

On company letterhead

Date

Ministry of Tourism and Culture
Attn RFEI Coordinator
439 University Ave., 2nd Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1L3

Re: Letter of Support - Regional Tourism Organization - Region 13

I am writing this letter in support of the vision and direction contained in the Expression of Interest to form the Regional Tourism Organization for Region 13 submitted by Rob Skelly, David MacLachlan, and the partner organizations represented by the Northern RTO Working Group, a special working committee of the OTMPC Northern Committee.

Yours truly,

signature

FAX copy to Rob Skelly, 705-671-6767

Northern Tourism Marketing Committee/Northern RTO Working Group

Communiqué # 1 - February 5, 2010

To: Tourism stakeholders, First Nations, Municipalities

ONTARIO'S NEW TOURISM REGIONS

REGION 13 – NORTHERN ONTARIO

In December 2009, the Ontario Ministry of Tourism announced the re-organization of the Province's tourism industry into thirteen distinct regions. A new Regional Tourism Organization (RTO) would be established in each region to coordinate the diverse interests of the tourism industry, and to build and support a competitive tourism region through marketing and destination management. The Province is showing its commitment to the tourism industry by investing \$65 million to fund these regions in each of the next two years.

Deputy Minister Drew Fagan recently circulated a letter inviting interested parties to submit an expression of interest in forming one of the new RTO's by March 1, 2010. The purpose of this communiqué is to advise that the Northern Tourism Marketing Committee has created a Northern RTO Working Group to respond to this invitation for Region 13. Information about the new region boundaries and RTO's is available at www.ontario.ca/tourismregions

Region 13 includes most of Northern Ontario. However, the District of Parry Sound and part of the District of Nipissing are in Region 12 along with Muskoka. Region 13 has three sub-regions (Northeast, North Central and Northwest) to recognize the distinct travel and marketing corridors, but it will be managed by a single pan-Northern Ontario RTO.

The Northern RTO Working Group is made up of people representing tourism businesses, cities, travel and tourism sector associations. They are working on a proposal to create an organization which will represent the collective interests of Northern Ontario's tourism industry and continue the implementation of the new Northern Ontario Tourism Marketing Strategy. Information on this strategy is available at www.connection-north.ca

The Northern RTO Working Group is receiving government staff support from the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation, FedNor, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines & Forests.

The cities and tourism organizations represented in the working group include: in the Northeast, Ontario's Near North, the City of North Bay, Ontario's Rainbow Country, the City of Greater Sudbury, Ontario's Wilderness Region and the City of Timmins; in the North Central region, Ontario's Algoma Country and the City of Sault Ste. Marie; and in the Northwest, North of Superior Tourism, the City of Thunder Bay, Ontario's Sunset Country and the City of Kenora. In addition the following sector organizations that play a major role in the North's tourism industry are also participating: Great Spirit Circle Trail, Direction Ontario, Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario, and the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs. All these organizations have come together to discuss and express their collective interest in establishing a new not for profit tourism organization to effectively manage the tourism interests in Region 13, Northern Ontario.

The Northern RTO Working Group has been established by the Northern Tourism Marketing Committee with a cross-section of representation including tourism operators, regional and urban tourism organizations, and sector groups, based on the three sub-regions to build a model which will address the various concerns and interests of the North's tourism industry. This group will be meeting over the next several weeks to prepare a submission to the Ministry of Tourism with the understanding the Ministry of Tourism will look most favourably upon expressions of interest supported by multiple organizations.

Once the proposal is accepted, the working group will then proceed to further structure the Northern RTO, to develop a long-term business plan and strategy, to be ready to accept provincial funding as early as April 1st, 2010 and prior to the July 1st implementation of harmonized sales tax.

For more information, contact Rob Skelly (rob.skelly@sudbury.ca, 705-674-4455 ext 4668) or David MacLachlan (david@northtoadventure.com, 705-759-8577)

Please complete questions C. 12 to C. 21 to describe the future RTO. Responses should be provided only once, by the group of organizations, and reflect the group's thinking and approach to establishing the RTO.

C.12 Below please outline your vision for the organization and the key areas you will focus on. Also, outline the skills, experience and expertise the sponsor and partnership organization(s) have that will contribute to an effective RTO.

Vision:

A Northern Ontario RTO will build a competitive and sustainable tourism industry in Region 13 that maximizes the Region's potential to successfully attract visitors and grow spending and achieve the goals and objectives of "Discovering Ontario, a report on the future of tourism" and the Northern Tourism Marketing Strategy. This will be achieved through the development of a single RTO organization that will coordinate, align and invest in sub regional Marketing programs and pan northern Management functions.

Key areas of focus:

Marketing - support established organizations in the 3 identified sub regions to develop and deliver marketing programs that align and cascade without duplicating as envisioned by the Northern Tourism Marketing Strategy announced by Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Monique Smith in January 2009. The RTO will build on successful destination brand identities and organizations (municipal, sectoral and regional) to build cooperative, partnered programs that address regional market priorities and realities. It is envisioned that the RTO will not undertake marketing initiatives, rather it will act to coordinate the efforts of the 3 sub regions and the OTMPC Northern Office.

Management - lead the development of a Northern Product Development and Investment Strategy to address appropriate roles and functions. This will guide the development of destination management programs, including product development, workforce training, investment attraction in partnership with Industry stakeholders, organizations and relevant government ministries and agencies

Co-operation – Building on the Northern Strategy, the Northern RTO will coordinate Marketing and Management efforts with OTMPC / Northern Office , MTOUR, MNM and Industry Canada FedNor. A Northern RTO will develop partnerships and communications with other regions, specifically Region 12, and others as opportunities arise.

Accountability: The Northern RTO will accept the responsibility of a transfer agency and the required reporting and accountability identified through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Province of Ontario. The RTO will facilitate the processing of any DMF adjustment program applicable to Region 13 as identified and directed by the province of Ontario.

Governance: It is envisioned that the Northern RTO will be guided by a representative board of directors from the three sub regions and sector organizations.

Upon acceptance of this REFI, the Northern Committee and the Northern RTO Working Group will develop a detailed business structure and business plan in a two day meeting planned for April 2010. This process will lead to the establishment of a new Not for Profit Corporation to operate and manage the Northern RTO.

Skills, experience and expertise partners will contribute to an effective RTO:

The Northern Committee of OTMPC initiated a working group of the industry from Sectoral, Municipal and regional travel associations to guide the development of a single RTO for Northern Ontario. This working group is comprised of 5 representatives from each sub region, 4 sector / experience based organizations and staff support from provincial and federal ministries.

This group provides a broad range of skills and experiences that will support the successful development and operation of the Northern RTO. These skill sets include:

- Marketing expertise
- In depth Market and Consumer Knowledge
- Board and organizational management
- Industry and Stakeholder trust
- Business Management skills and capacity
- Existing network of regions and municipal tourism organizations
- Communication