



**Date:** April 2, 2012

## **City Council Committee Report**

**To:** City Council

**Fr:** Lake of the Woods Development Commission

**Re:** Tourism Services Assistant Position

### **Recommendation:**

THAT Council hereby approves the one year trial Tourism Services Assistant Position to become a permanent, full time position effective May 1, 2012.

### **Background:**

In the Fall of 2009, a Tourism Intern was hired to provide support for the Tourism Development Officer. This support was responsible for staffing the front end operations of the Visitor Information Centre, in order to provide the Tourism Development Officer with additional time and flexibility to attend external meetings and work on larger projects identified as priorities within the Tourism Strategy. This position was a one year internship which was extended by 6 months to March 2011. In March 2011, the Tourism Services position was approved on a 1 year trial basis (until April 2012), at which time the position would be re-evaluated.

In 2011, Tourism Kenora moved its operations to the Lake of the Woods Discovery Centre. This move has provided Tourism with a much more visible and active location. The number of people seeking visitor services, the primary responsibility of the Tourism Services Assistant, has increased dramatically in 2011 since the move and is showing a trend of continuing to dramatically increase in 2012. The statistics provided below are only for the Hwy 17 East and Lake of the Woods Discovery Centre locations and do not account for the visitor traffic served in the summer months out of the Thistle Pavilion. We expect that these numbers will only continue to increase as new signage is now in place directing visitors from the Provincial Tourism Centre to the Discovery Centre in the off-season (Labour Day weekend to May Long Weekend). It should also be noted that these numbers do include approximately 700 visitors to the Discovery Centre who were attending special events.

## Tourism Center

<b>Month</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
January	19	44	78	105
February	19	47	73	115
March	48	70	113	
April	65	60	85	
May	193	207	201	
June	700	405	310	
July	1085	954	859	
August	905	725	2655	
September	394	238	1807	
October	103	133	603	
November	54	77	213	
December	43	298	144	
<b>Total</b>	3628	3258	7141	220

Since opening the Discovery Centre, we are noticing an increase in visitor traffic, which also has included increased trip planning support for first time visitors into our community.

Walk-in visitors are not the only way in which the Tourism Services Assistant provides information to the travelling public. This position is directly responsible for interacting with visitors and potential visitors via our Facebook and Twitter profiles. In one year, our Facebook profile has grown to 577 followers and our Twitter reaches an additional 249 people. The Tourism Services Position spends 5 hours per week communicating directly with visitors via social media as well as posting updated information regarding Kenora. Further to this, the Tourism Services Assistant handles requests for mail out information. In 2010 they responded to 35 requests and in 2011 that doubled to 70 requests for information. The majority of these requests are from the United States. They also coordinate the development and distribution of "Tourism Information Bags" for all large events, conferences, meetings etc. in the community. In 2011, over 2,000 Tourism Information Bags were distributed in the community.

While not busy with visitor requests, the Tourism Services Assistant is responsible for the inventory of all visitor information, and ensuring that we are receiving and distributing visitor information to all pertinent locations across the Province of Ontario and Canada. The position is also responsible for major projects such as the development of the City Map, a source of revenue generation, and KHA Events Calendar. They also provide support, when necessary to the Tourism Development Officer and the Lake of the Woods Development Commission's Tourism Committee. An additional function of their role is to provide back-up support to Special Events. This position ensures that events such as Winter Carnival have the staff support they require.

The Lake of the Woods Discovery Centre is a 7 day a week operation. We believe that having information available to those travelling through the community every day is critical. Currently the Discovery Centre has 3 full-time staff persons, the Tourism Development Officer, The Tourism Services Assistant and the Special Events Coordinator. These positions are supplemented by summer students in the months of May- September. The ability of the centre to operate 7 days a week on a year round basis is completely reliant on the compliment of 3 full-time staff. The three full-time positions ensure that our doors are open to the public 7 days a week, while responsibilities in terms of Special Events planning and execution as well as Tourism Development (including special initiatives like the Roger Brooks Rebranding), Tourism Investment and attraction, and marketing are maintained.

**Budget:**

This position was approved as part of the 2012 budget.

**Communication Plan/Notice By-law Requirements:**

Senior Manager Human Resources  
Tourism Development Officer  
Tourism Services Assistant  
LOWDC  
CUPE