

FedNor Update

OPENING DOORS. BUILDING FUTURES. IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

FALL 2004

Nature-based tourism

Northern Ontario is the Land of Opportunity.

Tourism operators from across Northern Ontario will gather in Thunder Bay this fall to learn how they can capitalize on one of the industry's fastest growing areas — nature-based tourism.

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The FedNor Eco-North 2004 Éco-Nord Conference and Trade Show will invite tourism operators to explore ways of incorporating this thriving sector into their operations.

"Vacations today are usually shorter and more family-oriented than in the past," says Mary Long-Irwin, President of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce. "For years, most visitors came to the North for the hunting or fishing, but now many are looking for a more diverse experience, to connect with mother nature, and to teach their children about the earth."

Organized by a consortium of Northern Ontario tourism organizations headed by the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, this year's conference will take place from November 24 to 27 in Thunder Bay. The FedNor-supported event is expected to attract more than 350 participants, and will build on the success of the original conference held in Sudbury in 2002.

Themed *Nature-based Tourism: For You and Your Community*, the conference component of the event will provide educational and practical sessions to

help tourism businesses, organizations and communities learn more about the nature-based experience. The conference will also feature more than 50 world-class speakers, as well as interactive sessions and workshops to discuss common issues and solutions.

In addition, delegates will have the opportunity to meet more than 40 tourism industry suppliers taking part in the trade show, including manufacturers and retailers of nature-based products and tourism business development services.

Long-Irwin says learning and adventure are now popular prerequisites for families planning vacation time. "With the North's large Aboriginal population, demand has increased for activities linked to Native culture, attracting people who might want to experience things like a wild rice harvest or a sweat lodge, for example," she says.

Eleven million people visited Northern Ontario in 2002, which generated about 25 000 jobs, so it's clear tourism is big business in the North. Since 1999, FedNor has invested \$26.7 million in support of more

than 200 tourism projects across Northern Ontario, including both Eco-North conferences. In 2003, FedNor opened an International Business Centre (IBC) specifically designed to support tourism and trade initiatives.

"While traditional tourism remains a major contributor to the Northern economy, nature-based tourism is a key growth

area," says FedNor Director General, Louise Paquette. "After the conference in 2002, FedNor committed to hosting a second one in the northwest in 2004, and thanks to the efforts of the consortium, plans are well underway."

For more information or to register for the Eco-North 2004 Éco-Nord conference, visit www.eco-north.ca.



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Shaping the New North



Greetings to my fellow Northerners.

I'm pleased to have been reappointed as Minister of State for FedNor, and want to thank Prime Minister Paul Martin for his continued confidence and, through his commitment to FedNor, for recognizing the unique needs of Northern Ontario.

Having called Thunder Bay home for most of my life, I gained at an early age an appreciation for the people of Northern Ontario, and an admiration for the community spirit that is ever-present in all corners of this special part of our province. Our sense of identity as Northerners bears witness to the connection we all share from years of living in this great region.

But while we are clearly connected as a people, the same cannot yet be said from a

technological perspective – the economic and social benefits of developments like broadband internet and telehealth services aren't being felt in all parts of the North. Over the next few years, I will make it a priority to provide Northern communities with the tools they need to get connected, and I will focus on developing and promoting the North's existing sectoral strengths and future economic growth engines.

This strategy — to use the information highway to connect Northerners across this vast region, and to brand the North based on its strengths — will enhance the face of the land we call home.

It is the beginning of the "New North."

As we move forward with this vision and these goals, it will be important to continue to

work in partnership with the Government of Ontario, Northern communities and businesses to present a unified front.

I am confident that FedNor, along with its many partners and the people of Northern Ontario, will succeed in shaping a "New North" that will make us all proud.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Joe Comuzzi
Minister of State
FedNor

Northern communities take flight

Two small towns in Northern Ontario are spreading their wings in hopes of securing their economic futures. With FedNor's support, Gore Bay and Earlton are expanding their airport facilities in an effort to ensure the long-term viability of these relatively isolated communities.

