



DESTINATION
**NORTHERN
ONTARIO**

2025-26

Business Plan



destinationnorthernontario.ca



2025-26 Business Plan

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Let's
Get
Back
to
Work

ONTARIO



ONTARIO
REGIONAL
TOURISM
ORGANIZATIONS
(RTOs)



Message from the President

As we enter the 2025-26 fiscal year, I'm pleased to share our strategic vision on behalf of Destination Northern Ontario's Board of Directors. This year is pivotal for tourism in Northern Ontario as we continue our post-pandemic recovery and drive sustainable growth and innovation.

Our region's natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and diverse experiences position us uniquely to meet the evolving demands of today's travelers. The data shows that tourism remains a major economic driver in Northern Ontario, with receipts ranking higher per capita than other regions in the province and many provinces across Canada. In 2024, our region saw tourism spending reach \$1.7 billion between January and September, marking an impressive 8% year-on-year growth.

As we move forward, we recognize the need to address key challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities:

1. Balancing Growth with Sustainability

While we've seen robust growth, particularly in international spending which increased by 20.6% compared to 5.8% for domestic visitors, we must ensure this growth is sustainable and benefits our communities long-term.

2. Enhancing Year-Round Appeal

Seasonality remains a challenge, with winter travel underperforming. We're committed to developing and promoting off-season experiences to create a more balanced year-round tourism economy.

3. Workforce Development

With projections indicating a 7% annual growth rate in tourism employment through 2025, we're focused on addressing labor shortages and enhancing skills training to support this growth.

4. Innovation in Product Offerings

Our data shows strong growth in the Recreation and Entertainment category, particularly among U.S. visitors. We'll continue to invest in innovative experiences that set Northern Ontario apart.

5. Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism

We're doubling down on our commitment to sustainable practices and inclusive experiences, including Indigenous tourism initiatives, to meet the growing demand for responsible travel options.

6. Leveraging Technology:

Enhancing digital infrastructure to improve visitor experiences and industry operations.

Our success depends on collaboration with industry partners to amplify our core investment from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming, driving innovation and growth. While challenges lie ahead, our data-driven, excellence-focused strategy positions 2025-26 as a landmark year for Northern Ontario tourism. Together, we will work toward representing 10% of provincial tourism spending and creating sustainable economic opportunities for our communities.



Yours in Tourism,
Marty Kalagian
President,

**DESTINATION
NORTHERN
ONTARIO**

Message from the Executive Director

As we enter the 2025-26 fiscal year, we reflect on the strong foundation we've built in driving Northern Ontario's tourism industry forward. Through collaboration with regional partners, industry stakeholders, and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, we've set the stage for continued growth. This year is pivotal in shaping the future of tourism in our region.

In the year ahead, we are focused on enhancing product quality, visitor experiences, and marketing campaigns to showcase Northern Ontario as a unique, world-class destination. We aim to blend nature, culture, and innovative tourism solutions to set ourselves apart on the global stage. By promoting sustainable travel, local experiences, and our region's unmatched beauty, we will reinforce Northern Ontario's reputation as a must-visit destination.

Growth, research, and capacity building will be at the core of our initiatives. Key research on travel trends, domestic market dynamics, and U.S. travel intentions will guide our product development and marketing strategies throughout the year and beyond. A key focus will be increasing capacity, collaborating with municipal and regional stakeholders to maximize resources and drive successful implementation. The overarching goal remains to increase receipts to 10% of the overall spend in the province, emphasizing the need to continuously innovate marketing approaches.

Our award-winning Tourism Excellence North program will continue to advance workforce development through targeted training, mentorship, and the integration of technology. We will address skills gaps, adapt to evolving visitor preferences, and align our efforts with priority product development goals under the recovery initiative.

Together with our partners, we will work to position Northern Ontario as a global leader in sustainable tourism, offering extraordinary experiences that celebrate the uniqueness of our region.

At the time of writing, we are amid a trade dispute with the United States and the situation continues to be dynamic and unsure. But with challenge also comes opportunity and we will support the sector both in terms of addressing negative impacts but also taking advantage of opportunities as they arise.

Here's to a year of growth, innovation, and success in shaping the future of tourism in Northern Ontario.



David MacLachlan
Executive Director,

DESTINATION
NORTHERN
ONTARIO

Executive Summary

Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) is entering a transformative phase as it navigates the post-pandemic tourism landscape and new dynamic challenges in real time. The organization will continue to monitor the impacts of an impending trade war with the USA, how the region’s tourism sector could be affected, and developing strategies to mitigate negative impacts. However, with challenge comes opportunity and Northern Ontario has increased its share of provincial tourism receipts outpacing provincial growth. Moving forward, DNO's Board of Directors has developed a five-year strategic plan to engage the sector, identify and bridge industry gaps, support recovery efforts, and drive growth in the regional tourism economy. This annual business and operational plan outlines the strategic focus for the 2025-26 fiscal year, emphasizing sustainable development, industry engagement, and economic revitalization.

Strategic Focus

DNO’s priorities are built around five key pillars set by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming:

- 01 Product Development** – Bringing high-quality tourism products and experiences to market.
- 02 Investment Attraction** – Securing funding and support for sustainable tourism initiatives.
- 03 Workforce Development and Industry Training** – Strengthening the sector through training and education.
- 04 Marketing and Communications** – Promoting Northern Ontario as a premier tourism destination.
- 05 Partnerships** – Fostering collaboration to leverage available resources and enhance industry effectiveness.

To support these pillars, DNO will focus on leadership, strategic planning, communication, relationship-building, and being an industry champion to elevate Northern Ontario’s tourism sector.

Integration with Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming

Destination Northern Ontario aligns with the Regional Tourism Organizations Guide and the Ministry’s Transfer Payment Agreement. Additionally, DNO is committed to implementing recommendations from the Auditor General’s Value for Money Report to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the tourism sector.



Vision

Destination Northern Ontario envisions Northern Ontario as a distinctive tourism destination offering high-quality experiences, fostering entrepreneurship, and connecting communities on local, regional, and global scales. Its mission is to provide leadership in strategically guiding and championing the region's tourism industry through communication, collaboration, and strong partnerships.

Values

Destination Northern Ontario is committed to:

✓ Accountability	✓ Leadership	✓ Collaboration	✓ Integrity
✓ Transparency	✓ Innovation	✓ Teamwork	

Goals for Northern Ontario Tourism Sector

- Supporting innovation and entrepreneurship through research and education.
- Bringing a critical mass of high-quality tourism products and experiences to market.
- Ensuring sustainable tourism development and strong product-market alignment.
- Streamlining services for operators to improve industry efficiency.

Business Development Goals

- Conducting industry research to enhance product development and visitor experiences.
- Establishing organizational excellence through corporate services, improved communication, and enhanced financial systems.
- Strengthening the workforce through specialized training and strategic partnerships.
- Promoting industry leadership in product development, investment attraction, workforce training, marketing, and partnership initiatives.



Three Development Streams for Northern Ontario

- **Defend & Maintain:** Existing tourism products and experiences in which Northern Ontario's tourism industry excels.
- **Inspire & Grow:** New products and experiences that will lead growth in Northern Ontario's tourism industry.
- **Rise & Shine:** Ensuring Northern Ontario's tourism products and experiences are best in class in every aspect.

Successes & Achievements

Market research and successful Tourism Development Fund (TDF) application with FedNor: Secured \$200,000 in TDF support from FedNor, leveraging contributions from six key partners: Destination Ontario, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, Sudbury, and North Bay. This funding will **enhance tourism infrastructure, support strategic marketing initiatives, and drive visitor engagement** across the region.



Federal Economic Development
Agency for Northern Ontario

Agence fédérale de développement
économique pour le Nord de l'Ontario

Canada

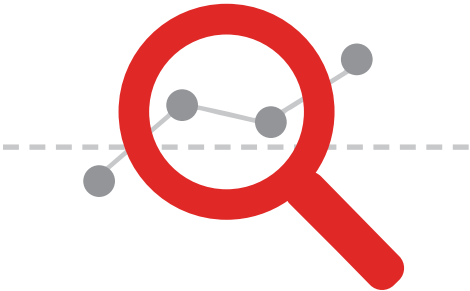


9.8 MILLION

**VISITS TO DESTINATION NORTHERN
ONTARIO WEBSITES**

In 2023-24, the success of marketing efforts continued with 9.8 million website visits and over 1 million referrals to partners: Regional marketing efforts continue to deliver strong results, with increased website visits and a higher volume of referrals to partners.

Outpacing provincial tourism growth: The region is exceeding provincial tourism growth rates, particularly in attracting international visitors from the U.S. and overseas. This success is fueled by **targeted marketing, enhanced travel partnerships, and improved accessibility**, reinforcing the region's status as a premier destination.



Budget & Funding Challenges

For the 2024-25 fiscal year, DNO's core Ministry funding allocation is \$3,930,235, with a target to leverage an additional 50% through industry partnerships and federal/provincial agreements. However, with no increase in funding since the regional tourism initiative's inception and rising operational costs, additional financial support would permit DNO to sustain and expand successful programs.

Call for Additional Investment

Destination Northern Ontario draws comparisons to Newfoundland and Labrador, which has successfully positioned itself as a premier destination. With its closer proximity to markets and a broader range of tourism offerings, Northern Ontario has the potential to outpace this success. A short-term investment increase of \$5 million annually over 5 years would enable DNO to enhance destination marketing efforts and grow tourism receipts substantially with a goal of increasing tourism revenues by \$1 billion and to 10% of provincial receipts, generating over \$300 million in annual tax revenues and creating an additional 14,000 full-time jobs in rural and Indigenous communities. Destination Northern Ontario has participated in 2025 Budget Consultations with the Ministry of Finance, submitting a proposal for consideration.



Financial Plan (April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026)

Area of Focus	\$		% Total Budget	% including Partnership
Governance & Administration	\$	\$ 425,235.00	11%	11%
Product Development	\$	\$ 350,000.00	9%	13%
Investment Attraction	\$	\$ 350,000.00	9%	10%
Workforce Development & Industry Training	\$	\$ 500,000.00	13%	14%
Marketing	\$	\$1,700,000.00	43%	52%
Partnerships	\$	\$ 605,000.00	15%	Included in pillars
Total Eligible Expenses	\$	\$3,930,235.00	100%	100%
Leveraged Contributions Goal	\$	\$2,000,000.00	50%	Minimum \$605,000
Total	\$	\$5,930,235.00	150%	

RTO 13**Regional Overview
& Assessment**

Tourism is a major economic driver in Northern Ontario with receipts ranking higher per capita than those of other regions in the province and many provinces in the country.

Tourism is the **largest employer of young workers** in the province and Destination Northern Ontario's research reveals that **40% of the workforce** in the region, as well as one-in-four businesses are tourism-related. In 2019, tourism receipts in the region accounted for **\$1.5 billion** in spending, contributing **\$1 billion to Ontario's GDP**. Demand for accommodation in region 13 has increased by **31%** from 2012-2017, at a compound rate of almost **7%**.

COVID-19 had an unprecedented impact on the tourism industry during the 2020 and 2021 seasons, and therefore completely reshaped the regional profile of RTO13. In order to track the impact to the region, Destination Northern Ontario undertook a multiyear RTO Research Program to cultivate a strong, data-driven decision-making culture across Ontario's Regional Tourism Organizations, which will be achieved through the design and implementation of a comprehensive data and research insights program. Destination Northern Ontario continues tracking fixed roof accommodation performance throughout the year to inform the following statistics and trends.

 **30%**
INCREASE IN
DEMAND FOR
ACCOMMODATIONS

 **\$1.5**
BILLION
IN TOURISM
RECEIPTS

ONE-IN-FOUR
BUSINESSES IN
NORTHERN ONTARIO
ARE TOURISM-RELATED

TOURISM = #1
EMPLOYER
OF YOUNG WORKERS
IN ONTARIO

¹ Statistics Canada's National Travel Survey and Visitor Travel Survey 2019; CBRE Hotels Trends in the Hotel Industry National Market Report, AirDNA, Statistics Canada's Business Register 2019, MTCS.

Spending Patterns & Growth

Tourism spending in RTO 13 continues to show robust growth, driven by both domestic and international visitors. Between January and July 2024, spending reached \$1.2 billion, marking a 6% year-on-year growth. International spending outpaced domestic spending with 24.3% growth, while domestic spending grew at a steady 3.4%. Intra-provincial travel is critical, contributing 72% of total revenue, highlighting its central role in the region's economy. U.S. travellers comprise 14% of the total spending, growing at 13.7% over the past five years, reinforcing its status as a key secondary market. Overseas markets, though smaller, have exhibited 21.3% short-term growth, indicating further potential for international engagement.

Spending by Category



Transportation and Food and Beverage

These categories dominate, contributing **32%** to the total spending.

While Food and Beverage has shown significant growth, Transportation has struggled, with a 10% year-on-year decline in the first half of 2024.



Recreation and Entertainment

While still representing a smaller portion (**12%**) of total spending,

Recreation & Entertainment is a rising category, with 51.2% growth in the first half of 2024, primarily driven by U.S. visitors.



Accommodation

This represents **13%** of total spending, showing steady performance, particularly for international travellers.



Retail

At **10%** of total spending, retail experienced a decline.



