

NOVEMBER 2011

the pulse



SAULT STE. MARIE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEWS

ALSO INSIDE:

- **SSMEDC and City work together to deliver results**
- **Tourism SSM ramps up winter marketing campaign**
- **Column: Here's to a bright future for Sault Ste. Marie**
- **2011 Bridges to Better Business Award winners announced**

ACCOUNTABILITY: SSMEDC unveils Annual Report and key performance indicators Local economy faring well

The Sault Ste. Marie economy has fared well during the past few years.

Employment and population levels have risen, and construction activity is reaching record highs. As well, reputable third-party sources have found that the community is a pretty darn good place to live, learn, visit and do business.

These, and other, findings were presented to City Council and the public by the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation (SSMEDC) this month.

In a detailed report and address, CEO Tom Dodds unveiled his organization's key performance indicators (KPIs), from January 2010 to September 2011, which includes the following results:

- SSMEDC clients have directly invested about \$335 million into the community
- This activity has resulted in between 900 and 1,000 jobs
- SSMEDC activity has generated about \$6 million in tourism revenue
- SSMEDC activity has led to increased tax revenue to the Municipality and an estimated \$21 to \$41 million in annual payroll

Also included in the information package to Council was the SSMEDC's 2010 Annual Report. The documents and presentation, put simply, are a way to demonstrate what the SSMEDC has been up to and how effective the organization has been in generating wealth,

creating jobs, attracting visitors and increasing the tax base.

"Our core funding comes from the Municipality and the taxpayers of Sault Ste. Marie, and it's important that we show them what they're getting for their investment," said Dodds, who joined the SSMEDC, a non-profit organization that works closely with City Council and staff, in April 2011.

His presentation and accompanying report are a key component of the 2009 memorandum of understanding (MOU), signed between the SSMEDC and City of Sault Ste. Marie.

The MOU sets deliverables for both agencies. For the SSMEDC, as an example, it includes a regular reporting schedule, designed to demonstrate accountability for the investments it receives from the Municipality.

"We take accountability extremely seriously," said Greg Punch, President and Board Chair of the SSMEDC. "The funding our organization receives from the taxpayers of Sault Ste. Marie is crucial for us to deliver our programs and generate wealth for the community, and it's important that we demonstrate a return on these investments."

The KPI report is available at www.sault-canada.com.



PHOTO: From the control room in City Council chambers, Shaw TV producer Tony Tagliabracchi watches SSMEDC CEO Tom Dodds on screen. Dodds presented his organization's recent activity at the Nov. 21 Council meeting.

PARTNERSHIP: Teamwork ensure best chance of success

City and SSMEDC work together to deliver results

They say working as a team usually produces the best results.

The solid working relationship between the City of Sault Ste. Marie and Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation (SSMEDC) is proof that the adage is correct. The two organizations have a long-standing alliance that's both productive and beneficial for the entire community.

"We have different mandates with unique resources, but we compliment each other in many ways," said Tom Dodds, CEO of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation.

A recent partnership to deliver entrepreneur training to at-risk youth is a prime example. The initiative involves the City's Social Services Department, which administers the Ontario Works (OW) program in the Sault area, and the SSMEDC's Business Sault

Ste. Marie division.

Implemented in 2011, the partnership is providing self-employment training to those receiving OW, or their older children. Its goal is to reduce the dependence on social assistance programs.

"The OW partnership is a perfect case study of what can happen when we work together with the City with a common purpose, for a common cause," said Dave Murphy, Executive Director of Business Sault Ste. Marie.

This is one of many exam-

ples of the solid working relationship between the City and SSMEDC.

Another involves Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, a division of the SSMEDC, and the City's Community Services Department (CSD). The former has a mandate to attract visitors to the community, while the latter aims to receive a return on public investment by filling the Essar Centre and other City-owned recreational facilities.

In this instance, both parties want generally the same thing, and they cooperate to achieve their individual – yet collective – goals.

For instance, Tourism Sault Ste. Marie and the CSD have partnered to successfully bid on a variety of major conferences, sports tournaments and

other events in recent years. These include the 2010 Scot-ties Tournament of Hearts, 2010 Finn Grand Fest, 2011 OCAA Men's Basketball Championships and 2012 CARHA Hockey World Cup.

The latter alone will attract about 2,500 visitors to the Sault for one week and inject up to \$10 million into the local economy. These events are made possible with the state-of-the-art Essar Centre, which was built with amenities and technology that make the venue truly multipurpose, able to comfortably host conferences, concerts and pretty well anything else.