"These investments are examples of the importance of having faith in our Northern communities as they work to become more self-reliant," says FedNor Director General, Louise Paquette. "We are very proud of the people of Earlton and Gore Bay for their foresight and their ongoing efforts to renew their respective communities."

Leaders in both company towns, whose economies rely heavily on employment at Manitoulin Transport (Gore Bay) and Grant Forest Products (Earlton), agree on the importance of having a reliable transportation link to larger business centres.

Earlton

Five new aircraft hangars are now fully operational at the Earlton airport and the benefits are already apparent.

"When the hangar project was originally planned, the expectation was that three full-time positions would be created," says Township of Armstrong Reeve, Jules Gravel. "Now, thanks to a lease

agreement with Grant Forest Products, the new 17 400-square-foot facility has resulted in the creation of 14 private-sector jobs."

In addition, the airport's expanded capacity played a key role in attracting a new call centre, employing about 100 people in the tri-town area of New Liskeard.

"One of the call centre's major requirements was that there be an easy way in and out of the area," Jules adds. "The new capacity at the airport has been a great boost to the economic sector in the whole of Timiskaming, helping to diversify the area's economy."

The improved transportation link was also a consideration for the developers of Bayport Village, a retirement-living complex currently under construction on the shores of Lake Temiskaming. The project is a partnership between the town of Haileybury and the private sector.

While diversification is important for this agriculture and forestry-dependent region, Jules says building on existing strengths is also key.

"In recent years, a number of farmers from southern Ontario have relocated to the tri-town area, where cheaper agricultural land is available," Jules says. "The expanded airport facilities now make it easier for these people to explore the area, and



Township of Armstrong Reeve, Jules Gravel, says the newly constructed hangar (background) in Earlton will have a positive impact on the long-term development of the entire Timiskaming area.

to travel to and from the region if they do decide to develop here."

Gore Bay

A similar success story is now being told in Gore Bay, in the heart of Manitoulin Island. Myles MacLeod, Chair of the Board of the Gore Bay-Manitoulin Airport, understands the impact the expansion will have on the future of the airport, and what it will mean to the local economy.

"Gore Bay's main employer, Manitoulin Transport, could not operate its head office locally without reliable air service,"

Myles says, "and Lafarge Canada's quarry operation on the west end of Manitoulin also depends on the airport facilities."

"The new hangars give the airport a long-term source of revenue and will help ensure its economic viability."

According to airport Manager, Robert Colwell, consumer demand created the need for the new hangars. Most of their prospective clients are seasonal property owners or business and transient traffic, but Colwell says the tourism industry will also benefit.

"There is a direct relationship between the airport and the

marina," explains Robert. "When the marina houses the larger boats and yachts, the airport typically sees an increase in the number of corporate jets that fly in."

"Now, when the question is asked 'Do you have hangars available?', we can say yes, and that will greatly boost our profile as a facility, and as a community."

Youth interns find success

(The following is a testimonial from Rick Evans, Manager of Economic Development for the City of North Bay, regarding FedNor's Youth Internship Program.)

Subject: FedNor Youth Internship Program success stories

The success saga continues! Erin Richmond, one of our graduate interns just completed

the requirement for her Certificate in Economic Development at the University of Waterloo. She was also the successful candidate in the competition for the Mayor's Office of Economic Development's E.D.O. position.

And, our two recent intern graduates have also done us proud. Marc Charron was hired as the operations manager by Le Centre ALEC du Nipissing for a

practice firm with 45 participants. Karen Jones, having completed her downtown revitalization project, was hired by The Business Centre Nipissing Parry Sound as our small business advisor and then was subsequently promoted to the manager's position.

Amy Gauthier has successfully completed teacher's college and is now teaching at West Ferris Secondary School in

North Bay, where she is actively promoting our FedNor Business Plan Challenge to her business classes. She is also helping us to develop a marketing plan challenge component to the program for The Business Centre.

