



destinationnorthernontario.ca

2023-24

Annual Report

Ontario 



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Message from the President

It is my pleasure to present you, the reader, with Destination Northern Ontario's 2023-24 Annual Report.

This document outlines the successes and challenges the organization experienced over the past fiscal year. It also summarizes our work as it relates to our key activities outlined in our Transfer Payment Agreement with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

2023-24 saw the continuation and expansion of key programming that supported the industry's recovery and growth. We maintained our focus on crucial programming to support the industry's recovery such as Tourism Skills Net North, Tourism Excellence North, and priority product development programs Experience Fishing, Heart of Canada Loop and the World's Best Snowmobile Destination. Our core sub-regional and pan-northern marketing programs continued to drive visitor engagement and economic impact.

This year, we built upon the success of our investment attraction podcast series and the Tourism Rocks: Tourism as a Career awareness campaign, both of which have shown promising results in attracting new talent and investment to the region. We introduced innovative initiatives to address emerging trends in sustainable tourism and digital transformation. We remain dedicated to building essential partnerships and investments throughout the region.

By supporting core marketing initiatives within four sub-regional Destination Marketing Organizations, we have enhanced our efforts in key travel corridors.

Partnerships with urban communities are at an all-time high, with our marketing dollars leveraged by 250%. Navigating our post-pandemic realities and changing consumer expectations requires a holistic approach to the tourism ecosystem, covering all our key pillars: marketing, investment attraction, product development, and workforce development and industry training. This strategy allows us to make meaningful investments across these areas while aligning with our provincial partners and their strategic goals.

As we progress on the road to recovery, it's time to think big about the future of our industry. The momentum we've built together will drive growth, prosperity, and sustainability. Our strong history of collaboration and partnership will continue to serve us well as we move forward. Let's focus on being innovative, sustainable, and inclusive as we aim to come back stronger and more resilient than ever.

Yours in tourism,
Marty Kalagian, President



Destination Northern Ontario Board of Directors & Staff

Destination Northern Ontario is governed by a pan-Northern Ontario Board of Directors who are recognized industry leaders and collectively provide vast knowledge, experience, and insight as they set the strategic directions for the organization.

The Board of Directors regularly consults with and is counselled by an advisory group comprised of key government officials in tourism-related ministries and agencies. The advisory group provides critical support to the Board of Directors in their strategic planning and consultation processes. The advisory group representatives are from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport Industries, the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation, FedNor, Ontario Parks and Parks Canada while sub-regional Destination Marketing Organizations and industry stakeholders make up the Board.

NAME	POSITION	SECTOR
Marty Kalagian	President	Private Sector – Retired
Gerry Webber	Vice President	Public Service – Retired
Betty McGie	Treasurer	Private Sector – Retired
Ray Nadeau	Director	Private Sector
George Stivrins	Director	Private Sector
Lori Branch	Director	Private Sector
Tammy Frick	Director	Not for Profit
Guy LaMarche	Director	Public Service – Retired
Ian Wood	Director	Municipal Government – Retired
Shannon McMullan	Director	Private Sector
Heather Gropp	Secretary	Municipal Government

Government Advisors

NAME	POSITION	SECTOR
Jim Antler	Advisor	Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport
Laurie Ypya	Advisor	Ministry of Northern Development
Todd Eastman	Advisor	Destination Ontario (OTMPC)
Heather McKeown	Advisor	FedNor
Chad O'Halloran	Advisor	Parks Canada
Vacant	Advisor	Ontario Parks

Destination Northern Ontario Staff

NAME	POSITION
David MacLachlan	Executive Director
Bobbi-Lynn Pallot	Corporate Services Officer
Kathy Carlson	Finance Officer
Karen Poirier	Office Administrator
Stephanie Hopkin	Senior Coordinator, Product Development, Marketing & Communications
Tiina Keranen	Visual Communications Designer
Sara Currier	Coordinator, Industry Communications
Megan Boyd	Product Inventory Intern
Gord Knowles	Senior Coordinator, Investment Attraction
Karen Peacock	Senior Coordinator, Workforce Development and Industry Training
Gillian McCullough	Training Coordinator
Mike Wozny	Special Projects
Ian McMillan	Business Development (Contract)
Marla Tremblay	Francophone Tourism Specialist (Contract)

