



304-111 Elgin Street
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6A 6L6
(705) 575-9779 telephone | (705) 575-9780 fax
communications@destinationnorthernontario.ca
www.destinationnorthernontario.ca

**MEDIA RELEASE
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DESTINATION NORTHERN ONTARIO PLANS FOR RECOVERY AS ONTARIO ECONOMY OPENS UP

(Sault Ste. Marie, ON) – COVID-19 has had a tremendously negative impact on the tourism industry worldwide and is adversely affecting year-round and seasonal operators, employees, and travellers. As the province of Ontario prepares to start slowly opening up the economy and easing social distancing measures, the Northern Ontario tourism industry is looking at ways to address the losses of the summer season as the industry moves into recovery.

Destination Northern Ontario (DNO) has been tailoring and adapting its programming for the past nine weeks with staff continuing to work remotely. Efforts to date have focused on mitigation and relief for the industry, sharing relevant resources, developing a webinar series to help operators navigate funding programs, insurance and new policies and procedures and awareness marketing. DNO's programming has been met with enthusiasm from the industry with an average of 100 participants throughout the webinar series and strong buy-in to the #DreamON awareness campaign across the North.

As the province continues to open to up, DNO is looking at investing in research around changes in markets, operating protocols and what will be the new long- and short-term training needs for the industry. The organization has been working hand-in-hand with the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario, Northern Destination Marketing Organizations, the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, sector organizations like Attractions Ontario and Camping Ontario and private tourism operators. DNO recognizes that the transborder closures may continue throughout what is usually the busiest time of the year for northern tourism operators. The organization is preparing marketing plans that will shift focus to domestic markets to make up for potential lost visitation across the Canada – U.S. border.

"It is difficult to plan long term as there is no indication as to when our province will open for business," said David MacLachlan, Executive Director, Destination Northern Ontario. "One thing is clear: it won't be business as usual and the number one priority is and will always be the safety of owners, employees and visitors and following the recommendation of our public health agencies. We are working diligently so that, when Ontario opens for business, the northern tourism industry will be ready."

Destination Northern Ontario continues to host weekly calls with stakeholders from across the region and key sector organizations. Information and programming updates are being shared to ensure there are no lost opportunities for tourism organizations in Northern Ontario. DNO will continue to share data and market intelligence with its partners to ensure that it is promoting meaningful, relevant content to its audiences. Survey results will continue to be posted on www.destinationnorthernontario.ca/covid-19/. DNO encourages the industry to keep up to date

Working Together to Build A Stronger Tourism Industry



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by signing up for its newsletters via the website and/or through social by following the handle destinationnorthernontario on Facebook and @DestNorthernOnt on Twitter.

Destination Northern Ontario is one of 13 not-for-profit regional tourism organizations funded by the Ontario Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. We are the largest tourism region in geography, the second largest in expenditure and the only region that includes sub-regions.

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. 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.

For more information on Destination Northern Ontario, please visit www.destinationnorthernontario.ca. Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/DestNorthernOnt or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/DestinationNorthernOntario for the most up to date news and information.

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Media contact:
Stephanie Hopkin
Senior Coordinator, Marketing and Communications
Destination Northern Ontario
111 Elgin St Suite 304
Sault Ste. Marie ON
P6A 6V1
(705) 575 9779