



3 Taylor Road, Bracebridge, ON P1L 1S6
1-800-835-7303
Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka,
Parry Sound & South Algonquin
www.explorersedge.ca



Tuesday March 24, 2020

***AN URGENT PLEA TO ALL ELECTED MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN THE
RTO12/EXPLORERS' EDGE GEOGRAPHICAL CATCHMENT REGARDING IMMEDIATE SUPPORTIVE
MEASURES FOR TOURISM SMEs IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19***

To Whom It May Concern:

The tourism industry accounts for 13% of this region's GDP and is one of the top three industry employers here; in fact, this region relies on tourism for economic development more than any other area in Ontario.

The bulk of the industry is composed of SMEs that are now facing challenges never before seen as a result of Covid-19, and which could be potentially compounded by the prospect of spring flooding and a global recession.

Measures legislated (or slated to be legislated) by the federal and provincial governments to combat the varying effects of Covid-19 have been, though necessary, disastrous for our regional tourism industry, and we are now faced with the reality that, unless supported by all levels of government, many of our stakeholders will not be able to keep their doors open at all. This is not hyperbole or alarmism; data sets run by the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, and the RTO's business consultant concur.

The RTO12 Board and its staff are working tirelessly to ensure tourism SMEs in our region not only survive this unprecedented crisis, but are also able to thrive on the other side of it. To that end, on behalf of my fellow Directors, the Executive Director and tourism SMEs in our region, I am writing to inform you that the most pressing issue facing them is the need for tax relief or deferrals from municipalities, and the need for that to be enacted immediately (prior to March tax deadlines).

If this type of relief – which will allow SMEs to retain some liquidity in the time of crisis – has already been enacted by your municipality, then on behalf of RTO12 and regional tourism stakeholders, I thank you. If not, I formally request that you explain IMMEDIATELY exactly what measures you will be putting in place in your respective municipalities to assist these operators, and exactly when.

Please respond to the RTO12 Executive Director, James Murphy, regarding this plea, so that he may, in turn, relay your approaches for ensuring the sustainability of tourism operators in your respective municipalities to the operators themselves.

I cannot stress this enough; tourism operators are in crisis, and they seek and deserve an immediate response, succinctly and efficiently communicated by the municipalities where they do business.

On behalf of the regional tourism industry, I thank you for your efforts to assist us as we navigate this extremely challenging situation. (For clarification on any of the above, please also contact the RTO12 Executive Director.)

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Suddaby", written over a horizontal line.

Jeff Suddaby
Chair of RTO12 / Explorers' Edge
Owner, 3 Guys & A Stove, Huntsville