

The Travel Industry Council of Ontario (TICO) is a self-managed, not-for-profit corporation, responsible for administration and enforcement of the Ontario *Travel Industry Act, 2002* and Ontario Regulation 26/05 on behalf of the Ontario government. The legislation governs all of the approximately 2,400 travel retailers and travel wholesalers registered in Ontario. In addition, TICO administers an industry-financed Travel Compensation Fund.

TICO was established in 1997 as a delegated administrative authority under the *Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act*, as a result of the mutual desire of the government and the travel industry to enhance professionalism, increase consumer protection and provide an effective and efficient regulatory body. The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services continues to be responsible for the Ontario *Travel Industry Act, 2002* and Ontario Regulation 26/05 as well as general oversight of TICO.

TICO is a wholly financed by registration fees paid by Ontario travel agencies and travel wholesalers. The Travel Industry Compensation Fund is financed entirely by Ontario travel industry registrants through contributions based on their sales revenues.

TICO has its own Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer and manages its own financial and operational affairs. The CEO is also Registrar of the *Travel Industry Act, 2002*. TICO's 11-member Board of Directors consists of 7 industry representatives and four ministerial appointees.

Mission and Mandate

The Travel Industry Council of Ontario's mission is to regulate consumer protection by promoting awareness, education and compliance as part of the efficient and effective regulation of Ontario's travel industry. We also support the mission of the Ontario Ministry of Government and Consumer Services to maintain a fair, safe and informed marketplace as it relates to Ontario's *Travel Industry Act, 2002*.

We accomplish this through developing high standards and efficient, effective and relevant regulatory mechanisms in areas such as:

- Consumer protection.
- Consumer education and awareness.
- Registration, inspection, supervision and discipline of registrants.
- Investigating and facilitating disputes between consumers and registrants.

TICO has set up programs to support our mandate that aim to promote fair and ethical competition in the industry, support a Code of Ethics, maintain and enforce programs that provide for consumer compensation in specific circumstances, promote an expected level of education as a criterion for registration and encourage legislative and regulatory amendments aimed at industry professionalism and consumer confidence.

In carrying out its mandate and initiatives, TICO works with stakeholder groups, including:

Consumers -- to increase awareness of their rights and responsibilities under the *Ontario Travel Industry Act, 2002*.

Registrants and industry associations -- to harness their knowledge and commitment to ethical and open competition.

Government - which has delegated to TICO the responsibility for administering the *Ontario Travel Industry Act, 2002* and which holds TICO accountable for supporting its mandate of a fair, safe and informed marketplace.

Services Delegated To TICO

Registration

- Processing new applications - ensuring criteria and standards are met.
- Processing registration renewals - ensuring criteria and standards continue to be met, for example:
 - financial viability including compliance with financial criteria under the Act and Regulation
 - supervisor / manager qualifications
 - other compliance issues (e.g. advertising standards)
- Registrant inquiries.

Consumer Protection

- Administering the Ontario Travel Industry Compensation Fund.
- Inspections:
 - financial reviews of registrants to minimize risk to consumers
 - checking compliance of registrants with advertising regulations, terms and conditions of registration and disclosure to consumers (e.g. conditions of booking)
- Compliance: employing administrative compliance measures to ensure that registrants correct deficiencies that have been

identified.

- **Investigations:** investigating instances of suspected breaches of the Act which could result in prosecution.
- **Enforcement:** suspensions, proposals to revoke registrations, laying charges under provincial statutes and referrals to criminal authorities
- Consumer inquiries.
- Consumer education.

Complaint Resolution

- Resolving complaints:
 - between consumers and registrants
 - between consumers and TICO
 - between registrants and TICO
- Where complaints have not been resolved, providing information on other options.

Government Liaison

- Working closely with Ministry of Government and Consumer Services for purposes of issues management, regulatory reform and matters of public interest.

Additional Responsibilities

In addition to the delegated responsibilities, TICO intends to increase the following:

- Consumer education and awareness on the benefits of purchasing travel services from Ontario registrants and the inherent risks of dealing with non-registrants.
- Consumer and Registrant awareness with respect to the emergence of electronic commerce as it relates to the travel industry.