

Helping Nova Scotia prove its worth

TIANS president wants to show how important tourism really is

Q&A
By Lindsey Keilty - The Daily News

As the president of the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia, Darlene Grant Fiander sees the industry from a different perspective. Rather than focusing on marketing Nova Scotia as a product, TIANS works with partner associations and stakeholders to represent the best interests of the tourism industry.

The Daily News sat down with Fiander recently to discuss highlights of the past year and her hopes for 2008.

Q: How is TIANS' role different from a tourism-marketing perspective?

A: TIANS is a trade organization, so we represent the private sector, businesses and tourism. We're a



The tourism industry is much more than restaurants and hotels.

membership organization and our main priority is to enhance the competitive environment for businesses in tourism so that they can run, operate effectively and meet the needs of consumers. So we ad-

vocate or lobby on issues that are affecting the industry, that are affecting the way we can service our customers.

Q: What stands out as significant in 2007?

A: The review of the Tourist Accommodation Act was a big area of work that took place. It's good that it's been dealt with; it's been long in the making. TIANS has also been very involved in advocating on important issues, such as quality and better access into the province. Some of the highlights in that respect ... the U.S. pre-clearance at the Halifax (Robert L. Stanfield) International Airport, which has been a wonderful asset to the tourism product because the airport is the hub, really, for Atlantic Canada. Also, the return of Iceland Air last spring was a very good achievement for our industry and opens up that marketplace for us, and it's a lucrative market. As well, Bay Ferries has been adjusting its schedule as they come into Yarmotuh to try to make up for the loss of the Scotia Prince a few years ago. So we continue to try to work on those areas by lobbying to the Ministers Task Force.

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Our roads are in poor repair, especially the secondary roads that we want our visitors to travel on. We think the government should have a filter that considers tourism when it makes decisions, and it shouldn't just be the decisions based on where the elected officials are, it should be decisions based on what makes the most economic sense in terms of investment. We're going to continue to push this with the government because it's key. We can do all the marketing in the world to get people here, but if, when they get here — they get poor roads — it's going to affect their decision to return. It's also a big factor in the motorcoach industry.

Q: Do you think most people look at tourism as a single entity, without grouping all of these other factoring departments in as well?

A: Absolutely. We actually lobbied for the development of a Ministers Task Force a few years ago and we're pleased that one does exist, but the idea is that tourism touches every-

thing, a number of departments, so what we asked is that they work collaboratively on a number of issues that face the tourism industry. The task forces looks at things in which the government shares responsibility, transportation being a natural one, the Department of Natural Resources would be another because of the work they're doing on the protected areas network, coastal access, etc. It all has big implications on tourism, so we believe it's a good mechanism to look at improving the industry.

Q: What's on the agenda for 2008?

A: One of the things that we're trying to push forward is the economic significance of tourism in this province. It's a \$1.3 billion industry; it employs almost 40,000 Nova Scotians. We don't believe there's an appropriate recognition given to the industry. Part of that is because in five sectors, there's more than 400 occupations, so it's not one building, and it's not so cut and dry, so that makes it a little difficult to understand. In the poli-

cies that are implemented, there needs to be more consideration given to the impact tourism has in this province. Last year, we had a big issue with the visitor-rebate program, the federal government was going to cancel that, when every other jurisdiction we compete with in the world is enhancing their visitor-rebate program, so policies like that have a big impact.

There's great potential in this industry and great room for growth. With a focus on transportation and product development, we'll be well-positioned for the future.

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DARLENE GRANT FIANDER

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Nova Scotia Launches Innovative Strategies to Address Tourism Labour Shortage

The Tourism sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in Canada. Today there are 1.67 million people working nationally in Tourism - approximately 40,000 in Nova Scotia. It is estimated that 2 million Canadians will work in Tourism by 2013. For the first time in our history as a Country we are entering a period of 0% labourforce growth by 2010. With a decrease in the number of children being born and an increase in life expectancy, the tourism sector can no longer rely on younger workers. Employers are recognizing the need to

recruit from non traditional labour pools such as mature workers. Employers are also being more creative in how they attract and retain new employees.

To assist employers with recruitment challenges, the Nova Scotia Tourism Human Resource Council has partnered with the Hotel Association of Nova Scotia to create a sector specific recruitment website for tourism jobs within Nova Scotia. **TourismTalent.com** is one of the few career portals in the world that specifically target those seeking careers

in the Tourism sector. Potential employees can access tourism employers in an efficient and focused manner and employers have a cost effective strategy to reach potential employees.

Nationally, the tourism sector has also developed a recognition program to attract workers to tourism jobs. The employee driven "Employer of Choice" program allows employees to rate their employer in nine categories including compensation and benefits, workplace culture, learning and development. The program assesses

employers against established employee satisfaction standard needed in today's workplace. Employers that meet a minimum standard earn the national "Employer of Choice" designation and use their rating as an attraction and retention strategy. In today's competitive labor market, employers must practice innovative strategies to attract and retain a strong workforce.

For more information, please visit the Nova Scotia Tourism Human Resource Council website at www.tourismhrc.com

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