

Information Byway



NORTH WESTERN ONTARIO

TOURISM ASSOCIATION

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MESSAGE FROM THE NWOTA PRESIDENT

I have just reviewed the membership list for the last few years! One thing jumped out, a few are donating time and money towards NWOTA's work for the benefit of everyone in the tourism industry and many are not. I was surprised to see some of you who complained the loudest at our meetings are not even members. That must change. We do not stand a chance of changing any of these issues if we are not all working together. You will be hearing from NWOTA and I would encourage you to join and if unable to be active become a part of the NWOTA stewardship Circle.

Over the last few years NWOTA has been active and working on many issues relevant to tourism and your businesses. The list below are just few things we have worked on:

1. Building a better understanding of the economic impact of tourism in our region. NWOTA coordinated this effort with including a Tourism Economic Impact Study in 2001. Over \$90,000.
2. Communicating with Government of Canada, Province of Ontario and stakeholders about the inconsistent of minor criminal charges, potatoes, dog food and fire wood etc. at the Fort Frances/Rainy River POE as compared to other POE's across Canada. Many thousands of dollars and much time.
3. Successfully participated with other partners to convince the Government to rescind the Removal of the GST rebate for non-resident visitors. Many hours.
4. Worked with other groups on the Border dispute with Minnesota resort owners over access to fishing rights.
5. Lobbied against US Passport issue requirements. Many hours including a donated trip to Washington.
6. Raised awareness of the lack of government marketing efforts for NW Ontario. Donated time and \$.
7. Planning a strategic planning session for the tourism industry in NW Ontario.
8. Worked with MTR to create a survey at 6 of the National Marine Manufacturing Association (NMMA) sports shows to determine visitor attitude about visiting Northwestern Ontario.
9. Develop a marketing strategy for NW Ontario. Working together with KDCA, NWOTA has formed a new corporation that will raise money with the mandate to market NW Ontario as a destination.

NWOTA has made progress in quite a few areas but we would not have been as successful if we hadn't partnered with other like-minded organizations such as KDCA who donated both manpower and money.

Issues in Northwestern Ontario are not taken seriously federally or provincially, especially tourism issues. It is becoming increasingly important to form partnerships with other Northwestern Ontario business interests like KDCA, NOMA and NOACC in order for a stronger voice to be heard. This will be one of NWOTA's top priorities.

The more progress we make on these issues the more we spend and the more money we need to keep the effort going. We need consultants, lobbyists and expertise that we just can't get without spending money.

NWOTA Stewardship Circle has been designed to give those that are unable to spend time or effort on NWOTA issues the chance to participate by donating money as a way to help.

The **NWOTA Stewardship Circle** is a strategy to raise money for the organization to bring maximum impact to the important issues we are facing in NW Ontario. In return for your financial support, you will receive recognition on the NWOTA web site and in the NWOTA By-Way in a special NWOTA Stewardship Circle section.

If you are unable to donate time and effort to NWOTA, then please consider joining the **NWOTA Stewardship Circle**.

Full information is available on the NWOTA web site. www.nwota.com.

2007 Meeting Dates

MARK THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR

Dates & locations are tentative;

Please check the NWOTA website or call the office for updates

NEXT MEETING: September 6, Nestor Falls, ON

Annual Fall Meeting, October, date & location TBA

November 1, Emo Inn, Emo, ON

December 7. Emo Inn. Emo. ON

BORDER UPDATE

On April 11 a meeting was called to discuss the border problem. A number of very frustrated operators attended along with Mr. Ken Boshcoff and CBSA.

As a result of this meeting Mr. Ken Boshcoff called a meeting with the Outdoor and Border Caucus in Ottawa on May 17.

KDCA/NWOTA called on Bud Dickson to present 5 recommendations at that meeting:

1. CBSA implement standardized enforcement across Canada.
2. CBSA communicate relevant changes prior to implementation.
3. Canada investigates alternatives to turning back visitors. "If they have done the time they have paid for their crime."
4. CBSA Fort Frances & Rainy River hire qualified people to handle immigration 24/7.
5. Canada investigates alternatives such as: surrendering driver's license, surrendering passport, a bondsman, photograph or fingerprint.