Thanks to FedNor for your ongoing confidence in our ability to develop these bright young men and women for meaningful careers in Northern Ontario.

Sincerely,



Rick Evans,
Manager of Economic
Development
City of North Bay

Youth finds niche in North



Karen Jones poses in front of the Nutty Chocolatier, one of 10 new businesses in North Bay's revitalized downtown.

Two years ago, Guelph-native Karen Jones set out to find her true passion. A recent graduate from the University of New Brunswick, she didn't expect her "first break" would materialize in a small town in Northern Ontario.

With her Business Administration degree in hand, Karen moved to North Bay and joined forces with the City of North Bay, the Downtown Improvement Area (DIA) and the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, to inject new life into North Bay's downtown core. As part of a partnership agreement through FedNor's Youth Internship Program (YIP), she helped create a revitalisation package that has garnered national and provincial awards.

Not only did her position give her the experience she needed to advance her career, it also shed some light on its future direction.

"I never really thought about a career in economic development before my

internship," says Karen, "but now, economic development is where I want to be. It's really helped me find my niche and a career I love."

The ultimate goal of the initiative was to attract outside interest and to stimulate investor confidence in the community. According to Rick Evans, Manager of Economic Development for the City of North Bay, more than \$10 million has been invested in the downtown and 10 new businesses have opened their doors.

"You won't recognize the face of the community in another two or three years," predicts Evans. "People will be amazed at the changes."

Thanks to her education, drive and experience with the downtown project, Karen has recently been appointed manager of The Business Centre — Nipissing Parry Sound, located in North Bay.

Next stop, Sault Ste. Marie

Students signing up for a new program being offered at Sault College can rest assured they're on the right track.

The community college and Canadian National (CN) are teaming up to offer a two-year Signals and Communications Technician program starting in the fall of 2004, with the aim of addressing the increased need for experts in the field.

"CN's demographics show a need for new signals and communications workers," says Keith Creel, CN's senior vice president, Eastern Canada Region. "Northern Ontario is a vital area for CN's communications network, and Sault College is attuned to the people, weather, and working conditions in the North."

The partnership, in which CN will provide its expertise, as well as specialized rail equipment for training, evolved from a FedNor-funded business plan. The first

step was for Sault College to secure training status through the Railway Association of Canada.

Sixty-four students are currently enrolled in a common first year for three different programs, including the Signals and Communications Technician program. The college anticipates that in the fall of 2005, the rail program will have 15 first-year students and 10 in the second year, each with an eye on careers with CN and other railways in Ontario and across Canada.

Sault College President, Dr. Timothy Meyer, says Canadian railways will need an injection of new workers over the next five years as retirement looms for large numbers of long-time employees. He is confident the college and its partners will benefit from a close working relationship.

"The proactive approach to future needs demonstrated by CN and the Railway Association of Canada is commendable," says Meyer. "Workforce planning for any sector of the economy works best when industry, education and government collaborate."



Sault College President, Dr. Timothy Meyer, says the new Signals and Communications Technician program will prepare students to replace retiring workers in the field.

Tourism recovery fund touching all corners of the North

Northern Ontario has enhanced its reputation as a prime tourist destination thanks to a \$3-million FedNor commitment announced in July 2003 to help promote the North's tourism sector. Designed to counter recent challenges faced by the tourism industry, the recovery fund has helped numerous tourism organizations develop strategies to attract visitors to the North.

Here's a look at just a few of the tourism initiatives underway across the North:

Destination Nord

In celebration of Samuel de Champlain's arrival in Canada 400 years ago, Destination Nord has developed a unique tourism experience detailing the famous explorer's travels between Montréal and Mattawa. Le Circuit Champlain is being marketed in both Quebec and France with the help of a \$150 000 FedNor investment. A total of 24 municipalities and 350 businesses and organizations are members of Destination

Nord, an organization that promotes francophone tourism destinations in Northern Ontario under the capable leadership of Executive Director, Nicole Guertin.

