

**Business Plan 2016**  
**Fort Frances Tourist Information Center**



## **Background**

Fort Frances is the point of entry for about 400,000 US visitors each year. In recent years, the Fort Frances (Ontario Tourism Information Center) OTIC provided tourism information to 35,000 travellers.

In the 2012 Ontario budget, the Province of Ontario announced the closure of the Fort Frances Ontario Tourist Information Center. In response to this, Mayor and Council of Fort Frances requested that the RRFDC pursue the opportunity to purchase the building.

To that end the RRFDC made contact with Infrastructure Ontario and secured the position of the Town of Fort Frances as the preferred buyer. The RRFDC then actively sought private and public sector partners and began planning for occupancy to begin in May 2013.

In the spring of 2014 the building and property were removed from the sales roster by the Province. At the direction of Council a long term lease was pursued.

To that end the following business plan and partnership agreements were submitted to the Town of Fort Frances for approval and action.

The Business Plan for the operation of the Tourist Information Bureau was approved by Mayor and Council in the spring of 2014. The agreement with Sunset Country Travel Association was approved in the summer of 2014.

## Building

### Location:



### Description:

The Information Center is 2,411 square feet. The building consists of two areas – one large atrium space that is neither heated or cooled and contains washrooms that have floor board heaters, and then an “inside” space that houses one large room with a reception desk for information – curved wall spaces for display that is divided in part for storage. Two small offices, a lunchroom, staff bathroom and utility room form the west side of the building. A space that was once the home to the currency exchange sits at the interior entrance to the building.

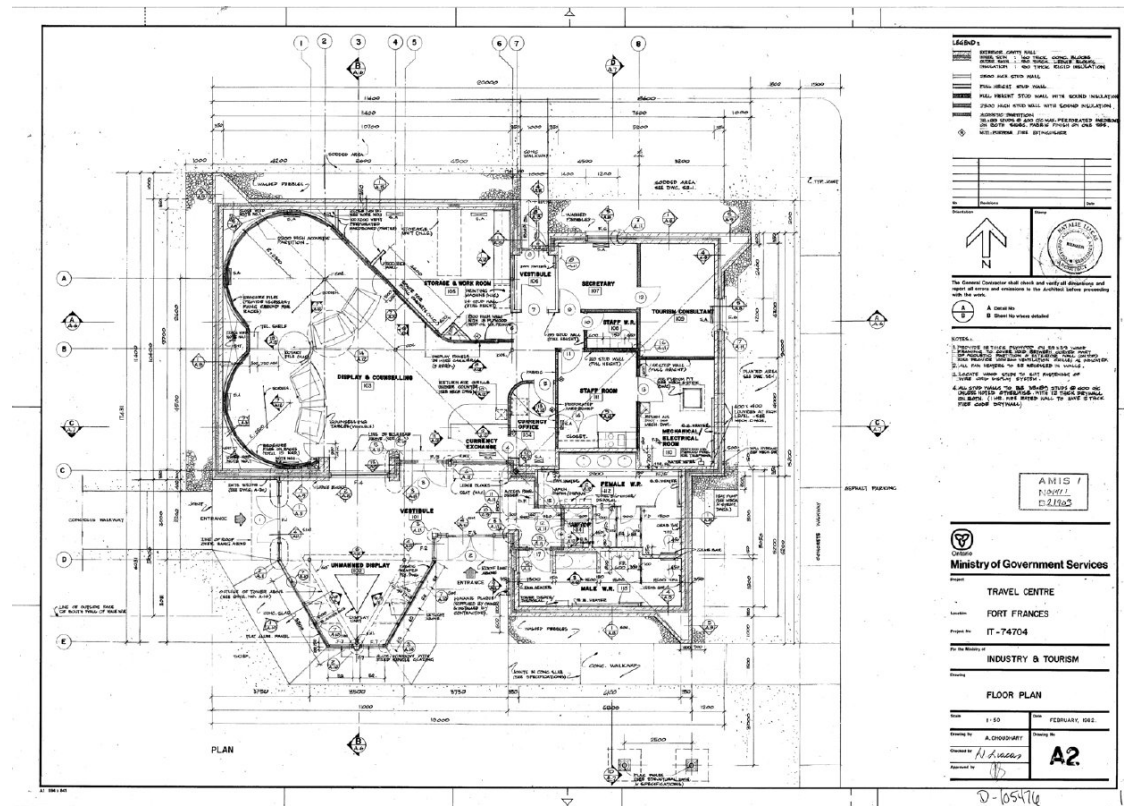
The building grounds have significant parking and a small green space.



