

JUNE 2009

the pulse

SAULT STE. MARIE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEWS

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Sault lands one of the biggest sporting events in its history

'Little city with a big heart' chosen over major Canadian centres to host 2012 CARHA Hockey World Cup

Sault Ste. Marie has hosted many major sporting events in the past few decades: the 1993 Memorial Cup and 1990 Labatt Brier to name just a few. However, the biggest is on its way.

It was announced recently that Sault Ste. Marie was picked to host the 2012 Canadian Adult Recreational Hockey Association World Cup. More than 2,500 players, from 120 teams around the world, will flood the city for a week, making this one of the largest events in its history.

Sault Ste. Marie was among 13 cities to bid on the championship. Even more significant is that the Northern Ontario community beat out several major centres, including Toronto, for the hosting rights.

"We saw Sault Ste. Marie as the little city with a big heart," said Nicole Vanbergen, CARHA's Coordinator of

Communications and Promotions. "When we came here (for the initial site visit), we were amazed with how welcomed we felt. They really went above and beyond."

Also helpful in the decision to come to the Sault is its strategic location. "It's at the centre of Canada," she said.

Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, a division of the SSM Economic

economy, said Vanbergen.

"As far as sporting events go, this will be one of the largest-attended in the history of our city," said Steve Hollingshead, Coordinator of Special Projects & Sport Tourism for Tourism SSM. "It fits within the vision of our organization to pursue and secure this type of opportunity. The financial benefit to the local tourism industry and community at large will be very substantial."

For the accomplishment, Hollingshead gave kudos to City Council, the City staff team and the local tourism industry. "We were very fortunate to have everyone's support," he said. "It gave us a compelling argument as to why we should host the event."

The 2012 CARHA Hockey World Cup will be held in the same year as the 100th anniversary of Sault Ste. Marie.



COURTING CARHA (L to R): Mayor John Rowswell, Tourism Sault Ste. Marie's Steve Hollingshead with CARHA President Michael Peski, and TSSM Executive Director Ian McMillan.

Column:

Tips for small businesses during an economic reset

Small businesses are always faced with tough decisions, regardless of the economic times. But what are they to do when faced with a recession and dollars become tighter, consumer spending decreases and the pressure is on to ensure that the firm is operating efficiently?

There is no definite course of action to “recession proof” a business. However, there are steps that can be followed to help weather the storm. During economic downturn, these tips can help a business maintain existing clients and gain new ones.



Know your clients

This is especially important when people become less inclined

to spend their shrinking disposable income, and competition for those dollars becomes more intense. By understanding why your customers buy the things they do, along with their specific needs and wants, a business can better position its products and services to meet those needs.

Additionally, a firm can better understand what products to carry or what services to offer to make it more efficient. This will also help to avoid carrying things that will add cost to your bottom line without ensuring revenue to cover costs.



Develop personal relationships with your clients

The best small businesses can compete with large corporations by having a more personal relationship with their customers. Maintaining a rapport with your clients creates a level of trust and familiarity, which can potentially offset the automatic tightening of belts during a recessionary period.

Simply put, people tend to purchase from businesses they know rather than those they do not.

By establishing a strong personal relationship with its clients, a business can reduce the impact of a recession. People will look to spend dollars with you rather than strangers or businesses they don't know.

Building these relationships can be easy. It could be a simple thank-you card to follow up on a purchase. It might be a friendly, attentive staff – attentive, not smothering. Or it could be as simple as remembering a customer's name.

Little gestures like these create more of a lasting impression than a few dollars saved or slick sales approach.



Look for new markets; Diversify your offerings

Small businesses tend to offer a smaller number of products or services, which usually appeal to a specific market segment. This is hardly a negative thing, but sometimes – especially during a recession – pressure can be put on niche products as consumers' budgets shrink along with their confidence in the markets.

To offset this, businesses can look at other product lines or services that will complement their existing operation. This can help attract new customers.

It can be as simple as adding a new line of shoes or accessories to an apparel store or as diverse as a complete departure from your existing offering. Diversification of products and services can provide new revenue streams that can be maintained over the long term. This can add revenue to your bottom line.



Consider that expansion and search for funding

Traditionally, credit becomes harder to find during recessions. And although interest rates tend to drop as the government attempts to stimulate growth, it might be harder for small businesses to incur debt because of the reduced spending of their client base.

Expanding during this period might seem like a losing proposition. However, with interest rates at their current levels and the cost of big ticket items dropping, opportunity may exist for strategic growth.

What makes this opportunity more appealing is the existence of federal and provincial programs aimed at helping small businesses. Government initiatives, such as the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation's Enterprises North Job Creation Program, can offer loans to start or expand a business through the purchase of capital assets and/or leasehold improvements.

This can make costly future plans more affordable in the shorter term while creating opportunity to add additional products or services to increase immediate revenue streams.

There are a lot of great tips out there to help small businesses survive a recession. But it's important to remember that just surviving is not enough. Small businesses should always strive to grow and reinforce for future market fluctuations, which can happen at the drop of a hat.