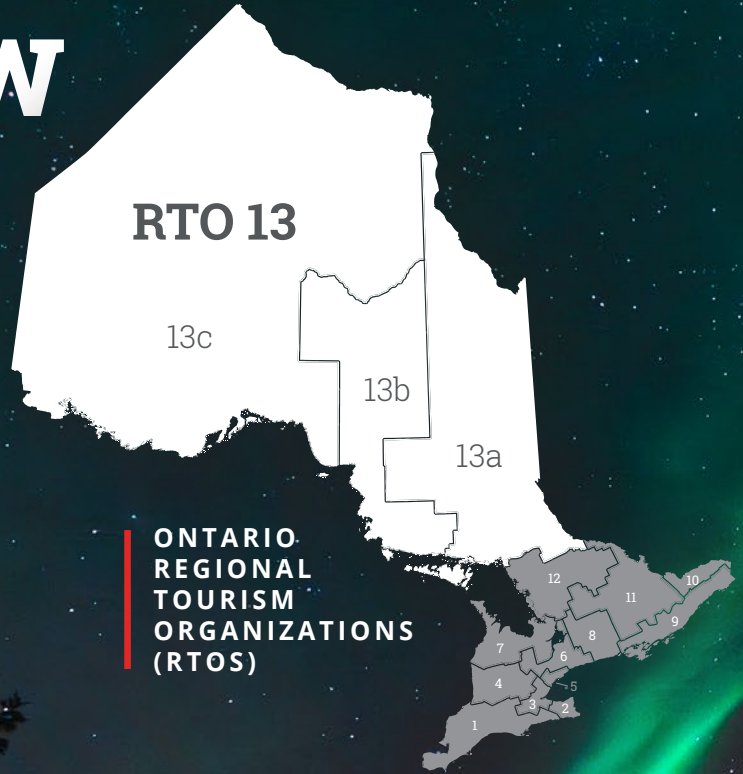


DESTINATION
**NORTHERN
ONTARIO**

A COMMITMENT TO ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE,
PROFESSIONALISM AND QUALITY PROGRAM DELIVERY.

Overview

Geographically, Destination Northern Ontario (RTO13) is the largest tourism region in Ontario. The region spans from the French River in the south including Manitoulin Island, the Ottawa River in the east, west to the Manitoba border and north to the saltwater coast. The region is divided into three sub-regions: Northeastern Ontario (13A), Algoma-Sault St. Marie (13B) and Northwestern Ontario (13C). Destination Northern Ontario's role in the tourism industry is to strategically guide and champion growth in Northern Ontario through strong communication, collaboration, and partnerships with industry.



8.2
MILLION
VISITS



\$1.6
BILLION
TOURISM
RECEIPTS



+\$500
MILLION
GENERATED
IN TAX
REVENUES

ANNUAL STATISTICS FOR NORTHERN ONTARIO

Organizational Excellence

100% of planned initiatives completed on-time.

Destination Northern Ontario has exercised administrative diligence on both planning and adhering to reporting deadlines with 100% of planned initiatives being completed on-time. Guided by a strategic implementation plan, a dedicated staff person is responsible for each of the four priority pillars with support staff as needed. Partnership projects also align with mandated pillars and each staff person works on partnerships related to their portfolio.



Destination Northern Ontario continues to align with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sports Industries in both its programs and coordination of staff.

Developed as a tool to help the Destination Northern Ontario Board of Directors track the organization's performance each year, this annual report is aligned with the Ministry's Regional Tourism Organizations Guide which recognizes the following five pillar areas:

5 CORE PILLARS

- 01 Product Development
- 02 Investment Attraction
- 03 Workforce Development & Industry Training
- 04 Marketing & Communications
- 05 Partnerships

Vision

Northern Ontario will be a unique and distinctive tourism destination wherein high-quality products and experiences resonate with consumers, entrepreneurship is valued, and tourism provides local, regional, and global connections for the entire region.

Mission Statement

Destination Northern Ontario will take a leadership role to strategically guide and champion growth in Northern Ontario's tourism industry, through strong communication, collaboration, and partnerships with industry.

Values

Destination Northern Ontario's Board is committed to focusing on the vision in an "innovative, results-based, effective and fiscally responsible manner, with a foundation of strong governance and management leadership." Destination Northern Ontario's Board also recognizes the following values as important aspects of the strategic plan:

- Accountability**
- Leadership**
- Collaboration**
- Integrity**
- Transparency**
- Innovation**
- Teamwork**



Business Development Goals

- **Generate** industry research and monitor industry performance to continually improve products and experiences and evaluate the success of Destination Northern Ontario programs to ensure a "visitor first" approach.
- **Implement** a strategic approach to bring high quality products and experiences to market through strong partnerships and workforce training.



Governance

- **The Board of Directors** met ten times this past fiscal. To keep attendance at acceptable levels, meetings via GoToMeetings enabled the Board to travel less, while still sharing resources and weighing in on decisions from their respective locations. Board attendance in 2023-24 was 87%. The Board monitors organizational performance through oversight of the various strategies in the business and marketing plans through the review of detailed performance reports.



Corporate Communications

- ▶ Throughout 2023-24 momentum to increase engagement within the tourism sector and promote the positive impacts of tourism continued.