Exterior



Entry



## Ontario Ministry Lease Agreement Summary and Partnership Agreement

After two years of attempts to negotiate terms to purchase the Building from the Province of Ontario, the Town of Fort Frances eventually settled for a five year lease. Terms of the lease were negotiated with the Ministry of Infrastructure.

### Summary of Lease Terms with Province

**Term:** 5 years – May 1, 2014 – April 30, 2019

**Premises:** Approximately 2,411 square feet

**Basic Rent:** \$4.50 per square foot

**Operating and Maintenance:** The Tenant shall perform at their expense all the Operating and Maintenance costs of the building, the grounds maintenance, parking lot, and utilities

**Capital Repair:** The Tenant shall perform at their sole cost and expense all capital repairs with the Landlord's consent

**Property Taxes:** The Tenant shall at their expense pay all property taxes related to the property directly to the tax authority

### Landlord's approval of Tenant improvements:

(a) The Tenant shall not install any Improvements in/or to the Premises without the Landlord's prior written consent, which consent shall not be unreasonably withheld, provided such Improvements do not affect the Structure or the Mechanical and Electrical Services.

(b) With its request for consent, the Tenant shall submit to the Landlord details of the proposed Improvements, including plans and specifications prepared by qualified architects or engineers.

**Sublease:** The Tenant cannot sublease this agreement.

**Cancellation:** Either party may cancel the agreement with 6 months prior written notice to the other party  
(Full agreement attached)

## Current Partners

**The RRFDC:** During year one and up to year three the RRFDC will work with Sunset Country Travel Association and eventually the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce (or some similar organization) to facilitate the transition. The RRFDC will provide supports to pay for a new sign, create displays and provide staffing this summer as required.

**Sunset Country Travel Association:** Sunset Country Travel Association, a not for profit, is the largest tourism marketing association in Northern Ontario. They represent every town and city west of Atikokan, as well as about 350 outfitters, retail and allied members. They have expressed an interest in paying for display space in the center. They would also assist with the creation of displays. Annually, Sunset Country Tourism operates the Tourism Ambassador program and would prioritize the center as a location to locate a summer student.

## Changes to Center Signage











## **Display Agreement: Sunset Country Travel Association**

### **Between:**

### **The Town of Fort Frances, the RRFDC and Sunset Country Travel Association**

Given that the Town of Fort Frances has rented a building whose purpose will be to provide Tourism Information at the Canadian–US Border, the Town Welcomes the financial support and assistance of Sunset Country Travel Association to:

1. Create displays that value-add the visitors experience. These displays will be created in cooperation with the Town.
2. Promote visitation in the Sunset Country lure magazine and digital media.

The Town of Fort Frances and RRFDC will solicit, ship and display only brochures from sources within the Rainy River District and International Falls. Regional brochures from the private sector will be provided only by Sunset Country Travel Association. Sunset Country may choose to only display member's materials.

The Town and RRFDC will make the approx. 15 by 8 foot space available for these displays and support regional tourism by staffing the Tourism Center from at least May to September, and will work to extend those dates to year-round as resources become available. The vestibule area will be used by Sunset Country Travel Association to create a space that represents the “outdoor” experiences available in the region.

The Town and RRFDC will work with Sunset Country Travel Association to train staff to be knowledgeable about regional offerings.

The Town will notify Sunset Country Travel Association immediately, if they choose to close the Center. Either party may decide to terminate this agreement annually.

Sunset Country Tourism Association will contribute \$20,000 a year (subject to funds being available) to assist with the operating costs of the Tourism Center.

### **Display Plan**

The interior wall space will be covered with a panoramic visual that will include a map of Sunset Country. Brochure display space will be divided into two sections, one for the local attractions which will form the first rounded section of the interior wall and the wall behind the desk will house Sunset Country brochures.

