



the pulse

Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development News



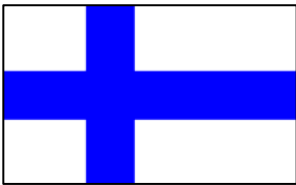
December 2008

Sault gets another major event: 2010 FinnFest

With another major event confirmed, 2010 is sure to be a very special year for Sault Ste. Marie.

The Finn Grand Fest is coming to town July 28 to Aug. 1, 2010. The event showcases an exciting mix of Finnish culture and recreation and is expected to draw around 5,000 visitors to the city.

"This is just a wonderful opportunity for us," says Mayor John Rowswell. "We're delighted to be doing this with the Finnish community."



This is only the third time the festival will be hosted by a North American city. Once again, Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, a division of the SSM Economic Development Corporation, has been successful at attracting a high-profile event.

"We've had outstanding support from the City and Economic Development Corporation," says Finn Grand Fest 2010 Chair Raimo Viitala, who's an Honourary Consul of Finland. "They've all been marvelous."

The 2010 Scotties Tournament of Hearts will also be hosted by Sault Ste. Marie, Tourism SSM announced last month. Other events recently hosted by the city include the 2008 World Club Ringette Championships and 2008 Frontier Adventure Races.

"Sault Ste. Marie is proud of its diverse ethnic background, and FinnFest 2010 will celebrate an important part of it," says Steve Hollingshead,

Coordinator of Special Events and Sport Tourism for Tourism Sault Ste. Marie. "In everything from sporting to accommodations, our city has some of the best venues in the country. This event will allow us to showcase them to the world."



Photo: Mayor John Rowswell speaks at the Finn Grand Fest press conference Dec. 12 at the Essar Centre.

Great times at Treetop Adventures



An empty parcel of land and great idea came together to form Treetop Adventures in the spring of 2008.

The eco-friendly tourism attraction offers a unique experience. A 400-foot zip line and other adventure challenges allow visitors to connect with Mother Nature while having a blast.

It all started with Cindy and Murray Joseph. The couple owns a large piece of land in Goulais River. "For years, we've been looking to utilize the property," says Cindy.

After visiting an outdoor adventure park in Southern Ontario, they knew what they wanted to do: open a similar attraction back home.

Not ones to waste time, their property was cleared soon after, and the business opened in June. The process was made easier with help from Enterprise Centre Sault Ste. Marie, a division of the SSM Economic Development Corporation.

"They helped me with the business plan and media launch," says Cindy. "They provided me with a lot of information."

Providing local and area entrepreneurs with support is what the Enterprise Centre does. In 2008, its staff helped six businesses expand operations and another 53 get off the ground, including Treetop Adventures.

"They had a great idea and a drive to succeed, and we were happy to assist," says ECSSM Acting General Manager Andrew Ross. "With such a unique business, I'm confident they'll have years of success."

Treetop Adventures, which is open year-round, employs 10 people. Not only is the business providing direct jobs for area residents, it's also great for the area's tourism industry.

Since opening, nearly 5,000 people have passed through, mostly out-of-town visitors.

"Treetop Adventures is a one-of-a-kind experience for Northern Ontario and, specifically, a great asset for the local tourism industry," says Charlotte Wiseman, Tourism Partnership Coordinator for Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, which

provides marketing and other support for tourism attractions in the area.

Linking SSM with the international market

If a company produces environmentally-friendly biomass energy converters in Europe, but then has to transport the product overseas, is it still considered friendly to Mother Nature? Binder Company, the Austrian business making the machines, says no.

Representative from Binder and the Austrian Consulate General and Trade Commission recently toured Sault Ste. Marie. The mission: find a suitable place to build the company's products – a place that would allow for easier and more eco-friendly access to the North American market.

The Austrian delegation met with local business leaders, politicians and representatives from the SSMEDC. They also had the opportunity to tour St. Marys Paper, Elementa Group, Flakeboard Company and SITTM Technologies.

