



## For Immediate Release

# NOTO and TIAO applaud Ontario decision waiving Crown resource fees for 2022

**Anishinabek & Cree Traditional Territory (Northern Ontario), March 29, 2022** — Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario (NOTO) and the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) applaud the decision of the Ontario Government to waive 2022 fees for 2022 for hard hit resource-based tourism operators.

There are over 1,000 seasonal lodges, resorts and campgrounds across Northern Ontario that are struggling to survive the economic fallout of this unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. These businesses cater to anglers, hunters, outdoor recreationists from Canada and the United States, but also all over the world, providing good jobs and prosperity for many communities in the North.

These businesses and their guests contribute over \$400 million in GDP which is retained in Northern Ontario during a 4 to 5-month operating season. The remote sector which includes fly-in and train-in experiences, have been particularly impacted. They operate on crown land and must pay annual fees for land use permits. Bear outfitters also pay annually for resource access, and bait harvesters pay annual fees to harvest baitfish to supply our angling market.

Owner of Garson's Fly-in Outposts and President of NOTO said, "The waiving of these fees once again is one of the more important actions this Government has done to aid remote tourism businesses. The 24 months of little income that we have been able to earn goes to paying the many bills that did not stop. By the waiving these fees, we have been able to concentrate on staying in business in hopes of getting to a spot where we can resume being a sustainable business."

Remote operators and bear outfitters cater predominantly to the US and International markets and have been cut off from their clientele effectively since March 2020 when the pandemic closed borders. Despite major efforts over the last two years, these businesses have not been able to rebound like other tourism operations, and relief from permit fees will support their economic recovery.

"While we are beginning to see light at the end of the long tunnel of restrictions, which may allow more travel to resume this year, **reopening does not mean recovery**," notes NOTO Executive Director Laurie Marcil. "We cannot forget the great deal of newly acquired debt that tourism businesses have had to take on to keep the lights on for two long years. The road to recovery will be long for tourism operators in the North. Waving these fees will help to get them on the right track. We are grateful to the Ontario Government for their continued support for these tourism sectors in Northern Ontario," adds Ms. Marcil.



A recent TIAO study revealed tourism businesses in Northern Ontario will take until at least 2024/2025 to return to pre-COVID revenue levels and financial stability. With 82% of tourism businesses still citing revenue loss as their biggest threat, 7 in 10 operators in debt and most unable to resolve these debts for at least 2-3 years (or more), and 1 in 4 operators struggling to hire due to the labour crisis, recovery has been slow—especially in Northern Ontario.

Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) President and CEO Chris Bloore said, “The catastrophic economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have been especially severe on Northern Ontario's tourism businesses. For two years, businesses have reported as high as a 93% decline in revenue, forced to lay-off workers and have accumulated large amounts of debt to survive. Despite the recent positive news on the removal of restrictions on businesses, the barriers to travel across international borders and low consumer confidence, means it could take several years for operators to see a sustained upturn in bookings. That is why it is such welcome news that the Ontario government has once again decided to waive crown resource fees and play an important part in our sectors recovery. TIAO is proud to work alongside NOTO and the Ontario government to support northern Ontario's tourism sector.”

## About NOTO

Nature & Outdoor Tourism Ontario (NOTO) is a not-for-profit membership-based trade organization that supports the resource-based tourism industry through consultation and business supports. NOTO works with Government to ensure policies and regulations support the growth and vitality of the resource-based tourism industry in Ontario. NOTO collaborates with regional, provincial, and federal tourism organizations to support this sector of tourism broadly. NOTO celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2019.

## About TIAO

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario works on behalf of their membership, collectively representing 200,000 businesses and 400,000 employees, to take on pressing policy issues that impact the Ontario tourism industry. TIAO leads the way in government relations on behalf of the Ontario tourism industry, including tourism businesses and operators, destination marketing organizations, regional tourism organizations, and educators. We provide evidenced-based policy recommendations to ensure the provincial government understands and addresses the multifaceted needs of the tourism industry.

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