



## ***A Water Act for Prince Edward Island***

**A Submission to Department of Communities, Land and Environment**

**Presented by: Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island**

**October 26, 2015**

The Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island (TIAPEI) is a not-for-profit, membership-based organization dedicated to the promotion and advancement of Prince Edward Island's tourism industry.

Our goals are:

- To promote and advance the tourism industry in Prince Edward Island;
- To strive for continued development and improvement of the tourism facilities and services offered to the public;
- To create a wider interest in and appreciation of the tourism industry among the general public in Prince Edward Island.

In keeping with these goals and objectives, the issue of a safe and sustainable water supply is considered to be a major component in a healthy and vibrant tourism industry. TIAPEI represents close to 600 tourism businesses of which over 80% are small businesses. In 2014, the tourism industry on PEI saw estimated visitation of 1,332,091, and revenues of \$401 million. Tourism accounts for approximately 7% of the GDP.

Prince Edward Island relies very heavily on agriculture, fisheries and tourism to provide revenue for the provincial coffers and employment for its citizens. These three industries have always formed the framework for development of rural communities, villages, town and cities alike. Tourism operations have always been a strong presence in Island communities and, in some cases, have been the backbone and economic driver of small communities when agriculture and fishing have experienced downturns in prosperity.

The growing appeal of eco-based or nature-based tourism travel in recent years has resulted in a boom in the experiential tourism sector which is one of the fastest growing sectors on Prince Edward Island. An increased awareness of the environment and the associated desire to "escape" the city and relax can be converted to an increase in visitation and the resulting economic spin-offs.

Integral to the preservation and stability of our predominately rural Province is well-defined protection of our water resources, agricultural lands, undeveloped areas, forests, rivers, streams and coastline, cultural and heritage sites and the viewsapes visitors to Prince Edward Island look for and expect. By working together with our colleagues in the farming and

fishing industries under comprehensive water use and protection guidelines, we feel that much can be done to preserve the integrity of our water quality and quantity on PEI and strengthen the economy of our rural communities and the agriculture, fishing and tourism industries. The tourism industry is interested in learning more about techniques for efficient water use as well as ensuring that visitors are provided the highest quality water for both consumption and recreation. Anoxic events, bacteria and nitrate contamination and siltation are detrimental to our water systems and as such affect the tourism industry's potential for growth.

While most Island residents may take for granted the scenic beauty that surrounds them, they are also the first to boast about the Island landscape to visitors. If asked to describe PEI to outsiders, Islanders will often begin with the word "beautiful." The landscape, beaches, rivers and streams have clear economic value, being a major motivator for visiting tourists and, as such, needs to be protected.

The Island's scenic landscape is a key element of the province's overall image and has contributed greatly to the 'brand' that is Prince Edward Island. Corresponding to the value of the Island's scenic beauty is its brand positioning as a "green," environmentally responsible jurisdiction, where visitors are encouraged to dig clams, rent cottages, enjoy shellfish and other local culinary delights with an implied factor of safety. Posting "Boil Water" directives, closing shellfish harvest areas, or announcing fish kills can severely undermine the positive, healthful image carefully cultivated by tourism and culinary promoters. The tourism industry must fulfill on the brand promise of a green and safe environment.

To that end, TIAPEI has been a driving force behind the implementation of strict water testing policy to ensure a safe water supply for visitors and Islanders alike. Governance such as the Municipalities Act, Planning Act, Land Protection Act, etc must be re-examined to determine if the statutes and regulations incorporate the most current practices for protection and development. Clear language and concise guidelines must tie together all the relevant Acts in the most comprehensive way possible. Boil water advisories happen each year. Improved practices, established through the development of the aforementioned guidelines and *A Water Act* for PEI, will assist in reducing the incidents of boil order advisories.

Visitors come to PEI to experience, touch and feel the real PEI. The rolling

green hills and red soil of our farm lands, sparkling blue waters surrounding us and the many harbours our fishing industry call home have entranced these visitors and call them back year after year. Islanders take for granted these viewsapes and protection has to be paramount in the future. A protected landscape will ensure safe, sustainable sources of water for consumption and recreation for both residents and visitors. The tourism industry is committed to working closely with the designated agencies toward effective stewardship of the water that surrounds and sustains visitors to PEI as well as Island families for generations to come.

Thank you the opportunity to present our views on this issue and we look forward to studying the final report when it becomes available.