



Representing the Districts of Kenora, Rainy River and Thunder Bay

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April 2, 2012

Honourable Michael Chan
Minister of Tourism, Culture & Sport
900 Bay Street, 9th Floor, Hearst Block
Toronto, ON M7A 2E1
via email: michael.chan@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Chan:

As President of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, I am writing on behalf of our 37 member communities to express our extreme frustration regarding the announcement in Budget 2012 of the closure of the Kenora, Rainy River and Fort Frances Travel Centres.

While we understand and support the need for deficit reduction, we question the rationale for closing every gateway centre in the western area of Northwestern Ontario. This decision will leave a busy tourist area completely void of the visitor information centres that are vital to providing visitors with the information they need to extend their stay and increase their spending – both of which are essential principles outlined within the Discovering Ontario report. It is interesting to note that the Fort Frances border crossing recorded a 10.8% increase in people crossing into Ontario this February.

This decision comes on the heels of an earlier decision to reduce the funding to Municipally operated tourist information centres across the North. That resulted in fewer centres being available to assist the travelling public in learning what to see and where to go as they travel through this vast and magnificent land.



We encourage the Minister to delay the closure of the Fort Frances Visitor Centre until the requested meeting has been held between yourself, Mr. Ronald Holgerson of OTMPC, and the sub regional board members of Northern Ontario RTO 13 and Sunset Country and the North of Superior Travel Association. We believe that such a meeting is vital in order to review the impacts of the decision and collaborate on constructive and productive solutions to ensure that visitors to Northwestern Ontario have the information they require to extend and enjoy their time in our great region.

We urge you to reverse this decision to ensure that the Fort Frances, Rainy River and Kenora Travel Centres will be open throughout summer 2012.

Sincerely,



Ron Nelson
President
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- c. Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
- Honourable Rick Bartolucci, Minister of Northern Development & Mines
- Honourable Michael Gravelle, Minister of Natural Resources
- Bill Mauro, MPP, Thunder Bay-Atikokan
- Sarah Campbell, MPP, Kenora-Rainy River
- Gerry Cariou, Sunset Country Tourism
- Paul Pepe, Vice Chair, RTO 13