During the meeting on May 17 the Honorable Gerry Ritz, Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism)

expressed an interest in visiting NW Ontario to talk about the border issue. A personal invitation has been extended to him.

NOTO has identified the border as one of the top 5 issues. NOTO has formed a "border committee" made up of Doug R., Dave M., Abby A., Steve H., KDCA, and Peg H., NWOTA. Steve H. is Chairman. They have had their first meeting in July.

As none of the issues previously forwarded to Mr. Boshcoff (according to the MP's staff) could be verified, a release form has been developed for Operators to use to allow the MP's office to investigate our guest's complaints. The release form will give his office the ability to follow up on complaints sent to him from our office.

All members have been sent the form and we would recommend that you add it to your web site along with a recommendation on how and why to fill it out and who to send it to (NWOTA office @ info@nwota.com).

The border will remain NWOTA's number one priority. We will continue to do everything possible to improve conditions.



FORT FRANCES VISITOR CENTRE



With the completion of the new CBSA facility, traffic no longer passes by the Visitor Centre. Visitation to the center dropped by 13.2% as a percentage of those crossing the border. As a comparison with 11 ports evaluated; a few increased, a few stayed the same, and some declined. None showed the decline that Fort Frances had.

There was previously an effort centered in Fort Frances to move the facility but received little government support.

Now there is apparently government interest in moving the Fort Frances visitor center to a location more in line with traffic flow leaving the border area. There is also interest in adding a Welcome to Canada component to the new site. More to follow on this

This is a regional issue. Support should be sought from all tourism destinations in NW Ontario. NWOTA will be working with project leaders to insure visitors have easy access to our travel information and that everyone crossing the US/Canadian border **is welcomed to Northwestern Ontario.**

ANOTHER REASON FOR ONTARIO’S DROP IN US VISITORS.

Northwestern Ontario is very dependent on US visitors, (88% of visitors according to the 2001 Economic Impact Study)

In every government report you read you will see reasons for the decline in US visitors:

- Stronger Canadian dollar / weaker USA Dollar
- Slowing US Economy
- High gas prices
- Passport issue
- Increased border security since 9/11

We believe there are other reasons also. As Fort Frances and Rainy River POE’s have opted to strictly enforce such issues as minor criminal charges, potatoes, dog food and fire wood, it has had a negative impact on visitors to our area.

With the help of Patricia Region Travel Association, KDCA/NWOTA was able to quantify the impact of those turned back since 2002.

- Loss of \$10.7m economic activity
- Loss of \$5.8m in labor
- Loss of 171 jobs
- Loss of \$3.8m direct taxes
- Loss of \$5.6m total taxes

Many indicators, including the Honorable Bob Nault’s comment in 2002 and CBSA’s reluctance to share turn back data, indicate that the POE’s of Fort Frances and Rainy River are truly a hot spot when compared to other POE’s in Canada. Some consider NW Ontario “the Canary in the Coal Mine”. This could spread across Canada to all POE’s in the future.

In May of 2007, KDCA/NWOTA sent a letter to the Honorable Gerry Ritz, Honorable Jim Flaherty, Honorable Stockwell Day, Honorable Jim Bradley and Mr. Ken Boshcoff asking that **one other benchmark be used.**

That benchmark is the **access to the NCIC FBI data base** by CBSA in early 2001!



IMPROVING TOURISM GROWTH AND ECONOMY IN NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

Dr. Rosehart has been appointed Northwestern Ontario Economic Facilitator by the McGuinty Government. He has been asked to identify ways to improve growth and the economy of Northwestern Ontario.

He has been meeting with various people and groups in Northwestern Ontario and will be filing a report later this year.

KDCA/NWOTA has asked Dr. Rosehart for a meeting and it is scheduled for August 24th in Dryden.

