



Yarmouth and Acadian Shores Tourism Assoc.
(YASTA)
932 Hwy 1 Hebron
Yarmouth, Nova Scotia
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Canada

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March 20th 2025

Subject: YASTA 2025-26 Core Funding Request

Overview

YASTA requests an increase in core funding from each municipal partner, raising their contributions from \$95,500.00 each to **\$116,000.00 each for the 2025-26 fiscal.**

Additionally, YASTA requests a short-term, operational grant of **\$21,000 from each municipal partner** to ensure YASTA can maintain operational stability and deliver programming until municipal core funding is received in April/May of this year. This grant is essential to sustain key tourism initiatives, operations and activities.

Key Financial Challenges

1. Levy Funding Shortfall Impacting Reserves

In November 2022, the province of Nova Scotia amended the Municipal Government Act (MGA) to allow municipalities to enact marketing levy bylaws. This amendment also rescinded existing marketing levies in the province, including the Town of Yarmouth's Marketing Levy. Ongoing provincial legislative changes related to housing—such as the introduction of permitting requirements, provincial deadlines, communication challenges, zero cooperation from platforms like Airbnb and VRBO, and difficulties in accessing short-term rental (STR) data—have delayed the enactment of new levy bylaws in both the Town of Yarmouth and the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth. Municipal staff have done their best to manage the demands and confusion around STR legislation and permitting requirements downloaded by the province. Unfortunately, the combination of these challenges has created a situation that has significantly reduced both the levy reserves and YASTA reserves.

Although levy bylaws in the Town of Yarmouth and the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth require all registered accommodations to collect, report, and remit a 3% levy, only a portion of accommodations do so consistently. Consequently, the expected levy funding for YASTA is significantly lower than budgeted. Lastly, while efforts are ongoing in the Municipality of the District of Argyle to implement a marketing levy, this work is in its initial stages. The Argyle marketing levy is not expected to provide additional funding in the short term.

- The projected levy revenue for 2025-26 is \$160,000, much lower than what could be collected
- YASTA reserves have fallen from \$165,663 in 2022/23 to \$20,038 in 2023/24, reducing financial flexibility.
- It has become increasingly difficult to manage operations with such a low reserve.
- Low reserves negatively impact operations, marketing and partnership opportunities, potential ACOA projects, event bids and long-term sales and planning.



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2. Reduced Provincial & Federal Contributions

- Federal funding has decreased to \$0 (compared to \$56,116 in 2022/23).
- Provincial contributions have significantly dropped to \$4,141 in 2023/24 from \$244,613 in 2022/23.
- Funding from ACOA and other external sources has been inconsistent, creating uncertainty in future support.

3. Rising Operational Costs

- Board-approved rent for the new YASTA office will more than double from \$14,846.91 in 2024/25 to \$32,688 in 2025-26.
- Inflation has increased the cost of marketing, office operations, staffing and essential visitor services.

4. One-Time Leasehold Improvements

- Board-approved leasehold improvements are required for the new YASTA office space, adding to the fiscal pressure in 2025-26.

Proposed Increase in Municipal Contributions

- Municipal funding has remained consistent in previous years with very moderate increases year over year, despite increasing costs and inflation. This success is due, in part, to strong levy support and partnerships.
- Requesting an increase from \$95,500.00 to \$116,000 per municipal unit will help stabilize operations and sustain tourism growth for the future.

Strategic Importance of Funding Increase

- Sustains tourism marketing and visitor engagement to support local businesses and economic development.
- Allows YASTA to maintain competitive marketing strategies despite short-term funding deficits.
- Ensures financial stability while awaiting the full implementation of the new levy system.

The requested increase in municipal contributions is necessary to maintain YASTA's role in promoting tourism and economic growth in Yarmouth & Acadian Shores. Without these additional funds, the organization will face financial constraints that could impact key initiatives and overall regional tourism development. We urge our municipal partners to support this funding request to ensure YASTA's continued success and sustainability.