"Having the Essar Centre is huge when we bid on events," said Ian McMillan, Executive Director of Tourism SSM, which worked with the City in the development of the downtown sports and entertainment complex. "Our ultra-productive partnership with the City bolsters our case even more."



PARTNERSHIP (L to R): Tourism SSM's Steve Hollingshead, CARHA President Michael Peski, City Marketing & Events Manager Trevor Zachary, and City Events Assistant Jennifer Muio.

VISITOR ATTRACTION: Tourism SSM ramps up winter marketing campaign

Snow is coming; So are winter travellers

While the pending snowy season may cause some Saultites to cringe a bit, the fact is that winter provides a variety of fun activities for both residents and visitors.

For the latter audience, Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, a division of the Economic Development Corporation, is gearing up its winter marketing activities. The campaign focuses on the Agawa Can-

yon Snow Train, along with downhill and cross-country ski packages.

Put simply, the area boasts some of the best skiing and scenery around, and Tourism Sault Ste. Marie is spreading this message far and wide.

"Once people come here, they fall in love



Tourism SSM's winter packages booklet.

with the landscape," said Ian McMillan, Executive Director of Tourism SSM. "Our job is to help get them here in the first place. That's what our winter marketing campaign, along with our marketing efforts in general, is all about."



This Snow Train ad is placed in targeted publications across the country.

COLUMN: Here's to a bright future for Sault Ste. Marie

No shortage of positive factors make the Sault a good place to do business



BY GREG PUNCH

While helping local firms start and expand, another key aspect of economic development is promoting your community around the world as a great place to live, learn, visit and do business.

For the latter goal, it helps when you can cite reputable, third-party sources. It tends to bolster your case.

On this front, there has been no shortage of positive findings for Sault Ste. Marie as of late.

Perhaps most impressive was the October 2010 report from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), titled "Canada's Top Entrepreneurial Cities," which looked at 12 indicators, including net business start-ups, future business performance and the overall state of business.

Sault Ste. Marie ranked No. 2 in all of the province and first in Northern Ontario. Equally significant, the Sault moved up nearly 20 spots since the previous CFIB study, from 61st to 40th in the country, while almost every other community in the province moved in the opposite direction.

A more recent report from MoneySense, a leading financial magazine and website,

also shed the Sault in a positive light. In "Canada's Best Places to Live 2011," our city moved up 30 notches from last year's quality-of-life study, climbing from 89th to 59th in the country.

Out of the 180 communities ranked, Sault Ste. Marie scored particularly well on things like average home prices. Having two post-secondary institutions, along with a new hospital, also seemed to play a factor.

While people who live here already know that our community is a great place to live, these studies show that others are seeing the Sault in the same bright light.

Meanwhile, our tourism sector is gaining widespread attention as well. Following the re-launch of the upgraded Agawa Canyon Train Tour in the summer, the attraction has been receiving international media coverage.

For example, Sympatico.ca Travel chose the Agawa Canyon as one of the "Top 10 Places to Spend Fall in Canada."

As well, throughout the summer and fall, the train tour was featured in The Toronto Star, Globe and Mail, London Free Press and Toronto Sun.

The attraction was also covered on the CTV television news show Canada AM in a segment called "Best places in Canada for autumn leaf peeping."

What does all this mean? Taken together, the busi-

ness and quality-of-life studies, along with media coverage around the train tour, reveal that Sault Ste. Marie is a pretty darn good place to live, learn, visit and do business.

It also means that past community-wide economic development efforts are paying dividends.

These same efforts have led, in part, to the current economic climate in the Sault. Our community has fared reasonably well these past few years, in spite of a global recession.

New companies have opened in a variety of sectors, including alternative energy and aviation.

As well, between 2005 and 2011, some \$1.5 billion in large-scale public and private sector investments were made here. These include new elementary and secondary schools, a new hospital, expansions at Sault College and Algoma University, the West End Community Centre, and a variety of green sector projects like a \$300-million solar farms initiative.

Furthermore, with major events held here, or scheduled, and with upgrades to area tourist attractions and an indoor soccer complex soon to be ready for tournaments, the local accommodations sector has invested about \$25 million in capital upgrades to existing or new hotels.

To get a sense of the impact of these developments, all one has to do is look at the stats.

According to Statistics Canada, total employment for Sault Ste. Marie reached 38,000 in 2010, up from 36,300 the year prior.

Meanwhile, construction permits for 2010, as reported by the City's Building Division, reached \$143.5 million, up from \$125.3 million in 2009 and \$113 million in 2008. And 2011 is on pace to be another banner year.