Column by Andrew Ross,
General Manager of Enterprise Centre Sault Ste. Marie,
a division of SSMEDC

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Sault Ste. Marie featured in energy webinar

Few cities in the world can match Sault Ste. Marie's alternative energy capabilities. With this in mind, the city was recently featured in a webinar, titled "Local Leaders: bringing renewable energy and energy efficiency leadership together."

Mike Wozny, Executive Director of Development SSM, joined representatives from Toronto, Calgary and Albuquerque, N.M. in the presenta-

tion session. Wozny made the case as to why the Sault deserves the title: Alternative Energy Capital of North America.

He outlined the various energy projects in the area, which include wind, solar, hydroelectric, oilseed and biomass, cogeneration, and waste-to-energy. Grouped together, Sault Ste. Marie is doing things few other places can match, said Wozny. "The Sault is truly

unique in the way we generate power."

A PDF version of the webinar PowerPoint presentations, including Sault Ste. Marie's, is available online at <http://webinars.reeep.org>.

Also in June, City Council passed a resolution to negotiate an agreement with Elementa Group for the long-term provision of all residential curbside waste.

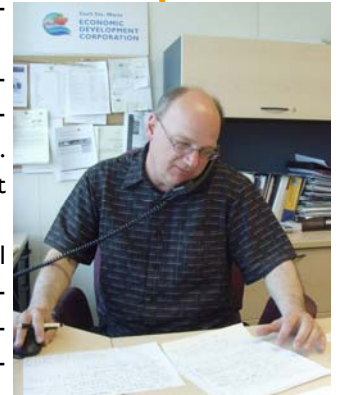


PHOTO: Wozny delivers his energy webinar presentation via telephone.

Summer Company provides opportunity for youth

Summer Company, a provincial youth-entrepreneurship program administered regionally by Enterprise Centre Sault Ste. Marie, had another stellar year in the Algoma District.

With 19 submissions receiving approval from the Ontario Ministry of Small Business and Consumer Services, the number of successful applications nearly doubled from 2008. Summer

Company provides up to \$3,000 for students, ages 15 to 29, to operate a seasonal business.

ECSSM's strong marketing campaign, coupled with the recent economic reset, gave students the opportunity to explore creative solutions to summer employment, which led to the success of Summer Company in the Algoma District.

"This year's group turned the

economic downturn into an opportunity by using their creativity and skill sets to serve their summer employment needs," said Zoltan Virag, ECSSM's Youth Business Development Coordinator. "We're very proud of the students who took advantage of that opportunity, and I look forward to more Summer Company entrepreneurs in 2010."



See 2009 Summer Company Directory at www.ecssm.com.

"We're gaining a reputation as a great location for conferences and meetings. Our city is a unique destination. We're an urban centre, but we also have natural beauty that is unparalleled."

*- Rosalie Graham,
Tourism SSM*

TSSM continues to build visitor-friendly reputation

Take Off Pounds Sensibly called Sault Ste. Marie home this month. The non-profit weight-loss support group held its Provincial Recognition Days at Essar Centre June 4 to 6. The conference involved nearly 1,000 delegates.

"The economic impact of this event is significant," said Rosalie Graham, Coordinator of Meetings and Conventions for Tourism Sault Ste. Marie. "The TOPS conference generated close to \$500,000 for the local economy."

In June, Sault Ste. Marie also

hosted a meeting of the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers. This event drew more than 400 delegates.

"We're gaining a reputation as a great location for conferences and meetings," said Graham. "Our city is a unique destination. We're an urban centre, but we also have natural beauty that is unparalleled. We offer an authentic experience."

Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, a division of the SSM Economic Development Corporation, presented the successful bids that secured these conferences.

Attracting visitors to the city is one of the division's main functions. Tourism SSM often works closely with local organizing committees to secure such events.

"We are thrilled to be involved and grateful that so many local organizations have been so supportive," said local TOPS Co-Chairs Rosa Grandinetti and Jean Gould. "We are delighted that this year's TOPS Provincial Recognition Days were held here, as we are so proud of what our city has to offer."



U.P. shares economic development strategy with Sault

Connected by the International Bridge, and with a similar passion for high-tech business growth, it makes economic sense to link the Sault Ste. Marie market with Michigan's Upper Peninsula. And that's exactly what Development Sault Ste. Marie is doing.

The division of the SSMEDC hosted a delegation from the U.P.'s Western, Central and Eastern regions May 28 and 29. The groups discussed areas where collaboration could benefit all parties.

"Our American friends indicated a strong interest in our renewable energy, knowledge-base economy and other sec-

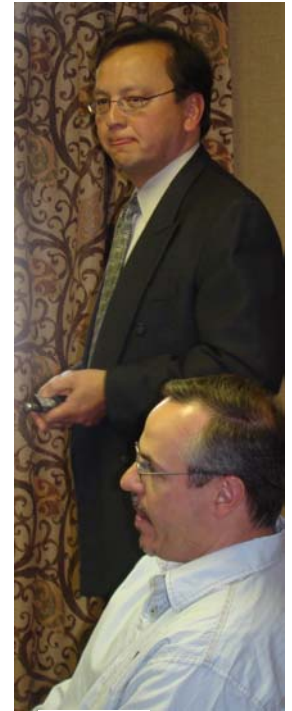
tors," said Randy Tallon, Director of International Relations & Global Logistics for Development SSM. "Opening up our economy to outside trade and investment from our largest trading partner will help position our city for long-term growth and sustainability."

