

July 23, 2008



To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in reference to the replacement of the Oxtongue Lake Narrows Bridge (GWP 93-89-00) and Oxtongue River Bridge (GWP 5550-04-00) in the Township of Algonquin Highlands in the County of Haliburton.

While there is a demonstrated need to have this project done, it is absolutely vital that a plan be put in place **before construction starts** to financially protect the tourism businesses that will be directly and adversely affected during construction.

The businesses around Oxtongue Lake are a unique community, in that they only have tourists as their main source of income. Tourists come to these businesses because of the showcase environment in the area: peaceful wilderness, placid lake, wildlife, fishing and relaxation. During the time that the bridges will be reconstructed and Highway 60 altered, which includes demolishing a significant portion of the cliff-face, the unique showcase environment will be disrupted on a massive scale. Accordingly, tourists who book rooms at the accommodation establishments around Oxtongue Lake will have no desire to stay in those rooms when they arrive and experience the noise, dust, and visual eyesore that, of necessity, must occur during construction.

Because of this, we urge the Government of Ontario, specifically the Ministry of Transportation (MTO), and other responsible parties, to enter into a mutually-agreeable plan with those area businesses that will be adversely affected by this construction. Said plan must provide for financial support for these businesses, to compensate them for the loss of guests that will refuse to stay at the properties due to the construction.

It is simply inadequate for MTO to promise to maintain access to the businesses during construction. Guest access of these businesses is not the issue. The issue is that guests will not want to stay at these businesses once they arrive, because of the noise, dust, and other disruptive elements caused by construction. The sole reason people stay at these properties is because of the environment of peaceful nature.

It is also unacceptable for MTO to promise that an arrangement can be done after the end of construction, to deal with any loss of business. There are two problems with that. First, the delay with government forms and bureaucracy will mean that many in the community may not be able to survive until compensation finally arrives. Second, and most important, as construction will likely take upwards of two years, the affected businesses will fail before the construction ends, simply because of loss of income from loss of guests.

It is important to note that the affected businesses are more than just businesses: they are also the homes of the owner/operators. So if these businesses are forced into bankruptcy due to lack of guests because of the construction, not only is that a terrible loss to the local

347 Pido Road, Unit 2
R.R. 6, Peterborough
Ontario, Canada K9J 6X7

Helpline
1-800-461-1972

Telephone
705-745-4982

Facsimile
705-745-4983

Email
info@oaa.travel

Web Site
www.oaa.travel

The Ontario
Accommodation Association
is the non-profit association
serving Ontario's independent
accommodation industry,
and represents its members
to government.

Canada's Largest
Provincial Association
Specializing In
Innkeepers.

OAA is about doing together
what innkeepers could not
possibly do on their own.

economy (most of these businesses have been operating for decades), but it will also be a loss of peoples' homes. The owner/operators have their entire financial and personal livelihood wrapped up in their businesses.

Ontario is currently suffering through an economic downturn, with many industrial and commercial businesses, and their employees, suffering. Tourism businesses are no exception. Tourism is particularly important in rural areas where, like Dwight, it is the mainstay of the local economy. If anything disrupts tourism in the area, then it will create a wide-ranging ripple effect, impacting not just tourism businesses, but also ancillary businesses such as gas stations, grocery stores, gift shops, and attractions.

Any loss of tourists caused by the construction project will affect the entire area. This loss could be significant: Algonquin Park hosts one million visitors a year, 90% of whom come through the West Gate, travelling along Highway 60 right through the area affected by this construction. The Ministry of Tourism should enact a medium-term strategy after construction ends for a rebound program for the community and Algonquin Park: A campaign to restore tourists' good feelings after two years of slogging through construction to access the Park.

It is imperative that all parties involved meet to discuss the known facts of the impact of this major construction project, and work out a solution that will compensate the affected businesses.

Assurances are also needed from MTO that the landscape features will be returned to its original state as much as possible (eg: the rock cut area will not be left raw).

Most of the affected accommodation businesses are members of the non-profit Ontario Accommodation Association (OAA). Founded in 1949, OAA has 1,000 innkeeper members across Ontario: motels, inns, hotels, resorts, B & Bs and lodges. Our members are small to medium-sized independent owner/operators.

Thank you for your attention to this matter

Sincerely,



Bruce M. Gravel, B.Ed., C.A.E.
President

cc. Honourable Jim Bradley, Minister of Transportation
Honourable Peter Fonseca, Minister of Tourism
Barry Devolin, MP, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock
Laurie Scott, MPP, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock
John O'Toole, MPP, PC Critic for Transportation
Ted Arnott, MPP, PC Critic for Tourism

BMG/slb