

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.

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