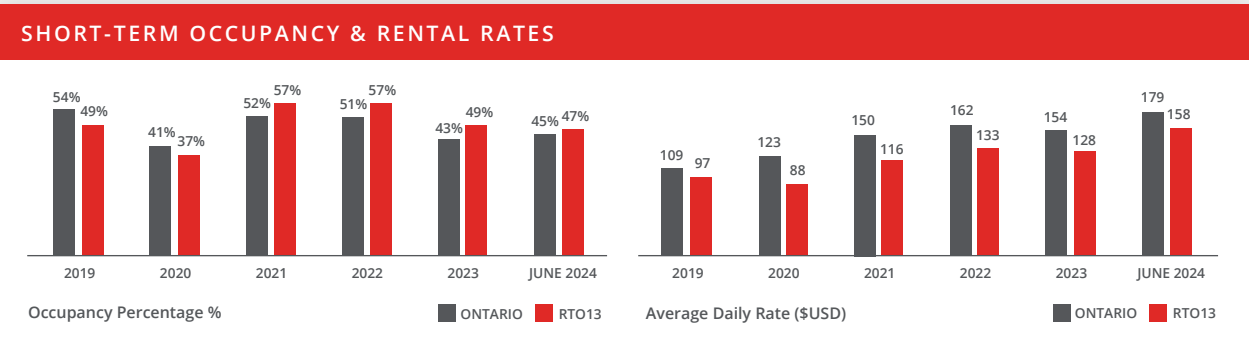
📍 Sleeping Giant Provincial Park – Sail Superior / Destination Northern Ontario



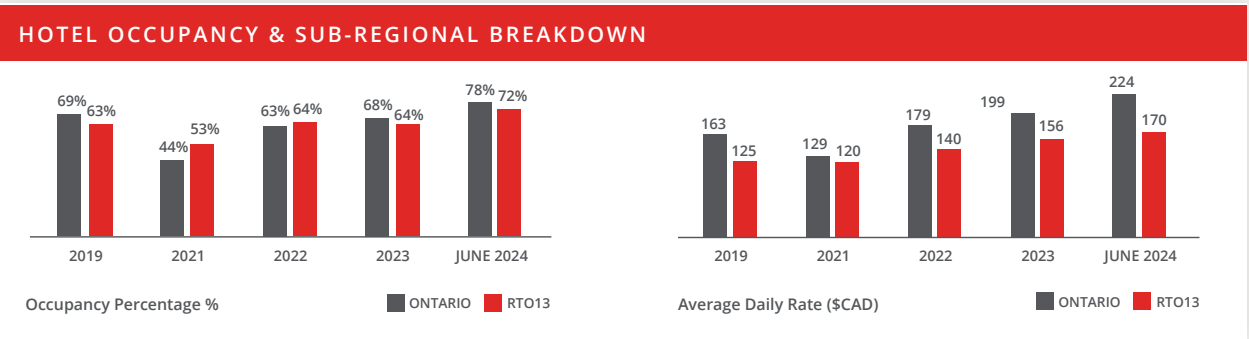
📍 Fresh picked Blueberries / Tiina Keranen

Occupancy and Pricing Trends

Short-Term Rentals: RTO 13's short-term rental occupancy rates have consistently outperformed the provincial average but have been steadily declining since 2021. The average daily rate (ADR) increased 23% to \$158 in June 2024, but this rise in pricing may have contributed to the dip in occupancy rates (47%). There is a growing need to balance affordability with premium service offerings.



Hotel Performance: Hotel occupancy rates for June 2024 stood at 72%, up eight percentage points from June 2023. ADR increased by 9%, now at \$170, suggesting a strong market recovery, although occupancy still lags behind the provincial average.



Source: Destination Ontario - Ontario Tourism Industry Health Check August 19, 2024



Strategic Implications and Opportunities

Refine Pricing and Offer Value

RTO 13 can adjust pricing strategies to balance ADR with occupancy rates, especially for short-term rentals. Offering value-driven packages catering to domestic and international markets will help attract a broader range of visitors.

Invest in Recreation & Entertainment

Expanding recreation and entertainment offerings has significant potential, especially since this category is rapidly growing and appealing to U.S. travellers. Promoting off-peak travel with cultural and environmental experiences can further increase visitation.

Enhance Connectivity

Improving transportation links between key regional destinations will make multi-destination travel more seamless, attracting longer stays and increasing overall spending.

Promote Sustainable Tourism

A strong marketing focus on sustainable and inclusive tourism, highlighting Indigenous and environmental experiences, will resonate with domestic and international travellers.

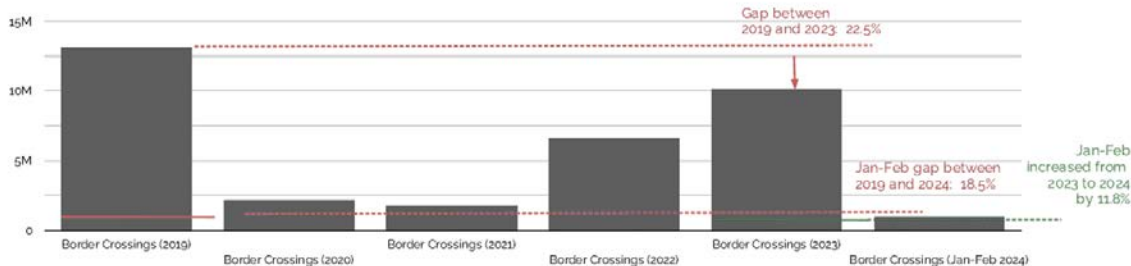
Ontario Border Crossings

Visits from the U.S.A. continue to lag 2019 numbers. The resource-based tourism sector, especially in Northwest Ontario, is reliant on the U.S. market.

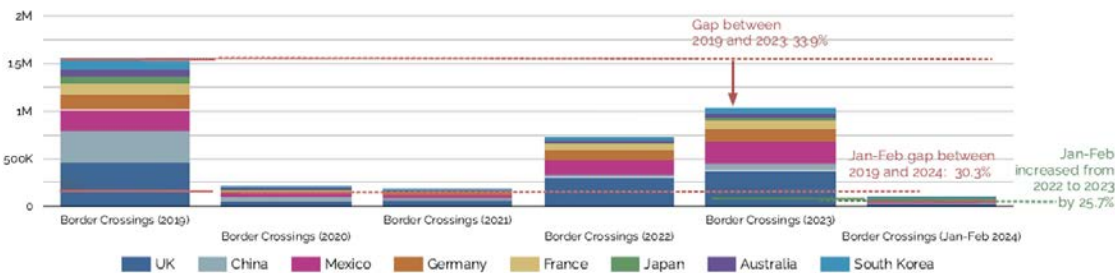
In February 2024, border crossings from all key international markets (except the U.S.) surpassed February 2023 levels but did not reach pre-pandemic levels (February 2019) by a 12.6% gap; U.S. entries grew 19.1% versus February 2022 but declined 11.5% compared to February 2019.

In 2024, Northern Ontario's eastern border crossings at Sault Ste. Marie and Pigeon River are outpacing the provincial average while border crossings at Fort Frances and Rainy River continue to lag.

ONTARIO'S BORDER CROSSINGS FROM USA



ONTARIO'S BORDER CROSSINGS FROM OTHER KEY MARKETS

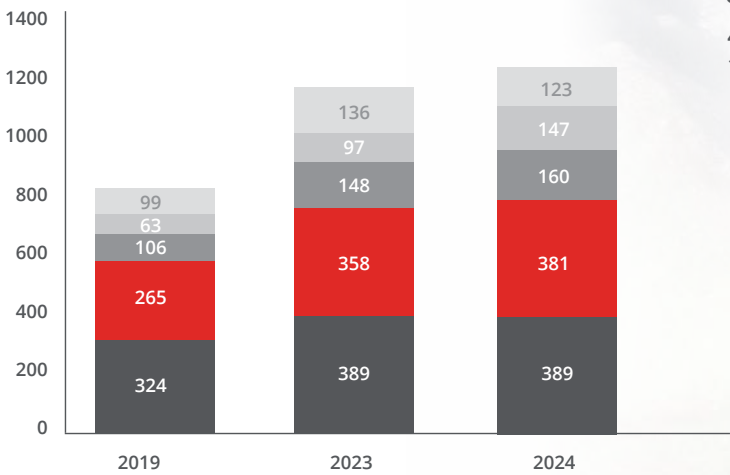


Source: Destination Ontario: Ontario Tourism Industry Health Check August 2024 – Ontario's Border Crossings

Tourism Spending

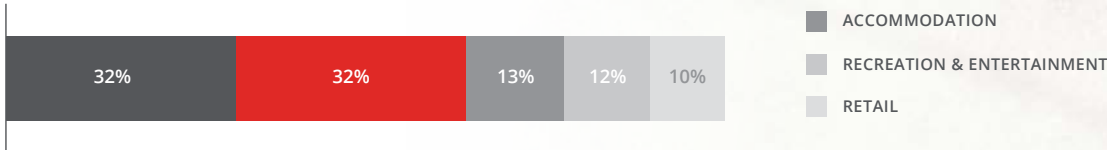
- Tourism spending in the region amounted to **\$2.8 billion** between January and December 2024, amounting to **9.6% growth** year-on-year.
- International spending outperformed Domestic spending, with the two markets growing by **24.3%** and **3.4%**, respectively. Total spending for the period equaled **\$195 million** for International and **\$1 billion** for Domestic.
 - The industry has grown consistently over the past five years, with a total average growth of **6.9%** per year since 2019. Domestic and International spending grew at **5.9%** and **13.3%** per year, respectively, over the past five years.
 - While the industry's short-term monthly growth shows some volatility, its long-term growth is stable and shows sustainable growth potential.
 - Transportation and Food and Beverage are the dominant categories in the region, accounting for **32%** each of total spending. Food and Beverage show consistent growth, but Transportation stagnated over the past year and showed low long-term growth.

RTO 13 TOURISM SPENDING CATEGORIES



5-YEAR CAGR	5-YEAR GRW
43.0%	-10.0%
18.6%	52.2%
8.5%	7.7%
7.5%	6.4%
3.7%	0.0%

RTO 13 SPENDING BY CATEGORIES (CURRENT YEAR)



Source: Destination Canada Data Collective Lodging Aligned Spend Reporting 2024 YTD Ontario

TRENDS & VISITOR PATTERNS

→ High Interest in Outdoor Activities

An overwhelming **70.8%** of respondents expressed a love for outdoor activities, with another **26.3%** enjoying them occasionally. This signals a strong market for nature-oriented experiences.

→ Top Activities

Sightseeing led with **72.2%**, followed by hiking (**65.2%**), camping (**62.8%**), and beach activities (**59.8%**). Activities like cycling saw less interest, highlighting where investments might have the highest ROI.

→ Interest in Indigenous Culture

Nearly half (**48.5%**) expressed significant interest in Indigenous cultural experiences, with an additional **43.6%** open to learning more. This indicates a growing demand for culturally immersive travel, particularly in regions with rich Indigenous heritage.

→ Food as a Travel Experience

Food exploration ranks high, with **70%** of participants eager to try different culinary offerings. Culinary experiences could be a major attraction in the travel package, especially for regions with unique food traditions.

→ Seeking Relaxation

A relaxing getaway was the primary travel motivator (**56.6%**), with cultural immersion and adventure activities appealing to smaller segments. Marketing efforts might focus on tranquility, scenic beauty, and rejuvenation rather than extreme adventure.

→ Reliance on Word of Mouth and Social Media

Friends and family recommendations are influential (**67.3%**), followed closely by social media (**41.3%**) and blogs (**40.9%**). This highlights the importance of building social proof and tapping into community-driven marketing.

→ Family and Partner Travel

The majority travel with family (**44.5%**) or a partner (**39.5%**), indicating a preference for group-oriented or couple-friendly accommodation and activities.

→ Nature Accommodation

Lodges or cabins (**67.8%**) and camping (**52.1%**) are preferred ways to experience nature, suggesting a trend towards rustic but comfortable lodging that connects travelers with the environment.

Sourced from NorthernOntario.Travel Tourism Tech Travel Intentions within the Soft Outdoors Travel Segment Survey Results

Travel is Prioritized

Even in today's economic climate, consumers globally are allocating a larger share of wallet to experiences over goods, with spending on experiences up **65%**, while spending on things is up **12%**, compared to 2019, as of March 2023. **48%** of Canadians are prioritizing travel at the expense of other spending.

Canadians are ready to roam, let's keep their adventure close to home. Despite the anticipated economic slowdown and the allure of international destinations, domestic spending is expected to maintain its growth trajectory. Domestic travel was vital in the early stages of recovery. In 2022, tourism spending reached 97% of 2019 levels. In 2023, domestic spending will reach **\$80 billion, 4.2% more than in 2019.**



Source: Destination Canada, Tourism Outlook: Unlocking Opportunities for the Sector

48%
of Canadians are prioritizing travel at the expense of other spending

Canada a top choice for key international markets

Canada is a **top three** long-haul destination for consideration amongst consumers in five of Destination Canada's key markets (**France, UK, Germany, Mexico, USA**). In Mexico, France and Germany, Canada is ranked as the number one destination for how much consumers like and respect the nation brand, illustrating Canada's positive reputation.



☒ Coffee in the Wilderness / Destination Northern Ontario – Tiina Keranen



☒ Touring Lake Superior Coastal Region / Destination Northern Ontario – Tiina Keranen

Provincial

Southern Ontario will be an important market for Northern Ontario in the coming year and beyond as the travel industry navigates through post-pandemic realities. With a population of 12.8 million people, it is the largest market with proximity to the region and boasts a diverse demographic with higher income on average and over a quarter of the population being visible minorities.

- Ontario has the largest market share for visits at **88.0%** and total visitor spending at **65.9%**.
- There is an opportunity for Ontario to extend their stay to increase overall spend where other market's increased visits to Ontario will increase spending.
- In June 2024, Travel Price Index (TPI) **increased by 1.5%** compared with June 2023 levels, following a **2.7%** increase in May.
- The 2023 hotel occupancy rate increased across all regions compared to 2022 levels (**+5.2 point change**) and 2019 levels (**+0.6 point change**).
- The short-term rental occupancy rates in June 2024 surpassed on average by a **0.8 percentage point** gap compared with June 2023 levels for all regions.
- Border crossings for all other key international markets in May 2024 surpassed May 2023 levels by **11.5%** and would have to increase an average of **15.1%** to reach May 2019 level.

