

Finance Committee Hearing

Hi, my name is Linda Rider; I am the owner/operator along with my husband Ian Rider of Horseshoe Island Camp. We are a small family run camp on Mistinikon Lake in Matachewan, in our second season as camp owners. We have 12 cottages spread over 3 acres of land both on our island and our mainland. We are a boat in facility with all of our cottages being lakefront with their own private docks. Our cottages are all well spaced and are housekeeping only. The only gathering areas would be our small store and our two fish cleaning huts. These have already been marked with signage to ensure only one group of cottagers are allowed in at a time with disinfectant provided for clean up after each group cleans their fish. We have met the requirements for our cleaning ladies to disinfect the cottages after each guest leaves.

Having already invested a large part of our savings into the purchase and running of the camp last year, as you can well imagine the start of our second season has been greatly impacted by covid. Unfortunately we have not yet qualified for any of the funding or loans in place by either the federal or provincial governments, putting us in jeopardy of closing permanently.

Being seasonal we have only four and a half months of the year to earn the money to carry us through the entire year. The good portion of our income is earned in the first five weeks of the season, and we've already lost three of those weeks with no relief in sight.

With covid impacting so much of the population it has a trickle effect, which is now impacting us. The spring is filled with our pensioners and diehard fishermen groups, whom have now lost their season. The summer months are the younger people, couples and families. These groups have been off work due to covid and are now cancelling their reservations because they can no longer afford to come up or have lost their summer vacation time. Some guests are cancelling simply due to health reason and the fear associated with covid.

The biggest impact right now is the fact that there is no clear communication or mixed messages from different levels of government. Depending on where you are located and the interpretation of the individual health units, some camps like ours are now open and have been open and operating. These health units are classing camps under the motel/hotel and shared accommodations allowing for operation. Our health unit is classing us under campgrounds and private parks, neither of which we are. We are a shared short-term rental with individual cottages. We have no camping spots for tents or areas for trailers/tent trailers; it is a water access only camp. We have received several cancelations from guests who are now going to other camps whom have been allowed to open. There needs to be some consistency in how camps are being evaluated and in turn opened, we understand the complexities of managing these types of things during this time but an assumption cannot be made to lump everyone into the same category. There is no common area that serves food, all food prep and consumption is done in individual cottages, washrooms are in individual cottages and spacing is such that no docks are close together.

The government has allowed motel/hotels to open and now crown land is open to over night camping. So people can now book a hotel room and come to our lake and fish, people can now set up their tents and trailers on crown land and fish on our lake, the few private cottages on our lake are all enjoying their camps and fishing with their friends who arrive every weekend, but we are not allowed to open still. There seems to be help available to every sector but ours and we are not sure how we will survive this without help, especially with some areas already open for guests. We still have to make mortgage payments every month, we still need to pay for our services every month, we still need to buy groceries every month and we are also having to reimburse deposits of guests whom are now to other camps. We have zero money coming at. When will there be help for tourist operators who are being held back from opening.

Thank You
Linda Rider