

FedNor Update

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Trade mission to southern U.S. pays immediate dividends

An exhibit featuring chimpanzees might seem an unlikely product for Northern Ontario to export to the southeastern United States, but it's one of several prospects that have emerged as a result of the Team Northern Ontario trade mission to Atlanta.

Team Northern Ontario was the first full-fledged international trade mission for the region.

Guy Labine, Director of Business Development for Science North Enterprises, signed up for the spring trade mission to explore the U.S. Southeast for new business opportunities. Remarkably, some advance phone calls to American contacts arranged for him as part of the mission process produced a \$180,000 deal even before the late-April trip began.

"Our participation in the Atlanta mission was very beneficial," says Labine. "It allowed us to finalize and sign a contract with the Fernbank Museum of Natural History to lease our *Discovering Chimpanzees: The Remarkable World of Jane Goodall* exhibit for three months in 2004. It also provided us with other significant and solid leads."

Science North Enterprises was one of 18 Northern Ontario businesses and organizations chosen for the mission to Atlanta. Organized by FedNor and the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce and led by Andy Mitchell, Secretary of State



Science North's *Discovering Chimpanzees: The Remarkable World of Jane Goodall* was a hit in Atlanta where the Fernbank Museum of Natural History signed a \$180,000 contract to showcase the exhibit. Here, two youngsters in the Chimp Forest section try their own chimpanzee walk.

(Rural Development) (FedNor), Team Northern Ontario was the first full-fledged international trade mission for the region.

From April 29 to May 1, 2002, mission participants engaged in more than 115 meetings with U.S. firms. Most took place in Atlanta, but some were held as far away as Savannah, Georgia, and Birmingham, Alabama.

"This mission really opened up a whole new market for us," says Peter Birnie, Chief Financial Officer of New Liskeard-based Wabi Iron and Steel Corporation. "We had six meetings and we're following up with the contacts we made."

Since the mission, Wabi's sales manager has returned to Atlanta and conducted follow-up meetings with several potential customers. Birnie

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Northern Ontario Citizen Engagement Forum

When northerners are asked for their opinion, they don't hold back. That became clear at a series of regional consultations that will culminate in the Northern Ontario Citizen Engagement Forum in Sault Ste. Marie, November 14-17, 2002. The goal of the regional consultations was to identify the barriers to economic prosperity and youth retention, and more importantly, to come up with possible solutions to key northern challenges.

Participants presented a wide variety of ideas they believe would make the North a better place to live. More significantly, many voiced their desire to see the consultations' findings put into action, rather than sit on a shelf collecting dust.

Discussions at the forum will centre around access to capital, access to a competitive and innovative business environment, as well as infrastructure and telecommunications requirements. In more general terms, discussions will touch on improved quality of life including health, education and lifelong learning.

A federal action plan will be developed in early 2003.

"This document and its recommendations will represent the collective voice of Northerners," says Andy Mitchell, Secretary of State (Rural Development) (FedNor). "Once the forum is completed, we will look at the options available for action so that we can focus our actions to meet the challenges facing our communities."

Youth Internship Program reaches milestone

Keeping the best and the brightest working in Northern Ontario is the ultimate goal of FedNor's successful Youth Internship Program. Since 1997, FedNor has helped nearly 500 post-secondary graduates launch their careers here in the North.

"Young people have a real role to play in the future economic development of the region and we need to provide them with the opportunity to live and work right here in Northern Ontario," says Andy Mitchell, Secretary of State (Rural Development) (FedNor). "Our youth are not the leaders of tomorrow — they're the leaders of today."

In the last five years, FedNor has invested more than \$12 million to provide internship opportunities for youth across Northern Ontario.



Erin Richmond began her FedNor youth internship in July 1999, filling a joint position at Nipissing East Community Opportunities and the North Bay Economic Development Commission. She is now Manager of The Business Centre—Nipissing Parry Sound in North Bay.

FOCUS on INNOVATION

For Dr. George Macey, Director of the Northwestern Ontario Technology Centre, Industry Canada's Innovation Summit in Thunder Bay was just what he was waiting for.

The eighth of 34 Regional Summits being held in cities across Canada, the event attracted strong representation from the private, technical and academic sectors, as well as those promoting Aboriginal and regional interests.

"Innovation is the key to diversifying and expanding all industry, including the resource-based enterprises that prevail in our region," says Macey. "The challenge we face here is to foster what I call a 'Culture of Innovation.' The summit provided an excellent means to reinforce that goal and gave us some solid ideas about how to reach it."

Also serving as innovation facilitator with the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce, Macey was one of 165 people who participated in the June 6, 2002, event. Since then, he has started building an information resource Web site on regional innovation, along with the Northwestern Ontario Technology Association. The Thunder Bay event was co-moderated by Dr. Fred Gilbert, President of Lakehead University, and Patricia Lang, President of Confederation College.

