

Information Byway



NORTH WESTERN ONTARIO

TOURISM ASSOCIATION

APRIL 2008

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MESSAGE FROM THE NWOTA PRESIDENT

Some are advocating our industry reinvent itself, that Resource Based Tourism industry is at its sunset as interest in fishing, hunting and the great outdoors is decreasing, supported by the down-turn in visitors to Northwestern Ontario. You only have to look at our neighbors, just south of the border, to see that tourism is alive and well and the tourist industry is expanding and, along with it, diversity and wealth of the whole region.

When you add up all the changes our industry has faced, no wonder we are in the state we are in. Issues like eliminating of the bear hunt, border disputes, no permanent ice houses in the winter, registration of guns, and the lack of major designation marketing for NW Ontario that is competitive with other world destinations in major media venues. This, along with a local border that is screening visitors to a different standard than the rest of Canada might give us a clue to our problem.

Visitors to our area are predominantly from the US. We draw a few from Manitoba a few from out east and some from overseas but because of our location we are very dependent on the US visitor.

NW Ontario is similar to NE Minnesota, both a major outdoor destination. I am not in any way suggesting we

need to be like NE Minnesota, I am saying the numbers for this major American tourist destination does contradict the notion that we are not offering what tourists want. They are unaware of our area or don't want to deal with the border to get to us.

This notion was the conclusions of a 2002 Fort Frances Sport Fishing Center scoping study. The study is available on www.nwota.com. After many interviews with visitors to Northeast Minnesota, two obstacles were identified, the border and lack of curiosity about Canada. **The conclusion was both obstacles needed to be resolved as a necessary precondition for future tourism development including a new destination for Fort Frances.**

Northwestern Ontario could have a vibrant economy built on tourism. We need the will and leadership to change from forestry based industry to a tourism based industry just as so many other communities have in North America.

There is no doubt we must always be aware of needed changes to be competitive but I do not think this is the cause of this recent decline in NW Ontario.

SURVEY TOOL FOR RBT INDUSTRY

To get a better understanding of issues affecting our industry KDCA/NWOTA has purchased a one year subscription to www.surveymonky.com. Our first survey will be going out this month in an attempt to get a better understanding on the economic well being of our industry. We will also be working with National Marine Manufacturers Association to survey those attending their shows to see if there are any issues keeping people from visiting NW Ontario.

2008 Meeting Dates

MARK THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR

Dates & locations are tentative;

Please check the NWOTA website or call the office for updates

**NEXT MEETING: *May 1 - 2008 Annual Spring NWOTA Meeting
Nestor Falls Community Centre, Nestor Falls ON***

July 3, Nestor Falls, ON

August 7, Nestor Falls, ON

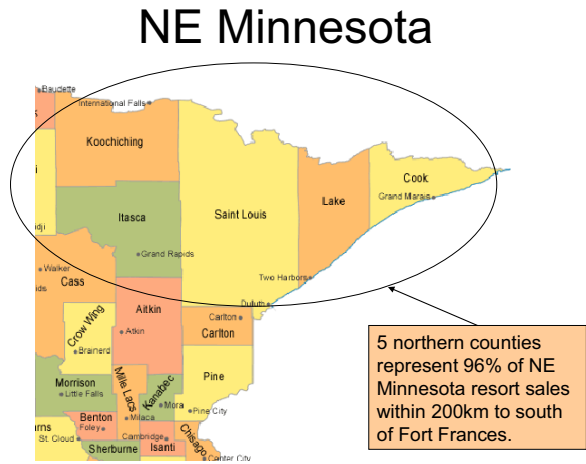
September 4, Nestor Falls, ON

October 2, Annual Fall Meeting, Location TBA

November 6, Emo Inn, Emo, ON

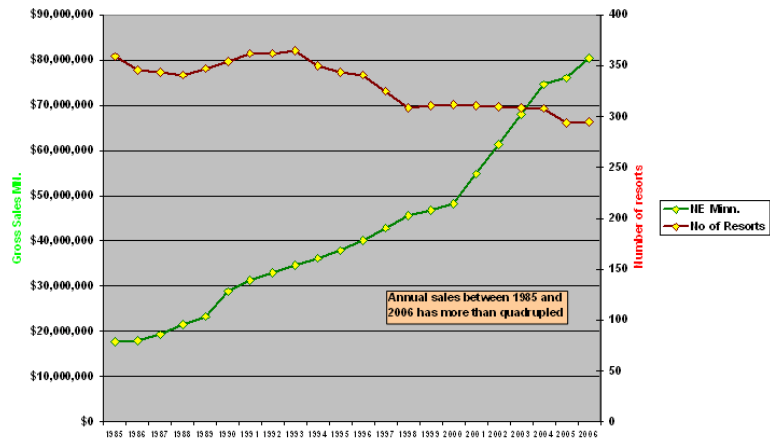
December 4, Emo Inn, Emo, ON

A REVIEW OF NE MINNESOTA RESORT GROSS SALES



Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Isanti, Itasca, Kanabec, Koochiching, Lake, Pine and St. Louis counties