Over 28 industry-focused newsletters highlighting Destination Northern Ontario and Tourism Excellence North programming, the Northern Ontario Tourism Summit, and notable success stories were distributed to over **4,500 contacts**. Our social media presence has significantly expanded, growing quickly with over **17,250 followers**, which represents an impressive increase of nearly **1,200 followers** since the 2023-24 fiscal. This growth highlights our ongoing efforts to engage with our audience and promote the diverse offerings of Northern Ontario.

Destination Northern Ontario's comprehensive database features approximately **4,000 listings** that encompass a wide range of operators, attractions, and municipalities. This resource not only supports all of our mandated pillars: marketing, investment attraction, product development, and workforce development and industry training, but facilitates connections within the tourism community, ensuring that stakeholders have access to valuable information and opportunities for collaboration.

2023-24 concentrated on developing and implementing a Francophone and Indigenous engagement strategy within the industry. This commitment aims to enhance inclusivity and representation in our tourism efforts, fostering meaningful connections with both Francophone and Indigenous communities. By prioritizing these strategies, we are working to create a more diverse and enriched tourism experience in Northern Ontario.

Destination Northern Ontario has aligned its industry communications initiatives to demonstrate leadership and a strategic direction to increase awareness of the Northern Ontario tourism sector's social and economic importance. Together, these efforts enhance our outreach and strengthen our position as a key player in the region's tourism landscape.



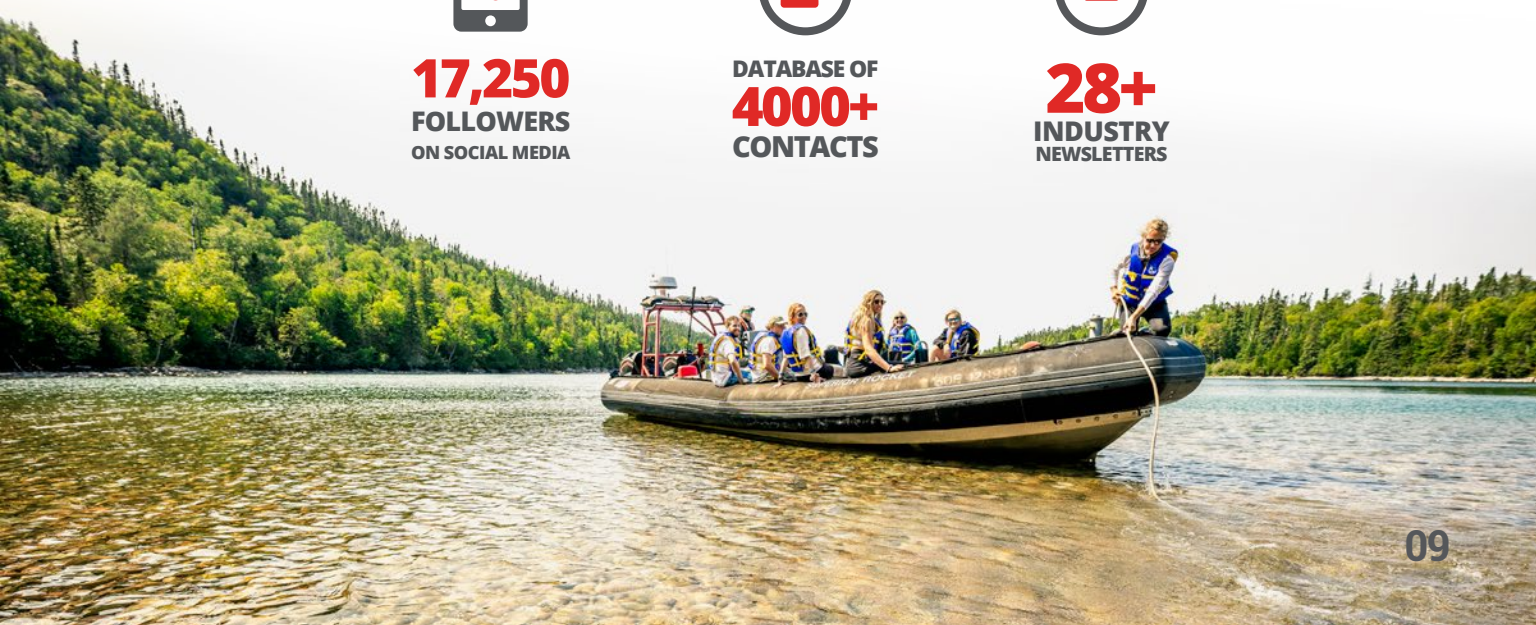
17,250
FOLLOWERS
ON SOCIAL MEDIA



DATABASE OF
4000+
CONTACTS



28+
INDUSTRY
NEWSLETTERS



#tourism rocks

"At Kivi Park, the support provided through training and wage subsidies has been invaluable in growing our team and ensuring they are equipped to deliver an exceptional guest experience. Tourism plays a crucial role in our community, and the Tourism Rocks Campaign is a powerful initiative that highlights the importance of the sector as both an economic driver and a fulfilling career path. We're excited to support this effort and showcase the opportunities in tourism that can inspire future generations."

