

REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION 7 JANUARY 2011 INDUSTRY UPDATE

January 24, 2011 – The Transition Team would like to take this opportunity to update Region 7 (Bruce, Grey and Simcoe)tourism stakeholders on the status of its activities, and outline next steps in the establishment of RTO7.

Incorporation and Board of Directors

We are pleased to advise that Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7) was legally established as a not-for-profit incorporation in December, 2010, and that by-laws for the organization are in place.

Applications for nominations to the permanent board of directors closed as of January 7th. Over 30 applications were received for 15 positions. For more information on the role and composition of the board, please visit www.region7transition.ca.

The Oversight Committee is currently completing its review of applications with the objective of having the first board approved and in place by February, at which point the Transition Team will transfer all authority to the new board and dissolve.

An announcement will be released immediately upon the establishment of the new board. Questions regarding the board selection process can be directed to the Oversight Committee at nominations@region7transition.ca.

Moving into 2011/12

Coincident with the Ministry of Tourism's approval of its transition plan in July 2010, the Transition Team began laying the groundwork for RTO7's first full year of operation.

The new board of directors will pick up the baton as RTO7 prepares to move into its first full year of operations. To take best advantage of available funding and to provide the board with a solid foundation, one of the key "priority project" initiatives RTO7 is investing in is the development of a Strategic Destination Development Plan.

The Strategic Destination Development Plan, which is being formulated with the assistance of lead consultant Longwoods International, will provide the new board with a strategic plan as well as a first year business plan. This business plan, which will be subject to Ministry of Tourism approval, will be the basis for expenditure of the \$2 million in annual funding the province has allocated to RTO7.

Priority Projects

Concurrent with the Strategic Destination Development Plan project, RTO7 has five other projects underway at this time, for:

- Image bank development – winter (fall portion of this project has already been completed)
- Media/PR campaign – also focused on the winter market
- Waterways product development
- Winter tourism economic impact
- Green / sustainable tourism development

We are also in the process of securing resources for three additional priority project initiatives:

- Road signage and wayfinding study
- Digital data, images and mapping
- Tourism signage investment (for Georgian Bay Coastal Route, in concert with Regions 12 & 13)

Details about project goals and execution are available on the transition web site www.region7transition.ca. Attached to this update is a progress and status report of all projects, which can also be found on the web site.

As you aware, a critical component of each are consultation processes with tourism stakeholders and business owners, some of which are still ongoing.

Questions about these projects can be directed to the Priority Projects Coordinator at projects@region7transition.ca.

Next Steps

As soon as the new board is in place, it will immediately begin work by reviewing and approving plans for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2011, which will then be submitted to the Ministry of Tourism.

Once this process is complete, the new board will communicate these plans to the tourism industry, and outline its vision and priorities. It will also begin implementing its plans, which will start with putting the necessary personnel and resources in place to manage the affairs and operations of RTO7.

In accordance with provincial funding requirements, 2010/11 priority projects are all slated for completion by June 2011. The new board will be communicating the results of the projects and seeking additional input on how best to capitalize on the findings and recommendations later this year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Web: www.region7transition.ca

E-mail: info@region7transition.ca

Tourism Industry Liaisons:

Bruce – Laurie Adams: (519) 596-8374
Grey – Linda Simpson: (705) 445-7722
Simcoe – Tibor Haasz: (705) 896-3473

Priority Projects Update

Strategic Destination Development Plan Project

- The research component of this project is well underway.
- An extensive Consumer Survey has been completed and an analysis of the data is in progress. The Longwoods team will evaluate the travelling metrics of the 3,000 respondents and use this data to support their recommendations in the Strategic Plan.
- Interviews with dozens of operators, DMOs, and Municipal representatives have taken place since the beginning of December.
- Five Strategic Planning Sessions were conducted throughout the region from January 17 to January 21. Invitations were sent out to over 1,000 tourism operators, and tourism related entities to attend a morning session which covered –
 - What Longwoods has Learned,
 - followed by Four Parallel Break-out Sessions –
 - **Civic Participation/County/Municipal Interface (including Planning and Economic Development) - led by AECOM;**
 - **Character of Place - led by PLACESConsulting;**
 - **Arts & Culture -led by PLACESConsulting;**
 - **Shopping, Dining, Clusters & Events - led by AECOM.**
 - The morning session was followed by another session that covered
 - **Positioning - led by PLACESConsulting/AECOM;**
 - **Elements of a Future Picture - led by PLACESConsulting/AECOM;**
 - **Review of Chart on Functions and Levels - led by AECOM/PLACESConsulting;**
 - **and Opportunity and Costs - led by PLACESConsulting/AECOM.**
- **Forward Looking:** The next step of this process will involve the analyzing of the data and focus groups feedback and drafting a Strategic Plan and Business Plan that will set the direction for Regional Tourism Organization #7.