Working with other NW Ontario tourism entities we have identified three issues:

1. Help with the border issue
2. Increase government marketing support for NW Ontario
3. Improvements in public travel infrastructure in NW Ontario
4. Provincial support for upgrades and modernization for NW Ontario tourism businesses

Please forward any comments you might have to the NWOTA office.

NORTHWEST ONTARIO STATISTICS

1. NWO* has **60%** of **US overnight visitors** to Northern Ontario.
(West of Thunder Bay** has **78%** of NWO's US overnight visitors.)
2. NWO has **70%** of **US overnight visitor spending** of Northern Ontario.
(West of Thunder Bay has **88%** of NWO US visitor spending)
(Question! *With the numbers listed above, is NWO getting its fair share of marketing support from the province, especially knowing individually our industry spends millions promoting our businesses (\$11.3 Million in 2001***)?*
3. NWO has **56%** of the **outfitter accommodations** of Northern Ontario.
(West of Thunder Bay has **83%** of NWO outfitter accommodations)
4. NWO has **45%** of the **accommodations** of Northern Ontario.
(West of Thunder Bay has **69%** of NWO's accommodations)
(Question! *With a majority of tourism values and assets for Northern Ontario located in Northwestern Ontario, and as important as tourism is to NW Ontario, why are all the organizations that supposedly look out for Northern Ontario tourism interests located or headquartered east of NW Ontario?*
5. Northwestern Ontario (NWO) generates **41%** of Northern Ontario's **visitor spending**.
(West of Thunder Bay represents **66%** of NWO's visitor spending)
6. Tourism spending per capita in NWO is 1.1 times that of Northern Ontario.
(Tourism spending pre capita West of Thunder Bay is 2.0 times that of Northern Ontario and 2.5 times that of Ontario)
(Question! *Why do politicians consider Thunder Bay as Northwestern Ontario? A majority of all tourism values in NW Ontario are west of Thunder Bay. When will politicians start paying respect to the rest of the tourism industry in NW Ontario by stopping in once and a while to say hi?)*

Recommendation! NW Ontario is a unique tourism area and destination. Managing the marketing needs of NW Ontario from anywhere other than NW Ontario makes no sense. OTMPC should have a Northwestern Ontario committee splitting the responsibility of the Northern Committee.

* Northwestern Ontario is Travel Region 12 or everything west White River.

** CD 59-60 or basically Sunset Country.

*** Tourism economic impact study 2001.

web site

2004 data from MTR research

Information Byway – August 2007

GST REBATE

The latest Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) release was good news. It is business as usual for NWOTA members who rebate GST to their guests directly on their invoices.

Credit should be given where credit is due.

When we (NWOTA) heard about the elimination of the GST, we reacted immediately. The reason given was “only a small percentage of the industry was applying for rebate thru the rebate centre”. NWOTA was able to show Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), through Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC), how our industry was rebating guests on the invoice and why CRA was not aware of this because it was buried in the GST reporting system.

TIAC deserves a lot of credit as they worked with NWOTA in the beginning to clearly document the issue. They then lobbied Ottawa hard on several occasions not only for big tour operators and large motel industry but resource based tourism operators like you and me as well. While TIAC felt the response to the on-line petition was less than they expected, it was effective.

Everyone who responded to TIAC's on-line petition should feel a little better with this news. A big thank you goes out to everyone that pulled together on this issue.

Hats off to TIAC and the work they did on our behalf.

NWOTA/KDCA Whitetail Deer Committee

The NWOTA/KDCA Whitetail Deer Committee sent two representatives to the Ontario Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission luncheon meeting in Kenora on June 4th, this group is a ten member appointed committee that makes recommendations to the Minister of Natural Resources concerning the promotion of new opportunities for, and public participation in hunting, fishing, fish and wildlife viewing and appreciation.

With an expanding deer herd and concerns from a variety of groups and areas in Northwestern Ontario both NWOTA/KDCA and OFAH were invited to share their concerns with regard to the deer hunt.

