



destinationnorthernontario.ca

2019-20

Annual Report

Ontario 



DESTINATION
**NORTHERN
ONTARIO**

2019-20

Annual Report

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

2019-20 wrapped up with an unprecedented global event – the spread of the novel coronavirus-19. COVID-19 will change the tourism industry for generations to come and has already reshaped the way people travel around the globe.

As an organization, Destination Northern Ontario felt the impacts of COVID-19 during the last three weeks of the fiscal year in March 2020. Due to the seasonal nature of the tourism industry in Northern Ontario, the impact of COVID-19 hit us hard, considering much of our marketing efforts and preparation for the summer season takes place in the last few weeks of the fiscal year. Overall, the 2019-20 year was one we can hang our hats on and we were on track to meet all targets as set out by the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries (MHSTCI). However, we had to quickly adapt to a new reality and refocus our efforts on retention and protection of our industry once the pandemic began. One marketing partnership was cancelled but had it proceeded, we would have exceeded our end of year leveraged investments by 10%. As it stands, we closed our year at 85% of leveraged investment; 1.7 million dollars leveraged above and beyond our MHSTCI investment.

Despite COVID-19 and its spread around the globe, the months preceding the pandemic proved fruitful for Destination Northern Ontario and the industry. Tourism Excellence North continues to expand its programming across the North completing Fast Track to Successes, training workshops and Best Practice Missions. Destination Northern Ontario engaged with nearly 100 different partners across the North on marketing and product development projects. In February of 2020, Destination Northern Ontario organized and invited stakeholders from across the North including Destination Marketing Organizations, tourism advisors, Destination Ontario and Ministry staff, including Minister Lisa McLeod, to a meeting in Toronto to discuss tourism in Northern Ontario, ways to collaborate and share information and how to continue growing tourism receipts in the region.

Now, our industry faces new challenges, and our organization will not hesitate to adapt and take on the task at hand - protection, retention and, in time, recovery.

Yours in tourism,

Marty Kalagian,
President.

Destination Northern Ontario Board of Directors

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

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

2019-20 Board of Directors

NAME	POSITION	SECTOR
Marty Kalagian	President	Operator – Retired
Gerry Webber	Vice President	Public Service Sector – Retired
Betty McGie	Secretary-Treasurer	Watson's Algoma Vacations Ltd.
Ray Nadeau	Director	Victoria Inn
George Stivrins	Director	Big Sound Marina
Lori Branch	Director	Branch's Seine River Lodge
Tammy Frick	Director	Cinéfest
Dr. Rhonda Koster	Director	Lakehead University
Ian Wood	Director	City of Greater Sudbury

Government Advisors

NAME	POSITION	SECTOR
Laurie Brownlee	Advisor	Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries
Isabelle Denault	Advisor	Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines
Melanie Robert	Advisor	Destination Ontario
Nancy Rosset	Advisor	FedNor Canada
Shannon Lawr	Advisor	Ontario Parks
Michaela Campbell	Advisor	Parks Canada

Destination Northern Ontario Staff

NAME	POSITION
David MacLachlan	Executive Director
Pat Forrest	Senior Coordinator, Partnerships and Initiatives
Stephanie Hopkin	Senior Coordinator, Marketing and Communications
Tiina Keranen	Visual Communications Designer
Sara Dekker	Coordinator, Industry Events and Communications (NOHFC Internship)
Nicki Schiewe	Senior Coordinator, Product Development
Kathy Carlson	Senior Coordinator, Corporate Services
Karen Peacock	Senior Coordinator, Workforce Development and Industry Training
Gillian McCullough	Training Coordinator
Karen Poirier	Office Administrator