Sourced from Destination Ontario Health Check August 2024

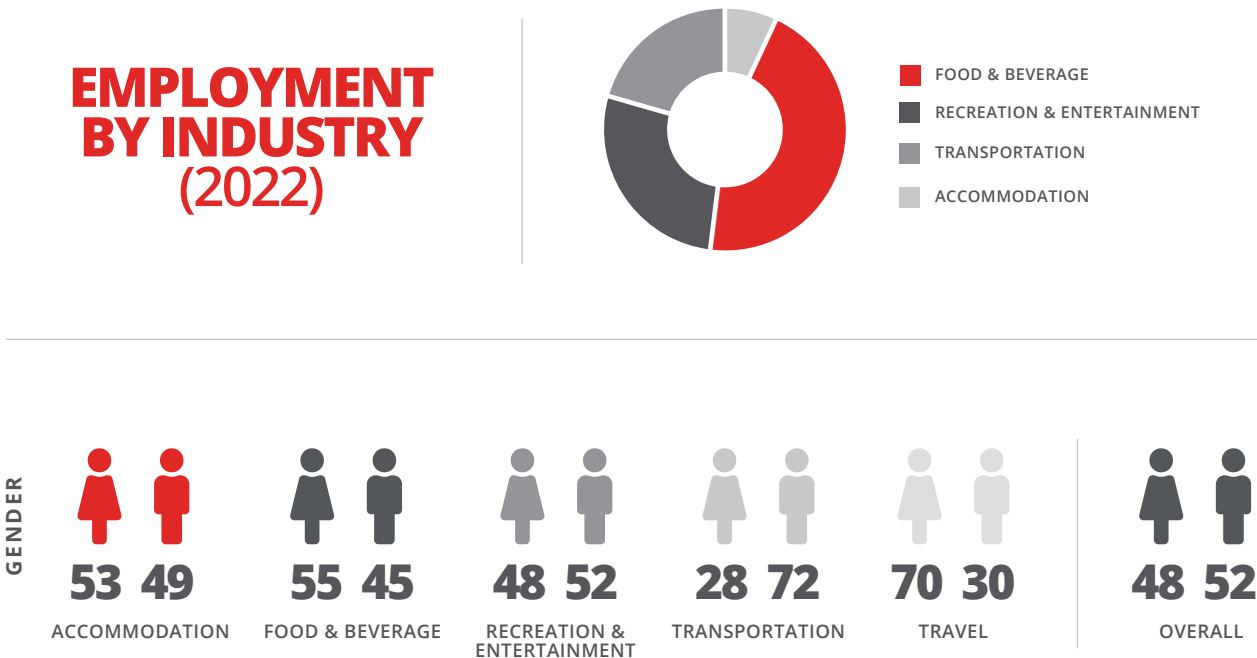


Workforce Overview

Ontario’s tourism industry is demonstrating robust employment statistics, especially in the Food and Beverage sub-sector, indicating a strong recovery from COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions. Ontario employment figures for 2022 show a sector that has rebounded significantly from the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. An average of 713,333 employees accounts for 9.3% of Ontario’s total employment.

Ontario’s tourism sector is rebounding strongly, with a **low unemployment rate of 5.5%** and a projected **annual growth of 7%** through 2025, particularly in travel services. Employment in travel services is expected to grow significantly (**16.1%**), though this may exacerbate labor shortages in lower-wage areas like food and beverage (**\$17.93/hour**) and accommodation (**\$21.56/hour**).

The food and beverage sector, employing 44% of the workforce, relies heavily on young, part-time workers, leading to retention challenges. Transportation, employing **20%**, offers higher wages (**\$31.44/hour**) and longer hours but faces renewal issues, as **31%** of its workforce is **55 or older**. Travel services have the highest full-time employment rate (**87%**), yet wage disparities persist, particularly in accommodation. Gender imbalances are also evident, with **72%** of transportation workers being **male** and **70%** of travel services workers being **female**.



28

72

TRANSPORTATION

70

30

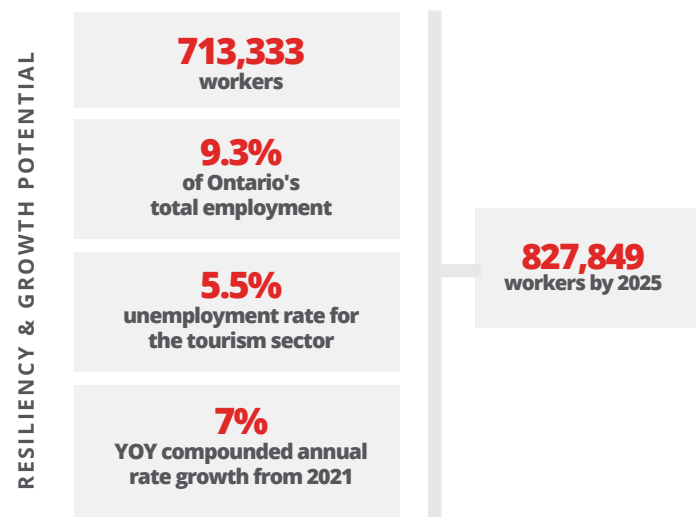
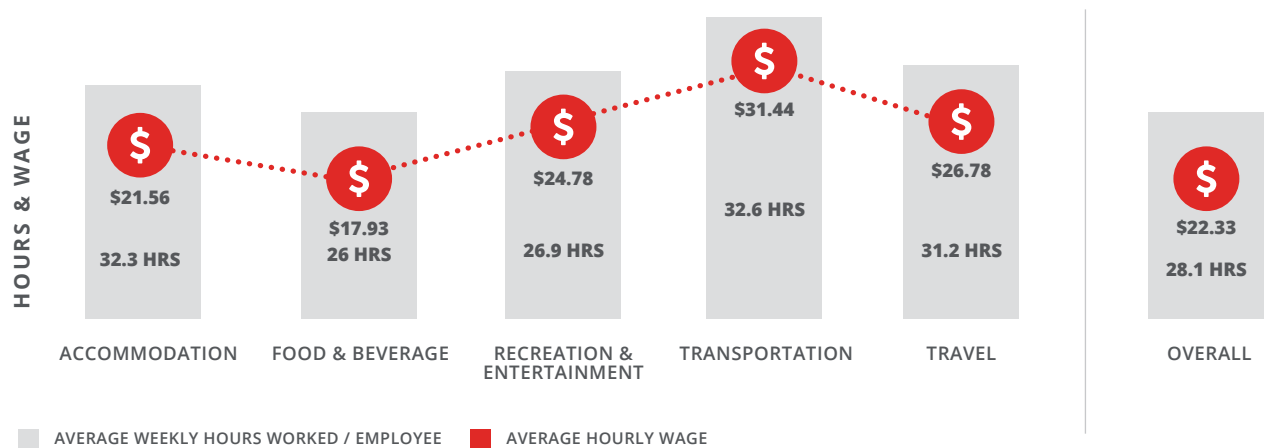
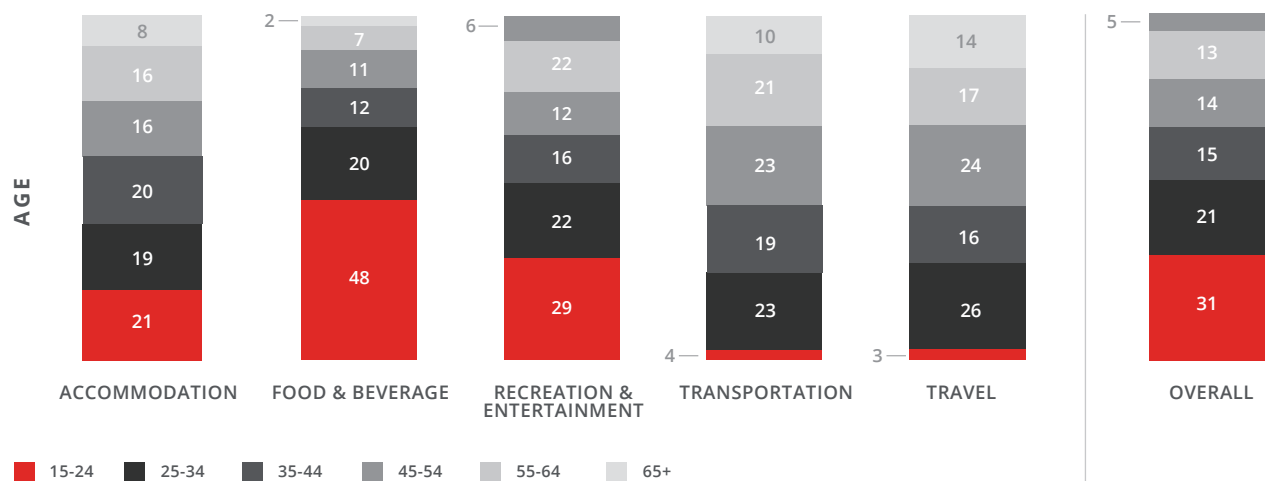
TRAVEL

48

52

OVERALL

Source: Tourism HR Canada Snapshot of The Tourism Sector Labour Market: Ontario February 2023



Almost half of Ontario's tourism workforce is employed in Food and Beverage. An aging workforce in the transportation sub-sector and wage disparities across the industry are the primary challenges facing the sector in Ontario.

- Investing in workforce development is crucial to ensure a skilled labour supply.
- Additionally, with **31%** of transportation workers **aged 55 or older**, proactive succession planning and **recruitment of younger workers** are needed to address potential risks.

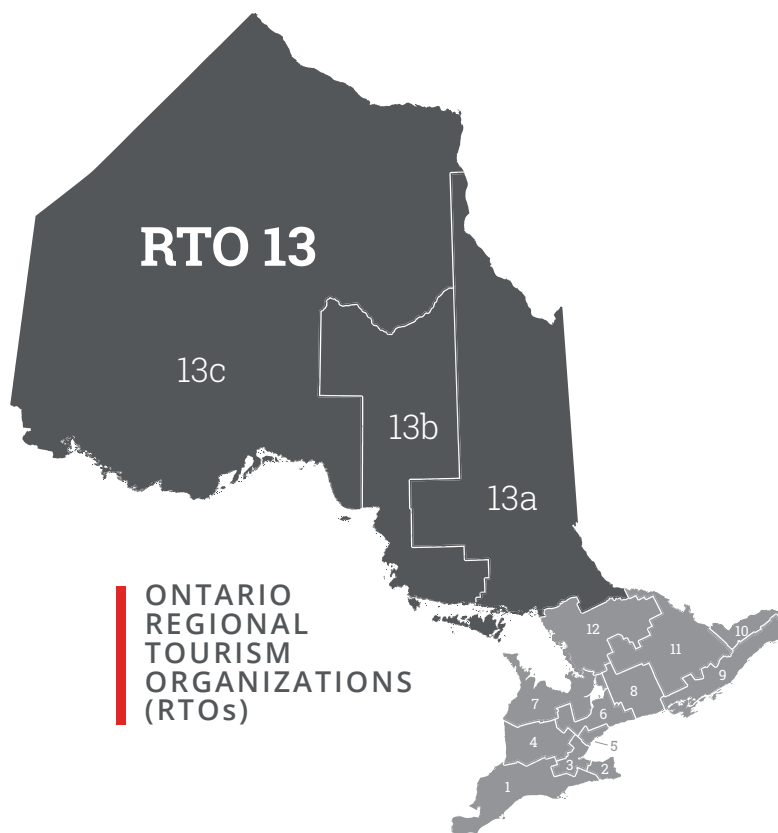
Source: Tourism HR Canada Snapshot of The Tourism Sector Labour Market: Ontario February 2023



Board of Directors & Government Advisors

Destination Northern Ontario is governed by a pan-Northern Ontario Board of Directors who are recognized industry leaders and who collectively provide vast knowledge, experience, and insight as they set the strategic directions for the organization. The organization maintains representation on the Board from the private sector at more than 50%.

The Board of Directors regularly consults with and is provided with guidance by an advisory group comprised of key government officials in tourism-related ministries and agencies. The advisory group is a key component to the Board of Directors' strategic planning and consultation process. The representatives are from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, Destination Ontario, FedNor, Ontario Parks and Parks Canada.



DESTINATION
ONTARIO



Federal Economic Development
Agency for Northern Ontario

Agence fédérale de développement
économique pour le Nord de l'Ontario

Canada



Parks Canada
Parcs Canada

2025-26 Destination Northern Ontario Board of Directors

NAME	POSITION	SECTOR
Marty Kalagian	President	Private Sector – Retired
Gerry Webber	Vice President	Public Services Sector – Retired
Betty McGie	Treasurer	Private Sector
Lori Branch	Secretary	Private Sector
Rod Duhaime	Director	First Nation
Heather Gropp	Director	Municipal Government
Tammy Frick	Director	Not for Profit
Guy Lamarche	Director	Public Services Sector – Retired
Shannon McMullan	Director	Private Sector
Will Pawlowski	Director	Private Sector
George Stivrins	Director	Private Sector
Ian Wood	Director	Municipal Government – Retired

Government Advisors

NAME	POSITION	SECTOR
Jim Antler	Advisor	Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming
Laurie Ypya	Advisor	Ministry of Northern Development
Todd Eastman	Advisor	Destination Ontario (MTCG)
Cory Jones	Advisor	FedNor
Vacant	Advisor	Ontario Parks
Chad O'Halloran	Advisor	Parks Canada

Core Priority Pillars

Destination Northern Ontario has dedicated itself in taking a leadership role to guide Northern Ontario’s tourism industry. As such, this business plan not only incorporates Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming program pillars but also includes goals to achieve Organizational Excellence.

