



Jacob Pelkey, Tourism Coordinator
on Behalf of Aroostook County Tourism

In Support of

LD 1998, An Act to Transfer the Arch Hangar at the Former Loring Air Force Base to the Loring Air Museum

January 16, 2024

Dear Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business:

My name is Jacob Pelkey, and I am writing today on behalf of Aroostook County Tourism and its board members, all of whom voted on October 26, 2023 to support LD 1998. Aroostook County Tourism is one of eight destination marketing organizations designated by the Maine Office of Tourism. The organization promotes the very best visitor experience of The County to potential tourists in the areas of southern Maine to Syracuse, New York to Baltimore, Maryland through paid and organic digital, print, and tradeshow marketing. In 2022, the region attracted 282,900 visitors of which 41% recall our advertising. The economic impact of tourism on The County supported 2,650 jobs and is measured as \$246,453,400 up 13% as compared to 2021.

The Arch Hanger at the Loring Air Force Base is an astonishing landmark recognized by visitors familiar with or curious about its history. In recent years, the Limestone Snowhawks (local snowmobile club) have groomed trail access to the Arch Hanger. It is said by one individual that an estimated 4-6,000 snowmobiles travel to the site each winter. The site has grown to be one of the most popular snowmobile destinations in Aroostook County and travel to the landmark is a focal point of marketing the winter experience of The County for promotional campaigns such as 'Come North.' and 'Maine's Best Winter.'

It is our understanding that the Loring Air Museum welcomes 4,000 visitors annually and the leadership of the museum has secured an F-104 Starfighter to be on permanent display only if indoor space is available. The Museum has a vision and dedication to the region as demonstrated through its existing museum organization and annual visitors. The interest in the cultural significance of Loring Air Force Base exists and the location is near other visitor destinations and activities such as: ample lodging in Limestone and central Aroostook, fine hiking and Nordic ski trails at the Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge, exciting entertainment at private businesses such as Spud Speedway, wilderness camping at

www.visitaroostook.com

11 West Presque Isle Rd. PO Box 779, Caribou, ME 04736
Voice: (207) 551-6227

Trafton Lake, 2,300 miles of Snowmobile trails and 1,300 miles of ATV Trails. The visitors to this part of Maine are experiencing a limited part of Loring and its storied past, this bill would increase the capacity and refine the visitor experience to Loring Air Force Base.

We respectfully ask that you support this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,



Jacob Pelkey
Tourism Coordinator
Aroostook County Tourism

Aroostook County Tourism Board of Members:

- Pat Sutherland, Chair - Chapman
psutherland@sutherlandweston.com
- Jane Torres - Houlton
director@greaterhoulton.com
- Steve Dobson - Washburn
srd@srdenprises.com
- Kim Smith – Presque Isle
ksmith@presqueisleme.us
- Kevin Freeman – Presque Isle
kevin@thesledshopinc.com
- Gary Marquis - Caribou
gmarquis@cariboumaine.org
- Bill Sheehan - Westfield
bill.j.sheehan@gmail.com
- Jennifer Brophy - Portage
jen@redrivercamps.com
- Leigh Cummings - Houlton
leighandsandra@gmail.com
- Dona Saucier - Frenchville
dona.saucier@gmail.com
- Scott Lafleur - Caribou
scott@caribouinn.com
- Steve Walker – Island Falls
vajowamaple@gmail.com
- Amber Rankine – Fort Kent
fortkentchamber@gmail.com

Jacob Pelkey
Caribou
LD 1998

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