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TOURISM: More upgrades slated for major tourism attraction in Northern Ontario

Agawa Canyon Train Tour going digital

Things keep looking up for one of Northern Ontario's most significant tourism attractions.

Not long after new coaches were purchased for the Agawa Canyon Train Tour, the ride is slated to receive even more upgrades. With \$1.02 million from the federal government, new audio-visual technology is next for the attraction.

The Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Fed-Nor, was on hand for the funding announcement June 11.

"This investment will not only enhance the ride experience . . . but it will also showcase the natural wonders of the region, helping draw more people to the North and encouraging them to stay," he said.

The enhancements include

video screens and wireless headsets that will tell riders the history of the region. To help attract more international tourists, the audio will be featured in five languages.

The funding application for the improvements was made by Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, a division of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation, along with CN Rail, which owns the attraction.

According to SSMEDC CEO Bruce Strapp: "This state-of-the-art technology will give us a competitive edge that will benefit Sault Ste. Marie and Northern Ontario's cultural and tourism attractions, communities and businesses."

Last year, new coaches were purchased for the Agawa Canyon Train Tour. The upgrades were made possible thanks to a \$10-million dollar joint investment from the province's Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation and CN Rail/ACR. The new cars, which will feature large domed windows, are expected to be in operation for the 2011 season.

The goal of both enhancement projects is to increase ridership on the train tour and, ultimately, grow the tourism base in the city and region.

"Along with the upgraded coach equipment, the technology initiative will go a long way in bringing rider levels back to historic highs," said Ian McMillan, Executive Director of Tourism Sault Ste. Marie.



Clement



UPGRADES AHEAD: Minister Clement (left) and Tourism SSM's Ian McMillan reveal what the technology upgrades will look like.



THREE AMIGOS: At the announcement are (L to R) Minister Clement, Mayor Rowswell and Ian McMillan from Tourism SSM.

SMALL BUSINESS: New EDC staffer plans on taking entrepreneur program to new heights

Passport to Prosperity on the rise

Home sweet home is a well-known phrase Kaitlin DiAngelo could not relate more to.

Joining the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation after living in southern Ontario for the past four years, she is pleased to be back in her hometown and looks forward to working with local businesses to strengthen the Passport to Prosperity program.

DiAngelo, a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Business Administration program

at Wilfrid Laurier University, joins the Enterprise Centre Sault Ste. Marie team for the next 12 months to help with the continued growth and evolution of Passport to Prosperity. The provincewide program is designed to increase employer involvement in school-to-work



PHOTO: Kaitlin DiAngelo (left) with co-worker Terri Chiarello at the Enterprise Centre-sponsored Chamber of Commerce Take Five event in June.

programs for high school students.

“I am thrilled to be back home and working in a position that promotes the city and what it has to offer,” said DiAngelo.

As Marketing and Events Coordinator, DiAngelo will be working alongside fel-

low staff to help expand small business development throughout the city and region. In addition to Passport, DiAngelo will focus heavily on event planning, the development of support programs and services, Summer Company, and the launch of the new Virtual Advisor system.

“Kaitlin will bring added depth and expertise to help deliver our programs and services in Sault Ste. Marie and the Algoma District,” said ECSSM General Manager Andrew Ross.

DEVELOPMENT: Construction booming in Sault Ste. Marie

Building in the city's green sector heating up

To go along with the hundreds of millions of dollars in government investments currently flowing through Sault Ste. Marie, the city has substantial private-sector projects on the front burner as well.

Three green sector clients of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation have major construction

works on the go.

Building of Pod Generating Group's solar energy farm is now taking place. The first 20 megawatts are expected to be complete this fall.

Meanwhile, the solar panel manufacturing facility from Heliene Canada is sprouting from the ground as well. The plant is also scheduled to be

in operation this fall.

Finally, Ellsin Environmental is establishing a pilot tire recycling plant on Yates Avenue. With shovels now in the ground, this too is full steam ahead and is expected to be complete in 2010.

All three green projects had their official announcements or groundbreaking

ceremonies in the past several months. While important, the real sign of progress is when construction crews are out, said John Febraro, Director of Industrial Marketing for the SSMEDC. “Having an announcement or a groundbreaking event is great, but seeing the construction begin and the building take shape



PHOTO: The Heliene site taking shape on the corner of Second Line and Allen's Side Road.

is when you see the real progress begin.”

Pod, Heliene and Ellsin have been clients of the SSMEDC for a number of years now. “When you work

with a client for so long, seeing their project finally take shape is what makes it all worth while,” said Febraro. “We're excited about the jobs being created in our city.”