It was pointed out to the commission that all districts (Kenora, Dryden and Fort Frances) have seen dramatic increases in hunter numbers over the past several years, the largest increase being non-resident hunters. While many felt this was great news it was also pointed out that much of the revenue from this growth is not going through the tourist industry and as there are few regulations to govern these hunters or even deer outfitters there are a host of problems associated with this

dramatic growth. The concerns expressed to the commission were similar from both NWOTA/KDCA and OFAH and included increased competition for areas by non-residents, residents, outfitters, guides etc, is causing dissatisfaction with the hunt in all districts, low end and no guide hunts compound the issue, no reporting game or area hunted leads to no information for deer management, dog hunts disturbing large areas and expanding, individuals buying up private land and going into business, under funded MNR enforcement, under the table operators from Canada and the U.S. dodging taxes etc. The list was long the time was short, all agreed to continue dialogue on the subject.

It was noted that presently Ontario's deer herd is world class and while there is not a sustainability issue overall there may be areas that are seeing effects of too many mature bucks being harvested. Both the tourist industry and resident hunters are very important to the economy of Northwestern Ontario and there must be a balance keeping in mind that the sustainability of this resource is the top priority.

Information Byway – August 2007

DESTINATION MARKETING UPDATE

One of the most important programs for tourism in Northwestern Ontario, along with the promotion of its tourism values, is the Northwestern Ontario Destination Marketing Association!

“Destination Marketing Fees”, (DMF) is a concept that is used in many other parts of North America to raise marketing money. Each one of us is competing with these destinations for tourism dollars.

DMF is a program that adds a modest fee, a percentage of the guest’s accommodations, to the guest’s bill. Other tourism businesses will have a set fee instead. Those fees that are collected will be spent on marketing Northwestern Ontario.

Northwestern Ontario Destination Marketing Association (NODMA) is up and running!

- We have a web site with information for the public, and restricted information for NODMA members.
www.nwontdestination.com.
- A board of directors has been elected from those participating.
- We are incorporated.

- Steering committee met weekly over the winter.
- Board is meeting semi-weekly since May.
- We are planning a strategic planning session for next month, to help develop a 5 year marketing strategy. All business in NW Ontario with tourism values will be invited.
- We will be holding community meetings throughout Northwestern Ontario to talk about the benefit of joining our effort.

As of the week of July 23, all of our start-up funding sources were in place and we will begin our next phase of recruitment and planning of the marketing strategy for 2008.

Member information is kept confidential. All members’ financial information is private and all internal reporting is shown as a total for all members only. No individual data is available to anyone except the Chartered Accountant.

Information and sign-up forms are on the web site. Please call Cindy at (807) 488-5514 if you need further information or help with the sign-up forms.

UPDATE ON NOMA AND COMMON VOICE

NWOTA contacted Mayor Anne Krassilowsky to see if we could sit down and talk about the tourism portion of Common Voice. As Iain Angus was coordinating this effort, the mayor directed us to him.

This is an update from Iain Angus, NOMA coordinator for Common Voice.

“Common Voice, as structured, does not have any of the traditional economic sectors represented (ie tourism, agriculture, forestry or manufacturing, or even transportation). Business as a broad group through NOACC has two seats. We are assuming that NOACC will choose people who can wear many hats based on their backgrounds to appoint to the Common Voice.

In addition the various Task Forces will have the ability to provide direct input to the Common Voice board on issues that they have identified as crucial to their sector with recommendations as to how they want the Common Voice to proceed.

Finally, there is provision for the Common Voice Board to add temporary members to the Board to provide ongoing expertise during a critical period (say 2 years) when there is a major campaign underway or contemplated. An example would be the current Ontario Forestry Coalition which could have a member at the table for a couple of years.”

*Iain Angus
Councilor at Large
City of Thunder Bay*

We will be meeting with Iain next week to talk about how tourism and NOMA can work together to improve tourism growth and the tourism economy in Northwestern Ontario through Common Voice.