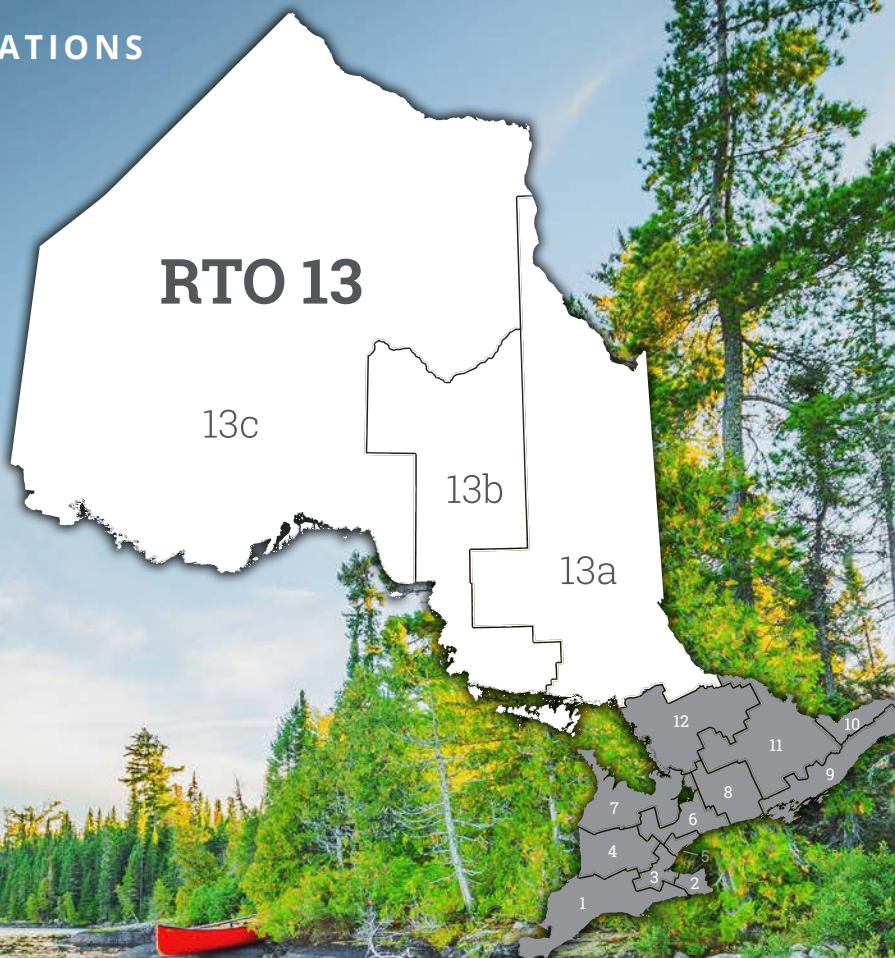


A COMMITMENT TO ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE,
PROFESSIONALISM AND QUALITY PROGRAM DELIVERY.

Overview

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

ONTARIO
REGIONAL
TOURISM
ORGANIZATIONS
(RTOS)



9.2
MILLION
VISITS



\$1.6
BILLION
TOURISM
RECEIPTS



+\$500
MILLION
GENERATED
IN TAX
REVENUES

ANNUAL STATISTICS FOR NORTHERN ONTARIO

Organizational Excellence

100% of planned initiatives completed on-time.

Destination Northern Ontario has exercised administrative diligence on both planning and adhering to reporting deadlines with **100% of planned initiatives** being completed on-time. The execution of a new strategic implementation plan allowed a more holistic approach to priority pillars. A dedicated staff person is now responsible for each of the four priority pillars with support staff as needed. Destination Northern Ontario continues to align with the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries in both its programs and coordination of staff.

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

5 CORE PILLARS

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

Vision

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

Mission Statement

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

Values

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

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





Business Development Goals

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



Governance

- > **The Board of Directors** meets nine times per year or more as required, including four meetings in person and the balance via teleconference. In order to keep attendance at acceptable levels, meetings via teleconference enabled the Board to travel less, while still sharing resources and weighing in on decisions from their respective locations. Board attendance in 2019-20 was 73%. The Board monitors organizational performance through oversight of the various strategies in the business and marketing plans through the review of detailed performance reports.



Corporate Communications

- > **Communication efforts continued throughout the 2019-20 year by using three defined audience streams:** Operators, Communities and Destinations and Tourism Advisors. This allowed corporate communications to be tailored to audiences depending on their relationship with DNO. Traditional communication tools were used including monthly newsletters, press releases and social media. In January 2020, a new Coordinator, Industry Events and Communications, was hired and communication activities were streamlined under this role.

DNO website traffic met a new benchmark this year with approximately **20,000 visitors** to corporate sites combined. **Over thirty** newsletters were sent out to industry focusing on DNO programming and success stories. DNO’s social media following reached upwards of **12,000 followers**.

COMMUNICATIONS STATS FOR 2019-20



12,000
FOLLOWERS
ON SOCIAL MEDIA



30+
INDUSTRY
NEWSLETTERS



20,000
VISITS
TO CORPORATE
WEBSITES

2019-20 marketing activities were defined by collaboration and partnership.