— Kerry Lamarche, Executive Director, Kivi Park

4 MILLION+ USERS



> northernontario.travel

Marketing

The 2023-24 fiscal year marked a significant milestone in the marketing pillar, building upon the momentum gained in the previous year. Tactical contracts with rural leads continued on an annual investment basis, and marketing partnerships were fully subscribed earlier than 2022-23. Destination Northern Ontario maintained its focus on research-based, consumer-first marketing investments, encompassing key activities at both sub-regional levels (urban and rural) and pan-northern initiatives.

The organization's e-commerce platform, SimpleRes, demonstrated remarkable growth, with online reservations surging from **\$1.5 million** in the previous fiscal year to approximately **\$2.1 million** in 2023-24. This substantial increase reflects the continued recovery and growth of the tourism sector in Northern Ontario.

Northernontario.travel experienced another successful year, attracting over **4 million users**, thanks to highly effective paid campaigns and improved organic traffic. The successful migration to northernontario.travel 2.0 in the previous year set the stage for enhanced content delivery and management, resulting in a **25% increase** in user engagement and time spent on the site.

The Northern Ontario Trip Planner continued to gain traction, with itinerary downloads **increasing by 75%** compared to the previous year. This tool has proven to be invaluable in assisting visitors in planning their trips to the region. Destination Northern Ontario successfully leveraged **\$80,000**, plus an additional **\$50,000** in-kind support, to facilitate nine media familiarization tours across the region.

These tours covered a range of experiences, from Great Lakes Cruising to Indigenous tourism

initiatives, showcasing the breadth of Northern Ontario's offerings. Marketing partnerships diversified, with the organization allocating **\$150,000** to support the Resource Based Tourism sector. This strategic investment resulted in **\$500,000** of marketing activity, demonstrating the power of collaborative efforts in promoting the region.

International marketing efforts grew post-pandemic, with a strong presence at major trade shows and an increased focus on key markets. The International Marketing Specialist developed two new international itineraries and attended five virtual and six in-person marketplaces. Additionally, three international travel trade familiarization trips were successfully completed in the region, further strengthening Northern Ontario's position in the global tourism market.

Partnerships with communities collecting the Mandatory Accommodation Tax continued to flourish, enabling participation in large-scale pan-northern marketing initiatives. These collaborations included an expanded marketing campaign with Porter Airlines and several high-impact campaigns in partnership with Destination Ontario, targeting key markets across North America.



"Thank you for your continuing support and understanding! I admire project officers like you Stephanie who are caught between the exigencies of handling public money while finding ways to get the job done. This is not a job I would want! Destination Northern Ontario is proving to be a real friend of the MRHHA and the Northern Cree people, as exemplified in how you, Erica, David and Karen have been so supportive. We are grateful. As far as the partnership has gone, we together navigated year-end which is always a chaotic time with determination and good will. The extra complicating factors of the launch of the More than 350 and the personal difficulties around caregiving and end of life nevertheless were met by your understanding in the face of less than perfect process management on our side of things. Thank you for that!"

— Daniel Berg, Development, Fundraising & Partnerships, MRHHA

Product Development

The momentum continued to build in the product development pillar for Destination Northern Ontario in 2023-24. Product teams evolved to address ongoing industry needs, including forming two new product teams for accessibility and sustainability. Throughout the year, 40 product team meetings were held, and additional working groups focused on the Northern Ontario Tourism Summit, rail travel, the 2SLGBTQI+ Team, and the Heart of Canada tour.



Multi-year product development projects progressed, including the Experience Fishing program, the World's Best Snowmobile Destination, and the Heart of Canada loop. The Experience Fishing program, now under Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario's management, saw continued growth, with over 61 operators certified in 2023-24.

The World's Best Snowmobile Destination program,

managed by Northeastern Ontario Tourism, successfully secured additional funding to develop two new pilot loops – the Lumber Jack Loop and the Gold Rush Loop. This expansion brought the total number of new snowmobile products to market to five, significantly enhancing the region's winter tourism offerings. Three new routes were developed, including the Huntsville to North Bay route through Algonquin Provincial Park, an extended Prospector Route with a side trip to Moosonee, and optional routes in the far north of the Fur Trade Route leading to Sioux Lookout, Red Lake, and other communities around Kenora. Developed in partnership with Travel Manitoba, the Heart of Canada RV route emerged as a critical product for international markets in the 2023-24 season.