The following table highlights Destination Northern Ontario’s core priority pillars that allow the organization to meet Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming reporting requirements:

PROGRAM PILLARS	DESTINATION NORTHERN ONTARIO OPERATIONAL AREAS / KEY PROGRAMS
Corporate Services & Governance	→ Governance, Organizational Excellence (Administration), Outreach.
Product Development	→ Engaging the sector and supporting growth in priority products and experiences. → Improved visitor services.
Investment Attraction	→ Engaging the sector, supporting, and facilitating investment attraction across the region.
Workforce Development & Industry Training	→ Supporting recovery and growth through the Tourism Excellence North and Tourism SkillsNet North programs.
Marketing & Communications	→ Providing marketing tools and tactics to grow tourism across the region. → Engaging the sector.
Partnerships	→ Reflect all pillar areas.

For the organization to demonstrate leadership, the staffing plan has been developed to reflect pillar area leadership, with the following roles:

- Manager, Product Development
- Senior Coordinator, Investment Attraction & Economic Development
- Senior Coordinator, Workforce Development and Industry Training
- Manager, Marketing and Communications
- Corporate Services Officer, Governance and Administration

Destination Northern Ontario's Executive Director manages all Senior Staff and is tasked with ensuring that initiatives under staff leadership are completed for each pillar area. The Executive Director along with the Senior Staff form a senior management team.

Destination Northern Ontario has increased its resources this fiscal to support additional investment attraction activities. Overall, the organization plays a supporting role when it comes to investment attraction. However, Destination Northern Ontario will play an active and leading role in finding solutions for sustainable regional tourism development.

It is not expected that all staff will be located at the Destination Northern Ontario office in Sault Ste. Marie. However, Senior Staff with office space in other locations will be required to act as representatives of Destination Northern Ontario for their respective community and sub-region. As such, it is expected that during the hiring process, Destination Northern Ontario ensures adequate representation in all three sub-regions. In keeping with Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming guidelines and Destination Northern Ontario's mission to establish a leadership role in the various program pillar initiatives, salaries are allocated to affiliated pillar areas.

Performance & Reporting

The Executive Director and Senior Staff will monitor implementation of initiatives in the annual business plan. Performance will be measured in each of the pillar areas. This will be accomplished through internal reporting, face-to-face team lead meetings, teleconferences and senior staff working directly with the Executive Director.

The Board will monitor progress and performance through a combination of dashboard reports, pillar updates and financial reports as well as review Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming performance and progress reports.

Destination Northern Ontario will submit on-time reports to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, including progress and final reports, financial documents and appropriate attestations identified in the transfer payment agreement.

Governance & Administration

OBJECTIVE

📍 South Baymouth – Manitoulin Island / Destination Northern Ontario – Tiina Keranen

The primary objective to guide Governance & Administration for Destination Northern Ontario over the next year is:

To ensure strong governance and organizational excellence while enhancing product development, investment attraction, workforce development and industry training, marketing, communications, and partnership development in the tourism sector.

This pillar is managed by the Executive Director, Corporate Services Officer, and Finance Officer with support from the Office Administrator. They will organize themselves around three management functions to ensure organizational excellence:

1. Operations.
2. Financial Administration.
3. Office Administration.

Staff follow Destination Northern Ontario's Operational Policies and Processes Manual, Health and Safety Plan, Succession Plan, Risk Management Plan, Strategic Plan, and annualized business plan.

Staff will continue to ensure the workplace remains safe and productive by monitoring and responding in real time to internal and external pressures and demands. The organization has made strides to improve efficiency, accuracy and timelines.

With respect to the Board, there are Board Governance Policies in place, and the Board will monitor its own processes and progress with initiatives identified in the strategic and annualized business plans.

Governance & Administration | Strategic Focus

01 Priority Action Area

Enhance strength and effectiveness of Destination Northern Ontario through good governance and Board renewal, to cultivate a culture of integrity and accountability, leading to positive performance and sustainability.

\$50,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Adhere to Board governance policies and procedures, compliance with provincial conflict of interest policies, and conduct annual review(s).	Board, Executive Director (ED), and Corporate Services Officer (CSO) monitor and review governance policies.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 100% of policies followed and reviewed.	Q1-4	Continued
b Review and apply recommendations from the 2024-25 internal review/ audit of all program areas with a view to increase engagement, effectiveness, and return on investment.	Board of Directors with support from ED/CSO and lead staff ensure planned activities align with audit recommendations.	Improved and more effective programming with 100% of all audit recommendations addressed.	Q1-2	New
c Maintain five-year strategic plan and develop annualized business plans in accordance with MTCG directives.	Board of Directors monitors and contributes to process led by ED with support of senior staff. TPA secured.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 1 annual business plan completed and submitted successfully to MTCG.	Q3-4	Continued

02 Priority Action Area

Ensure staffing plan aligns with strategic plan and consistently monitor resource allocations to ensure long-term organizational excellence, stability, and sustainability.

\$225,235.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Review resource needs for all Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) programs including new funding opportunities.	Activities are coordinated and managed by the Executive Director and/or Corporate Services Officer and supported by the Office Administrator.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 100% initiatives and reporting completed. Increased programming with budget leveraged by a minimum of \$2 million/50%.	Q1-4	Continued
b Adhere to and monitor compliance to DNO policies, manuals, and plans. Undertake an annual review to ensure relevance.	CSO communicates, monitors, and conducts annual review.	Improved organizational excellence with 100% staff compliance and 100% policies reviewed.	Q1-4	Continued

Governance & Administration | Strategic Focus

03 Priority Action Area

Maintain physical office premises and provide adequate resources to ensure successful execution of business plan.

\$50,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Maintain a productive workspace for all employees.	Offices maintained in Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, and Atikokan.	Increased presence with 3 offices open for business.	Q1-4	Continued
b Encourage staff to meet and work collaboratively from across the region.	Working and meeting space created that provides for video conferencing.	Increased alignment, collaboration, and effectiveness with connective meeting and working space in both Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury resulting in a minimum of 26 biweekly meetings.	Q1-4	Continued

04 Priority Action Area

Confidently manage Destination Northern Ontario finances following all policies and procedures.

\$50,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Track performance and provide reports to funders as required and on-time.	CSO completes funding reports with support from ED, Finance Officer (FO) Office Admin, Senior Staff, and team members as appropriate.	Enhanced organization excellence and leveraged resources with 100% of funding reports completed accurately and submitted on-time.	Q1-4	Continued
b Identify and monitor priorities/initiatives that require compliance with Destination Northern Ontario's Risk Management Plan.	CSO manages process with support of senior staff.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 100% staff compliance on all appropriate initiatives.	Q1-4	Continued
c Maintain relationships with legal and accounting professionals.	CSO and FO retain legal and audit teams.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 100% of audit(s) completed on-time and clean.	Q1-4	Continued
d Follow DNO financial policies and processes.	FO with support of CSO and office admin monitors compliance.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 100% of policies followed.	Q1-4	Continued

05 Priority Action Area

Board and staff travel as necessary to execute business plan pillar initiatives.

\$25,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a All travel is consistent with DNO travel policy.	All staff follow policy that is monitored by CSO with all travel approved by ED.	Enhanced organizational excellence with 100% staff compliance.	Q1-4	Continued

Governance & Administration | Strategic Focus

06 Priority Action Area

Maintain membership in key tourism industry organizations.

\$15,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Maintain memberships in industry organizations.	Memberships maintained in, - Destinations International - Travel Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) - Travel Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) - Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters Association (NOTO)	Increased collaboration, effectiveness, knowledge, and capacity with 4 memberships maintained.	Q1-4	Continued
b Champion Northern Ontario's tourism sector by being a productive member by contributing industry knowledge.	Staff participate on boards, committees and participate in events.	Increased knowledge of Northern Ontario's tourism sector through staff participation in 4 tourism organizations.	Q1-4	Continued
c Access full range of member benefits.	Staff access and participate in membership benefits.	Increased capacity with 4 lead staff accessing professional development benefits.	Q1-4	Continued

07 Priority Action Area

Ensure organization is adequately resourced in the area of information technology.

\$10,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
b Conduct annual review to ensure staff and board are adequately resourced.	Conduct annual review to ensure staff and board are adequately resourced.	Increased organizational excellence with 100% staff and board satisfied with available resources.	Q1-4	Continued
c Continue migration to a common document and file sharing system.	Continue migration to a common document and file sharing system.	Increased organizational excellence with 100% all project and partner (ship) related files available through file sharing system.	Q1-4	Continued



Performance Measures

✓	Board, staff, partner engagement and satisfaction with progress in accomplishing strategic directives compared to target (75% board attendance, 75% overall satisfaction).
✓	Percentage of planned initiatives undertaken, completed and on-budget compared to target (75%) and percentage of core budget leveraged compared to target (50%).
✓	Annual financial audit is completed clean, on-time, and with no deficit.

MTCG Budget Total

\$425,235.00



Destination Development

📷 Ice Fishing for Wild Brook Trout / Destination Northern Ontario – Tiina Keranen

Destination Northern Ontario lead staff continue the process to collaborate initiatives across all pillars, to develop and implement product plans, as well as broader destination development strategies across the region, three sub-regions, individual municipalities as well as unique smaller geographic areas.

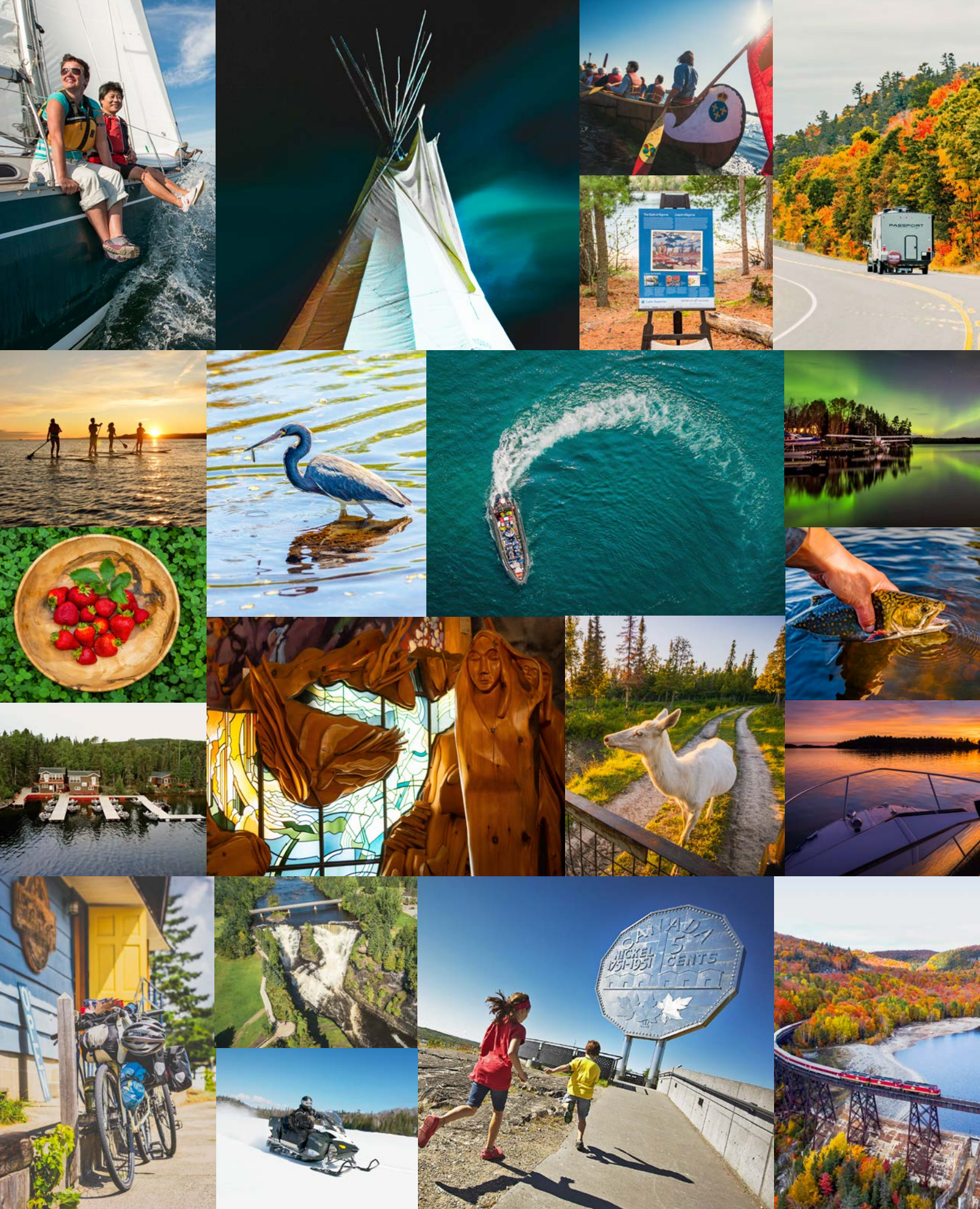
The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming defines destination development as *“a collaborative approach to enhancing a location as a desired destination for tourists that encompasses all/any of marketing, product development, investment attraction and workforce development.”*

Destination Development may include:

- Understanding what draws visitors to a place;
- Developing the right products/experiences/services to meeting visitor needs; and
- Effectively marketing priority products to a target market.”

Close to 40% of Destination Northern Ontario’s allocation from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming is focused on destination development activities in product development, investment attraction, workforce development and industry training, and the provision of marketing tools and research to the sector. This figure grows when taking into account its Tourism SkillsNet North initiative and leveraged partnered budgets.

In 2024-25 Destination Northern Ontario undertook the development of a Destination Master Plan. Lead staff will ensure future pillar initiatives align with plan findings and recommendations.