North of Superior Tourism Association

The North of Superior Tourism Association (NOSTA) is stepping up its efforts to market the north shore of Lake Superior as a world-class, four-season travel destination. NOSTA Executive Director, Bruce Fallen, says FedNor funding of \$120 000 will help the organization produce an attractions and events calendar, as well as a regional visitor's guide and map, and will also help to complete upgrades to its Web site.

Great Spirit Circle Trail

Over the past six years, FedNor has supported the efforts of the Waubetek Business Development Corporation to establish a community-based eco-tourism strategy for eight First Nation communities in the Manitoulin Island area. As a

result, the Great Spirit Circle Trail brand is now being promoted successfully in European markets, resulting in more than \$500 000 worth of free media exposure, according to Waubetek's General Manager, Dawn Madahbee. Most recently, a \$151 920 FedNor investment is assisting Waubetek in the production of a five-year marketing strategy and business plan aimed at expanding the initiative to include an additional 19 First Nation communities.

Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre

Visitors to the northwestern Ontario town of Red Lake know about the area's rich deposits of gold, but thanks to a new \$3.1-million regional tourism attraction, tourists will be able to immerse themselves in the area's cultural, historical and natural heritage. According to Red Lake Museum Curator, Michele Alderton, the 8000-square-foot, year-round Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre will feature a regional museum, historical archives, a tourist information centre and gift shop,

an interpretive venue for nearby Woodland Caribou Provincial Park, as well as a gallery for exhibitions and theatrical presentations. Supported by a FedNor investment of \$500 000, the facility is expected to open its doors by Spring 2005.

Tourism Sault Ste. Marie

The Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation enhanced its winter tourism promotion and advertising campaign in a bid to help tourist operators and associations overcome recent challenges in the sector. The initiative promotes snowmobiling, Searchmont Ski Resort, and the Algoma Central Railway Snow Train to proven markets in Michigan and Ontario. So far, the economic impact of the campaign has reached over \$23 million, according to Ian McMillan, director of tourism with Tourism Sault Ste. Marie. FedNor committed \$220 000 to the campaign as part of its tourism recovery fund.

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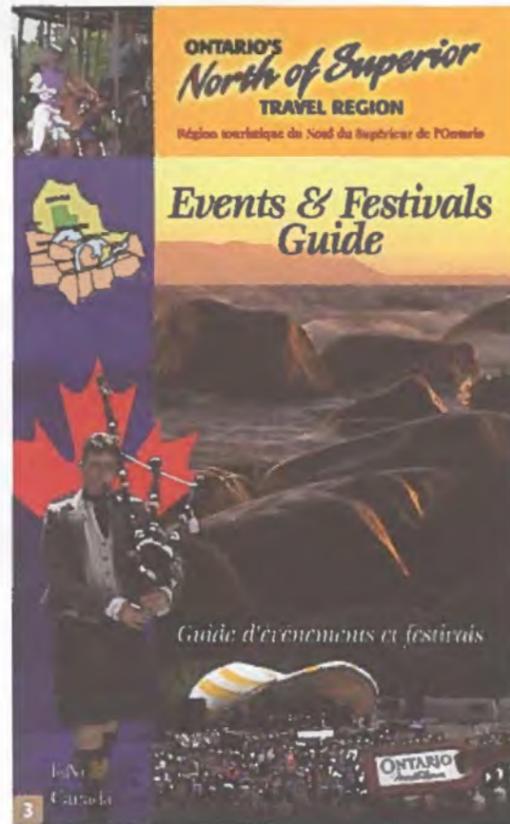
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- 1 Tourists enjoying the Great Spirit Circle Trail
- 2 The Algoma Central Railway Snow Train
- 3 Cover of the North of Superior Travel Association's events and festivals guide
- 4 Conceptual view of the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre Courtesy of Corbett Cinibel Architects
- 5 A historical stop on Le Circuit Champlain. Photo by Yves Ouellet