Great Lakes Cruising continued to be a crucial growth area for Northern Ontario. Building on the successful 2022 exploration of the Lake Superior North Shore Inside Passage, 2023-24 saw increased interest from cruise lines, with several new stops added to itineraries along the northern Lake Superior shoreline.

Indigenous tourism remained a priority, with Destination Northern Ontario strengthening its partnership with Indigenous Tourism Ontario. Collaborative efforts included supporting cultural events, expanding Indigenous-led tourism experiences, partnering with the

Northern Ontario Tourism Summit, and promoting authentic Indigenous tourism products across the region.

The Visitor Information Centre program,

operated through Algoma Kinniwabi Travel Association, continued, with survey tabulation ongoing. Concurrently, wayfinding initiatives extended throughout the northern region, focusing on endeavors in Blind River with private operators, while planning commenced in Red Rock.

Several new key partnerships and initiatives took place from 2023-24, including executing a partner conference to develop Georgian Bay as a UNESCO Geopark. With aligned visions, the next steps in a formal application are underway. A project development collaboration with the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce aims to boost Northern Ontario's appeal as a 2SLGBTQI+-friendly destination, contribute to the increase of tourism jobs for unemployed/underemployed people, and promote inclusivity and diversity in the region's tourism offerings.

A strategic partnership with the Culinary Tourism Alliance was established, focusing on implementing their Feast ON certification program over the next three years. This initiative elevates Northern Ontario's culinary tourism profile by recognizing and promoting restaurants prioritizing locally sourced ingredients and authentic regional cuisine.

Workforce Development & Industry Training

> tourismexcellencenorth.ca



"We had a new team member join the group mid-season who had a very different style of communicating than our other staff. Several members felt he was being disrespectful and not listening to important information in how to perform their job. We started having regular group meetings over breakfast and talked about how we all have different communicating styles, how we all need information in a different way and how we need to understand the other person's communication needs - written, verbal, succinctly, intrinsically, etc. We referenced the communicating for excellence and emotional intelligence modules and it was 100% relevant to helping our team quickly come to think about each other's needs and importance's. We all shared how we prefer information and how we were hearing some pieces of information and then how it was actually meant. It really helped us all understand each other's perspectives and come together better as a cohesive team. I also found the review on sanitary practices super important to help a waning Covid cleaning crew who has been through the gambit of processes."

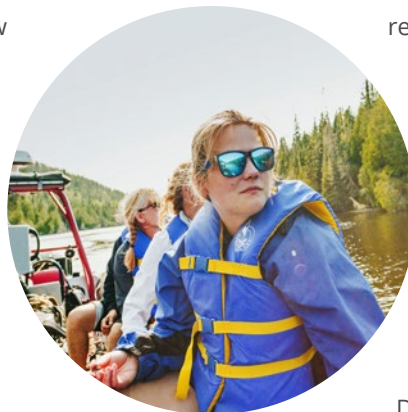
— Charlene Snow, General Manager, Eagle Lake Island Lodge





Under the Tourism Excellence North (TEN) banner, workforce development and industry training initiatives are overseen by the Senior Coordinator for Workforce Development and Industry Training with support from the Online Learning Coordinator, Workforce Development Coordinator and the Workforce Development & Industry Training Intern. In the third of its four-year Workforce Development & Industry Training Strategy, work continues by building upon current training solutions, addressing labour shortages and skills gaps with e-learning opportunities while looking through the lens of COVID-19 to assist with mitigation, recovery and rebuild phases.

Strategic action areas support workforce development and industry training from three perspectives: “defend and maintain shift” aimed at increasing the overall visitor appeal of Northern Ontario’s tourism products and experiences, “inspire and grow shift” to increase the capacity of industry as it applies to priority tourism products and experiences, and finally a “rise and shine shift” focused on increasing overall excellence for tourism operators, employees, communities and educators in Northern Ontario, and ultimately increasing a positive visitor experience in the region.



Tourism Excellence North has continued to offer its very successful ADAPT 2020: A Webinar Series for Tourism created in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Launched in April 2020, the webinar series provides participants with ongoing relevant training and information. While specifically designed for Northern Ontario tourism business owners

and operators, communities, destinations and industry stakeholders, anyone can attend, and it is free of charge. Throughout 2023-24, **six ADAPT 2020 webinars** were hosted with **176 total webinar registrations**. Considering repeat participants, it's clear that the webinar series has become a 'go-to' resource for those involved in tourism throughout Northern Ontario.

The Northern Ontario Tourism Summit has been a cornerstone event for delivering industry training. Destination Northern Ontario in partnership with Nature Outdoor Tourism Ontario, hosted the summit in-person from November 14 – 16, 2023 in Sault Ste. Marie. With **279 attendees** and **25 information sessions and workshops**, the summit was a very successful event. Highlights included two panel discussions: Tourism Workforce: A Student's Perspective panel discussion and Addressing the Mental Health, Addiction and Homelessness Crisis in Northern Ontario and increased sponsorship.

