

Pivoting to Address the New Norms in Hospitality and Tourism

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The School of Hospitality and Tourism hosted a roundtable discussion on revitalizing education to address the “new norms” in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Thirty-six key industry business leaders from the five sectors of tourism (accommodations, food and beverage services, recreation and entertainment, transportation, and travel services) met virtually to provide their feedback on the impact of COVID-19 on the industry. The discussion provided insight on the recovery of the industry, and what the future of work will look like post-COVID-19.

Several key opportunities and global challenges emerged as industry partners participated in an in-depth discussion on the issues.

- The industry is optimistic that recovery will see a long and steady growth to pre-COVID-19 numbers. This is expected to improve as we approach the 4th quarter of 2021.
- Strict physical distancing and sanitation protocol is in place to instill consumer confidence.

- Border restrictions between Canada and the United States has significantly impacted the tourism industry in Ontario's urban and suburban centers, whereas domestic travel within the province has seen an increased demand over the last year.
- The critical role of a rapid systematic introduction for rapid antigen testing before travel is currently in a piloting stage in Alberta and many other countries around the world. If successfully integrated, rapid antigen testing promises an alternative to quarantines and will build consumer confidence to travel.
- Massive losses of a skilled workforce due to changes in employment from furloughs, retirements, cutbacks, and closures will result in increased investment in workforce retraining and upskilling.
- Travel domestically is increasing. Resorts and Golf Clubs are looking at identifying outdoor activities and working with local businesses to develop outdoor attractions.
- Industry incentives, lower fares, room rates, and COVID-19 insurance are being offered to travelers to rebuild travel and increase confidence.
- Expect to see a huge demand in travel when restrictions drop. Pent-up demand is expected to show increases surpassing the 2019 highs like never seen before.

What skills and knowledge will graduates of our programs need to stand out in the industry post-COVID-19?

- Biosafety and biosecurity at airports and at large major events such as conferences, sports events, and festivals will become expected as a new normal.
- Business continuity planning to include risk management and a pandemic strategy.
- Knowledge of new initiatives in green technologies, environmental restrictions, and use of sustainable sources. There will be a resilient sustainable recovery in the industry.
- Knowledge of how to integrate new initiatives in digital technologies, biometrics and contactless technologies, artificial intelligence, travel analytics, design and planning, and most importantly communications.
- Skills shortage will create increased investment in the development of a knowledgeable workforce. This will be crucial in successfully addressing the challenges ahead.

The roundtable discussion ended on an optimistic note, reminding us that the desire to travel will always be there. Data analytics show that people are actively researching where they want to travel to post-pandemic in unprecedented numbers. We will travel again; it is only a matter of when.

The roundtable forum reminded us of the importance of the humanistic approach in conducting business today. Industry partners are eager to actively contribute and share their expertise and insights in supporting the future success of our students, graduates, and programming. By engaging our industry partners in a live digital event, we were successful in creating a connection that demonstrated the value we place on their participation – through engagement strategies such as “[Let’s Get Social](#)” to introduce the industry partners to one another prior to the event, right through to an outcome of attracting several new PAC members to join the Seneca School of Hospitality and Tourism team!

View the [December 2020 issue of the Academic Newsletter](#).

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