Six meetings were held with Destination Ontario during the year to draft a marketing strategy to lead the organizations and region into the next five years (draft pending due to Covid-19). A new reporting system was implemented on April 1, 2019 to streamline reporting between DNO and its traditional marketing partners which was received favourably from all sub-regions. **NorthernOntario.travel** saw another record-breaking year with traffic records with **over 3 million** visitors during the fiscal. Marketing campaigns were aligned with the provincial brand architecture whenever possible; another effort to solidify partnership across all levels of marketing organizations.

3 MILLION+ VISITS



northernontario.travel

Marketing

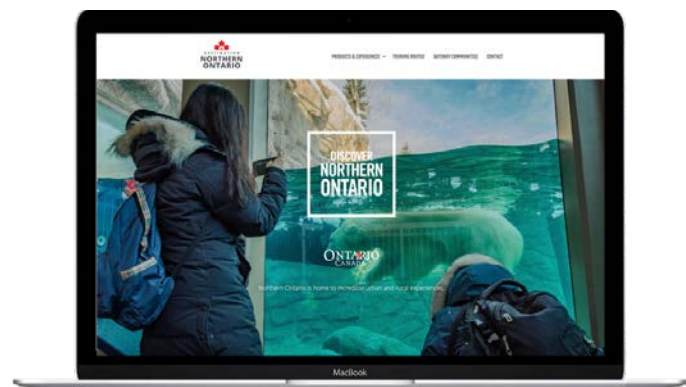


Marketing

Since the implementation of the **Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT)**, DNO continued to work with urban communities through a partnership model where ministry aligned projects were invested in by leveraging funding from local level with regional dollars. This model worked well and will continue in the coming year.

Continued alignment with **Destination Ontario** and **Destination Canada** resulted in attendance at two overseas marketplaces throughout the year. International marketing activities also resulted in **six new itineraries** including two RV specific itineraries (the “Fur Trade” route and the “Prospector” route) and four car/RV itineraries (the “Grand Northern Route”, the “Lake Superior Route”, the “Northeast Route” and the “Temiskaming Tour”). A dedicated International Travel Trade Web Portal (northernontarioitt.com) was also completed and used as a cornerstone marketing tool during the 2019 Rendez-vous Canada event held in Toronto where DNO and its partners created a massive presence to sell to the international market.

Key **pan-northern marketing projects** included expanding opportunities for international & U.S. travel trade marketing, continued growth of packages and online sales in both rural and urban areas and a large urban partnered campaign that promoted communities as gateways for snowmobile tourism. Destination Northern Ontario also partnered with Destination Ontario and the City of Temiskaming Shores to start the development of a re-tooled trip planner that will live on the NorthernOntario.travel site.



↑ Northern Ontario International Travel Trade Web Portal

Product Development

Activities were overseen by the Senior Coordinator for Product Development with assistance from an NOHFC Intern.

Research

Research and data play an integral role as Destination Northern Ontario develops and implements strategies across all pillar areas including product development

In 2019-20 the following research initiatives were undertaken:

- ✓ Research on impacts as more municipalities moved to implement the Municipal Accommodation Tax.
- ✓ Monthly and annualized industry performance tracking for both urban and rural fixed roof accommodations.
- ✓ Maintenance and continued enhancement of the DNO database.

Product Development

Experience Shift

Destination Northern Ontario continued to support tourism product development with activities undertaken in the 2019-20 fiscal year as part of the region's "Experience Shift".

Northern Ontario's Priority Experiences

157 industry representatives continue to serve on 17 DNO product teams, working groups and steering committees through identified product plans to develop and/or enhance Northern Ontario's priority experiences.; angling & hunting, culture and heritage, gateway and destination communities, nature and adventure and touring. Again with the support of these teams and working groups specific identified initiatives continued to form the backbone of DNO's product development work;

- 01 Experience Fishing
- 02 Indigenous Tourism Food Plan & Francophone Itinerary Building
- 03 Great Lakes Cruising, IPM and Great Lakes Waterfront Trail Adventure
- 04 Wildlife Viewing
- 05 Northern Ontario RV touring, Lake Superior Auto/RV and a new Winnipeg to Thunder Bay touring route.

Wayfinding / Travel Information Centres

DNO continued to invest in **wayfinding** and Northern Visitor information centres. Destination Northern Ontario applied to FedNor for funds in support of a Northern Ontario bilingual community wayfinding program. Approved and underway in June 2017, the partnership enabled Destination Northern Ontario to work with municipalities to provide 2/3rds of the costs associated with the development of bilingual signage strategies, manufacture and installation of wayfinding signs. To date more than **\$1,275,000** has been made available to transform **19 communities** in Northern Ontario. The program was so successful it has been extended into the first six months of 2020-21.

