

Northern Ontario Tourism Marketing Strategy 2012-2017

Response to the Consultants Report and
Implementation Direction





Northern Ontario Tourism Marketing Strategy 2012-2017 - Context

- The existing Northern Ontario Tourism Marketing Strategy sunsets as of March 31, 2012.
- RTO 13 in partnership with the Northern Office of OTMPC engaged a consultant , Erin Mitchell of Mitchell Westlake , to “refresh” the existing strategy.
- The “refresh” was directed to build upon the existing strategy and take into consideration key changes such as the introduction of the RTO model , economic factors and OTMPC / MTC future direction.
- The consultant has concluded the report and the executive of RTO 13 has “received and accepted” the document. We support the recommendations and direction of the strategy with the exception of what is detailed in this response.
- Northern Ontario is a **diverse and complex tourism destination** to work with; and build cooperative and productive strategies. As with many consulting reports, there are aspects of the report that do not reflect how we wish to work together and develop a stronger tourism industry.
- The purpose of this document is to provide how RTO 13 will implement the Strategy and articulate where we will do things differently from the consultants recommendations.

RTO13 - Key Principals to guide implementation of the new strategy

- Northern Ontario will embrace the recommendations of the strategy and identify where we are not in agreement and our alternate approach for the betterment of Northern Ontario's Tourism Industry.
- We will move from a model of entitlement to a business model.
- We will lead with our best, with clear criteria and develop programs and strategies to grow our stakeholders capacity.
- Our programs are built from the ground up not from the top down.
- We will plan together ensuring alignment and coordination of effort avoiding duplication and ensuring the best for Northern Ontario.





Implementation Approach

- RTO 13 will manage the business plan and TPA processes to provide appropriate resource allocations to the sub regional marketing efforts.
- RTO 13 through its sub regional leads (RFEI) will work with stakeholders to develop programs and tactics based on the direction of the strategy and the response.
- OTMPC Northern Office will plan with and partner as appropriate with the sub regions and RTO 13 as a whole.
- RTO 13 will ensure alignment and coordination of programs or tactics that are common to the sub regions.
- RTO 13 will undertake as a priority the development of a destination development plan to complement the marketing strategy.

Branding

- RTO 13 believes that Northern Ontario is best represented by building on the success of existing brands rather than trying to establish a new brand.
- We agree with the consultant that Northern Ontario is not consistently defined in the mind of the consumer. We will utilize research as a foundation for understanding our consumer and their perceptions of Northern Ontario.
- Therefore, RTO 13 will rely on sub regional planning to build upon successfully established brands or when no brand is applicable develop a new brand position.
- RTO 13 will consider Northern Ontario a collection of successful brands that celebrate the differences in experience and market requirements.



Digital Approach

- RTO 13 will not embrace the strategy recommendations as they relate to the Northern Portal or the establishment of one Northern call to action and fulfilment web site.
- We endorse the need for the Northern Portal to evolve and the required development of a strong digital / social strategy for Northern Ontario. A digital strategy must set forth an adaptable plan that builds on our inventory of sites and builds our capacity for the future. The plan must address how we acquire content, action social media and develop an inventory of consumer friendly sites.
- We concur that this should be a shared commitment between OTMPC and the RTO for the operation of the portal and the development of content.
- Making it easier for the consumer to navigate and make a decision is a priority. We will lead with our best sites and develop standards and process to help grow capacity of others.
- The future iteration of the portal “Lures”, our partners “fulfill”.
- A unique northern approach that is collaborative and not competitive for online reservations must be developed.



Priority Markets



- Each sub region has its specific market orientation due to travel distance, transportation and geography.
- We concur with the consultant that Southern Ontario is becoming an increasingly important market for more and more of the North.
- Quebec will remain an identified market for Northern Ontario with specific relevance for the North East.
- Near Border US has and will continue to be an important market for the sub regions. We will not abandon them, rather we will partner with OTMPC where appropriate to ensure we effectively target the US.
- We believe that the Sub Regions will focus on the near border to maintain and grow visitation.
- OTMPC Northern Office and OTMPC corporate should target new markets further a field including US markets to develop new consumers with higher yield for Northern Ontario as a whole.
- VFR and private cottages are not a priority for RTO 13 rather they are a local opportunity.



Assembling the Team

The consultant endorsed the RFEI process to identify sub regional leads.

Planning processes should be inclusive within the sub regions.

The consultant identified that 13a represents an area that faces a more difficult transition with three key cities and three regional organizations.

RTO should provide assistance to the region to acquire facilitation and organizational expertise.





Communication and Endorsement

- RTO 13 will provide the approved Response to the Strategy and the Executive Summary.
- A media relations plan will be developed for the release of the strategy.
- The full strategy document will be posted on RTO 13 .com .
- The response and strategy will be forwarded to the Northern Committee of OTMPC for their endorsement and adoption.
- The response and strategy will be forwarded to The Ministry for its information.

Next Steps

- RTO Board consideration and approval of the response to the strategy and the executive summary
- Direction to seek OTMPC Northern Committee endorsement (OTMPC will develop an implementation plan to ensure alignment and coordination with the RTO plans)
- Direction to proceed with digital strategy
- Direction to support coordination/facilitation services for 13A
- Proceed with destination development strategy
- Contract a writer to professionally present the response to the strategy