01

Product Development

OBJECTIVE

📍 Northern Ontario Sport Fishing Centre – Kenora / Andrew Scott, Kathryn Crane, What-A-Ride

The primary objective to guide Product Development in Northern Ontario over the next year is:

To enhance the visitor experience through well-designed tourism products that meet current and future customer demand.

Destination Northern Ontario's product development initiatives for 2025-26 will focus on growth, innovation, and operator-centric solutions to meet evolving market demands.

The pillar will work to enhance the diversity, quality, and competitiveness of tourism products and experiences in Northern Ontario through three key priorities:

1. **Driving Innovation in Product Development:** Destination Northern Ontario will actively engage in developing new, market-responsive tourism products that align with emerging trends and visitor expectations.
2. **Sustaining Momentum for High-Potential Offerings:** Efforts will prioritize the continued success of Northern Ontario's best-bet tourism products, such as nature-based and adventure tourism, which have been identified as high-priority niches.
3. **Enhancing Visitor Services:** Improving the overall visitor experience through better services and infrastructure will be a core focus.

This work will build upon the Destination Master Plan, incorporating its priority recommendations to address gaps in offerings and support innovative tourism concepts. A collaborative approach involving industry champions, stakeholders, and a reinvigorated consultation process will ensure alignment with market needs.

Destination Northern Ontario's product development activities will continue to play a key role in growing the region's tourism receipts.

Product Development | Strategic Focus

01 Priority Action Area

Play an active role in product development to grow and enhance Northern Ontario's tourism industry.

\$150,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Monitor and leverage resources to execute planned initiatives ensuring completed, on time and on budget.	Senior Coordinator manages execution of pillar activities with support of admin staff and junior coordinator.	Improved performance with 100% of initiatives completed on time and on budget, with reporting complete and on time.	Q1-4	Continued
b Finalize Accessibility and Sustainability Product Plan(s) and review Destination Master Plan to incorporate recommendations into pillar and business plans.	PD Staff with support of product teams identify which plans will be reviewed and work collaboratively to review and refresh plans as necessary.	Improved performance with minimum 3 product plans reviewed and refreshed as necessary to remain current and relevant.	Q1-4	Continued

02 Priority Action Area

Maintain the momentum for Northern Ontario's best-bet products and experiences by concentrating on priority product development initiatives that will enhance the visitor experience, resonate with new and existing visitors, and lead to increased visitation and yield.

\$175,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Assess, amalgamate and review product teams to create a new team that will advise and consult on all product development activities. This committee will include members from the following sectors: • Resource Based Tourism • Soft Outdoors • Accommodation including STR • Culinary • Indigenous • Transportation • Urban municipality • Rural municipality	Destination Northern Ontario staff support product development through the engagement industry stakeholders and in the near-term through the Destination Master Plan Steering Committee.	Product development is supported through the creation of 1 new product development committee and 1 visioning session with the Destination Master Plan Steering Committee.	Q1-4	New
b Destination Northern Ontario staff will engage industry stakeholders through specialized ad hoc focus groups as required.	PD staff with broader staff support will identify where and when specific focus groups need to be assembled for industry intelligence.	More effective information gathering through the creation and implementation of 1 focus group engagement plan.	Q1-4	New

Product Development | Strategic Focus

02 Priority Action Area

Create resources and tools to increase product quality in Northern Ontario which align closely with Tourism Excellence North programs. This includes,

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
c Create resources and tools to increase product quality in Northern Ontario which align closely with Tourism Excellence North programs. This includes: 1. Accommodation refresh program. 2. Work with partners to identify strategies to increase delivery of Tourism Excellence North (TEN) training tools with the goal of introducing or augmenting market-ready products for the region.	Product Development Staff will work with DNO Workforce Development and Training Staff and industry partners to review results, feedback and to further develop and identify potential participants to, 1. Increase the variety and quality of Northern Ontario's accommodation offerings. 2. Increase the reach of TEN training solutions.	Increased product quality and variety with a minimum of 2 organizations engaged, 2 strategies developed, and 12 operators participating.	Q1-4	New
d Continue supporting or investing in net new tourism products in priority product areas including: • Angling & Hunting • Culture and Heritage • Gateway and Destination Communities • Nature and Adventure • Touring	DNO Product Development Staff will work with identified industry partners to continue implementation of current multi-year initiatives. • Experience Fishing • 2SLGBTQ+ Project • Balado Itineraries • Culinary Development • Cycling Route Development • Great Lakes Cruising • RV Itineraries • Heart of Canada	Increased diversity of Northern Ontario tourism experiences through engagement of 25 industry champions to implement a minimum of 8 product development initiatives.	Q1-4	New Continued

Product Development | Strategic Focus

03 Priority Action Area

Set the foundation for improved visitor services and product quality across the region.

\$25,000.00

Key Activity		Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a	Implement priority recommendations from DNO's new Visitor Information Centre (VIC) Strategy and ensure better coordination among Northern Ontario VICs by supporting improved wayfinding for a minimum of 1 VIC.	Strategy implementation managed by Senior Coordinators (Product Development and WDIT). Senior Coordinator (PD) identifies opportunities for improved VIC wayfinding and executes in partnership.	Improved alignment, coordination, visitor services with, 1 strategy implemented and minimum of 1 VIC wayfinding initiative completed.	Q1-4	New Continued



Performance Measures



Change in the number of new products and experiences and/or the number of existing products and experiences enhanced, in market.



Number of product plans/strategies reviewed (minimum 3).



Number of stakeholders participating (minimum 100 participants) and showing satisfaction with Destination Northern Ontario product development activities (minimum 75% satisfaction).

MTCG Budget Total

\$350,000.00



📷 2SLGBT+ Project / Superior Country – Remus & Co.



📷 Feast ON – Timmins / Destination Northern Ontario – Megan Boyd

02

Investment
Attraction

OBJECTIVE

 Brunswick Lake Lodge / Algoma Country - So Fly

The primary objective to guide Investment Attraction and Economic Development in Northern Ontario over the next year is:

To increase investment in the tourism industry to enhance visitor experiences.

Destination Northern Ontario established Investment Attraction and Economic Development as a key pillar in 2021, in line with the existing pillars that guide DNO's activities.

Investment Attraction activities aid the region as the industry looks to grow beyond pre-pandemic levels, with a focus on business recovery, succession and enhanced opportunities in unserved and underserved areas. Firmly entrenched in a growth-forward mindset, the pillar can turn its attention to new opportunities and capacity building. Run under the direction of the Senior Coordinator, Investment Attraction and Economic Development, this position manages DNO's investment attraction priorities and oversees economic development programming in conjunction with a long-term strategic plan that fosters partnerships and collaborative efforts at the local, regional, and pan-Northern levels.

Through the lens of growth, research and capacity building will play an important role in the initiatives of 2025-26. Initiatives including travel trends, domestic market trends and U.S. travel intentions will be completed over the fiscal year to guide the region's product development and marketing activities throughout the year and beyond. Capacity growing will be a central focus and in collaboration with municipal and regional stakeholders, increasing/leveraging resources to implement plans will be at the forefront of development initiatives.

Investment Attraction | Strategic Focus

01 Priority Action Area

Play an active role in investment attraction and economic development to Northern Ontario's tourism industry.

\$150,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Monitor resources to execute planned initiatives ensuring completed, on time and on budget.	Senior Coordinator with support of Tourism Coordinator completes all initiatives.	Increased productivity and accountability with 100% of all planned activities completed, on-time and on-budget.	Q1-4	Continued
b Review, update, and execute DNO's Investment Attraction Strategy incorporating recommendations from the new Destination Master Plan.	Senior Coordinator with support of Tourism Coordinator completes initiative.	Increased investment and awareness of tourism with 1 strategy created during 2025-26 year.	Q1-4	New
c Engage the investment and economic development community including municipalities that have implemented or are considering implementing a Municipal Accommodation Tax.	Senior Coordinator with support of Tourism Coordinator completes initiative.	Increased engagement, alignment, and collaboration with a minimum of 24 interactions with a minimum of 48 stakeholders.	Q1-4	Continued

02 Priority Action Area

Through research increase DNO's role as a resource for Northern Ontario businesses seeking investment and for Northern Ontario's investment community.

\$75,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Track and communicate regional performance through subscriptions to CBRE hotel reports, AirDNA data, undertaking rural operator performance surveys, and participating in RTO research collaborative.	Senior Coordinator with support of Tourism Coordinator aggregates performance data into report that can be shared with industry.	Increased understanding of visitor trends leading to targeted real-time programming with 4 quarterly, 1 annual regional performance reports completed and communicated to industry.	Q1-4	New
b Maintain operator database.	Tourism Coordinator maintains DNO database and keeps current.	Increased capacity with 100% of entries in DNO's industry database reviewed/updated annually.	Q1-4	Continued

Investment Attraction | Strategic Focus

03 Priority Action Area

Provide support for investment into Northern Ontario tourism products and experiences through industry communication.

\$50,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Support Northern Ontario's tourism sector (investors, business owners, economic development community) access information through the communication of investment news, funding opportunities, and local resources via toolkits, newsletters, podcasts, and web portals.	Senior Coordinator with support of Tourism Coordinator enhance DNO's investment attraction web portal and add new tools/resources.	Increased investment through increase in visits to DNO's website with 1 investment attraction portal enhanced, 2 new tools/resources available, 6 newsletter articles communicated, and 4 podcasts created.	Q1-4	Continued
b Support the sector by attending and/or assisting with execution of investment attraction, economic development or municipal conferences and events to further build programming and partnerships.	Senior Coordinator will participate in industry conferences and events.	Increased alignment, awareness, and coordination with participation in a minimum of 6 events annually.	Q1-4	Continued
c Support the sector through initiatives to improve the region's transportation networks including updating Northern Ontario's tourism transportation trends report.	Senior Coordinator will support initiatives to maintain/grow transportation routes.	Increased alignment, awareness, and coordination with participation in a minimum of 1 ad-hoc group annually.	Q1-4	New
d Maintain regular communication with economic development stakeholders to champion tourism in economic development and municipal strategic plans for Northern Ontario communities.	Senior Coordinator participates in scheduled meetings, events, and one-on-one communications with municipal stakeholders.	Increased tourism investment with a minimum of 12 meetings/events attended.	Q1-4	Continued



📷 Rail-Access Canoe Expedition – Moose River / Algoma Country – Colin Field



📷 Highway #17 North / Destination Northern Ontario – Tiina Keranen

Investment Attraction | Strategic Focus

04 Priority Action Area

Play an active role in enhancing the facilitation of investment attraction and economic development activities to Northern Ontario's tourism industry.

\$75,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Play an active role in enhancing the facilitation of investment attraction and economic development activities to Northern Ontario's tourism industry.	Senior Coordinator in collaboration with regional stakeholders from the investment community assist in the development and funding of succession plans.	Maintain the number of tourism business in Northern Ontario with 5 businesses supported.	Q1-4	New
b Support operators to be ready for the next crisis and be eligible for remedial support through the DNO/CFDC Incorporation Program.	Senior Coordinator to engage investment community to further develop and grow program geared to assist unincorporated tourism businesses incorporate.	Increased vitality of the sector with more business eligible for support and funding programs with 1 target initiative continued, with 5 businesses directly supported.	Q1-4	Continued
c Facilitate tourism investments by providing grant writing assistance and/or providing letters of support.	Senior Coordinator works with industry proponents to complete funding applications and letters of support.	Increased investment into Northern Ontario's tourism sector with a minimum of 3 funding applications written and submitted and 12 letters of support for tourism initiatives that support DNO strategic priorities.	Q1-4	Continued
d Collaborate with the Nuclear Waste Management Organization and regional stakeholders to develop a post-nuclear tourism strategy.	Senior Coordinator in partnership with stakeholders will complete the strategy.	Increased capacity and readiness with 1 strategy completed.	Q1-4	Continued (project delayed in 2024)
e Facilitate municipalities in securing multi-year funding for tourism-based economic development plans including development officers who will focus on developing local tourism initiatives and products.	Senior Coordinator will identify and work with communities to support applications.	Increased investment with minimum of 2 communities supported and securing multi-year funding.	Q1-4	Continued



Performance Measures



Number of research initiatives successfully completed (100%), with 100% partner satisfaction.



Increase in visitation to DNO's investment attraction tools and resources (10%).



Number of successfully completed investment attraction outreach activities, compared to target (48).

MTCG Budget Total

\$350,000.00

03

Workforce Development & Industry Training

OBJECTIVE

Agich's Kaby Lodge / Algoma Country – Adventure Cast

The primary objective to guide Workforce Development & Industry Training in Northern Ontario over the next year is:

To facilitate and support the attraction, development, and retention of a tourism workforce to enhance the customer experience.

Destination Northern Ontario leads Workforce Development and Industry Training for tourism operators, employers/employees and job seekers, communities and destinations, and educators in Northern Ontario offering programs to attract, develop, and retain a skilled tourism workforce, ultimately enhancing customer experience.

A central initiative will be the continuation of the Tourism as a Career Awareness Campaign "Tourism Rocks", which includes an updated "Tourism Rocks" Toolkit to inspire job seekers to explore career opportunities within the tourism industry. The plan also seeks collaboration with key industry organizations, including TIAO, to support the "Forward Ready Tourism – A Collaborative Solution for Tourism" project, which will address workforce challenges and industry recovery with the help of provincial funding.

Additionally, partnerships with Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario and the Ontario Tourism Education Corporation will drive the delivery of a three-year program to recruit, train, and match job seekers with available tourism job opportunities. This effort, supported by FedNor funding, will extend to local communities, operators, and destinations across Northern Ontario. These partnerships will focus on increasing the industry's capacity to meet demand through both in-person and online training opportunities, providing a diverse range of learning solutions to support workforce development.

