

TIANS Position Paper – May 2, 2005

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-Submitted to: Minister Rodney MacDonald, May 4, 2005

-Copied to TIANS Board, COANS Executive Committee

Issue - Indiscriminate Camping:

Indiscriminate Camping is the practice of camping overnight in unauthorized locations such as shopping malls, parking lots or on the side of the road. Section three (3), article three (3) of the Tourism Accommodations Act states; no person shall use, maintain, operate or manage a camping establishment or permit the use of any lands for the overnight parking of recreational vehicles for the traveling or vacationing public unless there is a license which is in force. 1994-95,c.9,s.3. The Minister announced the new Tourist Accommodations Act on November 18, 2003.

COANS (Campground Owners and Operators of Nova Scotia) and TIANS (Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia) are asking that the Minister enforce the Accommodations Act.

What Has Been Done?

COANS, an associate partner with TIANS, has done much to work towards resolution of the issue of indiscriminate camping. Over the years, there has been on-going communications with the stakeholders involved.

TIANS has been able to track correspondence, to indicate that indiscriminate camping has been a problem in Nova Scotia for forty- five (45) years. COANS members and executive are extremely disappointed in the lack of action taken to resolve this issue.

TIANS has attached (for reference) a compilation of the file for review. The summarized communications indicate a desire to help, but very little progress. The problem is primarily enforcement, i.e., who is responsible for enforcement of the regulations, and, education and awareness to the broader community

The Impacts of Indiscriminate Camping:

The campground industry is a vital piece of the Nova Scotia brand promise of Come to Life, and an asset to the bottom line of the provincial resources. Campers who come to Nova Scotia should experience more than parking in a mall parking lot or along the side of the road. In May 2001, a report prepared for TIANS by Acceleration Corp. (involving steering committee members including TIANS, COANS, Parks Canada, NS Dept. of Natural Resources, NSTC&H, ACOA & HR Development Canada) stated;

The camping industry generated over \$21 million in export earnings for Nova Scotia (3% of all Tourism exports). A total of 1,340 jobs were generated from camping, 4.1% of all jobs created by tourism. Governments benefit from camping. Nova Scotia received \$2.5 million in provincial sales tax alone. The federal government took in \$3.2 million in federal sales tax. Over \$55 million in economic activity was created by the camping industry in the province. Improving the NS Camping Industry task force stated in 2002 that; \$20 to \$25 million of revenues have been lost to Indiscriminate Camping.

This is not just a financial issue; it is also a liability issue. TIANS is working diligently with the insurance industry to address current advocacy issues relating to insurance affordability and availability. If tourists are at risk, and they are, when they camp indiscriminately, then the overall industry could suffer increased risk assessments as litigation costs increase.

COANS and TIANS are committed to assisting the Minister with the actualization of these items in any manner deemed appropriate to ensuring indiscriminate camping is an issue of the past and our Vision partnership is the focus of the future.

For the 2005/06 Tourism Season, COANS and TIANS are asking the Minister to take action on the following four (4) items:

1. Formal legal clarification and assignment of the law re enforcement of the Tourism Accommodations Act.

Nova Scotia is not alone on this issue. In Ontario for example, municipalities enforce camping in licensed operations. Merchant associations in Maine have policies regarding Indiscriminate Camping in their lots. Florida is a model at all levels, through the creation of educational and enforcement support for those affected by indiscriminate camping. In his letter dated Feb. 26, 2004, C/Supt. T.W. Bennett, RCMP, the OIC Criminal Operations H Division, stated, Once proper notice is given to the overnight recreational campers, the RCMP would be in a position to enforce the Protection of Property Act. However, they are not authorized to act under the Tourism Accommodations Act. There is currently no one department other than NSTC&H, authorized or mandated to enforce the accommodation act.

2. Signage at critical entry points in major transportation routes.

COANS and TIANS are asking for simple signage that informs visitors of the law. There are models of effective signage in place now that could be used as templates for informing visitors that indiscriminate camping is illegal.

3. Training, signage and promotion in all VICs.

As part of the quality initiative, Visitor Information Center employees are well positioned to guide visitors to safe, hospitable campgrounds, legally licensed to operate in Nova Scotia.

4. Championing the campground industry and promotion of legitimate campsites.

Support COANS, one of our partners in the realization of our Vision goal to double tourism revenues by 2012; and at the same time, impact the value of our vision and marketing efforts overall. The 2005/2006 marketing campaign speaks directly to the potential visitor seeking experiences that relate to; birding, hiking, and water access. The campground industry is in one of the very best positions to deliver many of these amenities to our guests. Vision goals written around Quality, Coastal/Environmental Protection and Transportation; are all impacted by indiscriminate camping.

COANS Executive is asking for the industry to support their efforts to deliver on the brand promise.