The Town purchased new racks that are free standing and compliment the displays behind them.

The vestibule area houses a small display of animals commonly found in the region. It is hoped that this display will include a bear in the 2016 season. This will act as a draw for tourists.

## **Grants and Other Funding Opportunities**

### **Staffing**

#### **Summer Job Service**

Summer Job Service is a \$2-per-hour-per-student hiring incentive is available to Ontario employers to create summer job placements for students aged 15 to 30. Not-for-profit organizations can apply to receive the hiring incentive. Funding is based on availability and subject to annual renewals.

#### **Canada Summer Jobs**

Canada Summer Jobs provides funding to public-sector employers with funding to create summer job opportunities for young people aged 15 to 30 years who are full-time students are intending to return to their studies in the next school year. Not for profits can receive 100% of hourly funding for up to 8 weeks. All other costs must be covered by the employer.

#### **Sunset Country Tourism Ambassador Funding**

The grant is available on a year to year basis 100% funding for approximately 6 weeks. This funding is provided through the Sunset Country Travel Association as part of a grant applied for by the RTO for the Region and generally announced in early June.

#### **FedNor- NOHFC Internships**

Eligible not-for-profit and public sector organizations located in Northern Ontario are potentially eligible to receive a conditional contribution of up to 90 percent of a recent graduate's salary to a maximum contribution of either \$31,500.

### **Marketing**

Several marketing funds exist that could provide some matching support dollars for projects. These funds generally are 50% of projects. The Regional Tourism Organization often offers 50% funding for small capital projects.

## Operations

Based on visitation the Tourism Center would be open:

**Staffing:**

**May 20 to August 31:**

Monday	10-6
Tuesday	10-6
Wednesday	10-6
Thursday	10-6
Friday	10-7
Saturday	10-5
Sunday	CLOSED

**Sept 1 to November 30 (Oct 1):**

Monday	CLOSED
Tuesday	10-6
Wednesday	10-6
Thursday	10-6
Friday	10-7
Saturday	10-3
Sunday	CLOSED

## Operating Costs 2015

### ANNUAL

#### Expenses

Lease \$4.50	\$13,000.00	Town
Taxes 2012 occupied	*\$13,000.00	(internal)
Utilities	\$6,000.00	Town
Maintenance	\$2,500.00	Town
Staffing (2.5) plus intern	\$15,000	RRFDC
WiFi (etc)/phone/ toiletries	\$4,000.00	RRFDC
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$53,000.00</b>	

#### Revenue

Grants - staffing	\$7,000.00	RRFDC
Sunset Country Tourism	\$20,000.00	Town
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$27,000.00</b>	

<b>Cost to Town</b>	<b>\$26,000.00</b>
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## Operating Costs 2016

### ANNUAL

#### Expenses

Lease \$4.50	\$13,000.00	Town
Taxes 2012 occupied	\$13,000.00	(internal)
Utilities	\$6,000.00	Town
Maintenance	\$2,500.00	Town
Staffing (2) plus intern	\$15,000.00	RRFDC
WiFi (etc)/phone/ toiletries	\$4,000.00	RRFDC
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$53,000.00</b>	

#### Revenue

Grants - staffing	\$9,000.00	RRFDC
Sunset Country Tourism	\$10,000.00	Town
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$19,000.00</b>	

<b>Cost to Town</b>	<b>\$34,000.00</b>
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## Stopping Incentives

Marketing

Bottled Water                \$2,000.00

Signage US                    \$7,000.00

## Mitigating

$\$34,000 - 13,000 = \$21,000$  less taxes

$\$11,000/3 = \$3,333$  after funding

Total = \$14,334.00

## Options

1. Request lower rate from government.
2. Request removal of the clause the Town cannot sublet or carry on commercial activity. Lease 2 small offices.
3. Find new vendors to use display space.
4. Reduce hours/offer volunteers the opportunity to work in the center.

## Capital

1. Bench outside
2. Tinting Vestibule
3. Painting Red out to Green or Grey
4. Washroom doors etc
5. Side wall posters