Meantime, total building in the Sault is reaching impressive levels. In just the first half of 2010, construction values have exceeded \$80 million, according to City

building permits and a recent Sault Star article. In the past 27 years, annual values topped \$100 million just five times. This year should top the mark with ease.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: Elementa Group continues to attract global attention

Spanish investors eye the Sault's green sector

With its waste-to-energy technology proven, interest surrounding Elementa Group continues to soar.

In June, a delegation from Spain travelled to Sault Ste. Marie to see the process in action. Like many before them, the group is interested in bringing the Elementa process to their country.

The local visit was organized by the SSM Economic Development Corporation.

"Few days go by that we're not contacted by global investors interested in Elementa and other local green companies," said Randy Tallon, the SSMEDC's Director of Inter-

national Relations & Global Logistics. "With such a cutting-edge technology, I expect many more delegations to be passing through in the months and years to come."

Elementa uses steam reformation conversion technology to process solid waste into synthetic gas, similar to natural gas, which can be used for power generation. It's a non-incineration process, meaning there are very little noxious oxide emissions created in the process.

The company's pilot plant is located

at the municipal landfill site. A full-scale facility, which will be able to process virtually all of the city's curbside garbage, is expected to be in operation in the near future.

Following the recent Spanish visit, Elementa Group's Michael Wozny commented: "International delegations continue to be impressed with

the City of Sault Ste. Marie, in that this world-class innovative technology and process was developed in a small Canadian city."



TOP: The Spanish delegation at Elementa's pilot plant.

LEFT: Elementa staff meet the delegation at the airport.

THE SAULT'S BEST: Marian Theriault

Local entrepreneur takes home Influential Woman of Northern Ont. award

Life is to be lived, says local entrepreneur Marian Theriault, who took home the Private Sector Award from Influential Women of Northern Ontario in June.

Her business journey began as such: She left a 30-year marriage with few earnings in the bank and a son to help through law school. Theriault, who now owns Ithaka, needed to become a survivor in more ways than one.

She found a small storefront in Sault Ste. Marie and signed a two-year lease with the landlord before she could change her mind. And thus began the seeds of Ithaka, a high-quality clothing store for active women of all ages.

"I took one day at a time rebuilding my life, and I've

amazed myself," she said.

Theriault wanted to sell comfortable clothes for all walks in life.

"If you are comfortable with who you are and what you are wearing, you are more apt to get out and enjoy life," she said.

Coming from a family who owned the Duke of Windsor provided Theriault with the experience and vision to mould her new future.

She always thought she would assume the family business with her brothers. However, after one of them, Frank, died in 1995, her direction changed. She was standing in her family's store when it hit her.

"I have to do something creative," she recalled.

Theriault had a lot of self-confidence. However, after years in an abusive marriage, her self-esteem was low, and she really didn't know who she was anymore.

It took time for Theriault to reconnect with herself. Today, she is "blown away" by how remarkable the journey has been so far.

Meanwhile, Theriault is not only a member of the Downtown Association in Sault Ste. Marie, but she also promotes and participates in the CIBC Run for the Cure and supports other women who are experiencing difficulty through the Freedom of Abuse program at the Algoma Council on Domestic Violence.

It's this community involvement that caused Theriault to stand out in the minds of the judges. Water Tower Inn President Donna Hilsinger, who won an Influential Women of Northern Ontario award in 2008, was a judge in this year's competition.

Even though she evaluated nominees in northwestern Ontario — not in the Sault — she knows what it takes to take home such an honour.

"You have to have a passion and intensity to your cause," said Hilsinger, a Board member of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation. "You have to be dedicated. (Theriault) stood out as a result of that passion she had."



Theriault

COLUMN: Sault Ste. Marie is taking advantage of its hockey and tourism assets

AAA hockey tourney promises to be a significant tourism draw



BY MARC CAPANCIONI
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I remember, as clear as a calm spring day, being at the Memorial Gardens when the Soo Greyhounds hoisted the 1993 Memorial Cup.

While the games were most definitely noteworthy, what really resonate, were the acts of kindness displayed by local hockey fans throughout the week of the tournament.

As patrons waited in line for hours to buy tickets, food and laughs were shared by the bunch. If one buyer was a little short on funds — apparently miscalculating how much tickets were — money was pooled and handed over from others waiting in line.

That's just the kind of atmosphere it was. Sault Ste. Marie was hosting one of the largest hockey events around. Excitement filled the air.