Northern Ontario's second Innovation Summit, held September 27, 2002, in



Greater Sudbury, also drew enthusiastic participation, with close to 150 business and organizational representatives from across the northeast attending the one-day session at the Trillium Centre.

"It is vital we get Canada's Innovation Strategy right and that's why the innovation summits have been so important. It's great that Northern Ontario's regional innovation summits had such good turnout," says Allan Rock, Minister of Industry. "By attending and, more importantly, actively participating in these summits, the residents of this region have provided valuable input and perspective to this national process."

While the Sudbury summit explored ways to increase the size and scope of the city's emerging mining technology cluster, the Thunder Bay summit discussed the potential for research and technological development in forestry and forest products. Both summits looked long and hard at potential technical/industrial clusters in health and biotechnology.

"One of the most significant topics was how mining technology will evolve into information technology," says Sudbury summit moderator Dr. Greg Baiden. "Technological advances

can determine that an old deposit is in fact a productive one — in effect, you will be able to make new ore bodies rather than having to find them."

With Northern medical school campuses to be established in Sudbury and Thunder Bay, both cities are interested in biotech and medical research spinoffs.

"Already there's a partnership of common interest between Lakehead University, the Northwest Cancer Centre, the new Thunder Bay Regional Hospital and Genesis Genomics, a genetic research firm developing markers for cancer," says Judy Sander, Manager of the Northwestern Ontario Technology Centre.

"The new medical school will only strengthen the possibility of a biotech cluster," adds Sander.

Attracting private capital for small innovation-driven businesses was also on both agendas.

"Start-up and venture capital — especially for technology-driven firms — is in short supply in Northern Ontario," says Scott Dougall, Director of Software Development and Marketing at SkyStream Networks.Com. "It's tough to raise private funds locally and hard to gain credibility in outside venture capital markets."



Community Futures Development Corporation Day

Recognizing volunteer commitment to our rural and northern communities

Organizations dedicated to the economic growth of rural communities across Ontario celebrated their successes during the inaugural Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) Day on October 25, 2002.

Ontario's 56 CFDCs — funded by Industry Canada's Community Futures Program — celebrated the dedication and accomplishments of their volunteers and staff, and highlighted the importance of small and medium-sized businesses to the economy.

Held during Small Business Week, CFDC Day placed particular emphasis on the needs of the small business sector and provided the public with a glimpse of the work being done to help support the continued development, stability and diversification of our rural communities.

In the last five years, Ontario CFDCs have invested more than \$185 million, created or maintained 30 700 jobs and leveraged \$320 million in funds from other sources through their business counselling and investment activities.

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ECOTOURISM in the NORTH — a natural evolution

Northern Ontario has what it takes to become a world-class ecotourism destination. That was the consensus of delegates to the Eco-North 2002 Éco-Nord Conference and Trade Show held in Sudbury earlier this year.

Hosted by the City of Greater Sudbury and supported by FedNor, the conference was attended by 350 participants. The trade show, featuring 40 exhibits, attracted more than 1500 people over two days.

The international roster of guest speakers included Jim Watson, CEO of the Canadian

Tourism Commission, travel expert Marybeth Bond of Tiburon, California (CBS/Evening Magazine), and world explorers Gary and Joanie McGuffin of Goulais River north of Sault Ste. Marie.

Matthew Owl, Tourism Coordinator for the Waubetek Business Development Corporation — an organization serving

27 First Nation communities from across northeastern Ontario — wore two hats at the Eco-North Conference. He also operates Trails of the Eagle Clan tours out of the Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation, offering eco-adventurers from around the world guided interpretive tours of his ancestors' travel routes.

Owl believes that by returning to their roots, ecotourists are safeguarding the future of their children.

a successful Northern Ontario ecotourism industry was not lost on the participants of a pre-conference tourism dialogue, hosted by Secretary of State Andy Mitchell.

Participants in the discussion felt that the North needs assistance in acquiring the practical tools for tourism development. The group identified issues such as evaluating and expanding on community assets, building consensus for tourism development, and planning and marketing. As a result, FedNor is currently developing an action plan.



Trails of the Eagle Clan tours offers eco-adventurers from around the world guided interpretive tours of owner Matthew Owl's ancestors' travel routes.

“Ecotourism experiences help educate people about the importance of maintaining a healthy environment...”

“Ecotourism experiences help educate people about the importance of maintaining a healthy environment, ensuring future generations have the opportunity to experience the magic of sitting around a campfire listening to the language of the land,” he says.

While the aim of ecotourism operators is to provide a natural adventure, the potential multi-million dollar impact of

Building on the success of the Eco-North Conference, FedNor North Central Manager, Tom Dodds, led a seven-person delegation to the World Ecotourism Summit in Québec City, May 19–22, 2002.