The plan will also continue the development and delivery of innovative training solutions in-person and online, including personalized coaching, online learning such as Tourism Business Essentials and enhanced self-assessment courses, group learning, and the introduction of digital course badges and certificates to recognize learner achievements. These initiatives will support ongoing industry recovery and help tourism professionals build skills for future growth. In addition, Best Practice Missions and a targeted webinar series (ADAPT 2020), will

further provide critical insights and strategies for tourism businesses navigating the post-COVID-19 environment. Through these combined efforts, the workforce development and industry training plan aims to position Northern Ontario as a leader in tourism excellence and innovation.

The Senior Coordinator will implement key activities and action areas with the support of the Industry Training Coordinator, Information Technology Support Coordinator, and TEN Industry Partners assessing staff complement as needed.

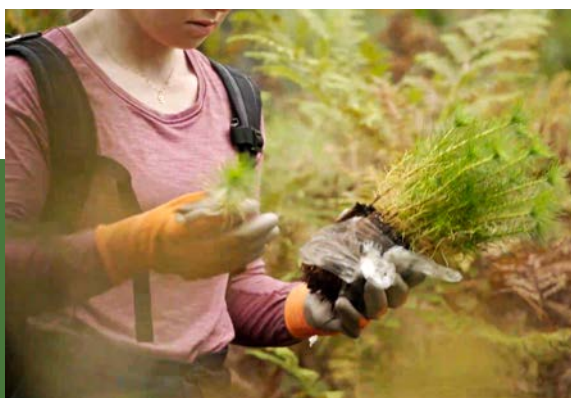
Workforce Development & Industry Training | Strategic Focus

01 Priority Action Area

Play an active role to demonstrate leadership, execute, and report on initiatives within the workforce development and industry training pillar.

\$200,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Ensure human, financial, and other resources in place to implement, monitor and report on performance of WDIT initiatives and work with DNO staff across all pillar areas.	Senior Coordinator will lead review, develop and implement reporting and performance monitoring process to ensure organizational excellence.	Increased accountability with 100% of planned initiatives completed on time and on budget.	Q1-4	Continued
b Review strategy and research documents to ensure current and incorporate Destination Master Plan recommendations into future business planning.	Policies and framework developed and/or updated.	Inclusive WDIT programming with 1 strategy reviewed and 1 business plan developed.	Q1-4	Continued



Workforce Development & Industry Training | Strategic Focus

02

Priority Action Area

Continue to work with partners to address the labour market shortage and skills gaps across the region and province through the delivery of an enhanced multi-year and multi-faceted initiatives including the Tourism SkillsNet North program.

\$100,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status	
a	Work in collaboration with Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario (NOTO) and Ontario Tourism Education Corporation (OTEC) to plan and deliver a 3-Year program to recruit, train and match job seekers/participants with available frontline job opportunities through FedNor, partnership, and/or additional available funding.	Tourism SkillsNet North (TSNN) management team oversees initiative.	Increased accountability with 100% of planned initiatives completed on time and on budget.	Q1-4	Continued
b	Work in collaboration with TIAO and provincial partners on 'Forward Ready Tourism – A Collaborative Solution for Tourism' project if funding is approved under Skills Development Fund Round 5 via Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development to address labour gaps in management positions.	TSNN management team oversees initiative.	Increased accountability with 100% of planned initiatives completed on time and on budget.	Q1-4	New
c	Continue to foster partnerships to expand delivery and reach.	Partnerships with educational organizations, community employment training programs and industry.	Greater alignment with minimum 6 partnerships created or maintained.	Q1-4	Continued
d	Continue to deliver Tourism as a Career Awareness Campaign including an updated and refreshed 'Tourism Rocks' Toolkit.	TSNN management team overseas initiative with support from DNO communications team with 1 Toolkit updated and 1 multi-media campaign developed.	Increased awareness of tourism as a career with 1 Toolkit updated and distributed digitally and 1 multi-media campaign executed.	Q1-4	Continued



Workforce Development & Industry Training | Strategic Focus

03 Priority Action Area

Continue to work with partners to develop and deliver priority training that addresses industry skill gaps, builds capacity, and aligns with priority product development goals through the Tourism Excellence North program including aligning and delivery of Destination Northern Ontario's recovery initiative.

\$200,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Continue to assess, identify, and develop training opportunities utilizing the Learner Design Experience and ensuring quality standards are met.	Senior Coordinator overseas initiative with support from DNO communications team with 1 marketing and communications plan updated and implemented.	Enhanced program uptake with minimum of 60 participants engaged via the execution of 1 marketing and communication plan.	Q1-4	Continued
b Continue to engage brokers, training specialists, and partners in a collaborative process to develop, market, deliver and assess training opportunities.	Senior Coordinator with support of WDIT staff will continue to engage education facilities, community development agencies, consultants and tourism organizations to execute initiative.	Increased alignment and quality tourism products in market or tourism plans developed, increased uptake, and increased capacity with 12 organizations engaged and a minimum of 2 workshops delivered to 24 participants.	Q1-4	Continued
c Develop an annual calendar of training opportunities, an annual marketing and communication plan, and promote DNO's training opportunities.	Senior Coordinator with the support of WDIT staff will execute identified activities.	Increased alignment and capacity within the tourism sector with 1 annual training calendar developed and promoted through 1 annual marketing and communication plan.	Q1-4	Continued



Workforce Development & Industry Training | Strategic Focus

03 Priority Action Area

Continue to work with partners to develop and deliver priority training that addresses industry skill gaps, builds capacity, and aligns with priority product development goals through the Tourism Excellence North program including aligning and delivery of Destination Northern Ontario's recovery initiative.

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
d Continue to deliver enhanced and new training curriculum/ content for self and group learning through on-line modules, podcasts, webinars, virtual and in-person workshops, and best practices missions.	WDIT staff with support of DNO communications staff, brokers, product teams, professional services, Training Specialists, and industry peers to deliver training.	Increased capacity with the delivery of employability/ soft core skill gap courses with 75 participants. 1 community workshop with 24 participants. 2 operator workshops with 24 participants. Enhanced self-assessment uptake with 200 participants.	Q1-4	Continued
e Continue to deliver personalized coaching through Fast Track to Success.	Managed by Senior Coordinators.	Increased future industry capacity with minimum 15 mentorship sessions executed.	Q1-4	Continued
f Continue to deliver follow up mentorship post-training.	Executed by TEN Training Specialists.	Increased visitor appeal and business capacity with minimum of 15 personalized coaching sessions executed.	Q1-4	New
g Identify and accredit training participants, tracking progress, through the TEN solutions.	Managed by WDIT staff with the support of professional services to execute an on-line training experience, track participation, and continue to develop a standardized accreditation program.	Increased industry capacity and increased ROI through the development of 1 tracking and accreditation system for all TEN participants.	Q1-4	New
h Maintain proficiency and professionalism of WDIT staff by encouraging their participation in ongoing professional development training opportunities.	WDIT staff completes training.	Enhanced and innovative WDIT programming development and delivery with staff attending a minimum of 2 external training opportunities that target or contribute to adult learning development and delivery.	Q1-4	Continued

Workforce Development & Industry Training

Strategic Focus

☑	Performance Measures
✓	Number and % change in stakeholders reporting business/customer improvements as a result of Destination Northern Ontario training activities compared to target (300).
✓	Number % change in stakeholders participating in (400 participants) and showing satisfaction with Destination Northern Ontario training activities compared to target (300 or 75%).
✓	Percentage of initiatives completed compared to target (100% of planned workforce development activities).
✓	Employment numbers for tourism (*from reporting guide).
MTCG Budget Total \$500,000.00	

04 Marketing & Communications

OBJECTIVE

Winter Vistas / Destination Northern Ontario – Tiina Keränen

The primary objective to guide Marketing in Northern Ontario over the next year is:

To increase awareness of Northern Ontario as a travel destination and increase conversion in target markets.

In the pursuit of elevating tourism receipts in Northern Ontario for the fiscal year 2025-26, Destination Northern Ontario is set to adapt its strategies in response to new travel insights and trends emerging in Ontario. The overarching goal remains to increase receipts to 10% of the overall spend in the province, emphasizing the need to continuously innovate marketing approaches.

The consumer marketing approach will continue with a dual focus, categorized into "Defend and Maintain" and "Inspire and Grow." The former targets existing consumers through traditional travel corridors, ensuring proven return on investment and visitation. Simultaneously, the latter explores emerging markets such as soft outdoors and touring experiences to diversify spending in the region.

Recognizing the crucial role of international markets, Destination Northern Ontario aims to leverage their potential, considering the significantly higher return on investment from international visitors. Pan-Northern marketing tools, including the Northern Ontario Trip Planner, will continue to be developed as integral components of itinerary planning for the region.

E-commerce platforms will be further emphasized, promoting seamless paths to purchase to increase direct sales. Collaborating with industry partners, the organization will support the evolution of these platforms to enhance consumer experience.

Aligning with provincial strategies, Destination Northern Ontario is moving into the third year of its digital strategy and will be working collaboratively to create a new Northern Ontario Tourism Marketing Strategy in partnership with Destination Ontario. These documents will serve as guides for marketing activities, ensuring adaptability to the evolving tourism landscape.



To further enhance the strategy for the upcoming fiscal year:

Data-Driven Insights

Leverage the latest travel data and analytics to gain insights into evolving consumer behaviors, preferences, and emerging travel trends in Ontario.

Community Engagement

Strengthening ties with local communities, organizations, and the sector, ensuring that tourism development aligns with community values and fosters a positive impact.

Innovative Digital Presence

Stay at the forefront of digital trends as it relates to a positive consumer experience through the awareness, trip planning and booking journey.

Sustainable Tourism

Emphasize Northern Ontario's commitment to sustainable tourism practices in line with the growing global emphasis on responsible travel.

Localized Partnerships

Forge localized partnerships to create tailored experiences that resonate with the unique offerings of each region within Northern Ontario.

By integrating these considerations into its strategy for the 2025-26 fiscal year, Destination Northern Ontario can capitalize on new travel insights and trends, ensuring a vibrant and resilient tourism sector for the region.

For the 2025-26 period, Destination Northern Ontario will enhance its communications strategy by focusing on deepening engagement with key sectors, including Francophone, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities, ensuring their active participation in tourism initiatives. Additionally, we will strengthen our connection with Northern Ontario's tourism sector, aiming for a 10% increase in online following through the strategic use of diverse digital platforms.

To ensure continued success, we will engage with industry stakeholders to assess awareness and satisfaction with DNO's programs and initiatives. A vital component of this will be the collection of success stories that highlight impactful practices and outcomes.

Building on the successes of the past five years, DNO's communications strategy will continue to tailor content to three core audience streams: government and economic development professionals, tourism operators and owners, and municipalities and communities. The 2025-28 Communications Strategy will employ a consolidated approach to maintain consistent messaging and a unified voice across all communication channels, with a particular focus on digital engagement, growth, and the integration of AI into strategies and processes where appropriate.

Marketing & Communications | Strategic Focus

01 Priority Action Area

Implement Strategic Direction for Marketing Tourism in Northern Ontario in partnership with Destination Ontario, Destination Marketing Organizations and other industry stakeholders which supports a pan-Northern approach to marketing the region as a destination of choice.

\$200,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Monitor resources to execute planned initiatives ensuring completed, on time and on budget.	Senior Coordinator with the support of marketing and communications staff execute planned activities.	Increased accountability and performance with 100% of planned activities executed on-time and on-budget.	Q1-4	Continued
b Review and implement current strategies incorporating recommendations from the new Destination Master Plan as well as aligning with current research.	Senior Coordinator with support of marketing and communications staff, and in consultation with DNO pillar staff review, update and implement current strategies.	A targeted approach to marketing and communications reflecting DNO pillar and sector priorities, and aligned with research, seeing 2 strategies reviewed.	Q1-4	New
c Continue to work in partnership with Destination Ontario and support the Northern Tourism Marketing Committee in the development of a renewed Northern Ontario tourism marketing strategy which includes a renewed vision and long-term framework to market Northern Ontario's unique tourism products and experiences.	Senior Coordinator supports Destination Ontario's Northern Tourism Marketing Committee in an advisory role and directly participating in Northern Ontario strategy development.	Increased performance through sector alignment, coordination, and collaboration with 1 strategy developed.	Q1-4	Continued
d Continue to leverage marketing budgets and work to identify new source(s) of revenue to develop and execute a general regional awareness campaign.	Executive Director with the support of Senior Coordinator identifies and pursues opportunities to greatly leverage DNO's marketing resources.	A more prominent recognition of the importance of tourism with 1 project brief prepared and presented to 3 Ontario government Ministries (MoF, MTCG, MND) and if successful 1 incremental regional awareness campaign developed in consultation with sector partners.	Q1-4	Continued

Marketing & Communications | Strategic Focus

02 Priority Action Area

Enhance Destination Northern Ontario's role as a resource by supporting tourism businesses and organizations with customized marketing tools and research that will increase collaboration, awareness, distribution, conversion, performance, and tracking.