The feedback has been very positive. "I'm very impressed with what I saw," says Dr. Robert Luck, Austrian Consul General and Trade Commissioner. "Everyone was very enthusiastic, and I would like to thank Mayor Rowswell and the staff at the City and Economic Development Corporation for making my trip a very successful one."



Dr. Luck

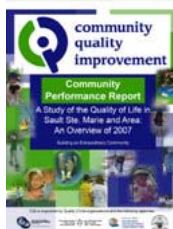
The delegation was also treated to a welcoming luncheon by City CAO Joe Fratesi, SSMEDC President and Board Chairman Greg Punch, and Development SSM. At the event, business relationships were established. In fact, Sid Jervis, Binder's North American Sales Manager, plans to return to Sault Ste. Marie to build on these relationships and work on potential alternative energy projects.

This was one of several recent visits to the city by international delegations. "Sault Ste. Marie is leading the way in alternative energy and other technologies. Companies from around the world know this and are showing great interest in us," says Randy Tallon, Director of International Relations & Global Logistics for Development SSM, a division of the SSMEDC.

CQI releases Community Performance Report

The quality of life has been rising in Sault Ste. Marie, according to a recent report from Community Quality Improvement, one of SSMEDC's partners.

Between 2000 and 2005, the number of families living below the



poverty line fell from 13 per cent to 10 per cent. A number of other economic, cultural and environmental indicators reveal progress as well.

"What we found was generally positive," says CQI Executive Director Ken Coulter.

The report, which was released in November, is available online at www.qualitycommunity.ca.



Searchmont opens

The Canadian snowflakes are falling, meaning another season for Searchmont Resort. The attraction, which features the highest vertical runs in the Midwest, opens its doors Dec 19.

Tourism SSM has been busy lately, promoting the mountain throughout Ontario and Michigan.

"Searchmont is one of the area's most important winter tourism attractions," says Ian McMillan, Executive Director of Tourism SSM "Promoting it is crucial for the local tourism industry."

One of Tourism Sault Ste. Marie's main goals is to increase the number of visitors to the area. As such, the organization has also been promoting the Agawa Canyon Snow Train, cross country trails and other winter attractions.

Simply put, Sault Ste. Marie is a four-season vacation destination, and Tourism SSM is helping to spread this message.



The staff and Board of Directors at SSMEDC extend their season's greetings to the entire community and wishes everyone a fun and safe holiday season.

The SSMEDC 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 continued support.

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Mission Statement

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.

Out & About

SSMEDC Photo Gallery



Left: SSMEDC President Greg Punch (left) with the Honourable Tony Clement, Federal Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for FedNor. Mr. Clement was in Sault Ste. Marie Nov. 28 to make a funding announcement, including \$82,500 for three interns at the SSM Economic Development Corporation.



Right: Tourism Sault Ste. Marie's entry in the 2008 Festival of Trees, a charity event supporting the Lung Association



Left: In all four seasons, there are plenty of things to do at Treetop Adventures, a business Enterprise Centre SSM helped start.



Right: Anne Waddell (right) from the Ontario Ministry of International Trade and Investment talks with a Tenaris Algoma Tubes employee during a mill tour Nov. 27. Development SSM initiated the tour with business representatives from Europe and the U.S.



Right: (L to R) SSMEDC President Greg Punch, Sid Jervis from Binder Company in Austria, Dr. Robert Luck from the Austrian Consulate General and Trade Commission, City CAO Joe Fratesi, and SSMEDC Vice-President Brady Irwin. The Austrian delegation was in Sault Ste. Marie last month to develop relationships and partnerships with local businesses.



Left: Tom Vair, Executive Director of the SSM Innovation Centre, unveils the future Convergence Centre to the SSMEDC Board of Directors. The new centre will house a variety of science and technology-based organizations.



Right: Ken Coulter, Executive Director of Community Quality Improvement, shows CQI's Community Performance Report to SSMEDC Accounting Clerk Marg VanLandeghem.



Left: Tourism Sault Ste. Marie's Steve Hollingshead (far left) and Ian McMillan (far right) with FinnFest 2010 Chair Raimo Viitala and other event organizers.