DNO also continued to support **Tourism Information Centres (TICs)** in 2019-20 by working with **31 TICs** to administer visitor surveys which resulted in **5,000 responses** received. Information was consolidated and shared with industry and other relevant tourism organizations. DNO supported customer service training provided to **44 partner TIC staff**, provide Summer Employment Program staffing extensions to **28 students**, and created customized travel brochure racks and placement for twelve centres as well as supported gateway signage for three additional regional travel information centres.



Workforce Development & Industry Training

In a move to consolidate workforce development and industry training efforts undertaken by the organization with the Tourism Excellence North program, Destination Northern Ontario's new Three-Year Strategic Plan involves fulfilling objectives under a single Training/Tourism Excellence North pillar area, with a dedicated TEN Training Senior Coordinator at the helm. A new Five-Year Workforce Development & Industry Training Strategy was created building upon current training solutions, addressing labour shortages and skills gaps and e-learning opportunities.

Highlights from the **sixth annual Northern Ontario Tourism Summit** included two days of workshops focusing on both operator and public-sector interests and pre-summit training from Tourism Excellence North and Workplace Safety and Prevention Services. Numerous industry experts lead workshops, presentations, and consultations were held throughout the event. Summit delegates also visited a tradeshow highlighting Northern tourism organizations, as well as product and service providers to the tourism industry.

NORTHERN · ONTARIO
**TOURISM
SUMMIT**



221
DELEGATES



★ ★ ★ ★ ★
4.4 / 5 STAR RATING

The **Northern Ontario Tourism Summit** took place **November 18-20, 2019** in **Timmins, ON**. The Summit was a success with a jam-packed agenda and greater than expected sponsorship investments. A total of **221 delegates** registered for NOTS. Participated gave sessions an average of **4.4/5 stars** through a rating system delivered through the event's mobile application.

Workforce Development & Industry Training



tourism excellence north
tourisme d'excellence Nord

Quality Shift

In November of 2015, Destination Northern Ontario launched Tourism Excellence North (TEN) at the 2015 Northern Ontario Tourism Summit.

TEN is a tourism development program that addresses the Quality Shift recommendations found in the Northern Ontario Tourism Product Development Strategy and is designed to help operators, organizations, communities and destinations make significant, quality investments in their business, operation or community, guiding them to increase the quality of their product and develop innovative experiences that raise the bar on visitor value, ultimately increasing positive visitor experiences and increasing operators' bottom line in the region.

In its fifth year, TEN saw the successful delivery of all proposed TEN training solutions. This included:

- **Over 544** operators, communities and destinations enrolled with TEN to make use of the Self-Assessments and Case Studies online tools. All TEN videos have been opened for viewing a total of **1,769 times**. And an additional **13** online self-assessment learning tools were developed and implemented.
- **11 operators** participated in the Fast Track to Success (FTS) personalized coaching program, totaling **92 operators** altogether who participated since TEN's launch. Input from operators who have responded to surveys about the value and impact of the FTS program have made it very clear that FTS is having a positive impact.
- **Three** group learning workshops (two for operators and one for communities) were facilitated in Temiskaming Shores and Sioux Narrows, with **48 participants**.
- One Best Practices Missions (BPMs) were facilitated and focused on understanding and attracting the international visitor, with 8 participants.
- Collaboration and partnership with other tourism training programs saw the delivery four workshops to **67 participants**. In addition, FrenchItUp! group workshop curriculum was created in partnership with SEO.
- Experience Fishing training delivered **five** workshops, resulting in **22 operators** signing up to the program.
- Consultant services were retained for World's Best Snowmobile Destination to deliver program content and training.

Workforce Development & Industry Training

Culture Shift

Culture Shift recommendations in Destination Northern Ontario's Product Development Strategy center around the dedication of resources to product development and creating a culture of excellence for Northern Ontario.

In 2019-20, more resources were applied to the non-marketing pillars and communication continued highlighting the importance of tourism through the Tourism Rocks! campaign and other media.

Tourism Excellence North continued to monitor the program and move forward to achieve a 'Culture of Quality' that generates investment, commitment and support for strategic tourism product development in Northern Ontario.



In 2019/20, Destination Northern Ontario experienced a 72% industry satisfaction level with investment attraction activities, up 8% from the previous fiscal.

DNO will continue its hard work in this core pillar to not only boost satisfaction rates but also increase awareness of the work undertaken in Industry Attraction (IA) on behalf of the industry.