Of particular interest during the visit was a knowledge-based initiative between the Eastern U.P. Regional Planning & Development Commission and various parties in Sault Ste. Marie, including the Economic Development Corporation and Innovation Centre. Also on the agenda was Michigan Tech Enterprise Corporation's Smart-

Zone. Its CEO, Carlton Crothers, hopes to expand the business incubation zone to encompass the U.P., northern Wisconsin and possibly Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.

During their visit, the delegation met with officials from a variety of government, private and public sector organizations.

Along with the recent Michigan U.P. mission, Development SSM and the City of Sault Ste. Marie hosted delegations from countries around the world, including Portugal, Finland, Australia, Slovakia, Austria and Israel. Upcoming missions involving Finland, Italy, India and Portugal are in the planning stages.



ABOVE: Carlton Crothers (standing), CEO of the Michigan Tech Corporation, shares ideas with SSMEDC officials.

Funding boosts Sault's post-secondary schools

The future of Algoma University and Sault College has never been brighter.

Both post-secondary schools in Sault Ste. Marie received significant funding from all three levels of governments recently.

Algoma University is getting more than \$16 million to build a state-of-the-art Biosciences and Convergence Centre. The pro-

ject should create 160 jobs.

Another \$16 million will be used to upgrade Sault College with modern facilities, which will create an additional 250 jobs.

Both announcements are part of the joint federal/provincial stimulus package designed to jump-start Canada's economy.

Sault College and Algoma University also received support

from the City Council-administered Economic Development Fund. Having municipal backing helped the schools make a case for receiving federal and provincial dollars.

SSMEDC, a longtime partner of Sault College and Algoma University, provided support both schools' EDF and stimulus funding applications.

BELOW: The Snowbirds perform their intricate aerial routine.

Snowbirds dazzle Saulites with high-flying act

High-flying! Death-defying! Mesmerizing!

The Canadian Snowbirds performed above the Sault Ste. Marie skies June 10. Crowds of all ages were treated to an exciting blend of finesse and danger on what proved to be a great day. The event also generated a few dozen accommodation room nights, making it a

benefit for the local tourism industry.

"The show was really a two-fold success," said Steve Hollingshead, Coordinator of Special Projects and Sport Tourism for Tourism SSM. "It provided great entertainment for Sault Ste. Marie residents while generating revenue for local hotels and other tourism businesses."

Hollingshead sat on the local Snowbirds Working Committee since September 2008. The group's goal was to bring the squadron to Sault Ste. Marie.

The work paid off.

Proceeds from the June 10 air show, along with a sold-out banquet prior to the event, went to the Sault Ste. Marie Military Family Support Group.



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99 Foster Drive - Level Three
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario
Canada P6A 5X6

Phone: 705.759.5432
Toll Free: 1.866.558.5144
Fax: 705.759.2185
E-mail: info@ssmedc.ca

www.sault-canada.com

The pulse is prepared by:
Marc Capancioni
Communications Coordinator
Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corp.
705.759.0409
m.capancioni@ssmedc.ca



Sault Ste. Marie
**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION**

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. 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

EDC praises departing Board member

The Board of Directors and staff team at the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation extend a very gracious thanks to Brady Irwin. After more than eight years as a volunteer Board member, Irwin is retiring from the position.

“Brady has been a passionate Board member and has brought tremendous value to the corporation and the City of Sault Ste. Marie,” said SSMEDC President and Board Chair Greg Punch.

“As a community leader and a go-to Board member, Brady has provided excellent



advice on the organization's strategies, governance, and maintaining an excellent relationship with the City, Algonoma University and community players.”

Irwin, a two-term City Councillor, served as the SSMEDC's Vice-President for most of his stay on its Board. Don Mitchell, another veteran of the SSMEDC Board, took over the VP position.

The Board is comprised of 13 Directors – with the Mayor serving as an ex officio – and four Liaison members, all with experience in various fields, including banking and small business.

EDC welcomes new Board member

The Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation is pleased to announce it has a new member on its Board of Directors. Ann Barkley was elected to the position at the Board's annual meeting earlier this month.

Barkley brings a wealth of new information and bright ideas, which will continue to enrich SSMEDC. As the

owner and operator of Trillium Office Furniture, she has extensive experience in the small business sector.

Barkley has been an active member of the community for more than four decades.

At present, she also sits as a volunteer Board member at the Community Development Corporation and other local organizations.

A term of office on the SSMEDC Board of Directors is three years long. Members apply to sit on the Board and are recruited by advertising and personal contacts from other members. A nomination committee brings forward a slate of names for election consideration by the existing Board of Directors.

SSMEDC is grateful to all of the volunteers on its Board and Committees.