Waterways Product Development

- This project is well underway with a comprehensive inventory of the waterways product offering within Region 7, and an analysis of the marketing materials that are offered by DMO's, Chambers, BIA's, Municipalities and DIA's.
- The information gathered so far will be further enhanced during three focus groups throughout the region.
 - These focus groups will be held in the morning;
 - February 1st at the Bruce County Museum,
 - February 3rd at the Simcoe County Museum and
 - February 4th at the Falls Inn and Spa at Water's Falls.
 - Invitations to these morning sessions were sent out the week of January 17th, some seats are still available if you would like to attend please email projects@region7transition.ca.

- **Forward Looking:** Following the sessions BC Hughes will analyze their findings and develop a plan for that will include understandings and recommendations of business relationships with specific waterways identify strengths, gaps and opportunities, environmental challenges, provide input on waterways tourism collaboration opportunities and identify new waterways tourism market opportunities.

Winter Images Campaign

- Photographers and Videographers have been selected to capture images of our region in winter and early spring.
- These emotive images will celebrate the variety of activities that take place during the winter season and into the early spring within our region.
- Providing access to these photographers and videographers to your operation would greatly assist in building a comprehensive image bank that can be used in future marketing and advertising programs.
- The photographers and videographers selected for this project shot images for the Fall Campaign and provided us with a very diverse collection of images that we will be able to use in the future to promote our region.
- **Forward Looking:** The images gathered during this campaign will be used in collateral publications and be made available to all tourism operators and entities throughout the region. A usage protocol will be established over the coming months to control the reproduction of images so that the same image is not used by many different operations in the same period.

Green/Sustainable Tourism Development Project

- The consultants on this project have conducted detailed research into existing programs that are available to the tourism industry and conducted many telephone interviews over the past months with operators that are currently engaged in Green/Sustainable tourism.
- The information gathered so far will be further enhanced during three focus groups throughout the region.
- These focus groups will be held in the afternoon;
- February 1st at the Bruce County Museum,
- February 3rd at the Simcoe County Museum
- February 4th at the Falls Inn and Spa at Water's Falls.
- Invitations to these morning sessions were sent out the week of January 17th, some seats are still available if you would like to attend please email projects@region7transition.ca.
- **Forward Looking:** This project will develop a toolkit that operators and organizations can use to evaluate their operation and provide direction on the steps to becoming a Green/Sustainable Tourism Operation.

Winter Tourism Economic Impact/Research Project

- Initial interviews have been completed on this project.
- A consumer survey will be launched the last week of January that will evaluate who the consumer is for Region 7 and their attributes as well as who is not a consumer of the Region 7 Winter product and their attributes.

- This survey will provide data from 1,000 completed surveys.
- During the month of January continued contact will be made with the tourism operators to gain insight into the winter market your assistance in this research project will help provide a data for future planning activities and will be a benefit for all winter operations.
- **Forward Looking:** In February, 3 focus group sessions will be conducted, details of these sessions will be released soon, if you would like to be involved please email projects@region7transition.ca and express an interest in participating. It is our plan to have a session in each county.

Media and Public Relations Winter Campaign

- This campaign has kicked off with coverage by CFTO, CTV, CP24, Marilyn Dennis' new morning show will be providing coverage, a nationally syndicated radio show called "At Home" is scheduled; a reporter experienced MacGregor Point Provincial Park in January and slept in a Yurt and took part in many outdoor winter activities. His story has been picked up by many Canadian newspapers including the Guelph Mercury. The Weather Network filmed in Collingwood the week of January 10 and has committed to considerable coverage on its station over the winter.
- **Forward Looking:** RTO media page will launch January 21 and will provide a launch pad for Social Marketing on YouTube, and Flickr, it will also host the stories that have received print and online coverage, and it will provide story lines and images to journalist.
 - Requests for imagery for the site to be used on YouTube and Flickr have been sent to your DMO's & our Photographers & Videographers.
 - If you would like to supply imagery please contact projects@region7transition.ca.
 - Remember to have releases from everyone in your imagery that allows for the use in this type of application. If you have an experience, or activity, that is winter based or early spring based please forward to projects@region7transition.ca.

Upcoming Priority Projects

- RTO7 has submitted funding proposals for 3 more projects.
 - A Data Base System Project to store and distribute all of the data, imagery and mapping information that has been collected in all of the projects over the past months.
 - The second project is a Way Finding and Road Signage Study Project that will evaluate what is needed to make it easier for our tourist to find their way around the region.
 - The third project is a joint project with RTO12 and RTO13, the project entails installing signage for the Georgian Bay Coastal Route through the 3 regions. Proposals for the Data Base System and Way-Finding and Road Signage Studies have been received and are being evaluated.