

OCTOBER 2009

the pulse

SAULT STE. MARIE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEWS

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PUBLIC SECTOR DEVELOPMENT: Staff added to local Ministry of Labour centre **SSMEDC and province join forces to bring jobs to the Sault**

The Ontario Ministry of Labour recently added 10 full-time positions to its local Provincial Claims Centre.

The investment will leave a significant economic impact on the community while serving the citizens of Sault Ste. Marie.

“The new staff will assist vulnerable workers in our community, as well as Ontario, by helping to accelerate Employment Standards Claims,” said Sault MPP David Oraziotti.

The announcement was part of a process that began years ago. In 2007, the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation, working with the Ontario Ministry of Labour, made the case as to why an expanded Provincial Claims Centre in the city would be a great public investment.

A business plan was created, listing the need for more staff and why the move would improve the Sault’s quality of life.

The pitch was successful, and the province added 15 positions to its local Provincial Claims Centre, which handles employment complaints. Ten more were added this month.

“Every job is important to the community, as they all contribute to the economic base,” said Greg Punch, SSMEDC President and Board Chair. “What makes the Ministry of Labour positions especially important is their high pay.”

TOURISM: New welcome signs greet city visitors

Signs, signs, everywhere-a-sign

You only have one chance to make a great first impression. With this adage in mind, the City of Sault Ste. Marie and Tourism SSM joined forces to create a long-lasting mark for visitors to the community.

Two new welcome signs were recently erected on Highway 17 east and west of the Sault. When on this route, it’s now the first thing people see when they reach city limits.

“You can’t judge a book by its cover, but the cover often makes a person pick it up off the shelf,” was the analogy given by Ian McMillan, Executive Director of Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, a division of the SSM Economic Development Corporation. “It’s the first impression people get when they

visit our community, and it’s something we hope will make them feel welcomed.”

The initiative has been a long time in the making. A committee, chaired by Councillor Steve Butland, was established a few years back. With representatives from the City and Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, the group facilitated a contest, and local firms submitted their designs for new signs.

After a winning design from Lucidia was picked, City staff began building the masterpieces and landscaping the site.

The end result, unveiled Sept. 30, is something special.

“The signs speak volumes,”



WELCOME: The Tourism SSM team showcases the new sign.

said McMillan. “I commend City staff, Council and Lucidia for their excellent work.”

Two more welcome signs will be erected at the Sault airport and International Bridge.

Visitors: Welcome to our city! Make yourselves at home!

SMALL BUSINESS: Enterprise Centre SSM helps local businesses keep doors open

Business Profile: Phoenix Fire Protection/General Mobile Radio

During this difficult economic period, businesses can find it tough to stay afloat. But with some professional help, they may find it easier to make it through the rough patch.

For instance, with the banks reluctant to provide financing to small businesses, Jennifer Dickson had to take a different approach to expand her local firms, General Mobile Radio and Phoenix Fire Protection.

“I wanted to diversify but didn’t really know how to do it,” she said evenly.

Dickson, who relied on a few large firms in the Sault, wanted to increase her customer base while offering more products and services. To help in the process, she took a trip to Enterprise Centre Sault Ste. Marie, a division of the SSM Economic Development Corporation.

The division’s staff helped with things like marketing strate-

gies, cash flow assessment and industry analysis.

“They’ve been fantastic,” said Dickson. “When you have a small business, you tend to get tunnel vision. They helped me see the big picture.”

While still feeling the impact of the recession, both General Mobile Radio and Phoenix Fire Protection are now better positioned to keep their doors open and their staff employed.

“I think we’re on an upswing,” said Dickson. “It’s better than it was but not as good as it’s going to be.”

General Mobile Radio offers products, such as satellite phones and two-way radios, to delivery companies and other businesses that require constant communication.

Phoenix Fire Protection provides safety

training and services equipment, including fire extinguishers and breathing apparatuses. With changing legislation, the business helps firms maintain their fire safety gear.

On the web: www.phoenix-firesm.ca and www.gmr.ca.



TOP: Andrew Ross, General Manager of Enterprise Centre SSM, with Jennifer Dickson.

BOTTOM: Ryan Scott, a Registered Technician with Phoenix Fire Protection, hoists an air tank into a device that tests for pressure and structural weakness. The business has the only testing station of its kind in the district.



NEW INDUSTRY: EDC works to establish movie production sector in the city

Take 2: Longfellow movie shoot gets city support

There are millions of dollars spent on movie productions in Northern Ontario each year, and Sault Ste. Marie is now in a better position to grab a piece of this cash cow.

In October, following a recommendation of the SSMEDC Board of Directors, City Council voted to provide \$25,000 from its Economic Diversification Fund to support the local production of Longfellow. The movie has a budget of about \$2 million, nearly half of which will be spent in Sault Ste. Marie.

