income increased by 38% to \$222.9M in 2023, from \$161.5M in 2020.
- Total Direct and Indirect Labour Income was at \$864M in 2020, down to \$145M in 2021, and up to \$1.33 billion in 2023, an increase of 53% from 2020.
- Total sales revenue of \$9.8 billion reported in 2023.

It is mentioned that the complete report will be sent to everyone in the next few days.

It was mentioned that although we missed the data from ATOQ and some from CATO, as opposed as 100% from CATO in 2021, the numbers are impressive.

Someone said the messaging is important and CATO needs to frame a positive message about the economic value of the tour operators in Canada. The industry has regained momentum and to compare with the 2022 USTOA report showing \$19 billion in total revenue, CATO, with 1/10 of the population, is proportionally doing better.

## **2. Approval of the agenda**

Approved unanimously.

## **3. Approval of the Minutes from Previous Meeting**

Approved unanimously.

## **4. Reports**

**Sustainability Committee Report.** Emma Cottis, Sustainability Committee Chair, first said that the goal is to provide more education about sustainability in the industry. A mission statement has been developed and available. We aim to create momentum and affect changes in our industry by strategic collaboration and better communication. A webinar is planned for March 21<sup>st</sup> on the theme of “animal protection”. She encouraged everyone to share the invitation with staff and with as many people as possible. She also invited all to share any resources information for the benefit of all and send it to me or Jean.

**Executive Director’s Report.** (A copy of the complete report is attached to the Minutes, see Appendix A)

The main topics of the report are:

- TICO’s Funding Review. In short, the overall outcome was disappointing, but it is not over yet, and our advocacy campaign will continue.
- The new CATO Newsletter launched in January with a plan to issue one every three months.
- The CATO website improvements.
- The success of the ETC event last November.
- An out of Country Members’ meeting in Portugal.
- The “CATO needs your feedback” survey.
- Organizing webinar.
- Numerous meetings with the executive committee and other associations partners.

### **Chair's Report**

The Chair reported on Tourism Portugal's approach to complimentary hosting a meeting in the Algarve in the Fall for Canadian Tour Operators and one companion. A couple of meetings with members and local businesses will take place, and the theme "travel differently," which follows the ETC event, will be prominent. Details will be supplied shortly. He also talked about improving communication.

**Treasurer's Report.** In his absence, the executive director supplied the financials highlights to date as prepared by the Treasurer. The document has also been sent in advance along with the meeting.

### **5. 2023 EIA Report**

### **6. CATO's Priorities in 2024**

The executive director highlighted five priorities that are important in the next several months:

- Continuing to advocate on behalf of the members.
- Trying to encourage Members' engagement, for example in Sustainability and in advancing profitable social and environmental practices in our businesses.
- Improving CATO's communication tools.
- Organizing Members' Events – and other Special Events.
- Reviewing and improving our Governance tools and policies.

### **7. Other matters: Open for discussion**

As new CATO members, Carolina Stolf and André Netto from the Brasil Tourism Board introduced their organization, Visit Brasil, which wants to build relationships and even host events with Canadian tour operators. Andre mentioned their interest in hosting a similar out-of-country meeting in Brasil in 2025 putting in touch DMCs and sharing information with our tour operators.

As a first participation to a CATO meeting and as a guest, Ravi Kumar introduced his company Huntington Travel.

### **8. Next Meeting: AGM (May or June)**

In his closing remarks, the Chair mentioned the intent to hold more in-person meetings and engage in more discussion and greater collaboration in the future. Although we're all competitors, there are many issues and many ways to work together on positive changes, advocacy, and sustainability. This is a friendly reminder to renew your membership as soon as possible, as the out-of-country meeting is also for tour operator members only.

Someone mentioned that for better business planning, knowing well in advance about events will make it easier to contribute, either as a sponsor or as a participant.

### **9. The meeting adjourned at 5 pm.**

## Appendix A

### IV. Executive Director's Report

#### 1. TICO's Funding Review

Firstly, in 2023 we have been highly active advocating for a better regulatory system and burden reduction as well as for a real consumer protection system that must be paid by its beneficiaries, the consumer.

As you know, TICO has undertaken the “**most important**” Funding Review since inception. At the same time, the OAGO conducted a “value for money” audit.

- 5 recommendations from TICO essentially about a new funding structure - two of them will take effect as of next April 1<sup>st</sup> as published few weeks ago.
- 16 recommendations from OAGO,
  - 9 of them about TICO's operation - TICO has published an RFP to undertake that review.
  - 6 will require a government approval given possible regulatory changes, and the 16<sup>th</sup> recommendation is about the Ministry leading a review of the TIA 2002, and the regulations, as well as TICO's overall Mandate. (It will take at least two years to complete the work)

Along with ACTA we worked hard trying to influence the outcome, including several meetings with TICO, government officials, OAGO, we have made several public statements, letters to the Minister, etc. Two weeks ago, we have met with the minister's team staff for an update and the next steps following TICO's and OAGO's recommendations to the government.

In very short, the outcomes so far are disappointing, but it is not over yet. We continue our advocacy campaign about a better and fairer regulatory system, although we have been told that our request for a legislated consumer insurance protection system, paid by the consumer, is clearly out of scope.

What we all know though, is that a new fee structure will take place on April 1<sup>st</sup>, as published last February 1<sup>st</sup>.

Finally, we should get feedback very soon about the TIAC and its composition.

2. I hope that you have received and appreciated **CATO's new Newsletter**. The next one is planned to go out on April 1<sup>st</sup>. This is a new tool for better communication with the members, not only one way but two ways, so please send to me any topics you would like to share with the membership.

3. We are also working on making changes of our **website**, once again to improve the access to relevant information and improve our communication with you. I want to emphasize on

the fact that it must be a two way, the more we hear from you and your needs, the more efficient we will be.

4. **ETC event last November** in Toronto was a remarkable success with 118 attendees from 7 European Countries representatives, tour operators, suppliers and travel agents, many media representatives (26). The Theme Event was: "Europe invites the Curious - Travel Different. We received excellent media coverage.
5. For the past few months, we have been in talks with Ines Almeida Garrett from Turismo de Portugal and representatives of the Algarve Tourism Bureau about an **"Out of Country Meeting" and marketing event**. It would be for November, and a courtesy of the Algarve Tourism, for the most part of it.
6. About the survey called **"CATO needs your feedback"**, which closed in January, we have received 14 responses. Although it could have been a better response rate, this was an opportunity to get some of your expectations and guidance.
  - a. Some of the highlights are:
    - i. A consensus was clear about "Sustainability" a clear message that we should do more to advancing profitable social and environmental practices in our businesses. So, we'll do our best to provide you with more information, workshops, or seminars, etc. In short, more opportunities to learn about it.
    - ii. The overall satisfaction rate of being a member of CATO, is at 83%.
    - iii. Q.1 about the 5 benefits that CATO can provide, the highest score goes to, by order: advocacy (86%), networking opportunities (84%), information to industry trends (79%). Marketing and promotional opportunities, and professional development score the lowest. Two suggestions for training though: Technology and Market trends.
    - iv. Interest to join the board, 3 have said yes, and 4 maybe. IT WAS ASKED TO SEND AN EMAIL, BUT NONE RECEIVED. Please do so if those respondents are still interested.
7. **Regular meetings** with the executive committee and the Board Chair, support to the Sustainability Committee Chair and meetings. Preparation of the first webinar of the year that will be hold on March 21<sup>st</sup>.
8. Relationship with other Tour Operators Association: USTOA, ETOA, CATO (Australia)