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June 1, 2020

RE: Study of Economic Effects of COVID-19 on Tourism

To: Members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Dear Members;

I am writing to express my serious concerns regarding the economic impacts of COVID-19, specifically on tourism in Northwestern Ontario. Further, I implore you take action, providing significant and direct aid to this industry that has been almost entirely overlooked by current packages.

The situation for so many of us here is dire. If allowed to fail, there will be significant repercussions and a depression that takes hold of the whole Canadian economy.

Tourism brings in more than 1.6 billion dollars annually to the local districts, towns, and municipalities of Northern Ontario – a majority of this comes from international travelers and generates more than half a billion dollars in annual tax revenue. One out of every four businesses in the north is tourism related and 40% of the workforce is connected to tourism (source: Destination Northern Ontario).

Over the past several months these figures have amounted to near zero. As we now enter the peak of summer with no definitive roadmap to reopening, there is diminishing hope that any of these dollars, jobs, and businesses can be salvaged.

While our revenue has vanished, our bills, of course, have not. Paid months ago, were land use permit fees, suppliers, capital purchases, and corporate taxes. Due in the near future are equipment maintenance costs, insurance premiums, mortgages, and property taxes among many others. While some of us do have the credit to borrow more, most are already heavily leveraged as we made large capital improvements in the strong economy of just a few months ago. Borrowing more in either case will ultimately lead many with an insurmountable amount of debt.

It is for this reason I strongly encourage you to consider direct aid. It is not in our nature to be dependent on anyone. It is only in these extreme circumstances that we ask for help. I truly believe that you have the power to save an industry and thousands of livelihoods. Inaction will almost certainly mean many permanent closures, business failures, and longer term dependence on government welfare.

I thank you for your time, consideration, and help and am glad to provide any additional information that may elucidate these issues.

Sincerely,

Ryan Carlson  
Owner, Big Hook Wilderness Camps