

Ministry of Tourism

Minister

9th Floor, Hearst Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2E1
Tel: (416) 326-9326
Fax: (416) 326-9338

Ministère du Tourisme

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9^e étage, Édifice Hearst
900, rue Bay
Toronto, ON M7A 2E1
Tél.: (416) 326-9326
Télec.: (416) 326-9338



May 27, 2008

Dear Tourism Partner:

Tourism Week 2008 this year is June 2-8. I am pleased to update you on my ministry's plans for marking this annual event in recognition of the important nature of our industry and to update you on some recent news.

Tourism Week celebrates the contributions of tourism to communities across Canada, and to our province and its economy. The theme for this year is *Potential Worth Exploring*. Tourism is vital to employment and economic development in communities throughout the country. Based on data from Statistics Canada, we estimate that tourism is a \$22.8 billion industry in Ontario.

I am looking forward to attending Tourism Week events around Ontario. Tourism Week provides an excellent platform to share our success stories, profile innovative partnerships and approaches, and encourage Ontarians to explore the many great tourism experiences in our province. I encourage you to use this opportunity to get people talking about tourism in your community. We will be promoting Tourism Week on my ministry's website, at www.tourism.gov.on.ca, and on our consumer website, at www.ontariotravel.net.

In other good news, the recent 2008 Ontario Budget recognized the tourism industry's role as a key economic driver with great potential for growth by committing significant new investments. These investments and actions include:

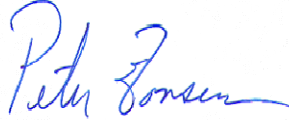
- Funding to support a competitiveness study and develop a tourism sector action plan;
- An additional \$50 million over four years for marketing and the Festival and Events Attraction and Support Program that will continue the success of *Celebrate Ontario*, which provided funding to 90 festivals across the province this year; and,
- The Retail Sales Tax exemption for Destination Marketing Fees has been extended out beyond next year, to June 30, 2010.

The competitiveness study will be the main focus of the ministry's work with the industry this year. For more on the competitiveness study, please visit our website, at www.tourism.gov.on.ca and click on the link. Greg Sorbara, MPP for Vaughan, is consulting with industry leaders about the future of tourism in our province and will be reporting on measures to ensure that Ontario can compete successfully with the rest of the world. As part of that process, we will be releasing a discussion paper in the first week of June.

Our industry is facing many challenges – some related to the current business cycle, others to more fundamental changes beyond our control. In this environment, the study provides an opportunity for you to work directly with us to develop an action plan to reshape our tourism experiences to meet the demands of today's global market.

I wish you all the best in the coming year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Fonseca". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peter" and last name "Fonseca" clearly legible.

Peter Fonseca
Minister