Annual Sales, NE Minnesota resorts
Ten counties roughly 200km south of Fort Frances, 1985 through 2006.



www.exploreminnesota.com

Resort gross sales have grown from \$17 million to over \$40 million from 1985 to 2006, a factor of 4.5, while the number of resorts has declined

From 1985 to 2000 resort sales grew by an average of 7.0%. Between early 2001 and 2004 sales grew by an average of 11.5%.

5 northern counties represent 96% of sales and are within 200km south of Fort Frances.

A comparison with Sunset Country from the 2002 sport fishing centre in Fort Frances.

- An area ¼ the size of Sunset Country.
- 3.7 times as the population.
- Very diversified economy.
- Gross sales 4.8 times larger.
- Major American destination.

A COMPARISON OF CHANGES TO PREVIOUS YEAR, GROSS SALES FOR MINNESOTA AND US BORDER CROSSINGS FOR ONTARIO

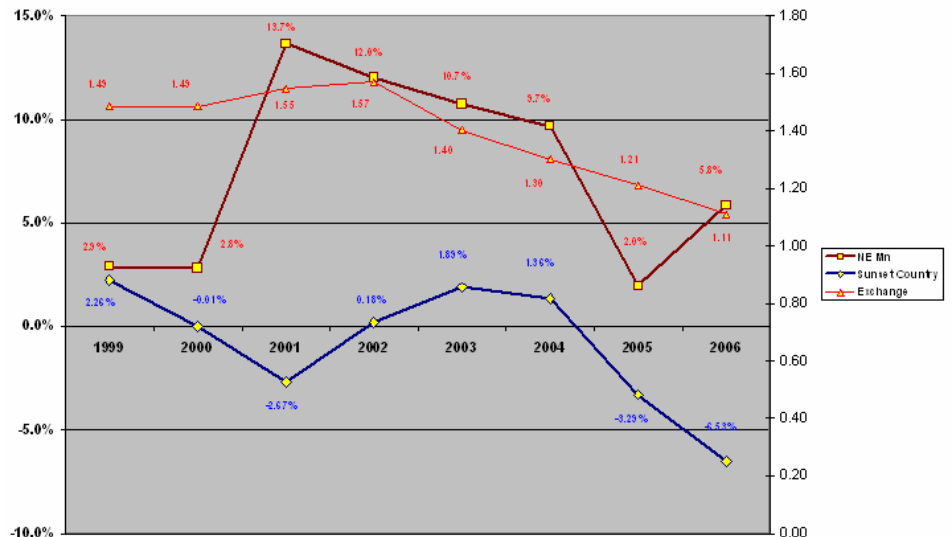
In NW Ontario so much of the RBT industry (high 90's) and tourism spending in general (79%) is dependant on the US visitors. This chart gives an example of the change from year to year. The rust line is NE Minnesota (NEM) resort sales and the blue line is US border crossings into our area.

Again this is not to advocate or emulate the growth in NEM but it does point out the difference in travel to businesses that have similar offerings.

There is a reluctance or decrease since 2000 to cross the boarder.

Notice the timing of the raise in NE Mn., the decline in SSCTA and the change in the exchange rate. Double digit growth in NE Mn. started in 2001 as did screening for minor criminal issues at FF/RR border. (First case reported May of 2001)

Comparison Ontario US visitors and Minnesota resort sales
Difference to previous year, NE Mn. Sales and NW Ont. 2+ night visitors, Fort Frances/Rainy River