“With the support of council and the EDF, it shows producers that the Sault is serious about

movie productions and that filmmakers will have support when they come here,” said Rosalie Graham, Coordinator of Meetings and Conventions for Tourism Sault Ste. Marie. “Word travels fast in this industry, and this is a great way to spread the word that our community is a terrific place to shoot movies.”

Also important to note, said Graham, is that the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, along with other government agencies, offer incentives for movie producers to film in Northern Ontario. Already attracted to the region, Sault Ste. Marie is now in a better able to

capitalize on this trend.

For Longfellow, the EDF funding will help offset the costs that each City department is incurring to help accommodate the movie production, including extra policing, snow removal and bussing the film crew.

“I really think this could be the beginning of another significant sector for the Sault Ste. Marie economy,” said Graham.

ACTION: Rosalie Graham from Tourism Sault Ste. Marie explains the EDF application for a Shaw TV news story.



DEVELOPMENT: Cross Country Automotive celebrates half a decade in the Sault

Five down, many more to go

Cross Country Automotive, a major employer in Sault Ste. Marie, recently celebrated its fifth year anniversary in the city. Equally significant, the firm renewed its lease in its current location for another half decade.

The success of the call centre, one of several in the Sault, is a community-wide triumph. When looking for a place to start a new branch, the company brass came north and liked what they saw.

“What Cross Country saw in the Sault was a high level of energy and a positive attitude,” said Brian O’Shaughnessy, Director of Contact Centre Operations. “They felt very welcomed with the people they met.”

Also influential in the decision to begin operation here was assistance from the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation, which helped with employee training and other

business start-up aid. The two continue to work together to build a better future for both the company and entire community.

“Since Cross Country came to the Sault, we haven’t forgot about each other,” said Don Muio, the centre’s Director of Human Resources. “As a Saultite, I know the value that 500 workers has on the city. And so does the EDC.”

The history of call centres in Sault Ste. Marie dates back many years. Throughout much of the 1990s, the city was hit with one of the worst economic downturns in its history. The Sault’s main industrial employer was experiences tough times, and that downturn spread.

Unemployment, high across the country, was particularly lofty in the Sault. With a large number of citizens looking for work, the situation was bleak.

The SSM Economic Development Corporation, working with its community partners, stepped up to the plate to turn the tides. The plan: attract an entire new industry to the city. With EDC assistance, along with incentives provided by the province and City, the strategy was successful. Call centres came in and swooped up hundreds of unemployed Saultites in the process.

“Everyone came to the table,” said SSMEDC CEO Bruce Strapp, referring to the successful group efforts from City Council, the City staff team, Sault College and other partners.

During its peak, the call centre industry employed 3,600 people totaling \$90 million in annual wages. While this number has dropped recently, the industry remains one of the Sault’s major sectors.



Strapp

MOVING FORWARD: Don Muio (left) and Brian O’Shaughnessy, both Directors at Cross Country Automotive, look forward to many more years of operation in the Sault.



TOURISM: Honour given to the industry’s best and brightest

2009 Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Awards

With millions of dollars in visitor spending and major future events secured, it has been a positive year for the local tourism sector. Tourism Sault Ste. Marie honoured the industry-wide effort that led to this accomplishment at its annual awards night Oct. 27.

This year’s winners are:

- *Tourism Award of Excellence:* Joanie and Gary McGuffin. This couple offers one-of-a-kind outdoor expeditions. Whether canoeing or hiking, the McGuffins show tourists what the Sault area is all about: Welcoming people and outdoor beauty few places can match.
- *Business of the Year:* Shaun

Parent. His North of Superior Climbing Co. treats visitors to some of the best rock and ice climbing in the country. Parent has personally developed most of the climbing spots in the district, literally making him a pioneer for the sport.

- *Tourism Ambassador Award:* Tom Coulterman. As a Canadian Curling Association member, he was instrumental in bringing the 2010 Scotties Tournament of Hearts to the Sault. His years of volunteer service in curling is a shining example of the great things that can happen when one is involved in the community.
- *Customer Service Award:* Sunny Naqvi. As Director of

Sales and Marketing at the Great Northern Hotel & Conference Centre, Naqvi is often a first contact for visitors to the city. His warm nature and constant smile go a long way to creating a visitor-friendly reputation for the Sault.

- *Student Hospitality Award:* Kevin Sinclair. This Sault College student, enrolled in Hospitality Management — Hotel and Resort, represents what the local tourism industry is all about: Smart, kind people who go above and beyond.



ABOVE: Shaun Parent (right) accepts the 2009 Business of the Year Award from past Tourism SSM Chair David Hornstein.



RIGHT: Sunny Naqvi shows the warm demeanour that led to his winning of the 2009 Customer Service Award.