Finally – and this is perhaps most promising – the population of Sault Ste. Marie appears to have risen somewhat significantly.

Though 2011 census data won't be out until the new year, early reports indicate that our community may very well be at or near the 80,000 mark, which would be an increase of about 5,000 since the last census.

Put simply, it's an exciting time for the Sault, and we all have much to be proud of.

With the community working together, this upward trend of opportunity is slated to continue.

Here's to a bright future for Sault Ste. Marie.

Greg Punch is President and Chair of the Board of Directors for the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation.

Column originally published in The Sault Star on Nov. 19, 2011.

ENTERPRISE SERVICES: SSMEDC builds bridges to small business community

2011 Bridges to Better Business Award winners

The local business community was honoured last week at Bridges to Better Business 2011.

Hosted by Business Sault Ste. Marie, a division of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation, the annual event features learning and networking components, along with an awards ceremony, which included:

- **Bridges to Better Business Award** – given to a new local business that demonstrates innovation, creativity and entrepreneurial excellence. *2011 Winner: Teresa Burns, Candy Bouquet*

Teresa had a creative idea that she was passionate about and has run an extremely successful operation since she opened her doors in early-2011. Located at 290 Wellington St. West, Candy Bouquet provides a delicious alternative to flowers. The business is booming and is expected to soar even higher going into the holiday season.

- **Summer Company Award** – given to the partici-

pant in the Summer Company youth entrepreneurship program who had the highest revenue generated. *2011 Winner: Tim Berkenbosch, Tim Berkenbosch Milling*

Summer Company provides grants of up to \$3,000 for youth to run their own seasonal business. Tim operated a company that manufactured cedar wood products like decking and siding. He completed the program reaching a 93% actual-to-projected income for his business.

- **Alynn Burke Award** – given in memory of Alynn Burke, a former SSMEDC staffer who died in a tragic accident several years ago, to an individual who champions youth development or entrepreneurship. *2011 Winner: Wendy Marasco, Cupcakez*

Located at 153 Great Northern Rd., Wendy's business provides mouth-watering cupcakes for any occasion. She worked with Sault College to hire graduates from their Hospitality and Tourism program and also with Community

Living Algoma to provide work and development opportunities to young adults with disabilities.

“The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in the Sault area, and these award winners exemplify the creativity and ingenuity of our business community,” said Terri Chiarello, Small Business Advisor for Business Sault Ste. Marie.

Following the awards ceremony, a networking session and keynote speech was given by Doug Bolger, founder of L(earn)2, an award-winning professional training company.

About 150 people attended the free event, making Bridges to Better Business 2011 an overall success.

Held at the Marconi Club, it was sponsored by Business Sault Ste. Marie, RBC Royal Bank, the Ontario Min-

istry of Economic Development and Trade, Canada Business Ontario, and Passport to Prosperity.



Dave Murphy (left) and Terri Chiarello (centre), from Business Sault Ste. Marie, with Alynn Burke Award winner Wendy Marasco.



Zoltan Virag (right), Youth Development Coordinator for Business Sault Ste. Marie, congratulates Summer Company Award winner Tim Berkenbosch.



Nella Chiarello, from event sponsor RBC Royal Bank, with keynote speaker Doug Bolger.



Doug Bolger (standing), founder of L(earn)2, leads a networking session and delivers a keynote speech at the Bridges to Better Business 2011.



SSMEDC CEO Tom Dodds presents the Bridges to Better Business Award to Teresa Burns.

Out & About: SSMEDC Photo Gallery



TOP OF THE MO-NING TO YA: Members of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation joined the City of Sault Ste. Marie's Movember team. The annual fundraising campaign sees men from around the world grow a mustache to raise money and awareness for prostate cancer. The CitySSM team managed to pull in more than \$10,000. For information on Movember, visit ca.movember.com. To view the team in question, type in "[CitySSM](#)" in the search icon.



TREE OF HOPE: Tourism SSM's entry in the 2011 Festival of Trees. As in past years, the division of the SSMEDC, along with its industry partners, donated a tree and accompanying goodies. Each entry in the fundraising event was sold or auctioned off, with the money raised going to the Lung Association. Tourism SSM's tree sold for nearly \$700, the highest amount raised.



GROWTH PLANNING: Tom Dodds (standing), CEO of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation, delivers an introductory presentation on the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario to a group of regional politicians, civil servants and other community activists. The Province's Growth Plan aims to chart the future of economic development in Northern Ontario. Also present at the event were City CAO Joe Fratesi, MPP David Oraziotti and Algoma U President Dr. Richard Myers.

November 2011

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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.