A copy of the document from NOMA “Common Voice” can be found on the NWOTA web site, www.nwota.com.

Information Byway – August 2007

OTMPC UPDATE

From 1990 to 2000 there was a steady (19.7% overall) increase in long stay (2+ nights) visitors to NW Ontario. Between 2001 and 2006 there has been a drop of 9%.

There are many factors causing this, one issue is the lack of provincial support for marketing NW Ontario as a destination.

KDCA/NWOTA called a meeting in Thunder Bay on December 20th 2005 to point this out. All involved in tourism were invited and most were present or connected by phone.

KDCA/NWOTA made another presentation at an OTMPC meeting in Kenora on September 6 of 2006.

Two issues were presented at both meetings:

- a. The lack of destination marketing for NW Ontario
- b. The only marketing option OTMPC has available for NW Ontario is partnership buy-ins (OTMPC will spend \$100 if we spend \$100). Our position was that tourism in Sunset Country already spends millions to market our individual businesses (\$11.3 million TEIS¹ 2001). Ontario is also being outspent by many other destinations, including other countries, for our marketing area in mid western USA.

On June 20th Chris Milner, Director of Northern Partnerships OTMPC, invited Gerry Cariou, Mike Bilsbarrow, Harald Lohn, Jerry Fisher, Frank Bastone and Jim Grayston to a meeting to discuss a new Northwestern Ontario marketing strategy.

The objectives were as follows:

1. Primary Focus, **Northwestern Ontario**.
2. Consumer Focused.
3. Engagement. Program developed in partnership.
4. Drive awareness of Ontario Canada.
5. Long term project. (Not just a flash in the pan)
6. Tracking.

The overall objective was to build awareness and interest in a major Mid-West community like Chicago or Minneapolis. The theme would be “**Ontario, Canada’s Great Outdoors**”. The plan is to spend \$1 million in that selected market. The money would come from Fed Nor, NOHFC and OTMPC. **It would not be predicated on partnership buy-in.**

The plan will be developed over the next few months with the marketing effort scheduled to start October/November. This is a major improvement in marketing NW Ontario as a destination.

The meeting recap is available on the NWOTA web site.

¹ Tourism Economic Impact Study

AULNEAU ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Bob and Peg Hunger, NWOTA’s representatives on the Aulneau Advisory Committee, attended the May 31st meeting. The committee met at the Whitefish Bay Camp landing and boated to the Turtle Portage for a review of the facility. MRN is removing itself from all boat transfer locations and is going to submit a series of proposals on the Turtle Portage to the committee for review, possibly by the fall meeting. The committee is determined to provide recommendations resulting in a user friendly facility.

The second part of the meeting was an update on AKRC’s work on forestry, native values and traditional uses on the Aulneau. Jaunita Jordian is heading up the effort with First Nations. Although moving slowly, the consultations and information process is resulting in better understanding of the proposed harvest.

Information Byway – August 2007

REQUIREMENTS FOR FOREIGN RECREATIONAL BOATERS IN CANADIAN WATERS

Information taken from the Office of Boating Safety

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/BoatingSafety/facts/foreign.htm>

Operator Competency Requirements

All operators of pleasure craft fitted with a motor must have proof of Competency and proof of age on board at all times. **As of September 15, 2009, all operators will be required to have proof of competency.**

How the Regulations Apply to Non-Residents

- If a Non-Resident operates their pleasure craft in Canadian waters for more than 45 consecutive days or,
- If they operate a pleasure craft that is licensed or registered in Canada (including rented or chartered boats).
- The Regulations do not apply to Non-Residents who operate their own pleasure craft in Canadian waters for less than 45 consecutive days.

Currently (2002 – 2009) if you were born after April 1, 1983 **or** operate a motorized vessel under 13' long; you will need proof of competency.

Acceptable Proof of Competency for Non-Residents

Non-Residents must have one of the three forms for proof of competency:

1. A Canadian-issued pleasure craft operator card.
2. A completed boat rental safety check-list (for power-driven rental boats).
3. An operator card or equivalent which meets the requirements of their state or country.

