



NEWS RELEASE

Tourism Industry's Northern Ontario Border Working Group Applauds Government's Move to Drop Testing Requirement at U.S. Border

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From: NOTO, DNO & TIAO

North Bay, ON – In December 2020, Destination Northern Ontario (DNO), Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario (NOTO) and the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO), formed the Northern Ontario Border Working Group (NOBWG) to represent the tourism industry to work with the public and private sector to address the issues of a restricted United States (U.S.) border due to the pandemic.

The NOBWG continues to meet and liaise with government officials and tourism stakeholders providing advice, offering solutions and supplying market data to assist in the evolution to an unrestricted U.S. border.

The tourism industry has been hit the hardest by the pandemic and in order for the tourism industry to begin full recovery, unnecessary border restrictions on tourists must end.

As a result of prescriptive measures and vaccination efforts, COVID-19 has waned. On February 15, 2022, the Government of Canada announced that "... it is now time to move to a more sustainable approach to long-term management of COVID-19." Specifically, they announced that international travellers were no longer required to provide a negative PCR test and could provide the cheaper and more timely antigen test.

As COVID-19 continues to wane and the provinces eliminate most COVID-19 restrictions, the **NOBWG has urged the Government of Canada to eliminate all COVID-19 testing requirements at the border.**

The announcement today to remove the pre-entry COVID-19 testing will certainly be a boon to the Northern Ontario tourism industry as approximately 1.0 million U.S. visitors spend \$466 million in Northern Ontario annually. This will allow all tourism operators and stakeholders to implement their full marketing plan to recapture and recover lost business.

The NOBWG will continue to work with the Canadian Government to develop plans to remove the random testing for travellers arriving into Canada as well as a plan for unvaccinated travellers to return in the near future. These two pieces remain a barrier to a full recovery of the tourism industry.

Background

Tourism is a key economic driver in Northern Ontario as there were 9.2 million visits to Northern Ontario with tourism receipts totaling \$1.6 billion and supporting 24,000 jobs. There are approximately 1.0 million U.S. visitors to Northern Ontario annually, spending \$466 million. Ninety-one percent of the visitors to Northern Ontario arrive by cars/trucks and use the land border crossings. The industry provides a major source of taxes and international income for the country.

DNO is the regional tourism marketing and development organization to build a strong tourism industry in Northern Ontario by working closely with tourist operators, industry associations, communities and stakeholders by supporting tourism economic development.

NOTO works to enhance the quality, diversity and economic viability of the nature and outdoor tourism industry in Ontario and the optimum use of the resources of Ontario for the long-term social and economic benefits of all.

TIAO works on behalf of their membership to take on pressing policy issues that impact the Ontario tourism industry and leads the way in government relations on behalf of the Ontario tourism industry, including tourism businesses and stakeholders.

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Contacts:

Laurie Marcil, NOTO
1-705-472-5552 ext. 24
laurie@noto.ca

David MacLachlan, DNO
1-705-575-9779
d.maclachlan@destinationnorthernontario.ca

Chris Bloore, TIAO
1-416-906-4045
cbloore@tiaontario.ca