



POSITIONS ON PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL ISSUES

2010

This booklet contains the final approved version of all resolutions adopted by the voting members of the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce (NOACC) at the N.O.A.C.C 74th Annual General Meeting in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

The 2009 policies, approved at the 2008 Annual General Meeting in Kenora, are in effect for two years, and are also included.

The resolutions were drafted originally by individual Chambers and Corporate members throughout Northwestern Ontario. In accordance with the By-laws, a majority of the votes cast from member Chambers are necessary to approve each resolution.

The Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce is registered as a provincial lobby organization. (Registration #: OLOO26-19990921094644-0)

Questions pertaining to these policy positions should be directed to the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce at:

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NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO ASSOCIATED CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE (NOACC)

ONTARIO TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTRE

BACKGROUND:

The Ontario Travel Information Centre (OTIC) was established to provide information to travelers into Canada destined for locations throughout Northwestern Ontario.

Businesses and municipalities across Northwestern Ontario benefit from effective delivery of services at the OTIC.

Tourism and easy access to travel information at the Fort Frances OTIC is vital to value-added tourism in Northwestern Ontario.

In 2001, the Fort Frances Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (now Canada Border Services) Inspection Facility was relocated to its current site at 101 Church Street.

ISSUE:

The flow of traffic from the international bridge through the new inspection facility bypasses the Fort Frances Ontario Travel Information Centre. This has had an adverse affect on the number of visitors to the OTIC, which in turn has impacted business and opportunities for value-added tourism throughout Northwestern Ontario.

Numerous statistical studies have been conducted over the past years since the new inspection facility commenced operation in 2001, all showing a considerable and alarming drop in number of visitors to the Centre. In 2000, 123,182 travelers visited the OTIC compared to only 27,816 in 2008.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Government of Ontario, through its Ministry of Tourism and the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation, take a lead role in the investigation and identification of all issues regarding the ease of access to the Fort Frances Ontario Travel Information Centre to help facilitate the effective delivery of the OTIC's services to the benefit of all businesses and municipalities in Northwestern Ontario.

NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO ASSOCIATED CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE (NOACC)

SAFETY OF NORTHERN ONTARIO HIGHWAYS

Background:

Northern Ontario serves as a major artery for the Trans-Canada Highway serving the local population, summer residents, tourists and the transport industry. This stretch of highway has claimed a number of lives, many of which need not have been lost if improvements were made to this stretch of highway.

Much of the highway is two-laned, has a great number of areas with poor visibility, narrow clearances, and marginal passing lanes. These deficiencies have contributed to the loss of lives due to motor vehicle accidents. While not all accidents are preventable, it is a certainty that improved conditions on this stretchy of the Trans Canada Highway would greatly reduce the rate of motor vehicles accidents.

Issue:

There is a need to improve the road conditions along Northern Ontario Highways, particularly those in Northwestern Ontario to reduce the fatalities. While it is not envisioned that such improvements will completely eliminate motor vehicle accidents, it is believed that improvements to correct the deficiencies would greatly enhance the safety of persons utilizing this major corridor of the Trans-Canada highway.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Government of Ontario commit to:

1. Four-laning of Highways 11/17 (Trans Canada) in Northern Ontario;
2. Redirect, where necessary, routes of the highway in order to improve driver visibility;
3. Erect signs in areas that have high accident rates;
4. Establish rest stops along the highway with appropriate signage indicating the upcoming stops coupled with signage already in place about not driving tired.

NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO ASSOCIATED CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

RETENTION OF SUNSET COUNTRY TRAVEL AREA

BACKGROUND:

In February 2009, the Government of Ontario released an Ontario Tourism Competitiveness Study entitled Discovering Ontario: A Report on the Future of Tourism detailing four broad strategic proposals and 20 specific recommendations meant to see Ontario reach its potential as one of the world's preferred places to visit and double tourism receipts by 2020.

One of the recommendations identified in the report is for Ontario to establish tourism regions to better co-ordinate tourism marketing and management across the province so each region can work towards creating a unique brand and a stellar experience within a provincial brand.

As a result, the current travel regions throughout Ontario would be altered, reducing the number to eleven. Nine of the proposed regions would be located in southern Ontario while the current Sunset Country Travel Association region would become part of a region known as Superior North—encompassing everything from Sault Ste. Marie to the Manitoba border. Currently, Sunset Country encompasses everything west of Thunder Bay to the Manitoba border, covering 100,000 square kilometers.

ISSUE:

The proposed Superior North marketing region 11 will disadvantage the tourism industry in the current Sunset Country region.

The area has been branded Sunset Country since 1974 and is a valuable marketing tool for the area. The regional Sunset Country brand is well-known and often used as part of area business names and product endorsements, for example Sunset Country Ford, Sunset Country Metis, "Sunset Country Knows Real Cola Taste" billboards by Coca Cola Corporation and "Sunset Country's Best Coffee" by Tim Horton's.

Sunset Country is a truly unique travel destination; visitor spending is vastly different than that of the other three proposed amalgamated regions.

- 43% of all tourism in Northern Ontario is generated in Northwestern Ontario with 66% of that generated in the Sunset Country Travel region.
- Close to 60% of the customer base in Northwestern Ontario comes from the United States; a different market than that of the rest of Ontario.
- American visitors to the area contribute 81% of all tourism expenditures.
- Sunset Country generated \$451 million in economic activity, supports directly and indirectly 12, 235 full-year jobs, pays out wages and salaries in excess of \$393 million and contributes \$185 million in federal, provincial and municipal taxes.

The report further suggests that each region institute a destination marketing fee with all funds flowing directly to the new Destination Marketing and Management Organization (DMMO) for each region. All monies collected in the current Sunset Country region would then be controlled by the DMMO, but given the different customer bases, marketing efforts would have little to no effect in our area.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Government of Ontario, through its Ministry of Tourism, evaluate the repercussions to Northwestern Ontario, specifically the Districts of Kenora and Rainy River, with the newly proposed travel region boundaries outlined in the Discovering Ontario: A Report on the Future of Tourism;
and furthermore, that a twelfth region be added or retained as a tourism area that matches the boundaries of the current Sunset Country Travel Area.