My mom managed to snag a few standing-room tickets for the final game. However, at nine years old and four-foot nothing, I was barely tall enough to see over the railing of the old rink.

Luckily, a man sitting in front of me offered to trade spots, with him taking my standing position and me upgrading to his seat. His generosity allowed me to see the game and my beloved Greyhounds defeat the Peterborough Petes 4-2.

These acts of kindness were the norm throughout the duration of the cup. A sense of pride, in both our Greyhounds and community at large, swept through Sault Ste. Marie.

The moral of this tale is that the Sault is a hockey town, pure and simple.

With natural beauty, the city is also a beacon for visitors. And with recent improvements to local accommodation facilities, along with the construction of the Essar Centre, this traveller-friendly reputation is bolstered even further.

Combining the community's flare for hockey and its tourism assets seems only fitting. And that's precisely what the Sault Major Hockey Association and Tourism Sault Ste. Marie are doing.

The two have joined forces to put on a foremost AAA tournament. The Soo Greyhound International Showdown will feature some of the best midget, bantam, peewee and atom teams from across North America.

Interest in the event, scheduled for Nov. 18 to 21, is already spreading like wildfire, said Tournament Chair Mike Murphy. "We are hearing from a lot of teams right now."

The goal of the event is simple: show the visiting players, coaches and fans a great time so they'll keep coming back, he added.

"We realize that getting the teams to come is

one thing, but the future success of this tournament will rely heavily on the teams leaving on Sunday and already wanting to come back the following year. The hospitality that our city is known for, coupled with a professionally-run tournament that far exceeds teams' expectations, is the recipe, and we are excited about it."

The Soo Greyhounds International Showdown is, essentially, replacing the Steel City International Tournament. In recent years, the latter was decreasing in size due to many factors, including the increase in the number of tournaments available and the passport issue at the Canada-U. S. border that kept many Americans close to home.

Today, those concerns are largely gone. Many — perhaps most — travellers now have proper documentation. On top of that, U.S. border requirements have been loosened a bit, particularly for people under the age of 19 who are crossing in groups, which would apply to American hockey teams looking to play in a Canadian tournament.

As well, the date of the new Greyhounds International Showdown conflicts less with other major tournaments, some-

thing that was a bit of a problem in past years.

Put simply, the time was near perfect for the redevelopment and rebranding of the local event.

With the Soo Greyhounds OHL club on board as a sponsor, the tournament is new, fresh and is already drawing attention from across the continent.

"The Sault has been a great hockey destination for a lot of years," said Murphy. "Teams are looking to come back, and with the new date and a new look, we're giving them a reason to."

The Soo Greyhounds International Showdown is expected to attract upwards of 60 out-of-town teams, totaling nearly 2,000 visitors.

Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, which is helping to organize and market the event, is a division of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation.

Marc Capancioni is Communications Coordinator for the EDC and Website Administrator for the Sault Major Hockey Association.

Originally published in The Sault Star on June 26, 2010.

PHOTO: Having the Essar Centre helps entice teams to the Sault.



Out & About: EDC Photo Gallery



PROMOTING THE SAULT: Bruce Strapp (standing), CEO of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation, gives a presentation on the city's strategic advantages to the Michigan Exporting Workshop in Gaylord, Mich. The event was designed to further connect Sault, Ont. and Michigan — particularly in the Upper Peninsula — and explore business-to-business opportunities between the two jurisdictions.

SOLID SOURCE: Bruce Strapp (below), CEO of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation, answers questions for a CTV news story on the shape of the local economy. With his knowledge, Strapp is commonly asked by the news media for his perspective on various market issues.



TAKE FIVE: At the Chamber of Commerce June Take 5 event are (L to R) Don Ferguson, the Chamber's Communications & Events Officer; local musician Rusty McCarthy; and Andrew Ross, General Manager of Enterprise Centre Sault Ste. Marie, which sponsored the event with the Passport to Prosperity program. The Enterprise Centre delivers the program, which provides work experience for high school students.



June 2010

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Sault Ste. Marie
**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
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The Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation recognizes the financial support it receives from the City of Sault Ste. Marie. As well, it recognizes the strong backing it receives from the Mayor, Council and City staff team. The SSMEDC also thanks the federal and provincial governments, and its many other partners, for their financial support.

The Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation is a non-profit organization, funded by public and private partners, whose goal is to be the community's leader in supporting and promoting an environment that generates sustainable employment in a healthy, growing and diversified economy.