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AULNEAU COMMITTEE REPORT

The Aulneau Advisory Committee held the second scheduled meeting of 2007 on October 22, 2007 at the AKRC office south of Sioux Narrows. Bob and Peg Hunger represented NWOTA at the meeting. The meeting was hosted by Juanita Jordain and AKRC. In addition to a number of procedural items, four topics were discussed at length. One was the listing of proposed development, improvements and actions taking place that would require notification of the Committee and MNR for discussion. Maintaining the values of the environment is the goal. The second discussion was centered on options for the Turtle Portage and developing a list to be opened for public comment in 2008. Action to be taken at May 2008 meeting. A resolution was passed to have the government continue to fund the operation of the portage on an annual basis. The third discussion topic was the progress for the informational sessions being held in First Nation communities regards logging on the Aulneau and its effect on Native traditional values and uses. Considerable progress has been made but lack of funding has slowed the process. The fourth item was a progress report on the implementation of the Kenora Forest Plan which is moving ahead but being affected by the slow-down in the forest industry.

MEETING WITH THE PRE BUDGET COMMITTEE

In February of this year KDCA/NWOTA met with the Ontario Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs while they were in Thunder Bay. Our presentation focused on three main issues, tourism's role in the economy of NWO, improving infrastructure funding opportunities for accommodation industry, improving infrastructure expenditures for the traveling public like historical markers, wayside rest areas and travel destinations. While marketing support was talked about, especially the effort in Chicago this spring, one of the members mentioned the \$30 million released this spring in additional funding. To our knowledge none of it was used to benefit NW Ontario.

MEETING WITH DR. ROSEHART

Early last year Dr. Rosehart was asked to meet with business and municipal leaders to develop recommendations that would build economic growth in NW Ontario.

In August 2007, KDCA/NWOTA met with Dr. Rosehart in Dryden to lay out 4 issues we felt were important for growth of tourism in NW Ontario.

1. Help with the Canadian border crossing in NW Ontario.
2. Lack of Government Marketing Support for NW Ontario.
3. The lack of travel destination attractions and infrastructure for the traveling public.
4. Increase in Provincial incentives for tourism industry to upgrade and modernize facilities especially for

unfunded mandates like sewer, water and fuel handling. Tourism got 5 pages of comment out of the 84 page document with all but the last recommendation mentioned. Dr. Rosehart's report was released this spring and is available on the NWOTA web site.

US BORDER CROSSINGS

If you would like monthly border crossing statistics for Canada (Stats Can), Ontario (Ministry of Tourism and Recreation) and the 4 western Ports (KDCA/NWOTA) they are available at www.NWOTA.com.

IMPROVING TOURISM TRAVEL TO NW ONTARIO

This winter and spring there has been a couple of meetings and issues both KDCA and NWOTA have been involved with.

A. Roger Valley MP Kenora District, called a meeting December 7th in Dryden to bring tourism and CBSA together to discuss the border issue. After the meeting Roger asked CBSA 6 questions. To date no reply has been forwarded to NWOTA.

1. What is the protocol for the code of conduct for the Canadian Border Services officers when a client comes to the border to cross into Canada?
2. What information or assistance does the officer have to provide?
3. Can this information be posted as an on-line service?
4. How many Temporary Visitor Permits are issued annually in Canada, broken down by region?
5. Is there room for flexibility in Tourist Camp Owner work permits so that three year permits may be issued, therefore cutting down on the amount of paperwork?
6. We ask for a 2 year exemption from the \$200 Temporary Visitor permit fee at both the Fort Frances and Rainy River border crossings to aid in the recovery of the financial losses to the tourism industry.

B. This spring Atikokan sent a resolution to the Rainy River District Municipal Association asking that those with minor criminal background to be allowed into Canada. It passed and will be sent on to NOMA. At the meeting CBSA downplayed the effect of just 606 being turned back. Jerry Fisher, Gerry Cariou and Harald Lohn sent a letter to the editor challenging that premise. The News article and our letter to the editor are available on NWOTA's web site.

C. On April 4th, Geoff Gillon, Harald Lohn and Jerry Fisher met with Murray Hardie, Consul and Trade Commissioner and Graham Rush Consul and Senior Trade Commissioner at the Minneapolis Canadian Consulate office. We talked mainly about ways to improve tourism trade to Northwestern Ontario. Several good ideas came from our meeting and will be followed up on early this year. One was a meeting in Fort Frances to talk about issues restricting border travel and what if anything can be done to improve travel.

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2008 Sunset Country AGM

Wednesday, April 30th at 7:00 PM

Best Western Motor Inn, Government St., Dryden, Ontario

There are positions on the Sunset Country Board of Directors open so if you are interested please send notice in writing to Gerry Cariou at gcariou@sunsetcountry.net or Box 647, Kenora, ON P9N 3X6

Any member in good standing is eligible to run; terms for Directors are 3 years.