DNO continued to work on core IA projects including maintenance of the online resource library for industry and attendance/participation in approximately **50 tourism related meetings** throughout the year. The organization also commissioned a research project on the Municipal Accommodation Tax to look at next steps and impact on the industry.

DNO held its second Spark session in Northern Ontario in partnership with the Tourism Innovation Lab to help foster and develop new tourism ideas and entrepreneurs with mentorships and grants. In addition to the Spark Program, DNO provided grant writing assistance to approximately **15 tourism organizations** to further their industry-related programs and projects.

Investment Attraction



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

Destination Northern Ontario implemented **ten** partnered initiatives working with over **95 partners** and **leveraging** the Province's investment **three times over** resulting in nearly **\$2 million** of partnered activity.



95+
INDUSTRY
PARTNERS

Partnerships



SUCCESS STORIES

Culinary Tourism

Supported by the Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA), DNO, through its partnership program, joined with regional DMOs in the Northeast and Algoma in 2018-19 to develop food tourism strategies. By the end of March 2019, strategies had been developed for Sudbury, North Bay, Temiskaming Shores and Sault. Ste Marie and were ready for implementation.

The buzz that all this innovative work in the north created, along with the successes of DNO's Tourism Excellence North (TEN) training program, captured the attention and imagination of Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) Executive Director, Kevin Eshkawkogan, a long time DNO partner. Eshkawkogan proposed working with DNO and CTA to develop a Northern Ontario Indigenous Food Tourism Strategy as a pilot project for all of Ontario and, ultimately, for the rest of Canada. It was a revolutionary, ground-breaking concept – and one which DNO readily embraced.

The project included development of an Indigenous Food Tourism Standards and Best Practices Checklist, which would be contributed to the industry at large. The work has positioned ITO as a pioneer of inclusive food tourism development and a strategic partner for growing Indigenous tourism at the national level. It was featured on CBC, presented at the largest Indigenous tourism conference in the world IITC Kelowna (Nov 2019), presented at ATLAS Latin America in Bogota (Nov 2019) and featured in a United Nations World Tourism Organization newsletter.

The Northern Ontario Indigenous Food

Tourism Strategy has now been completed as a pilot project for the rest of Ontario and beyond and ITO (with the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada) has been successful in obtaining federal funding both for the implementation of the Northern Ontario strategy and the development of a plan for the rest of Ontario based on this pilot project.

At the same time, other communities and regions were getting busy on growing their food tourism offerings. Temiskaming Shores was first out of the gate with its strategy implementation. Focusing on enhancing food and beverage experiences on its renowned Lake Temiskaming Tour Loop, in 2019 the partners created or enhanced a total of 16 new food and beverage products around the lake. COVID-19 has not slowed the group's efforts as they have encouraged food and beverage businesses to use the time to regroup and create new products. In May, four online workshops were presented, one in French and

one in English focused on enhancing food and beverage experience and another on online commerce. Private consultations are being offered as follow ups.

Algoma's working group has been working on a phase 1 project for building out a culinary program that includes a mapping component. In partnership with Rural Agri-Innovation Network (RAIN), Algoma was supporting and building from the Buy Algoma/Buy Local initiative. The plan is to use the criteria to continue to vet businesses to maintain consistency with the program. All culinary experiences, farmers, farmgate, markets, dinners and other related products and experience will then be mapped on a digital platform and a social media presence will be created.

Next up for DNO, while continuing to support partners in their implementation process, will be to work with eleven communities and First Nations along the North shore of Lake Superior for a food tourism strategy for that region.

SUCCESS STORIES

International Marketing

RVC 2020

Growing international visitation in the North from its current **0.5%** of all visits to **2%** of all visits would boost tourism receipts by **\$500 million dollars** annually.

With this lofty goal in mind, Destination Northern Ontario, with its partners, decided to make a concerted effort to showcase Northern Ontario at RVC 2019 in Toronto, Ontario. Since the marketplace was taking place in Ontario, DNO had a unique opportunity to invest in its presence at RVC to make an impression on thousands of attendees and international buyers.

One of the greatest successes of this partnership was the sheer number of partners involved. Not only did we have a majority of DMOs from Northern Ontario

onboard, DNO had a privately held airline who partnered on four pre and post media fairs in the region. The amount leveraged in this partnership was to the tune of **\$100,000** both in kind and cash.

Over 200 buyers stopped in at the DNO booth during the course of the event. Partners held **over 150 appointments** with buyers from across the globe and a lasting impression of Northern Ontario was left on the marketplace for the foreseeable future.