Workforce Development and Industry Training saw the successful delivery of its training solutions and programs including:

Tourism SkillsNet North

✓ Tourism Skills Net North was successful in a **\$2.7 million** application to the Ontario Skills Development Fund through the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. A new partnership between RTO 7 and 9 was launched. The program collectively between three regions recruited and trained more than **540 job seekers** for the tourism workforce and matched **430 employees with 117 employers**.



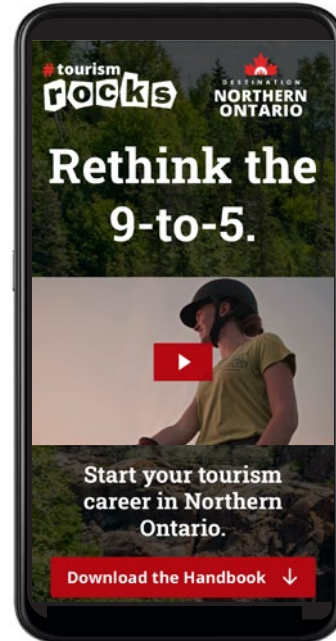
"Tourism Skills Net North was so beneficial to us! Because of the subsidy we were able to afford to hire additional staff. This not only helped us improve our product through both maintenance of our trails and our customer service, it also increased safety as we were able to have more staff overlapping hours. This allowed us to stay open longer as well and serve more customers. From a training point of view all staff gained a better understanding of customer service and how that fits in with the overall experience for users of Kivi Park. All employees have a specific job, but the program taught them that regardless of the role they have for their job, they are also ambassadors of Kivi. Other technical course such as the cleaning courses and such helped to drive home the message of the importance of cleanliness and maintenance. Our employees now have transferable skills and a few months of hands-on experience to help them in their future careers. Definitely a win-win for everyone involved!"

— Kerry Lamarche, Executive Director, Kivi Park



Tourism Rocks

- ✓ Under the Tourism SkillsNet North umbrella, **Tourism Rocks** promoted a positive perception of careers in tourism and awareness of available career opportunities among youth and adults in Northern Ontario. Using the developed marketing plan, deliverables included researching target audiences and consulting stakeholders to inform the new strategy and develop tactics to expand Tourism Rocks to reach those who do not reside in Northern Ontario (RTO13), **20 new short form videos, four articles** on northernontario.travel, **two media releases** and the ongoing updates to tourismrocks.ca.



> tourismrocks.ca



20

NEW SHORT
FORM VIDEOS
PRODUCED



TEN Training Tools

- ✓ As part of its five-year strategy, the Workforce Development and Industry Training Recovery Project is **expanding training delivery through online tools** to address workforce skills gaps and enhance business management post-pandemic. A new suite of Tourism Excellence North Business Essentials Courses, including Components of a Business Plan and Fundamentals of Marketing Planning, will be available through the Learning Management System in November 2024 and fully delivered by January 2025. These courses aim to equip learners with essential knowledge to improve business operations and strategic planning. Additionally, several existing Tourism Excellence North courses will be redeveloped for better online delivery.
- ✓ The **Customer Relationship Management (CRM)** shared database for Destination Northern Ontario, Tourism SkillsNet North, and Tourism Excellence North has also been created for the collection, organization, distribution and analysis of high volumes of data using the Whereabouts Tourism Management platform.
- ✓ Tourism Excellence North soft launched a **new website** in December 2023 and will continue to update.
- ✓ In October 2022, a partnership was established with Lakehead University and College Boreal to launch the bilingual micro-credential program, **Ontario Professional Tourism Industry Specialist (OPTIS)/Northern Ontario Professional Tourism Industry Specialist (NOPTIS)**. This program aims to upskill current employees and support the tourism sector in its post-pandemic recovery. The objective of the OPTIS micro-credential is to provide a credential that will lead to a more knowledgeable and skilled professional tourism workforce that is enabled to advance, support, and grow the tourism sector. A seventh module focused on the geographic region of Northern Ontario will provide an option to obtain a NOPTIS micro-credential.
- ✓ In partnership with Lakehead University and Collège Boréal, a new Tourism Excellence North's **Experiential Travel Training for Operators workshop** will be developed as an **asynchronous, six-module online course** for students, employees, and operators. This bilingual micro-credential program is designed for individuals interested in the theory, practice, and design of Experiential Travel Tourism within the unique Northern Ontario setting. The program also includes a mentorship component and will launch in Winter 2025.



- ✓ Tourism Excellence North developed and delivered **48 training solutions** including workshops, Best Practice Mission: Building a Quality Touring Route, Fast Track to Success, Experiential Travel Training for Operators group workshop, Moving Tourism in Your Community from Ideas to Action, and case studies. The program also includes a mentorship component and will launch in Winter 2025.
- ✓ Tourism Excellence North continues to create new online training assets. Through an RFS process in Q1 TEN contracted Insight Media Works to create **20 training videos** in collaboration with the Tourism Excellence North team. In total, **70 videos** have been created, six of which make up a series on 'The Value of Partnerships'. Tourism Excellence North staff continue to work to produce **18 in-house videos** showcasing operators and aligned with training courses.

- ✓ **The Tourism Excellence North Studio**, is now actively used for various purposes, including:

- Voiceover recording in the Whisper Room
- Online meetings
- Shooting video and recording sound
- Video editing

48 TRAINING SOLUTIONS
DEVELOPED & DELIVERED

70 TRAINING VIDEOS
PRODUCED



- ✓ The Broker master list has been updated by the Workforce Development and Industry Training Intern and the Broker network will be re-launched using **Tourism Excellence North's Learning Management System** and **Customer Relationship Management**. The Learning Management System will host Broker Dashboards that Brokers can use to download and upload resources, update their contact information, and communicate with Tourism Excellence North and tourism business owners/operators, communities, and destinations
- ✓ A Request for Services to research and develop the **Tourism Excellence North mentorship program** was posted in December 2023 and was awarded to Karen Jones Consulting Inc. The program will match mentees with mentors. The program will see mentees develop personal goals to be 'approved' by the mentor (mentor will have mentees create realistic 'doable' goals based on each mentee's personal circumstances), and those goals will become the desired outcome for the mentee. Also, networking, general training and information sessions will be part of the Mentorship Program. The Mentorship program will be launched and implemented in 2024-25.

NORTHERN · ONTARIO
**TOURISM
SUMMIT**



"Destination Northern Ontario and Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario did an excellent job--well executed. I really enjoyed getting an introduction to a wide variety of industry issues -- not all directly relating to our circumstances but important to the organizations we need to work with."

**— Anonymous, Northern Ontario Tourism Summit
2023 Satisfaction Survey**

Continuing to work on the **five-year strategic plan**, Tourism Excellence North is working to increase the effectiveness of training activities by developing customized training tools to support Northern Ontario’s tourism industry. This includes training delivery being expanded through on-line training tools in the following ways:

- ✓ Continued work to facilitate a **blended learning environment, aggregation of data, track progress** and **interphase** with Destination Northern Ontario website, all from a learner-first focus.
- ✓ Tourism Excellence North maintained and delivered **post-training resource guides** from its **ADAPT 2020: A Webinar Series** on Tourism for participants and visitors through the Tourism Excellence North web portal, through links to upcoming educational sessions, COVID-19 resources and on Tourism Excellence North’s Resources page.
- ✓ Tourism Excellence North completed a **Learner Design Experience Research Study** so that Destination Northern Ontario can formally develop a Quality Assurance process to ensure the learner experience remains at a high standard. The results of the report will allow Tourism Excellence North to monitor and ensure a high-quality learner experience moving forward.
- ✓ The Online Learning Coordinator completed the Seneca College Course **‘Alignment and Assessment Strategies’** in August 2023, the **‘Quality Assurance and Course Evaluation’** in December 2023 and the **‘Collaborative Frameworks: Working with Subject Matter Experts’** in March 2024. All courses are in pursuit of an Instructional Design certificate.





Investment Attraction

“Destination Northern Ontario has been an invaluable partner in supporting our local tourism sector, most recently through their support of the Sports Tourism Infrastructure Study. This initiative is crucial for guiding strategic investments that will enhance our local sports tourism assets and create significant economic benefits.

The insights provided by the study will help us prioritize infrastructure development that not only attracts regional sporting events but also boosts local businesses, supports job creation, improves resident quality of life, and fosters long-term economic growth. In addition, the broader tourism insights offered by Destination Northern Ontario align with our community's goals and the larger vision for Northern Ontario. Their leadership in this space ensures that we are well-positioned to capitalize on tourism trends, as we work to position our community as a destination of choice for visitors and athletes alike. We are proud to work alongside Destination Northern Ontario in achieving our shared goal of strengthening the region's tourism industry and driving economic success.”

**— Jennifer Esposito, Manager of Strategic Initiatives
Municipality of Sioux Lookout**

Investment Attraction priorities were managed by the Senior Coordinator of Investment Attraction and Economic Development through the fiscal year.

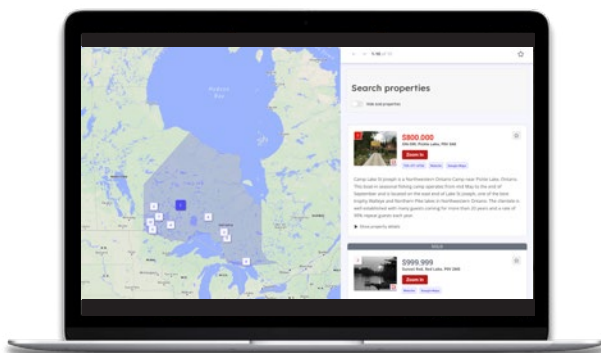
As part of the investment attraction strategy, Destination Northern Ontario continues to monitor the implementation of the **Municipal Accommodation Tax** and **post-pandemic growth** effects to recover and diversify the tourism sector. Additionally, Destination Northern Ontario works with data analysis companies



to get key data on the accommodations sector, adding pan-northern AirBNB and VRBO data scraping to its urban KPI data to give a full picture of occupancy and highlighting areas of potential for sector growth. Relevant research pieces continue to be a central focus of the pillar, to aid Destination Northern Ontario's stakeholders in making key decisions for their communities/clients.

Destination Northern Ontario continues to build out its Investment Attraction sub-portal (invest.destinationnorthernontario.ca), created with the assistance from FedNor. Ongoing research projects complement a multi-faceted approach to cataloguing deficiencies, highlighting potential areas of growth, and creating a database of investment-ready properties and opportunities to target new investors to the area, with an emphasis on new and un\nderemployed Canadians. Collaboration programs with regional

Community Futures organizations, focussed on incorporation, succession and access to capital remain at the forefront of growth opportunities focusing on the end user and expanding Northern Ontario's tourism receipt intake. Additionally, the pillar launched a second season of its award-winning Destination: Northern Ontario, the premier Northern Ontario investment attraction podcast to facilitate business succession and promote opportunities for business purchase to those outside of the region.



> [Visit the portal](https://invest.destinationnorthernontario.ca)



Destination Northern Ontario continued to build its existing investment attraction resources such as the **resource centre** on destinationnorthernontario.ca and the **inventory of funding sources**. Support was provided through virtual methods to facilitate succession planning for tourism industry partners across Northern Ontario including webinars as a part of the Northern Ontario Tourism Training Week. A new iteration of the very popular 'Spark' program continued, with mentorships and investments awarded to individuals, entrepreneurs, small businesses, and non-profits to develop their new innovative tourism ideas in Northern Ontario.

Destination Northern Ontario remains present and engaged with the **Tourism Industry Association of Ontario**, the **Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association**, the **Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities**, the **Community Futures network**, the **Economic Developers Council of Ontario**, key **provincial** and **federal ministries** and other important industry organizations to ensure collaboration on investment attraction initiatives remains at the forefront of Northern Ontario's renewed growth. The pillar remains focussed on direct work with local and regional organizations – in collaboration with parallel pillars - to build community economic development initiatives that create sustained growth and promotes organic investment attraction opportunities.



“Working with Destination Northern Ontario is always an honour, thanks to the organization's professional, forward-thinking and collaborative team. DMOs who partner with them soon see the benefits, whether it is to develop a strategy or discover insights to support a new direction. Keep at this important work!”

—Clark Hoskin, Destination Development and Tourism Consultant, Deloitte





"As chair of the Northwestern Ontario Community Futures network, I have had the opportunity to work collaboratively with the folks from Destination Northern Ontario, bringing innovative projects to support businesses across Northern Ontario. Destination Northern Ontario has become a strategic partner of the Northern Ontario Community Futures Development Corporations, and I look forward to even greater collaborative projects with them in the future!"

**— Ryan Raynard, CF-NWO Regional Network Chair
Executive Director, Lake of the Woods Business Incentive Corporation**



Partnerships

Fulfilling its partnership mandate, Destination Northern Ontario reached out across the North to identify potential initiatives that aligned with its business plan and pillar strategies.

Destination Northern Ontario implemented **38 partnered initiatives** working with **over 83 partners** and leveraging the province's investment three times over, resulting in **\$1.9 million** of partnered activity.



83+
INDUSTRY
PARTNERS = **\$1.9**
MILLION
LEVERAGED



Financial Report 2023-24

Area of focus	Actual	Budget	%
Governance & Administration	\$ 452,484.00	\$ 425,235.00	-6%
Product Development	\$ 292,492.00	\$ 350,000.00	16%
Investment Attraction	\$ 342,939.00	\$ 350,000.00	2%
Workforce Development & Industry Training	\$ 531,088.00	\$ 500,000.00	-6%
Marketing & Communications	\$ 1,706,232.00	\$ 1,700,000.00	-1%
Partnership	\$ 605,000.00	\$ 605,000.00	0%
Total MTCS Contribution	\$ 3,930,235.00	\$ 3,930,235.00	0%
Leveraged Contributions*	\$ 2,567,534.00		
Total \$	6,497,769.00		



THANK YOU



DESTINATION
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