

# INVESTING MORE IN THE WORLD'S LONGEST FRESHWATER BEACH AND NANCY ISLAND HISTORIC SITE

## OUR ASK

**That the Minister of Tourism convene a joint meeting of the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Sport, Ministry of the Environment and Town of Wasaga Beach.**

The Town of Wasaga Beach requests that the Minister actively encourages collaboration and convenes a joint meeting with the Town, Minister of Tourism, Minister of Sport, and Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, to achieve the following:

- **Move** the longest freshwater beach in the world, Nancy Island Historic Site and the Nordic Trails System to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming (MTCG).
- **Modify** the provincial park boundary to enable the Town to proceed with its Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan in 2024/2025. This requires removing some Town-owned lands from the park boundary. This will unlock the redevelopment of the Town's beachfront commercial area (which burnt down in 2007) and construction of an award-winning beachfront hotel, just minutes away from the Town's new \$60-million twin pad arena.
- **Identify** new tourism events and experiences that the Town and Province could collaborate on planning and delivering at Wasaga Beach Provincial Park on Town-owned land at the beachfront, and at Town facilities, including our new \$60-million twin pad arena.
- **Fund** a new annual live-music festival in Wasaga Beach, beginning in 2025/2026.
- **Identify** new and improved ways that the Town and Province (and Ontario Parks) can work together to share content and creative assets and collaborate on promoting tourism/events/festivals in the Town of Wasaga Beach through MTCG, MOS and MECP (provincial) and Town marketing channels.

## Why is this important?

- This year, the Town of Wasaga Beach is celebrating its 50th anniversary of incorporation and the fact that it continues to be one of Ontario's most iconic tourism destinations. Tourism is up 20% and higher than it has been in almost a decade. Over the past year and a half, the Town has invested significantly in demand-generating visitor/tourism programming to grow tourism by 800,000 unique visitors.
- Working together, the Province and Town can leverage existing assets in our community, including Town festivals and events and Wasaga Beach Provincial Park, to grow tourism in the province. This will create jobs and economic opportunities in our Town and region – for years to come.
- These actions also support and leverage the Town's beachfront redevelopment and Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan. Our goal is to concurrently drive supply (first-class hotels and other short-term accommodations) and demand (for higher-value, multi-day tourism experiences) to transform Wasaga Beach into a more resilient, all-season Ontario destination.

## Our Opportunity

- Thirty minutes down the road from Wasaga Beach, the Province (MTCG) operates two of the most successful historical parks in the province – both with links to the war of 1812 – with an accomplished CEO and developed assets with year-round appeal: Saint-Marie among the Hurons and Discovery Harbour. The Town wants to collaborate with the Province to develop Nancy Island to the same level.
- The Town has recently launched its new Tourism Destination Management Plan, which is a blueprint to guide the Town in growing tourism. We are laser-focused on driving tourism through new, collaborative sports and live music events and experiences.
- In 2024, to demonstrate its commitment to this approach, the Town approved a new arms-length corporation to drive the development of demand-generating sports and live music experiences: Wasaga Beach Sports and Entertainment Inc.
- In 2025, Wasaga Beach Sports and Entertainment will move forward in parallel with the Town's Downtown Development Master Plan and the redevelopment of the Town's iconic beachfront, which will see the construction of an award-winning beachfront hotel, just minutes away from the Town's new \$60-million twin pad arena.
- The Town of Wasaga Beach is ready to collaborate, support provincial priorities, and explore all of the ways the Province and the Town can work together to elevate the longest freshwater beach in the world, Nancy Island, and Town of Wasaga Beach to its full potential.

## Our Challenges

- Recently, the reputation of the Town and the world's longest freshwater beach have been dragged through the mud.
- Adding more garbage cans, a fresh coat of paint and more enforcement on the beach is a good start, but it's not enough. Provincial park infrastructure is crumbling. Nancy Island is crumbling. These provincial assets need to be treated like world-class attractions. They would better serve the Province and Town if they were placed under the care and management of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming (MTCG), in the same way that MTCG oversees Niagara Falls, Saint-Marie among the Hurons and Discovery Harbour, which are all carefully protected and well-maintained Ontario attractions.
- Currently, the world's longest freshwater beach and Nancy Island are managed by Ontario Parks and it has fallen into a state of disrepair.
- This unique recreational park/natural wonder and historic site are tourism attractions that should fall under the ministry responsible for promoting and protecting tourism, culture and recreation with the funding envelope and expertise to do so.
- The way the Parks Act is written now, rules must be applied across the board. The current legislation does not recognize that Wasaga Beach Provincial Park is unique. There is a better way to manage the truly unique aspects of the park, and unlock greater value from these assets for the Town and Province.

## Total Impact

- The beach is our Town's beating heart – our economic engine. We cannot understate the impact that these actions will have on the Province and Town. They will help strengthen our tourism brand and support the Town's efforts to develop into a resilient 2-season Ontario destination (summer and winter – short term), on the path to a full four-season destination (long term). This will help develop Wasaga Beach into a world-class tourism, sport and resort destination.

### ALIGNING WITH PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES

Supports MTCG's priorities to promote and strengthen tourism across the province.  
Supports the Province's priorities to expand access to parks and outdoor recreational opportunities, grow tourism, create jobs and build a stronger Ontario.

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# 2 Million

Number of people who visited Wasaga Beach in 2023.

# \$19 Million

The amount the Province has committed to spend over the next three years, as part of the 2024 Ontario Budget, to establish Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park in the Township of Uxbridge.

# \$1 Million

The amount the Province has invested in Wasaga Beach Provincial Park (a recreation class park) over seven years, between 2018 - 2024.

# \$50 Million

The amount the Province announced it is planning to spend on Bigwind Lake Provincial Park over the next few years (an environmental class, non-operating park in Muskoka with no visitation numbers).