Doug Reynolds, Executive Director of the Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters Association, says the summit in Québec confirmed that the challenges of developing ecotourism are similar around the world.

“The basic issues facing outdoor nature tourism are fundamentally the same worldwide,” he says. “The Québec [City] summit really highlighted that we should ensure these tourism operations create good quality social and economic benefits in local communities.”

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North meets South

predicts Wabi will be doing business with at least seven or eight firms in the Atlanta area with an eventual sales target of \$2 to \$3 million as a result.

Labine and Birnie aren't the only ones optimistic about the trade mission's success. Judging from post-mission surveys, Team Northern Ontario's main objective — to increase exports from Northern Ontario and to have half of the participants active in the southeast U.S. marketplace within 12 months — appears to be on track.

Of the 18 delegate firms, 12 intend to return to Atlanta. One is Bombardier Transportation's Thunder Bay Works, which is pursuing the chance to supply \$50 million in bi-level rail cars for a new Atlanta-Macon commuter rail line. Others from the mission are also hard at work developing prospects, including Brown's Concrete, Neureka Research Corp., and Lumière International from Greater Sudbury; Lakehead University and software maker FSC Ltd. from Thunder Bay; and Mining Technologies International Inc. and Cutsey Business Systems from North Bay.



Team Northern Ontario's 18 participating organizations and businesses met with more than 115 U.S. firms during the three-day mission to Atlanta this past spring.

Milking new industry's potential



The growing market for goat milk convinced Northern Ontario farmers to form the Northeastern Ontario Goat Milk Producers Group. President Deborah Warren Smith runs her own operation of over 300 goats.

It's delicious, nutritious and one of the fastest growing livestock industries in Ontario — it's goat milk!

Since April 2001, a group of northeastern Ontario farmers have been exporting goat milk to one of the country's largest processing companies in southern Ontario. The Northeastern Ontario Goat Milk Producers group — now comprised of 12 farms from the area — was founded with the help of the Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) known as Economic Partners—Sudbury East/West Nipissing Inc. The Sturgeon Falls-based organization was instrumental in pioneering this dynamic and innovative industry in the North.

"Area stakeholders saw the development of a goat milk producers group as an opportunity to diversify the

local agricultural sector and to get in on the ground floor of a rapidly expanding market," says John Candie, Manager of the CFDC.

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Over six million litres of goat milk and other by-products are marketed every year in the province. FedNor funding for the goat milk producers group is helping to provide management, technical and human

resources support needed to help each farm operation prosper.

Consumer interest in goat milk has been increasing in recent years. Goat milk has similar amounts of protein as cow milk, as well as fat, iron, and vitamins C and D. It has more natural vitamin A, more vitamin B and 13 percent less lactose than cow milk. While the use of goat milk for nutritional reasons is sound, many consumers once worried about one important aspect — taste. The fact is, goat milk and cow milk taste just about the same.

Deborah Warren Smith, president of the Goat Milk Producers group, says the opportunity to capitalize on this growing multi-million dollar industry was there, if area farmers worked as a team.

"We knew we wouldn't be successful if we didn't work side by side," she says from her farm in Powassan. "We've become a very close-knit group and things are going well."

Competition goes province-wide



Michael Chernawsky and his partner Jason Dasti (not shown) won the FedNor Business Challenge thanks to their work in founding Wise Wear, a clothing manufacturer, distributor and retailer.

The FedNor Business Challenge on May 29, 2002, was the first step for young entrepreneurs Jason Dasti and Mike Chernawsky of Lockerby Composite School. Now they are well on their way to learning how to run a small business.

Dasti and Chernawsky — co-owners of Wise Wear, a clothing manufacturer, distributor and retailer — took top honours at the annual business plan competition, which drew 100 participants from seven area secondary schools.

First developed by a participant of the FedNor Youth Internship Program, the FedNor Business Challenge has attracted more than 215 submissions since 1998. Today, the program's success has resulted in the creation of similar competitions in 22 other communities across the province.

Of the thousands of secondary school students who have participated in the challenge across the North, many have gone on to start and operate their own small businesses based on the venture plans they prepared for the competition.

"The FedNor Business Challenge forced us to think our way through every aspect of a professional business plan," says Dasti. "It gave us direction and helped us develop new ideas."

Since winning the local competition, which was coordinated by the Sudbury Regional Business Centre and sponsored by FedNor, Dasti and Chernawsky have secured over 300 clients and have become the youngest members in the history of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce.

NEW
FEDNOR OFFICE
SERVING
**TIMMINS-
JAMES BAY**

FedNor's new office in Timmins is officially open for business following a ribbon-cutting ceremony on July 25, 2002, at the 101 Mall. The new facilities will continue to provide programs and services to the 100 000 residents in the region.