\$325,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Continue to support increase e-commerce activities within the region.	Senior Coordinator coordinates activities in partnership with DMO and other partners.	Increase in number of tourism products available for on-line purchase with a minimum of 25 operators participating, generating a minimum of \$1 million in sales.	Q1-4	Continued
b Continue to grow and enhance NorthernOntario.travel as the primary consumer facing website for Northern Ontario.	Senior Coordinator with support of DMO and sector partners, and professional services coordinates activities.	Increase in destination awareness of Northern Ontario with a minimum of 3 million visits generating 750K referrals to partners. Increased alignment and performance with minimum of 75% targets and KPIs aligned with the digital strategy.	Q1-4	Continued
c Continue to grow and make available Northern Ontario collective digital asset library with compelling and relevant photography and videography.	Senior Coordinator with support of staff, DMO and sector partners coordinates activities.	Increased industry alignment, coordination with 1 digital asset management system maintained and assets increased by 15% YoY.	Q1-4	Continued
d Within the context of the new marketing framework, execute a request for services exercise to identify organizations who have the capacity to help Northern Ontario and its priority products to target markets and audiences.	Senior Coordinator with the support of Executive Director and pillar Senior Coordinators execute the activity.	Increased industry alignment, coordination, and performance with 1 procurement document developed, released, responses reviewed, and successful selection process.	Q2-3	New
e Undertake consumer and market surveys to gain a better understanding of current travel trends and motivators as they related to Northern Ontario's tourism products and experiences.	Senior Coordinator with the support of staff and possibly professional services executes the activity.	Increased market intelligence and performance with a minimum of 2 surveys completed.	Q1-4	Continued

Marketing & Communications | Strategic Focus

03 Priority Action Area

Continue to develop and coordinate marketing initiatives that position Northern Ontario as a destination of choice through leveraged investments, efforts, and partnerships, to increase conversions and to grow visitation and yield featuring priority tourism products and experiences.

\$1,100,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Continue to procure new content and maintain/enhance existing regional and sub-regional content on NorthernOntario.travel.	Senior Coordinator coordinates activity with the support of staff, DMO partners, and professional services.	Increased awareness with 100 stories and/or itineraries reviewed, enhanced, refreshed or new content with a minimum of 1.5 million visits, 500K referrals, and at a cost per visit of 50 cents or less.	Q1-4	Continued
b Increase awareness of Northern Ontario as a destination of choice through development and execution of collaborative regional campaigns that align with Destination Ontario promoting best-bet products to new and existing markets for both the Inspire & Grow and Defend & Maintain products/experiences.	Senior Coordinator completes the activity with the support of staff, DMO and other partners, and professional services where required.	Increased awareness and alignment with a minimum of 10 campaigns undertaken, with a minimum of 15 partners, and performance measured by traditional marketing KPIs.	Q1-4	Continued
c Grow destination awareness through product and familiarization tours.	Senior Coordinator completes the activity with the support of staff, in partnership with industry and Destination Ontario.	Increased awareness, alignment, and collaboration with a minimum of 8 tours executed that feature priority products/ experiences with traditional KPIs tracked (earned media, # of placement, and reach).	Q1-4	Continued

Marketing & Communications | Strategic Focus

04 Priority Action Area

To increase engagement within the tourism sector, increase awareness of Destination Northern Ontario initiatives and promote the positive impacts tourism.

\$75,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Maintain and enhance Destination Northern Ontario's Media Relations Kit and utilize as DNO maintains and executes annual Communications Plan in alignment with Industry Digital Strategy incorporating pertinent recommendations from the new Destination Master Plan.	Senior Coordinator with the support of Communications Coordinator executes the initiative.	Increased awareness and appreciation of Northern Ontario's tourism sector and increased awareness of DNO and partner initiatives with 1 media relations kit maintained and 1 annual communications plan executed. Performance measured through traditional KPIs (number of activities, engagement, and reach).	Q1-4	Continued
b Ensure consistent usage of organizational and Ministry styles, logos, and recognition guidelines.	Senior Coordinator with support of Communications Coordinator and Visual Communications Designer execute the activity.	Increased awareness of DNO and MTCG investments and amplification of provincial branding with 100% compliance.	Q1-4	Continued
c Engage Northern Ontario's tourism sector and increase following by 10% through a variety of digital channels including but not limited to, • Social Media • Websites • Newsletters	Senior Coordinator oversees initiative undertaken by Communications Coordinator.	Increased sector engagement and awareness of DNO and partner tourism programming with 10% YoY increase in each of social media engagement, newsletters and websites, with 1 industry event calendar maintained and published, 1 review of available on-line resources, 12 monthly newsletters, and 500 social media posts.	Q1-4	Continued
d Increase engagement with the Francophone, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+ sectors.	Senior Coordinator with support of Communications Coordinator and engaging SEO, ITO, and CGLCC executes activity.	Increased engagement and partnership with a minimum of 3 outreach engagements with the francophone, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+ sectors.	Q1-4	New
e Operator and Community focused campaigns aimed at increased participation in DNO programming.	Senior and Communications Coordinator oversees initiative with support of DNO Senior Coordinators.	Increased awareness and participation in DNO programming with a minimum of 2 campaigns undertaken measured by traditional communications KPI (# campaigns or outreach activities, engagement, and participation).	Q1-4	New

Marketing & Communications | Strategic Focus

04 Priority Action Area

Implement Strategic Direction for Marketing Tourism in Northern Ontario in partnership with Destination Ontario, Destination Marketing Organizations and other industry stakeholders which supports a pan-Northern approach to marketing the region as a destination of choice.

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
f Destination Northern Ontario board and staff attends industry events and secure opportunities to raise the profile of the organization and sector.	Board and Staff represent DNO at industry and other functions/events.	Greater awareness of DNO programming and sector activities/contribution with minimum of 12 events attended with minimum of 2 industry awards annually.	Q1-4	Continued
g Engage industry to assess awareness and satisfaction of DNO programs and initiatives, including the collection of success stories to highlight effective practices and outcomes.	Senior Coordinator with support of Communications Coordinator and Corporate Services executes activities.	Increased relevance of DNO programming with minimum of 1 annual survey undertaken with minimum 75% industry satisfaction	Q1-4	Continued
h Incorporate AI into strategies and processes as required.	Executive Director, Senior Coordinators with the support of Communications Coordinator executes initiative.	Increased productivity with 1 strategy researched and developed and 3 DNO processes adopting AI in some capacity.	Q1-4	New



 **Snowmobiling** / Destination Northern Ontario – Tiina Keranen



 **Northern Ontario Walleye** / Destination Northern Ontario – The Ontario Experience

Marketing & Communications

Strategic Focus



Performance Measures



Increase % in web traffic, direct bookings, completed media FAMs and leveraged marketing efforts from partners (10%).



Change in number of partners participating and satisfaction in marketing and communications programs (75%).



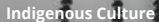
Percentage of initiatives completed compared to target (100%).

MTCG Budget Total \$1,700,000.00

05

Partnership

OBJECTIVE

A close-up photograph of various pieces of Indigenous beaded jewelry, including necklaces and earrings, featuring intricate beadwork in yellow, red, black, and white. The background is blurred, showing more jewelry and greenery.  Indigenous Culture - Manitoulin Island / Destination Northern Ontario - Tiina Keranen

The primary objective to guide Partnership Initiatives in Northern Ontario over the next year is:

To become a catalyst in building strategic alignment and promoting collaboration within the industry.

Partnership initiatives are identified, framed, and managed by the Senior Staff within their pillar areas, Product Development, Investment Attraction, Workforce Development and Industry Training, and Marketing.

Initiatives are selected based on potential outcomes and alignment with priorities set out in DNO's strategic and annualized business plans reflecting all pillar areas. The DNO Board of Directors has set a goal of 50% of initiatives are in non-marketing pillars.

As more operators complete DNO's training through the Tourism Excellence North program a newer priority has been set to execute more partnerships with industry operators to support their completion of training and mentorship recommendations.

Post-pandemic, Destination Northern Ontario's partnership program has recovered and leveraging industry resources for greater impact. We look forward to a fully subscribed portfolio of initiatives again in 2025-26.

Partnership | Strategic Focus

01 Priority Action Area

Continue to build long-term relationships with industry partners, focus on projects that show progression beyond marketing, and leverage available partnership funding.

\$25,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Implement staffing plan and monitor resources to execute planned initiatives ensuring completed, on time and on budget in alignment with Destination Northern Ontario's strategic framework and incorporating recommendations from the region's new Destination Master Plan.	Senior Staff engage stakeholders, identify, frame, and manage partnered initiatives that reflect mandated pillars.	Increased tourism programming, opportunities, awareness, and engagement with, minimum 75 partners engaged in minimum 9 partnership priorities. Minimum 50% of partnership budget reflects product development, investment attraction and workforce/training pillars. Minimum of \$1,210,000 leveraged.	Q1-4	Continued

02 Priority Action Area

Work with partners to identify and undertake strategic partnerships focusing on tourism product development that will assist Northern Ontario's tourism sector recover and/or grow with an emphasis on strategic plan development and implementation.

\$150,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Identify and undertake partnerships to grow tourism through strategic planning and/or implement strategic or other tourism plans.	Senior Staff in collaboration with sector partner(s) manages initiatives through to completion.	Increased tourism collaboration, planning and programming with minimum of 6 partners engaged.	Q1-4	Continued
b Identify and undertake partnered initiatives with sector operators to develop, increase number of and diversity of Northern Ontario accommodation options. – minimum 2 partners	Senior Staff in collaboration with industry partner(s) manages initiatives through to completion.	Increase in diversity and availability of accommodations with a minimum of 2 operators engaged.	Q1-4	New
c Identify and undertake partnered initiatives with communities and/or trails organizations to improve wayfinding.	Senior Staff in collaboration with sector partner(s) manages initiatives through to completion.	Increased capacity and improved wayfinding with minimum of 2 partner communities or trails organizations engaged.	Q1-4	Continued

Partnership | Strategic Focus

03 Priority Action Area

Work with partners to identify and undertake strategic partnerships focusing on tourism investment attraction that will promote the value of tourism and projects that will assist operators recover and grow.

\$50,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Identify and undertake a partnered initiative to promote the value of tourism through a Tourism Rocks Awareness campaign(s).	Senior Staff in collaboration with sector partner(s) manages initiatives through to completion.	Increased awareness of the importance of tourism to the Northern economy with minimum of 4 partners engaged and 1 campaign planned and executed with performance measured through standard marketing KPIs.	Q1-4	Continued
b Build operator capacity and ensure long-term sustainability and vitality of the sector through partnered initiatives to facilitate succession and incorporation of tourism businesses.	Senior Staff in collaboration with industry partner(s) manages initiatives through to completion.	Increased capacity and long-term sustainability with minimum 10 businesses partnering.	Q1-4	New

04 Priority Action Area

Work with partners to identify and undertake strategic partnerships focusing on tourism workforce development and industry training that will assist Northern Ontario's tourism sector recover and grow with an emphasis on initiatives that focus on labour or training gaps.

\$50,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Deliver industry training through plenary and break-out sessions at the annual Northern Ontario Tourism Summit (NOTS) including a Spark Session organized by the Ontario Tourism Innovation Lab.	Senior Staff in collaboration with training partner(s) manages initiatives through to completion at NOTS.	Increased capacity within the sector with a minimum of 250 operators completing training at a minimum of 12 plenary or break out sessions.	Q3	Continued

Partnership | Strategic Focus

05 Priority Action Area

Work with partners to identify and undertake strategic partnerships focusing on tourism marketing that will assist Northern Ontario's tourism sector recover and grow.

\$330,000.00

Key Activity	Output	Outcome	Quarter	Status
a Identify, plan, and execute marketing partnerships that focus on Destination Northern Ontario's Inspire and Grow markets.	Senior Staff in collaboration with sector partner(s) manages initiatives through to completion.	Increased destination awareness with a minimum of 8 collaborative partnerships executed and measured with standard marketing KPIs.	Q1-4	Continued
b Identify, plan, and execute marketing partnerships that focus on Destination Northern Ontario's Defend and Maintain markets.	Senior Staff in collaboration with sector partner(s) manages initiatives through to completion.	Increased destination awareness with a minimum of 8 collaborative partnerships executed and measured with standard marketing KPIs.	Q1-4	Continued
c Identify, plan, and execute co-op marketing partnerships with industry operators who have participated in and enacted recommendations made as a part of TEN's Fast Track program and have enacted recommendations that focus on Destination Northern Ontario's priority markets.	Senior Staff in collaboration with industry partner(s) manages initiatives through to completion.	Increased destination awareness with a minimum of 4 collaborative partnerships executed and measured with standard marketing KPIs.	Q1-4	Continued



Performance Measures



Maintain a minimum of 75 individual partners with 100% satisfaction in partnership activities.



100% partnerships completed on time.



Leverage \$2 for every \$1 partnership allocation (matching, non-matching, and in-kind contributions).



Minimum 50% MTCG partnership allocation going to non-marketing partnerships

MTCS Budget Total

\$605,000.00

Risk Management

Destination Northern Ontario has had a formalized risk management plan in place since 2020. Building off of this plan, the organization has continued to add levels of mitigation as risks have been identified through process and policy.

It is expected that staff will maintain a high level of professionalism in the performance of their duties. The Executive Director, in consultation with the Board, will ensure that the staff complement is adequate and that staff members have the skill sets and competencies to carry out their work. Where warranted, Destination Northern Ontario may also contract independent contractors for specific tasks through a fair and transparent procurement process.

Destination Northern Ontario's Board of Directors is committed to ensuring that they uphold a high level of professionalism and integrity with a "zero tolerance" policy for any perceived or actual conflict of interest. In addition, financial audits are conducted annually, ensuring that funds are used appropriately and according to the terms of the Transfer Payment Agreement with His Majesty.