NOTE:

Guests will be required to have both **proof of residence** and **proof of competency** on board when operating a boat.

We have tried our best to interpret the regulation. For more information, consult the *Competency of Operators of Pleasure Craft Regulations* available at the website at the top of the page.

Age – Horsepower Restrictions

Operators under the age of 16 are prohibited from operating recreational vessels above specified horsepower limits:

- Children under the age of 12 and not directly supervised by someone 16 years of age or older can operate a recreational vessel **with no more than 10 hp (7.5 KW).**
- Youth between the ages of 12 and 16 years of age and not directly supervised by someone 16 years of age or older can operate a recreational vessel **with no more than 40 hp (30 KW).**

- Only persons 16 years of age or older can operate a personal watercraft (PWC) regardless of supervision.

These restrictions apply to all operators of pleasure craft in Canadian waters both Resident & Non-Resident.

Safety Equipment Requirements

Foreign pleasure craft (pleasure craft that are licensed or registered in another Country other than Canada) need to comply with equipment requirements of the Country in which the vessel is usually kept.

If you are not a Canadian Resident and are using a pleasure craft licensed or registered in Canada, all of the required safety equipment must meet Canadian safety requirements. However, you may opt to bring your own PFD for your own personal use.

Only the devices marked with one of the following are approved for use in Canada:

- "Approved by Department of Transport Canada" or
- "Approved by Canadian Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans"

The following exception is for Non-Residents:

Non-Residents may bring aboard the pleasure craft a wearable PFD or lifejacket of appropriate size that the person has brought into Canada for the person's use during their stay and that conforms to the laws of the country in which they are a resident.

For specific regulations to the type and size of boat visit,

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/BoatingSafety/equipment.htm>



Information Byway – August 2007

KDCA/NWOTA INTENTION SURVEY

We have worked with MTR to develop a non biasing survey that will give us incite into visitor attitude about visiting NW Ontario.

The objective of the survey is to get a better understanding of why long stay visitors have not increased over the last 35 years, even though the tourism industry spends millions (\$11.3 in 2001) marketing our individual businesses.

KDCA/NWOTA, working with the National Marine Manufacture Association (NMMA), will be conducting a survey. The survey will be on a screen in a kiosk at the entrance of these 7 mid-west sports shows:

- Kansas City January 9-13
- Nashville January 9-13
- Louisville January 26 – February 3
- St Louis February 6 - 10
- Des Moines February 21-24
- Schaumburg February 14-17
- Northwest (Minn.) April 2-6

We are looking for members that are willing to donate a trip for this effort. We would like to have one trip to give away at each of the six shows. Please call Cindy at the NWOTA office if you can help.

We will be looking at other alternatives for understanding visitor intentions.

The Survey can be viewed on the NWOTA web site.

2007 ALLIED NWOTA MEMBERS

All Canada Shows, Bay Lakes Marketing
Blattner Prop & Skeg Repair
Border Bob's
Business Development Bank of Canada
Dryden GM
Falls Hardware Ltd.
Fort Frances General Supply
Fort Frances Times Ltd.
Green's Countrywide Furniture
Meyers Norris Penny
Nestor Falls Marine
Pardon Services Ent. MB
Peter Allison, CMA
Pinewood Sports & Marine
The Standard Insurance Brokers
Tompkins Home Hardware
Town of Rainy River

www.allcanada.com
www.darrenblattner.com
www.borderbobs.com
www.bdc.ca
www.drydenchev.gmcanada.com
www.fallshardware.com
www.ffgeneralsupply.com
www.fftimes.com
www.greencountrywide.com
www.mnp.ca
www.nestorfallsmarine.com
www.bordercrossing.ca
1-807-484-2563
www.pinewoodsports.com
www.thestandardonline.com
www.tompkinshardware.com
www.rainyriver.ca

***Please support the businesses that support the
Tourism Industry in Northwestern Ontario***