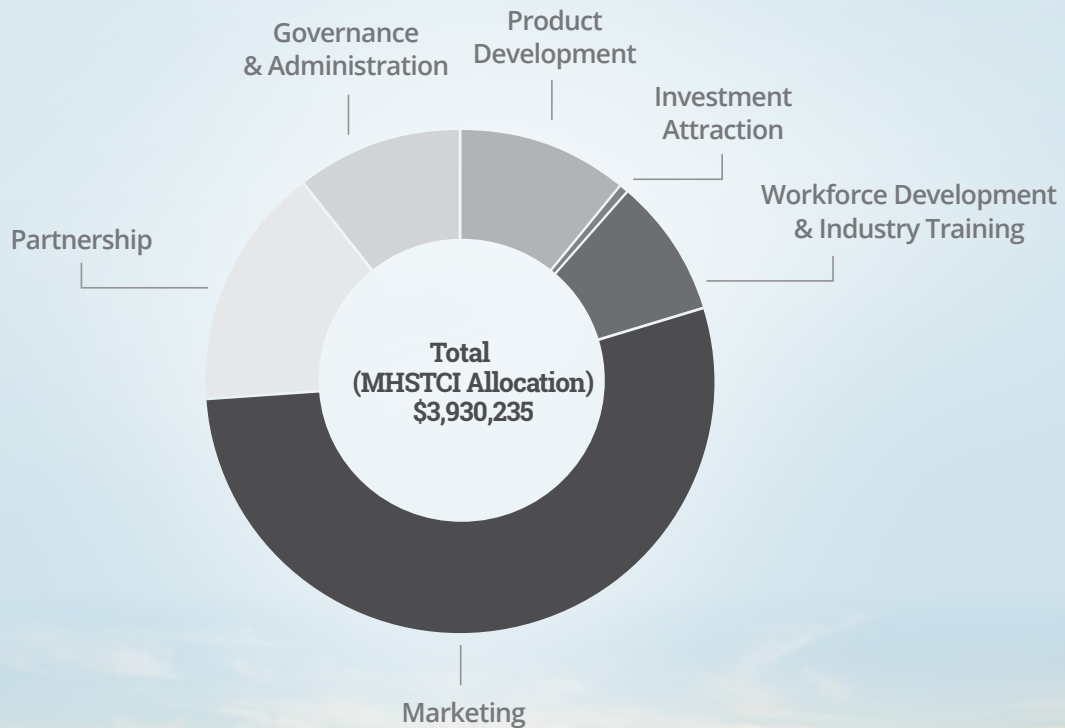


← 3-minute video featuring Northern Ontario sights, sounds and experiences.

Financial Plan 2019/20

Area of focus	Actual	Budget	%
Governance & Administration	\$ 415,235	\$ 415,235	11
Product Development	\$ 430,000	\$ 430,000	11
Investment Attraction	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	<1
Workforce Development & Industry Training	\$ 345,000	\$ 345,000	9
Marketing	\$ 2,110,000	\$ 2,110,000	54
Partnership	\$ 605,000	\$ 605,000	15
Total (MHSTCI Allocation)	\$ 3,930,235	\$ 3,930,235	100
Leveraged Contributions*	\$ 1,708,423	\$ 2,000,000	85
Total	\$ 5,638,658	\$ 5,932,235	95

*impacted by COVID-19. One partnership was ultimately cancelled with funds carried over to support COVID-related mitigation measures in the 2020-21 fiscal year



GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

CMA	Census Metropolitan Areas
CBRE	CBRE Group (consulting firm)
DMO	Destination Marketing Organization
DNO	Destination Northern Ontario
FAM	Familiarization Tour
IA	Investment Attraction
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MTCS	Ministry of Tourism Culture & Sport
NOHFC	Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation
NOTO	Nature & Outdoor Tourism Ontario
Q	Quarter
RTO	Regional Tourism Organization
SEP	Summer Employment Program
SIP	Strategic Implementation Plan
TEN	Tourism Excellence North
TIC	Travel Information Centre
TNO	Tourism Northern Ontario
TSRC	Travel Survey of Residents Canada
VFR	Visiting Friends & Relatives



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THANK YOU



DESTINATION
**NORTHERN
ONTARIO**

111 Elgin Street, Suite 304, Sault Ste. Marie, ON, Canada P6A 6L6

T » 705.575.9779 | F » 705.575.9780 | E » info@destinationnorthernontario.ca | W » destinationnorthernontario.ca