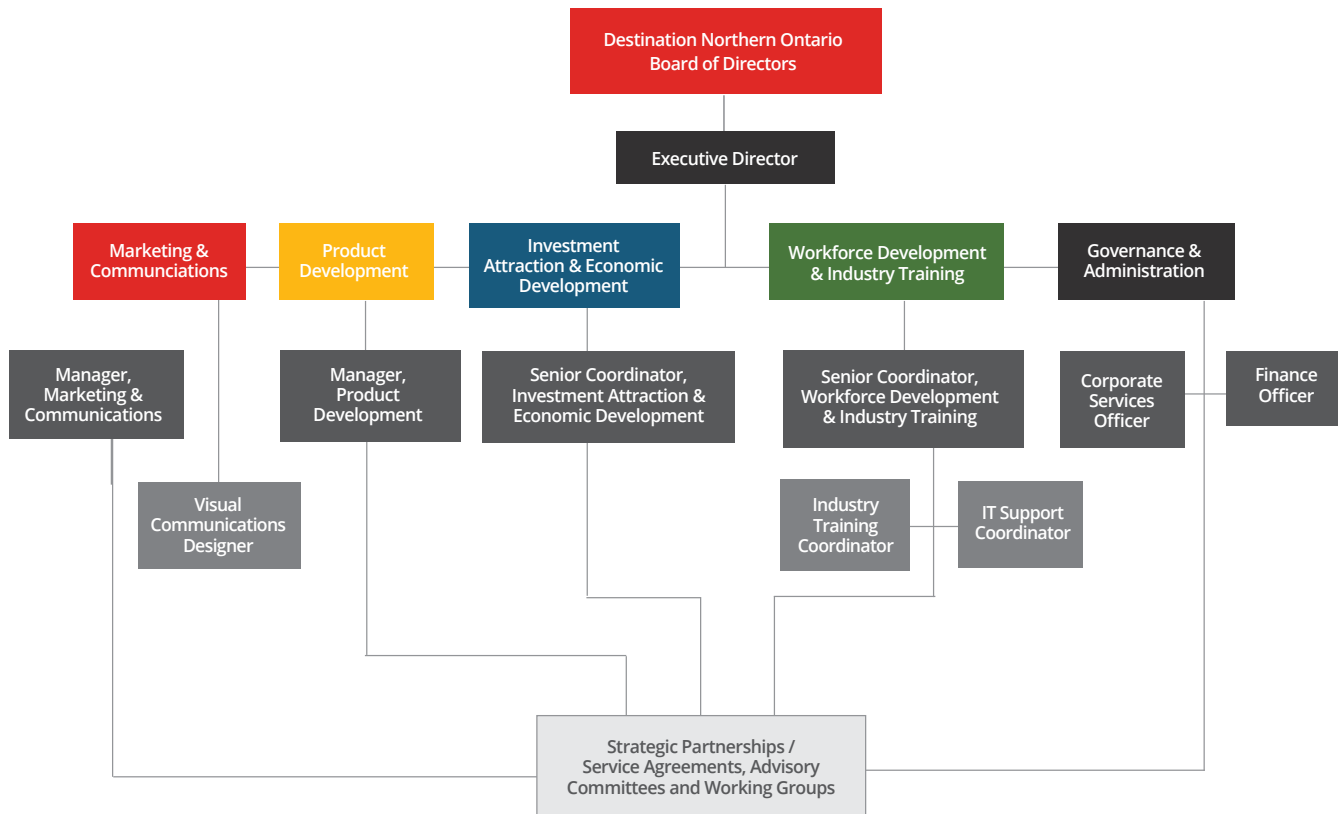
Additionally, Destination Northern Ontario completes comprehensive risk assessment plans for all projects over the total cost of \$50,000 to ensure risks are identified and analyzed before commencement of activities. This helps the organization through conversations with partners as it relates to potential shared risk and challenges on individual projects.

Finally, the availability of financial resources to carry out the initiatives outlined in this plan are of high importance. Considering this, Destination Northern Ontario is committed to meeting the reporting deadlines that are milestones in the payment schedule. In rare instances where financial gaps need to be bridged, Destination Northern Ontario has negotiated a substantial line of credit with its financial institution.



DESTINATION NORTHERN ONTARIO'S

Organizational Structure



An important component to Destination Northern Ontario's success is the dedication of the Board towards implementation of all strategic objectives, and adherence to Board policies to ensure that appropriate governance, sound advice, and oversight of the organization are being met.

Furthermore, the Board will continue to monitor progress to ensure that Destination Northern Ontario is successful in reaching its overall goals and objectives. The Board of Directors will meet in person a minimum of four times throughout the year.

The Board of Directors has developed and maintains a Succession Plan for all Board and Staff positions ensuring both smooth transition and renewal.

DESTINATION NORTHERN ONTARIO

Staff Directory

Destination Northern Ontario Staff

NAME	POSITION
GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION	
David MacLachlan	Executive Director
Bobbi-Lynn Pallot	Corporate Services Officer
Kathy Carlson	Finance Officer
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	
Megan Boyd	Manager, Product Development & Investment Attraction
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS	
Sara Currier	Manager, Marketing & Communications
Tiina Keranen	Visual Communications Designer
INVESTMENT ATTRACTION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
Gord Knowles	Senior Coordinator, Investment Attraction & Economic Development
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & INDUSTRY TRAINING	
Karen Peacock	Senior Coordinator, Workforce Development & Industry Training
Gillian McCullough	Industry Training Coordinator
Naza Obasi	Information Technology Support Coordinator
DESTINATION NORTHERN ONTARIO SUPPORT TEAMS (Under Contract)	
Ian McMillan	Business Development & International Marketing Specialist
Marla Tremblay	Francophone Tourism Specialist
Mike Wozny	Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Meet the Team

Governance & Administration



David MacLachlan
Executive Director

In 2013 David became the Executive Director for Destination Northern Ontario. David grew up in the tourism industry and is third generation to work in the family tourism business started 65 years ago by his grandfather. David is also a past chair of the Algoma Kinniwabi Travel Association, OTMPC Northern Tourism Marketing Committee and sat on the Board of Directors for OTMPC. David and Destination Northern Ontario have received numerous awards over the years and most recently two Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence at the Ontario Tourism Summit in 2023.

Kathy Carlson
Finance Officer

Kathy Carlson has been involved with Destination Northern Ontario since its inception in 2011 and has served in numerous capacities over her career with the organization. She has watched it grow from a small working group to the largest Regional Tourism Organization in Ontario. With over 25 years of experience working in finance, she currently holds the position of Finance Officer supporting the Executive Director, Corporate Services Officer and Senior Coordinators to fulfil the organization's mission. Outside the office she has a passion for the outdoors and is proud to call Northern Ontario her home.



Bobbi-Lynn Pallot
Corporate Services Office

Bobbi-Lynn Pallot is the Corporate Services Officer at Destination Northern Ontario (RTO13). As the CSO she has re-developed certain internal policies and procedures. Among her priorities is the Health and Safety of our employees, she has developed and implemented Health and Safety Policies and works with a small Health and Safety team to make sure DNO is a safe and regulatory compliant workspace. In 2023 Bobbi received "Certified Practitioner" certification from the Society of Human Resources (SHRM) International Status, she is a current member. Bobbi also holds a degree in Advertising and Graphic Design. In her free time, she enjoys spending it with her family and furry friends outside by the backyard pool.

Investment Attraction



Gord Knowles

Senior Coordinator – Investment Attraction & Economic Development

Gord Knowles (Ec.D) is the Senior Coordinator of Investment Attraction and Economic Development for Destination Northern Ontario (RTO 13). Previously, he worked for more than a decade as a general manager and senior loans officer at two northern Ontario-based Community Futures Development Corporations. Gord proudly served as the Economic Developers Council of Ontario's 57th President and has been a member of the Board since 2016. In 2022 he was elected to be a Municipal Counsellor in the Town of Atikokan; additionally, he sits on the Board of the Atikokan Economic Development Corporation, as the Treasurer of Atikokan Health and Community Services, and on TIAC's Investment Readiness committee.

Product Development



Megan Boyd

Manager, Product Development

Megan Boyd is the Manager of Product Development and Investment Attraction at Destination Northern Ontario, where she is dedicated to enhancing tourism offerings in the region with a strong focus on sustainability and accessibility. Drawing on her entrepreneurial background and expertise in small business management, she supports tourism operators to help them grow and thrive in a competitive industry. Deeply committed to community involvement, Megan also volunteers locally and strives to make a positive impact on Northern Ontario's tourism landscape.

Marketing & Communications



Sara Currier

Manager, Marketing & Communications

Sara Currier is the Manager of Marketing and Communications at Destination Northern Ontario, where she leads strategic initiatives to elevate tourism and industry engagement across the region. Since joining the organization in 2020, she has taken on progressive roles that reflect her strengths in communication, relationship-building, and creative strategy. With over a decade of experience spanning tourism, agriculture, and the nonprofit sector, Sara is known for her collaborative approach and high-quality work. Originally from the Niagara region, she moved to Sault Ste. Marie, inspired by her love of the outdoors and Northern Ontario's unique character. She holds a diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management from Mohawk College.



Tiina Keranen

Visual Communications Designer

Tiina Keranen, Visual Communications Designer at Destination Northern Ontario, holds an Advanced Diploma in Graphic Design from Sault College and brings over a decade of design and marketing experience to the team. She plays a key role in shaping the organization's brand and visual identity while collaborating with internal teams and industry partners to create impactful designs for both consumer and industry-facing initiatives in domestic and global markets. Previously, she worked with Algoma University's Marketing and Communications department, where she refined her skills and expanded her expertise. A self-taught photographer with a passion for the outdoors, Tiina enjoys capturing the raw beauty of Northern Ontario—contributing to a digital asset library for the organization and its partners. Her work reflects creativity, problem-solving, and a deep appreciation for the region.

Workforce Development & Industry Training



Karen Peacock

Senior Coordinator – Workforce Development & Industry Training

Karen Peacock, Senior Coordinator of Workforce Development and Industry training enthusiastically began her role in November of 2015. Karen is responsible for coordinating and launching two award winning programs. The first, Tourism Excellence North, a pilot program that is a suite of tourism training solutions for use by tourism operators, communities, and destinations across Northern Ontario, now the foundation of Destination Northern Ontario's industry training and workforce development pillar. The second, Tourism SkillsNet North, addresses labour shortages and skills gaps in Northern Ontario. Karen has spent her 25-plus year career in the not-for-profit industry. Her last position before joining Destination Northern Ontario was as Executive Director at the Art Gallery of Sudbury. Karen lives in the Greater City of Sudbury.



Gillian McCullough

Training Coordinator

Gillian McCullough is the Training Coordinator for the Tourism Excellence North program. She works to organize online and in-person training, as well as develop new and enhanced curriculum for the Northern Ontario tourism industry. Gillian has a strong background in education and curriculum development, including a Bachelor of Education degree, and is currently finalizing her Instructional Design certification.



Naza Obasi

Information Technology Support Coordinator

Naza Obasi, Information Technology Support Coordinator, brings nearly 2 years of experience in IT support and systems management to the team, specializing in workflow optimization and technical solutions. She plays a key role in enhancing the operational efficiency of the Workforce Development and Industry Training Pillar, supporting Tourism Excellence North's mission to empower Northern Ontario tourism operators to achieve excellence and growth.

Support Teams



Ian McMillan

International Marketing Specialist

Ian McMillan was the Executive Director of the Algoma Kinniwabi Travel Association and Tourism Sault Ste. Marie throughout his career, before joining the Destination Northern Ontario team in 2018 as their International Marketing Specialist. His responsibilities include developing key international market opportunities in Germany, U.K., Japan and Korea, along with coordinating North American Group Tour initiatives. He has served on The Board of Directors of TIAO, Attractions Ontario, TICO and currently serves as the Vice-Chair of the Science North Board of Trustees.



Mike Wozny

Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Michael Wozny has been working in the tourism and economic development industry for over 30 years. He has worked in senior management and as an industry consultant with the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism and in the private sector. His success includes over \$250 million direct investment activity in Northern Ontario projects and expertise includes investment attraction and product development; business, financing and strategic plans; government funding programs; feasibility studies; domestic and international marketing campaigns; and various other non-capital initiatives.

Financial Plan



Destination Northern Ontario is funded by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming. Regional Tourism Organizations (RTO’s) receive a core allocation consisting of a base amount based on performance compared to provincial fixed roof accommodation tourism receipts. There is also a partnership allocation that matches partner contributions from non-Provincial government sources.

Destination Northern Ontario’s budget includes an allocation for pan-Northern Ontario initiatives as well as individual allocations to each of the three sub-regions.

APRIL 1, 2025 – MARCH 31, 2026



Governance & Administration

Governance	\$	50,000.00
Salaries & Benefits	\$	225,235.00
Overhead & Facilities	\$	50,000.00
Finance & Administration	\$	50,000.00
Travel	\$	25,000.00
Industry Relations	\$	15,000.00
Information Technology	\$	10,000.00
Subtotal	\$	425,235.00



Product Development

Salaries, Benefits and Coordination	\$	150,000.00
Priority Products and Experiences	\$	175,000.00
Improved Visitor Services	\$	25,000.00
Subtotal	\$	350,000.00



Investment Attraction

Salaries, Benefits and Coordination	\$	150,000.00
Resources	\$	75,000.00
Support Initiatives	\$	50,000.00
Facilitate Initiatives	\$	75,000.00
Subtotal	\$	350,000.00



Workforce Development & Industry Training

Salaries, Benefits and Coordination	\$	200,000.00
Workforce Development	\$	100,000.00
Industry Training	\$	200,000.00
Subtotal	\$	500,000.00



Marketing & Communications

Salaries, Benefits and Coordination	\$	200,000.00
Marketing Tools	\$	325,000.00
Northern Ontario Destination Marketing	\$	1,100,000.00
Communications & Stakeholder Engagement	\$	75,000.00
Subtotal	\$	1,700,000.00



Partnerships

Salaries, Benefits and Coordination	\$	25,000.00
Product Development	\$	150,000.00
Investment Attraction	\$	50,000.00
Workforce Development & Industry Training	\$	50,000.00
Marketing	\$	330,000.00
Subtotal	\$	605,000.00



2025-2026 Budget Total

Total	\$	3,930,235.00
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- › **Destination Northern Ontario** / destinationnorthernontario.ca
- › **Tourism Excellence North** / tourismexcellencenorth.ca
- › **Domestic Marketing** / northernontario.travel
- › **International Travel Trade** / northernontarioitt.com



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