SMALL BUSINESS: District firms learn harmonized sales tax process

Enterprise Centre SSM hosts tax information session

With tax season just around the corner, now's a good time to start preparing, especially for small businesses.

Charged with developing the small business sector in the district, Enterprise Centre Sault Ste. Marie hosted a tax information session earlier this month.

The event touched upon the current taxation system for small business and the information that's currently available on the proposed Harmonized Sales Tax.

"There isn't a lot of information out there on the specifics of

the HST, and with the transition deadline approaching, businesses must be provided with as much information as possible as soon as it's available," said Andrew Ross, ECSSM General Manager. "The best information we have now is that the HST will be administered just like the GST, so reviewing GST parameters and protocols would be a great head start for local businesses."

The one thing that is certain is that the PST will cease to exist, and all rules and regulations that apply to it will no longer be

around, Ross added. This means a whole new way of looking at taxable goods and services, and what the government describes as tax savings for small businesses.

"There are still issues and concerns with the HST model, such as how it applies to First Nations exemptions, and many of these issues were raised at the session," he said. "For now, the one certainty is that it is coming and small business should do all they can to prepare for life in 2010 with the HST."

GET READY



Tax Season

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: U.S. Consul General in Toronto heads north

U.S. Ambassador's Ontario representative visits the Sault

With a new crew moving into the White House earlier this year, the U.S. Ambassador's Ontario representative has been quite busy lately getting to know his northern counterparts.

In October, Kevin Johnson, U.S. Consul General in Toronto, made his way to Sault Ste. Marie. The seasoned bureaucrat met with community leaders, including Mayor John Rowswell, Councillor Susan Myers, CAO

Joe Fratesi, Board members from the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation, SSMEDC CEO Bruce Strapp, and local Chamber of Commerce representatives.

"I look forward to continuing to work with the EDC and your great city," said Johnson, who joins a growing list of global diplomats who are showing heightened interest in Sault Ste. Marie and the unique businesses

found within.

Like many before him, the Consul General was particularly interested in Elementa Group's waste-to-energy facility, Essar's cogeneration project and other initiatives that, grouped together, make Sault Ste. Marie "The Alternative Energy Capital of North America."



MEETING OF THE MINDS: Mayor Rowswell (left) talks with Kevin Johnson, U.S. Consul General in Toronto.

TOURISM: City gears up for the 2010 Scotties Tournament of Hearts

Sault Ste. Marie heats up with Scotties fever

With just a couple months to go until the 2010 Scotties Tournament of Hearts invades the Sault, the community is already buzzing with excitement.

This month, curling legend Jennifer Jones was in town. The skip of Manitoba's squad was the guest of honour at the Chamber of Commerce's Take 5 event Oct. 16. She also dropped the puck in the ceremonial faceoff at a Soo Greyhound game.

"The enthusiasm surrounding the 2010 Scotties is extremely evident throughout the city," said Sandra Randa, the event's Host Committee Chair. "We encourage the entire community to get behind the Scotties, buy a ticket and experience firsthand the impact this national championship is going to have on our great city."

Tourism Sault Ste. Marie helped a local organizing com-

mittee make the successful bid that led to the 2010 Scotties coming to the city. The Canadian women's curling championship will take place Jan. 30 to Feb. 7 at the Essar Centre.

For tickets and other information on the event, please visit www.seasonofchampions.ca.

PHOTO: Canadian curling superstar Jennifer Jones with Tourism SSM's Steve Hollingshead.



2009 Chamber of Commerce Awards

Sault Chamber honours the city's best and brightest



TOP: Bill Shepherd, owner of Bruce Street Storage, took home the Volunteer of the Year Award. Among his years of volunteer service, Shepherd is currently a liaison member on the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation's Board of Directors.



GROUP: The 2009 Chamber of Commerce Award Winners:

- Skipper Manzutti Award for Business Achievement (John Martella, Green Circle Environmental Recycling)
- Volunteer of the Year (Bill Shepherd, Bruce Street Storage)
- Paul Dalseg Award (Jim Hilsinger, Algoma's Water Tower Inn)
- President's Award (The Chamber Ambassador Corps)
- Business of the Year (Algoma Telephone Services)
- Business Development Award (Soo Foundry & Machine Ltd.)
- Marketing Award (City Meet Market)
- Customer Service Award (Soo Mill Buildall)
- Environment Award (Essar Steel Algoma)
- Safe Work, Sound Business Award (Soo Foundry & Machine)
- Athenao Award (Marnie Stone, Stone's Office Supply)



TOP: Armand Plastino (left), CEO of Essar Steel Algoma, with SSMEDC President/Board Chair Greg Punch. Essar took home the SSMEDC-sponsored Environmental Award for its recent actions, including establishing a 35-megawatt clean cogeneration power facility.

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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 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.