



January 16, 2020

Mr. Joe Maure
Forest Sector Strategy - Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
70 Foster Drive, Suite 610
Sault Ste Marie , ON P6A 6V5

Subject: ERO# 019-0880 Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy (Draft)

Dear Mr. Maure,

On behalf of the Resource-Based Tourism Industry, Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario (NOTO) is extremely concerned with the direction presented in the Draft Forest Sector Strategy and subsequently in other related recent postings listed on the ERO.

This draft Forest Sector Strategy outlines the end of the resource-based tourism (RBT) industry. It will see the RBT industry, that relies on the natural environment wither and fade. This strategy lists the RBT industry as nothing more than a stakeholder when in fact it is one of the largest industries in Northern Ontario.

The Northern economy depends on all three industries to remain strong; forestry, tourism and mining. These are the three industries that founded the north and have traditionally supported the northern economy. Tourism being the only truly sustainable industry is often discounted in its importance to the northern economy and it should not be. While the forestry and mining industries have extreme highs and lows the tourism industry has remained constant. Tourism is poised for growth internationally on its own merit with Ontario leading the way. Mining and forestry industries have been heavily subsidized by the Ontario Government over the years, while the resource-based tourism industry remains solely supported by private enterprises that offer our tourism experiences.

Over the next 3 years, 39 forest management plans will be renewed. The potential impact to 1024 tourism businesses and the 9,000 plus associated jobs is staggering. Deep in the heart of these forests lie our lodges, resorts, and remote outpost camps that attract over 1 million visitors annually from all over the world who come to relax, fish, hunt and explore our Northern wilderness. These visitors spend over \$1 billion in Northern Ontario annually. It is important to note that 90% of these revenues remain in the region and are new dollars generated annually on a sustained basis.

Understanding the significant contributions that resource-based tourism makes annually to our northern communities and our Province, we must ensure that our forests, lakes and land base are managed properly to allow this industry to continue to exist and grow for the benefit of all in Ontario.

Over decades of forest management plans in Northern Ontario, our industry has advocated time and time again to ensure the sustainability of the important tourism values that are vital to our sector. We have strived to ensure that the level of remoteness that our guests choose to experience over other destinations around the world remains viable. Current forestry practices and the lack of subregional land use planning which creates non-traditional access to these once remote valued areas is our biggest challenge in this regard.

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There is nothing in this strategy that outlines the importance of working with the tourism industry to ensure its survival. There is room for both industries on the land base but without cooperation and even an acknowledgement that tourism is more than a stakeholder, forestry will eliminate resource-based tourism in the North.

We understand the lessening of burdens, in fact we (tourism industry) can relate, but we need processes in place to resolve the impacts of forestry on the tourism industry. With the elimination of Environmental Assessments, we need the issue resolution process to be made stronger to ensure one industry does not put another industry out of business.

We have great concern for endangered species, moose, bear, deer, and other game and other small furbearing animals that will be displaced or have no habitat as a result of forestry activities. What mechanisms will now be in place to ensure their sustainability? Without the EA process allowing those who live in the north and care for these species to draw attention to their existence, how will they survive? This strategy appears to remove all of the processes that may have a positive impact on protecting those species and their habitats.

In these early stages of the new FMP processes over the last several months we have seen MNRF shy away from supporting existing land use planning designations, we have seen forestry companies pushing forward with plans that include no protections for existing remote tourism businesses, we have seen plans that do not include road use plans for the public. All of this is of great concern not only to the tourism industry but to other remote recreational users on the land base.

We cannot support the utter disregard for the tourism industry and remote recreational users in Northern Ontario through this Draft Forest Sector Strategy. We will make more specific comments on the individual EROs that have been posted as a result of this overall strategy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. Marcil". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laurie Marcil
Executive Director
Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario