



DESTINATION
**NORTHERN
ONTARIO**

NORTHERN ONTARIO

**Wayfinding
Implementation Plan**
PHASE II



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NORTHERN ONTARIO

Wayfinding Implementation Plan PHASE II

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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

In partnership with industry, Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) seeks to increase tourism, build tourism capacity and advocate on behalf of Northern Ontario tourism.

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 its strategic plan:

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

Goals for Northern Ontario Tourism Sector

- Innovation and entrepreneurship are supported by research/educational tools
- Critical mass of high-quality products/ experiences are brought to market
- Realistic/sustainable tourism development (i.e., product-market match) is underway
- Streamlined services for operators are available

Destination Northern Ontario's Roles in achieving Sector Goals

- Leadership
- Communication
- Strategy
- Relationship-building
- Champion for industry growth (bringing the operator perspective to government)
- Professionalism (setting a standard of high quality for the industry)

BACKGROUND

Wayfinding is defined as “the process or activity of ascertaining one's position and planning and following a route”. Well planned wayfinding is an important element in the experience of visitors to a community or area.

In February 2009, the Province of Ontario commissioned the Ontario Way-finding Research Study (Oliver Wyman) to help inform Discovering Ontario: A Report on the Future of Tourism 2009, also known as the Sorbara Report.

The strategy study pointed to the need for a province-wide wayfinding strategy with the Province assuming a lead role where there is clear provincial jurisdiction and a supporting role whereby the Province would help and encourage other stakeholders to align and improve their wayfinding efforts. The report recommended that the Province of Ontario provide funding for local feasibility studies and wayfinding strategies, with eligibility

targeted to municipalities, counties, tourism organizations, etc. to assist regions in improving wayfinding in Ontario that is consistent with other provincial initiatives such as the Tourism Oriented Directional Signage (TODS)/Logo program. In doing this, the following objectives would be fulfilled:

- **Foster collaboration by allowing only one designated “applicant” per region;**
- **Phased approach with pilot programs to demonstrate success/best practices;**
- **Build in flexibility to accommodate highly diverse local contexts.**



The Sorbara Report recommended improving wayfinding across the province, stating, “Ontario needs better signage to help make the province more welcoming, safe and comfortable”.

With this in mind, Destination Northern Ontario (then Tourism Northern Ontario) contracted with wayfinding consultants to develop a *Northern Ontario Tourism Wayfinding Strategy (2014)*. The study looked at how people find their way, the tools they use, and what visitors need to know. It made recommendations regarding the Regional Tourism Organization culture (or the way the regional partners identify themselves), travel information centres, wayfinding guidebooks, border crossings, signage, websites, mobile applications and stakeholder participation.

From this plan, Destination Northern Ontario undertook two tourism wayfinding signage pilot projects, one in Thunder Bay as a major urban centre and one in Wawa as a smaller community. A tourism wayfinding toolkit was developed from the pilot projects as well as a *Northern Ontario Tourism Wayfinding Implementation Plan (2016)*. DNO also commissioned the Northern Ontario Travel Information Centre (TIC) Project 2018.

This Northern Ontario Wayfinding Implementation Plan Phase II will provide an update on implementation of the recommendations of the 2016 plan and the 2018 TIC project and recommend the next steps forward.



📷 Example of Community Wayfinding Sign in White River.



TRENDS IN WAYFINDING

New wayfinding trends are constantly emerging such as supersized wayfinding tools like huge signs or big standalone letters or numbers, using landmarks to assist in wayfinding and an array of digital solutions. For Northern Ontario, though, for the past several years, a substantial focus has been on developing its tourism wayfinding signage inventory in its communities and on its trails as the most visible and therefore the most important element in helping visitors find their way around safely and enjoyably.

As more cities invest in wayfinding signage, they are seeing how visitors can better understand the layout of a city. Here in Northern Ontario there are numerous examples of visitors showing appreciation for our community wayfinding systems including numerous favourable comments about the ease of wayfinding in Terrace Bay and Blind River, among other communities. With increasing concerns about safety among travellers, wayfinding has never been more useful or critical. With thoughtfully planned signage, a community can grow its tourism and help residents travel more efficiently while driving them to explore new areas of the place they call home.

More people than ever are starting to value walkability in the areas they visit and the communities they live in. In fact, when Forbes created a guide for the top places for people to live, it included the city's walkability rating alongside valuable insights like diversity, tax rates, and median home prices. Visitors enjoy getting a feel for a community by exploring it on foot.

Urban wayfinding and walkability go hand-in-hand. While pedestrians care about cleanliness and safety on their walks, they also want to know where they are going. Clear signage guides people to and through areas of interest.

Boston's Freedom Trail is a strong example of a city taking pedestrian wayfinding seriously. The Freedom Trail is a collection of museums, churches, houses, and landmarks throughout the city. Visitors can follow the guide and the signs to learn about America's early history. The city of Philadelphia also uses clear signage to guide visitors to the Liberty Bell, Independence National Historical Park, and other important locations.



Northern Ontario's Wayfinding Situation

In 2014, Destination Northern Ontario completed the Northern Ontario Tourism Wayfinding Strategy. The cornerstone of the strategy was that our regions is “only as good as the stories that are told about it” and that fewer, better tools were needed to support wayfinding for visitors. The strategy’s recommendations focused largely on two areas: tourism wayfinding signage and Travel Information Centres (TICs).

With respect to signage, it stated:

Signage is the most visible, the most logical and the most extensive embodiment of wayfinding in Northern Ontario. In our research, signage was consistently mentioned as the most frustrating aspect in supporting the visitor experience, because of the bureaucratic and regulatory restrictions tied to signage on provincial highways, municipalities and rural areas.

Regarding Travel Information Centres, it stated: *The most effective and trusted way to share information is to have a person local to the area available to answer questions. Research in all areas of Northern Ontario showed that basic questions are the most frequently asked:*



“How far is it to our final destination?”

“Where can we stay in the local area?”

“What should we do while we’re here?”

“Can you recommend a place to eat?”

“How far is it to the next gas station?”

Especially in remote areas, visitors are looking for reassurance that they’re in the right place or headed in the right direction, and information to make their experience more enjoyable. Of all the information we’ve covered so far in this report, the most important wayfinding channel is the friendly face at the visitor’s centre. That person needs to be supported with education, funding and current information.

Since 2016, Destination Northern Ontario has partnered with 18 communities and a variety of trails organizations on their wayfinding signage plans and on fabrication and installation and the development of other tools such as maps and guides.

This Northern Ontario Tourism Implementation Plan Phase II identifies the key findings and recommendations of the wayfinding and TIC plans that have been developed to date, discusses what has been done to date and recommends a path to continue to move forward.

Status of Recommendations of Northern Ontario's 2016 Wayfinding Implementation Plan

*NOTE * indicated also cited in Wayfinding Symposium, Northern Ontario Tourism Summit, November 2015*

CULTURE/GATEWAYS

GAP/OBSERVATION:

Because the RTO hierarchy has been established for a relatively short period of time, the culture hasn't fully completed its transition. Level 3 is the most confusing to visitors because boundaries are undefined/overlapping, and they represent "signature landscapes" rather than hard-edged geographic areas.

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES:

The structure for this transition is in place and has been for some time.

- Use this strategy document (Northern Ontario Wayfinding Plan) to build tools for awareness and education at all levels.
- Use Northeastern Ontario, Algoma Country, Northwest Ontario as the starting point for wayfinding.
- Use Tourism Association names only as secondary to more well-defined spaces.

RESEARCH: Investigate billboard signage at entry points to regions (roads, borders, sub-regional entry points and airports).*

DEVELOPMENT:

Develop gateway signage plan

MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS:

Communicate results

INVESTMENT: \$20K – plan

PARTNERSHIP: Airports, sub-regions

STATUS: Northwest Ontario brand no longer in use. Gateway signage plan was developed but has not yet been implemented.

MOBILE APPLICATIONS

GAP/OBSERVATION:

While these do exist to some extent in Northern Ontario, most operators have decided that the initial expense of developing such tools is enough of a barrier to keep them from moving ahead. Ongoing costs for maintenance as operating systems change, staff time and expense for updating information regularly, and the realities of connectivity in the North have further limited the use of these tools. In order to recoup development costs, most mobile apps created for tourism are pay-to-play only, which limits the information they contain, and their effectiveness for visitors.

RESEARCH: Research options for Northern Ontario on an ongoing basis.

MARKETING: While this is viewed as a lower priority than other wayfinding tools, consider creating a template for mobile applications that could be customized for a given destination. Absent that (note that DNO has chosen this option), The Discover ON mobile app aggregates events and destinations based on the current location of the user; this could be the tool on which Northern Ontario operators increasingly rely, since the infrastructure has already been created. DNO will work with sub-regions to inventory and ensure DiscoverON is inclusive of all tourism experiences, accommodations and dining.*

Carefully consider whether an app fits the needs of audiences, budgets exist for initial development and promotion, there are implications for membership-based Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) funding sources, maintenance is supported.

WORKFORCE & INDUSTRY TRAINING:

Train operators to subscribe to and maximize results from DiscoverON.

INVESTMENT: Financially support sub-regions to enroll subscribers to the DiscoverON app.

PARTNERSHIP: Partner with Destination Ontario to build Northern Ontario presence in DiscoverON.

STATUS: DNO financially supported sub-regions to train and assist industry partners to enroll in the DiscoverON app for several years until budget cut in 2019-20 necessitated a re-examination of all programs. Because of the ongoing reluctance of both sub-regions to train and assist partners and resistance of partners to take part, financial support was terminated for this initiative. The app is no longer in existence, but its content has been used to populate the province's tourism website.

TECHNOLOGY

GAP/OBSERVATION:

Because much of Northern Ontario is remote, use of technology to aid in wayfinding can be difficult.

The structure for this transition is in place and has been for some time.

- International visitors either do not have data plans activated for Canada or incur expensive fees when accessing data. This causes them to turn off their data plans, which negates the use of many of the digital tools created for them.
- Canadian visitors cycle between Rogers and Bell systems as they move across Northern Ontario, incurring roaming charges when outside of their provider networks.
- Mobile applications for visitors rely on data service to provide accurate information, and do not work in areas with limited service.
- Some websites have awkward interfaces on a smartphone or other mobile device.
- Many visitors rely on GPS technology rather than cellular plans to navigate.

For tourism operators, there are multiple digital tools requiring investment of either time or dollars for participation. Providers receive frequent solicitations, but often have limited budgets. They are unsure as to where to invest their dollars for maximum impact. not yet been implemented.

RESEARCH: Review to determine which websites work efficiently on multiple platforms and devices, have caching functionality and GPS modules.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT:

- Optimize websites to work efficiently on multiple platforms and devices.
- Incorporate the functionality to “cache” information in a mobile application so that visitors can still use the app while their data plans are inactive.
- Tourism product providers should consider GPS modules as a potential digital development tool. Currently the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs offers this option for purchase on their website.
- Bundle packages that include placement in digital tools such as websites, mobile apps, GPS modules and the like. Since many digital tools can draw on the same data set, these bundles can maximize efficiency for developers and exposure for tourism operators. If possible, include printed materials in the bundle as well.

WORKFORCE & INDUSTRY TRAINING:

Provide an online “broker page” so tourism operators have one place to go to participate in digital information created and maintained by RTOs.

PARTNERSHIP: Possible marketing partnership opportunity

STATUS: DNO does not fund website development for regional partners as it is expected that they have the resources and can access the expertise to have highly-functional websites. The Northern Ontario trip planner tool offers TICs and Destination Marketing Organizations the opportunity to embed the Trip Planner widget into their own sites/campaigns. The widget also allows individuals to filter products, experiences and properties to ensure the route they are marketing is aligned with their target markets. Over the longer term, DNO can potentially work with the TICs to make routes developed for international and domestic visitors available at TICs for download via a public technology resource (i.e., touch pad computer screen with USB ports).



Travel
Information
Touristique

PRINT GUIDEBOOKS

GAP/OBSERVATION:

One common theme observed at TICs across Northern Ontario is that, regardless of other channels being used by visitors, they almost always carry a printed reference with them as well. Despite this, there is the perception that print is no longer used by majority of travelers. Printed materials not always consistent with signage, GPS, mobile tools. Often only members or advertisers listed. Inconsistent displaying of materials.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT: Point of Purchase (POP) display and online ordering tool, make all printed materials available in PDF format via a QR code or web address.

MARKETING:

- Financially support the development of printed visitor guides as a supplement to other wayfinding channels. At the RTO level, develop standards for funding and organizing visitor guides so that key information appears consistently: a central map, for instance, or information about crossing the border on the inside front cover.*
- 800,000 copies of Ontario Road Map imprinted with NorthernOntario.travel which now attracts 3.1 million visits annually.
- All RTO printed materials should contain complete listings of local businesses in each category as a baseline, with the opportunity for tourism operators to purchase an enhanced listing. This will provide the most comprehensive visitor resource.
- Develop a DNO "Point of Purchase" display that contains the resources recommended. Provide an online ordering tool so that tourism operators can re-order printed materials as needed, and receive email notices as materials are updated.

STATUS: As is the case with websites, DNO does not financially support the development of printed materials as it is again expected that the sub-regional partners will provide this key trip planning and wayfinding tool. Having said that, although DNO does not fund print development, it will work with organizations to ensure that their collateral is aligned in look and content with the provincial brand, thus extending reach and impact. Resources such as information on crossing the border are made available through the TIC Hub. Point of purchase displays have been developed and are being delivered to 12 partner TICs. These display racks will be stocked by a media distribution firm according to the designated layout of the literature by DNO.

MAPS

GAP/OBSERVATION:

As the embodiment of wayfinding information, there are a tremendous variety of maps that have been created for publications. Used at different scales, with varying levels of detail, these are usually developed by individual tourism operators. In each case, they are “reinventing the wheel” with respect to mapping which results in increased costs for operators and wayfinding inconsistency for users.

RECOMMENDATION: Create a single wayfinding map standard for all DNO and sub-region-supported communications. Assure the graphic standards apply equally to printed, digital and signage applications.

RESEARCH: Research standardized mapping options.

MARKETING / COMMUNICATIONS: Review with TICs.

INVESTMENT:

Support standardized maps.

STATUS: DNO created a single wayfinding map standard and has communicated its availability with DNOs and TICs. To date, it has not been well used if at all.

VERBAL / TICS

GAP/OBSERVATION:

- Low awareness of fact that TICs are key point of contact re: wayfinding
- Seasonal operations
- Inconsistent training
- Confusing array of information materials
- Inconsistent wording re: issues such as border crossings

RESEARCH: Develop database of TICs with respect to seasonality, staffing, training, etc.

DEVELOPMENT:

- Work to have OTIC visitor centres that have been closed, re-opened; support TICs with summer students.
- Develop standard language, information for TIC staff, literature, web sites etc. re: border crossings, etc.; link to reliable resources

MARKETING / COMMUNICATIONS: Begin discussions with TICs re: opportunities, needs. Options include: training materials and practices modeled on best practices, fewer and better tools (already produced as well as required), POP style display (QR codes, web addresses), wall-mounted map, self-serve unstaffed kiosk

PARTNERSHIP: Partner with communities and leverage additional funding from other sources

STATUS: Editable database has been developed and is posted on the TIC Hub. Support has been provided to Fort Frances and Atikokan TICs to remain open/ reopen. Discussions take place on an ongoing basis about TIC needs and a variety of support programs such as SEP Summer Student top ups, training programs such as Customer Service Excellence online training (OTEC), the TIC Hub with information resources and a TIC directory and the new display units are being provided.

SIGNAGE

GAP/OBSERVATION:

Signage is the most visible, the most logical and the most extensive embodiment of wayfinding in Northern Ontario. In the research, signage was consistently mentioned as the most frustrating aspect in supporting the visitor experience, because of bureaucratic and regulatory restrictions tied to signage on provincial highways, municipalities and rural areas.

DEVELOPMENT: Wayfinding pilot project, toolkit

MARKETING / COMMUNICATIONS:

Outreach re: wayfinding, toolkit, resources

INVESTMENT: Matching funds in partnerships; outreach

INVESTMENT:

- Multiple partnerships moving forward (plans, alignment, fabrication).
- Partner with communities and leverage additional funding from other sources.
- Encourage stakeholder participation in raising awareness of the specific issues that limit wayfinding in Northern Ontario.

STATUS: Three-year funding partnership secured with FedNor (ending March 31, 2020) resulting in \$1,275,000 being invested in bilingual tourism wayfinding signage in communities across Northern Ontario.

SIGNAGE – CTODS

GAP/OBSERVATION:

Cited as most difficult to understand or change.

ISSUES: Becoming a qualified destination; cost/time investment; long lead time; orphan signs; unsupported tourism routes.

RESEARCH: Review latest CTODS regulations and document relevancy to Northern Ontario signage issues.

MARKETING / COMMUNICATIONS:

Build awareness of any changes; work with municipal staff to provide summaries of opportunities and restrictions; work with CTODS to make changes (special consideration for natural features, customizable community sign panels that indicate when visitor has entered or left; Ontario Business Improvement Area Association [OBIAA] symbol); panel for more information rather than empty sign; eliminate unsupported routes (signage pilot project).

STATUS: CTODS signage is available for natural features, rural downtowns (OBIAA symbol), TICs and DNO has worked with them recently to provide TIC signage. However, the new price structure confirmed in 2019 has now been put in place and has resulted in costs more than doubling and in some cases tripling, putting CTODS signage out of reach for not only TICs but other smaller tourism operations and amenities such as small museums, art galleries and trails.

SIGNAGE – MTO

GAP/OBSERVATION:

MTO viewed as not supportive of tourism in municipalities (bypass corridors).

MARKETING / COMMUNICATIONS: Petition MTO to change language at points of decision.

PARTNERSHIP: Engage relevant partners in discussions.

STATUS: No activity to date.

TRAILS WAYFINDING

GAP/OBSERVATION:

Various municipalities have instituted signage standards for walking, cycling or driving that vary greatly.

DEVELOPMENT: Toolkit/handbook nearing completion – needs to be shared/explained**

Develop standards for trail signage as part of overall signage standards program (Thunder Bay pilot project).

MARKETING / COMMUNICATIONS: Ensure trails signage addressed in plan/toolkit.

INVESTMENT: Matching funds in partnerships; outreach

PARTNERSHIP: Multiple partnerships moving forward (plans, alignment, fabrication); Partner with communities and leverage additional funding from other sources

STATUS: Toolkit created. Trails wayfinding partnerships with Manitoulin Island Cycling Advocates, Cochrane, Mattawa, Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (Cup and Saucer) and Casque Isles Trails complete; initiated and or ongoing with numerous additional partners.

ONTARIO BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

GAP/OBSERVATION:

OBIAA (Ontario Business Improvement Area Association) creating consistent brand for downtowns; negotiating ways to incorporate into CTODS, MTO signage.

RESEARCH: Determine progress of OBIAA in getting brand incorporated

MARKETING / COMMUNICATIONS: Work with MTO and CTODS to incorporate; promote in multiple channels

PARTNERSHIP: Work with OBIAA to achieve incorporating shopping district brand into signage

STATUS: OBIAA symbol is incorporated into CTODS offering for rural communities under 20,000.



Next Steps to Support the Next Phase of Implementation of Wayfinding Tourism Initiatives for Northern Ontario

CULTURE/GATEWAYS

RESEARCH

Revisit gateway signage plan and update/revise as necessary

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Work towards implementation of gateway signage plan

MARKETING / COMMUNICATIONS

Communicate recommendations of Northern Ontario gateway signage plan to industry and seek partners

PARTNERSHIPS

- Integrate the above with partnership program, core budgets and identify funding sources to leverage resources
- Encourage partnerships at local level for DMOs to create/market routes on Trip Planner

INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

Seek funding in support of gateway signage program

MOBILE APPLICATIONS

RESEARCH

- Work with third party agency to ensure Trip Planner software addresses needs set out in wayfinding plans
- Continue to maintain and develop tourism database in-house

MARKETING

Encourage Destination Marketing Organizations to create information-rich wayfinding content that complements the Trip Planner itineraries and listings.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Continue to develop the trip planner

WORKFORCE AND INDUSTRY TRAINING

Help sub-regional partners to maximize use of trip planning tool and resources available through TIC hub

PARTNERSHIPS

Integrate the above with partnership program, core budgets and identify funding sources to leverage resources

PRINT – GUIDEBOOKS / MAPS

RESEARCH

- Research “Know Before You Go” information package and other Hub resource materials on an annual basis to ensure that information is up to date before providing to partners
- Survey TICs about interest in having a Northern Ontario map for display

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- Print and supply maps to interested TICs
- Oversee work of distribution company stocking Northern Ontario racks to ensure sufficient supply and consistent placement

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- Promote use of standardized map
- Ensure map is aligned with provincial brand

PARTNERSHIPS

Integrate the above with partnership program, core budgets and identify funding sources to leverage resources

VERBAL / TICs

RESEARCH

- Work with TICs in danger of closing to identify other means of support
- Use data being gathered at Northern Ontario TICs to undertake further research in order to provide DMOs with additional information in support of their marketing plans
- Continue to meet with wayfinding team twice annually to review initiatives and identify needs

MARKETING / COMMUNICATIONS

Continue discussions with TICs and wayfinding team re: opportunities, needs.

INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

Partner with communities and leverage additional funding from other sources

SIGNAGE - CTODS

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Confirm options for OBIAA symbol signage and cost out options for small rural communities with support from the bilingual community wayfinding program

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Communicate any options to mitigate CTODS pricing increase with rural communities

PARTNERSHIPS

Integrate the above with partnership program, core budgets and identify funding sources to leverage resources

INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

Partner with communities and leverage additional funding from other sources

SIGNAGE - MTO

MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS

Petition MTO to change language on bypass corridors

SIGNAGE – COMMUNITY WAYFINDING

RESEARCH

- Reach out to communities that have not yet developed their community wayfinding signage to determine needs; look for clusters of communities that may be willing to work together on a comprehensive plan and implementation
- Look into ways of having communities adopt the “rural downtown” symbol sign as a way to attract visitors into the communities rather than multiple individual attractions/amenities signs
- Work with communities that have completed their signage programs to gather data on impact for FedNor reporting

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Continue to work with partners to complete their wayfinding signage initiatives

INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

- Help to leverage resources through funders to accomplish wayfinding priorities (preparation of grant applications etc.)
- Include in DNO investment attraction outreach activities
- Monitor and track investments

SIGNAGE – TRAILS WAYFINDING

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Continue to work with partners to complete their trails wayfinding signage initiatives

INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

- Help to leverage resources through funders to accomplish trails wayfinding priorities (preparation of grant applications etc.)
- Trails Wayfinding: Continue to reach out to communities, trails organizations and trails users to determine their wayfinding needs
- Community Wayfinding: Continue to reach out to communities to determine their bilingual community wayfinding needs. Explore options to have communities work together to apply for FedNor funding for their bilingual community wayfinding programs



SWOTT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Through DNO's outreach and several years of wayfinding enhancements, a culture that recognizes the need for tourism wayfinding has been built among tourism partners.
- Pilot projects and toolkit contribute to the ability to align initiatives.
- Numerous communities and trails organizations in Northern Ontario have partnered with DNO on tourism wayfinding plans for communities and trails and have worked with DNO to implement them by way of design, fabrication and installation.
- Partnered community signage projects are all bilingual and some are tri-lingual (Oji Cree/Ojibwe/Michif).
- FedNor's support of the community wayfinding program for the last three years has seen \$1.275 million invested in tourism wayfinding across the region.
- FedNor officials have expressed strong support of the program.
- DNO has established much clearer lines of communication with many of its Travel Information Centres and has been able to work with them to determine their needs and develop resources and tools that support them.
- DNO's program to refurbish Travel Information Centre pillar signs complements these communities' wayfinding abilities.



Weaknesses

- Despite significant investment by DNO and FedNor, funds have not been adequate to address all of the region's community and trails wayfinding needs.
- The FedNor three-year funding agreement will expire March 31, 2020.

Opportunities

- Potential to leverage other sources of funding including for communities to apply independently or as a group to FedNor.
- Accommodations taxes can support community wayfinding needs.
- All regions have unique selling points to capitalize on to theme signage
- Implementation of a new digital trip planning tool for Northern Ontario that can be used by visitors and TICs alike.

Threats

- Lack of Municipal support for some Travel Information Centres.

Purpose of the Northern Ontario Wayfinding Team

Members of the Northern Ontario Wayfinding Team were selected based on their experience in wayfinding in Northern Ontario, their overall understanding of tourism in the region and its unique natural, cultural and heritage attractions, their knowledge of relevant policies and regulations and their track record in tourism product development. Additionally, the members play an ongoing role in advising DNO on the best avenues for focused community engagement and communication of critical information.

The team aids and advises DNO on the enhancement and development of wayfinding in Northern Ontario, drawing on their knowledge, the available research and the recommendations outlined in the Northern Ontario Tourism Wayfinding Strategy (2014). DNO capitalizes on members' knowledge of wayfinding as a key support tool for visitors to Northern Ontario and utilizes their feedback and advice to action its development.

Role of the Northern Ontario Tourism Wayfinding Team:

Team members use their wisdom, coupled with research, to support work undertaken by DNO with the purpose of encouraging visitors to Northern Ontario more readily navigate the region, resulting in tourists staying longer and spending more money.



Northern Ontario Tourism Wayfinding Team Members:

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Heather Bot	Ontario's Algoma Country
Gerry Cariou	Ontario's Sunset Country
Charley Goheen	Township of Chapleau
Jennifer Grundy	Tourism Thunder Bay
Kaleena Johnson	Owen Sound Transportation Company
Guy Lamarche	Tourism Timmins
Don McConnell	Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie
Rod Raycroft	Northeastern Ontario Tourism
Angela Romano	Destination Ontario – Ontario Travel Information Centre, Sault Ste. Marie



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