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Strategic Focus for 2025-26

YASTA will implement a comprehensive strategy for the upcoming fiscal year centred on destination marketing, visitor engagement, and economic growth. Our priorities include:

Strengthening Digital and Content Marketing

- Expanding digital marketing campaigns to drive awareness in key markets (Northeast US, Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic Canada, and the UK and Europe).
- Leveraging influencer collaborations, travel media and travel trade channels to increase organic and paid media reach.
- Enhancing website performance and engagement on owned media channels like email marketing and our website yarmouthandacadianshores.com.

Expanding Experiential Tourism Offerings

- Supporting Wasoqopa'q First Nation (formerly Acadia First Nation) in developing and promoting Mi'kmaq tourism experiences and activities.
- Showcasing our region's Acadian culture, seafaring heritage, UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and Starlight designation and experiences.
- Strengthening seasonal tourism to enhance fall and winter visitation, including events and cruise ship visits.

Optimizing Partnerships for Maximum Impact

- Maximizing partner dollars and co-marketing investment with Bay Ferries, Tourism Nova Scotia, and other key stakeholders.
- Managing visitor engagement through the CAT and Fundy Rose Ferries visitor information centers.
- Increasing presence at consumer travel shows and industry events to attract high-value visitors.

HR and Business Training

- In partnership with TIANS, YASTA will deliver targeted industry training and tools to support our local tourism businesses.

Measuring Success with Data-Driven Insights

- Tracking key performance metrics, including room nights sold, revenue, ADR, digital engagement, media exposure, and user-generated content.
- Assessing visitor sentiment and economic impact through market research.
- Reporting back to our partners on the measurable impact of our initiatives.



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Leveraging Additional Funding through ACOA

YASTA has applied for an ACOA project to expand our strategic initiatives.

This project (if awarded) will enable YASTA to:

- Leverage Halifax's Cruise Canada New England Symposium (CCNE) 2025 to increase exposure and consideration of Yarmouth & Acadian Shores with key cruise lines operating in the region.
- Enhance Google Mapping content to improve the visibility and accessibility of local trails, streets, businesses, and attractions.
- Commission a five-year strategic plan to ensure a sustainable, long-term vision for tourism growth in Yarmouth & Acadian Shores.

Your continued investment will enable YASTA to execute key destination marketing and management strategies that benefit our region. Your funding allows YASTA to leverage additional investments, ensuring that a large portion of the core funding is multiplied through strategic partnerships and co-marketing efforts.

However, to sustain YASTA's effective track record and future growth, we must address the current financial challenges posed by low levy collection rates and the reliance on our reserves.

We appreciate your ongoing support and commitment to the success of our tourism industry.

Sincerely

Neil MacKenzie
CEO - YASTA

Councillor Phil Mooney
Municipality of the
District of Yarmouth
Chair of YASTA

Councillor Darryl LeBlanc
Municipality of the
District of Argyle
Vice-Chair

Councillor Wade Cleveland
Town of Yarmouth
Past Chair/Council Rep

YASTA is a proud member of:





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Relevant Reports

- [YASTA Year End Report 2024](#)
- [Joint Council Presentation - Nov 2024](#)
- [PROGRESS REPORT Economic Impact Study of the Yarmouth-Maine Ferry 2024](#)
- [Nova Scotia Tourism Accommodation Statistics Jan. - Oct. 2024](#)
- [Summer Fall Marketing Campaign Report 2024](#)
- [Influencer Campaign Report 2024](#)
- [Destination Promotion. A Catalyst for Community Vitality 2024](#)
- [Visitor Exit Survey - Visitors Who Used the Maine - Nova Scotia Ferry 2022/23](#)
- [Driving Destination Competitiveness - Accommodation Levy for Yarmouth County 2023](#)
- [Canadian Destination Leadership Council - The Importance of Visitor-Based Assessments on the Canadian Economy 2023](#)
- [YASTA Enhancing Winter/Shoulder Season Tourism in YAS: 3-year Strategy 2021](#)
- [YAS Tourism Destination Management Plan 2018](#)