



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Premier Ranked Tourist Destination Framework

Date:	January 8, 2007
To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	Donald G. Eastwood, General Manager, Economic Development, Culture & Tourism Division
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to inform Council about a strategic planning initiative which will strengthen Toronto's tourism sector and appoint a member of the Economic Development Committee to the project's steering committee.

The Premier Ranked Tourist Destination Framework (PRTDF) is a SWOT analysis of Toronto's amenities as a tourist destination and action plan for addressing opportunities and challenges in the future. It uses a templated process developed by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism which has proven effective in nine other Ontario destinations. Additional PRTDF projects are underway in eight other municipalities as well as in Toronto.

The PRTDF engages industry stakeholders in shared learning, evaluation and planning for the future. About 100 people will participate on various subcommittees. It is recommended that a City of Toronto be represented on the project Steering Committee by a member of the Economic Development Committee. This will enhance the understanding of tourism issues and the role the City could play in strengthening the sector and the visitor experience in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism recommends that:

The Economic Development Committee nominate one of its members to participate with industry stakeholders on the Premier Ranked Tourist Destination Framework Steering Committee.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

DECISION HISTORY

City Council at its meeting of February 1, 2005 adopted Clause 13 of Economic Development and Parks Committee Report No. 1, thereby supporting Toronto's participation in the Premier Ranked Tourist Destination Framework process. An additional \$30,000 for the project was provided in the Tourism Section's 2006 Operating Budget. The remainder of the costs were to be covered by contributions from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Service Canada and from the Tourism Section's base Operating Budget.

The intervening time has been spent in securing Service Canada's contribution to the project. This was achieved on November 6, 2006, enabling the project to begin.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Premier Ranked Tourist Destination Framework (PRTDF) is a tool developed by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, to help tourist destinations across the province define their competitive positions. Nine municipalities have now completed the assessment and an additional nine (including Toronto) have projects underway to do so in 2007. All other municipalities within the Greater Toronto Area will have completed the Premier Ranked Tourist Destination Framework by the end of 2007, providing a common base for understanding the region's strengths and weaknesses as a tourist destination and opportunities for developing region-wide linkages and programs.

The assessment is completed by industry stakeholders and supported by federal, provincial and municipal government resources and staff. It begins by undertaking a comprehensive inventory of the destination's tourism assets. The inventory is then summarized and presented to industry stakeholders. These stakeholder committees are engaged in a series of structured discussions to evaluate the inventory against the framework's criteria and benchmarks. These criteria are based on attributes considered essential if a destination is to be "A Place more attractive than the rest, a place the tourist should consider first – in other words, A Premier Ranked Tourist Destination".

The evaluation then guides discussions and decision-making about future plans and priorities for action.

The municipalities which have completed PRTDF assessments testify to their value. They have indicated that the framework provides an efficient way of assembling and evaluating a wide breadth of information about how visitors interface with the destination. Activities and stakeholders not normally considered to be part of the "inner circle" of the tourism industry are included in the audit and involved in the evaluation

discussions. This typically has led to new insights about the destination and new partnerships.

One of the Framework's greatest strengths is the forum it provides for shared learning across the sector, group discussion, and collective priority setting. This has proven to engender a high degree of industry buy-in and to lead to the formation of implementation teams to act on the recommendations.

The Ministry of Tourism is using the completed projects to determine where its support and investment is best utilized to develop Ontario's tourism industry. It has provided project implementation funding for many of the municipalities with completed frameworks to assist with follow-up actions.

COMMENTS

The Premier Ranked Tourist Destination Framework project will inform strategy and work program for Toronto's tourism sector and build a stronger alliance between the City, Tourism Toronto, and individual industry stakeholders.

For the past few years, the City's work program in tourism development has been guided by the Five Year Tourism Development Action Plan, adopted by City Council in June 2003. The PRTDF will carry forward from the 2003 Action Plan. It also will inform the broader economic development strategic plan being developed in 2007 as to tourism sector needs and priorities.

The resources needed to support the project are now in place. As has been done in most other municipalities, an employment readiness training program (Job Creation Partnership (JCP) Program) operated by Service Canada is being accessed to provide the required research staff. A Ministry of Tourism grant has been secured to retain a consultant experienced in using the PRTDF to guide the project and facilitate the evaluation and plan development stages. The Tourism Section is supporting the project by providing significant staff resources and a portion of its 2007 base program budget. \$30,000 in additional City funding was used in 2006 to set up the project office infrastructure and support stakeholder recruitment in the weeks preceding the recruitment of JCP participants.

A major strength of the framework is that it directly engages industry stakeholders in evaluating the research and reaching conclusions about the future. It is thereby fundamentally different from the typical third-party study where a consultant is engaged, does the work, and reports back findings and recommendations. The Premier Ranked Destination Framework has been shown to build a shared understanding across the industry about the destination's strengths, weaknesses and priority needs, and a strong commitment to action.

It is anticipated that about one hundred individuals from across Toronto's tourism sector will participate in the project's discussions. These people will be organized into

subcommittees. A steering committee comprised on about fifteen people representing the various sub-sectors and interests within the industry will provide overall leadership. It is recommended that a member of the Economic Development Committee be nominated to join the Steering Committee.

The anticipated project timelines are as follows:

- January – Research and stakeholder committee formation begins
- May – Research completed and summarized
- June – Destination evaluation and start of planning discussions
- September – Discussion of draft recommendations
- November – Final Recommendations
- January 2008 – Implementation begins

CONTACT

Duncan H. Ross, Executive Director, Tourism, Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Division; 416-397-5395; dhross@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Donald G. Eastwood,
General Manager