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## **Tories plan to move G20 summit to Toronto**

***Ottawa seeks new host site as expanded economic council proves too big for Ontario's Muskoka region; G8 will remain in Huntsville***

Stephen Harper's decision to invite the world to Canada is proving to be too much for Ontario's cottage country.

The Harper government is making plans to move next year's Group of 20 summit to the Toronto area from the Muskoka region because the demands of lodging and securing the vast retinue of officials threaten to overwhelm the rural Ontario district.

At the same time, federal and provincial sources say, the Conservatives plan to keep the related but separate Group of Eight economic gathering in Muskoka's Huntsville, Ont.

Both events are still expected to take place in June 2010, with the thinking being the G20 would follow the G8.

Canada has long been preparing to play host to the G8 meeting for wealthier nations in Huntsville. But its plans were disrupted in late September when world leaders decided the G20 – which includes bigger developing countries – would supplant the G8 as the key international economic council. It's an idea Canada had long championed during Paul Martin's terms as finance minister and prime minister.

The Harper government responded to this turn of events by announcing it would also play host to a G20 summit in June of 2010. And federal Industry Minister Tony Clement, whose riding includes the G8 host site, said both meetings would take place in Muskoka.

Organizers had been examining whether the G20 meeting could also be held at the same Deerhurst resort in Huntsville as the G8 summit.

It hasn't worked out that way, however.

A federal government source said the population of officials that travels with G20 leaders and their delegations is too big for a place like Huntsville. The summit will also draw observers from the European Union, African states and the United Nations, making the security and logistical task too steep for Muskoka.

Planning envisions the G8 summit beginning in Huntsville, with the leaders later heading south to Toronto to join up with the G20 meeting, the federal government source said. Muskoka is about a 90minute drive from Toronto.

A spokesman for Mr. Clement, however, said no decision has been made to move the G20 meeting from Muskoka. Darren Cunningham, director of communications for Mr. Clement, said Ottawa has not given up on playing host to the summit in Ontario's cottage country.

"We are still examining the feasibility of hosting this in Muskoka," Mr. Cunningham said. "We've done the hotel room count and now it's a matter of making sure we look at things like securing off the roadways."

He said talk of shifting the G20 is speculative. "There's nothing to announce," he said. "I am not willing to talk about an alternative location because right now we're doing what we can to host in Muskoka."

But a senior Ontario government official said it is his understanding that the G20 will be held in Toronto or a neighbouring suburb. Muskoka's Deerhurst resort is simply not large enough to accommodate the G20, said the official, who asked not to be named.

Huntsville Mayor Claude Doughty said he was warned weeks ago that organizers were thinking of moving the G20.

"I know they're reconsidering that just because of the size of the event," Mr. Doughty said in an interview yesterday.

"I wouldn't be shocked if they don't have the G20 here."

He said if planners can't fit the G20 meeting in the Huntsville resort, then it has to move outside Muskoka. "Deerhurst is by far the biggest hotel in Muskoka. If it's not big enough, there's nowhere else it's going."

Mr. Doughty said he thinks Toronto is the only backup option for the G20.

Picturesque Huntsville is nevertheless an ideal venue for Canada to welcome the G8 leaders. Ever since the terrorist attacks in New York in 2001, G8 countries have looked for smaller, more secluded places to hold their annual meeting. In 2002, a year Canada also played host, it was held in Kananaskis.

Mr. Harper is expected to announce a decision on the G20 location before he visits South Korea in early December.