DEER COMMITTEE REPORT

As the deer herd in Ontario continues to grow so do the problems associated with the hunt. Non-resident hunter numbers continue their upward trend, and reports from outfitters and residents throughout the region indicate a lot of problems associated with competition for areas, private land trespass and a variety of other complaints not all associated with just non-resident hunters.

It seems the underground economy is alive and well across the region, with new hunting rentals, services and guides showing up for a few weeks starting mid October right from the border to Dryden and Kenora. Other provinces and states are laughing at the state of the deer hunt in Ontario, where they protect their resource and manage it - we give it away to the person who will pay the least.

Because of the dwindling numbers of moose (partially caused by the increase in Deer) and the growing economic loss to our industry and Ontario, this issue is of major importance.

The Deer Committee recently met via conference call and there are some things that they are working on but it's really too preliminary to elaborate on at this time. There are definite concerns in the growth of non-resident hunters in zones 6, 7B, & 8 where there is no guide requirement.

The KDCA/NWOTA working group will meet this month to discuss the issue. A recommendation will be brought to each organization for discussion. Recommendations will be sent back to the working group and a formal position paper will be developed.

STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

We are all members of NWOTA for a reason, and that reason I hope is to improve the business environment for tourism in our region.

It is troubling to see the reluctance of those in our industry to get involved and organized, not only unwilling to get involved but unwilling to support those who are. To make matters worse, all RBT businesses are benefiting but only a few are willing to take part.

If the tourism industry would ever pull together with businesses willing to help and fund important issues I doubt there would be any issue we could not have a positive impact on.

More and more often people are unavailable to attend meetings (even via conference call), we are unable to raise adequate money to support the work we want to complete, what is the answer?

NWOTA is working with many other organizations to increase our voice on many big issues like improving the visibility of tourism assets in Northwestern Ontario through the destination marketing effort, the reluctance of visitors to cross our borders by bringing these issues to the attention of those responsible and many others like infrastructure for the traveling public, GST rebate, and on and on.

Everyone needs to be a part of this effort. It takes everyone getting off of our butts and pitch in how ever we can with time or money. Our industry will continue to get the short end if we don't.

Please consider joining the Stewardship Program (Info available on our www.nwota.com web site) and get involved.

CHEM FREE GRADUATIONS

For the last few years the Rainy River & Fort Frances High Schools have been promoting 'Chem-Free' Graduation Celebrations. Chem-free is an alcohol, drug and smoke free celebration following the high school grad ceremony.

At this time the committees are requesting help in the way of donations of a prize (or money to purchase prizes). Your donation and support of our young people will be greatly appreciated. Help make this event an opportunity to have a safe, sober and memorable night for these graduates.

Rainy River High School - Celebration on Tuesday, June 24, 2008

For more information contact the school at 807 852-3284.

Gifts can be sent to: Chem-Free Graduation 2008, c/o Rainy River High School, P.O. Box 361, Rainy River, ON P0W 1L0

To arrange for gifts to be picked up please contact the school.

Fort Frances High School - Celebration on Wednesday June 25, 2008

For more information contact Trudy Badiuk, Sponsorship Chairperson at 807 486-3301 (evenings)

Gifts can be sent to: Chem Free Grad, Fort Frances High School, c/o Brian Gustafson, 440 McIrvine Road, Fort Frances, ON P9A 3T8. Arrangements can also be made for the collections of gifts.

Thank you for your consideration.

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NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO DESTINATIONS MARKETING ASSOCIATION

While things are moving slower than thought things are moving forward. NODMA is marketing on a major cable network "ComCast" in Minnesota, outdoor print magazines and developing a brochure for distribution at travel centers and sports shows next year. If you have not had a chance to read the latest newsletter, published mid April, please call the NODMA office at 807 488-5796 and one will be sent to you.

2008 ALLIED NWOTA MEMBERS

**Falls Hardware Ltd.
Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce
Meyers Norris Penny, LLP
North of Superior Travel Association
Sunset Country Travel Association**

www.fallshardware.com
www.fortfranceschamber.com
www.mnp.ca
www.northofsuperior.com
www.sunsetcountry.net

***Please support the businesses that support the
Tourism Industry in Northwestern Ontario***



2008 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

- _____ **VOTING MEMBER - \$250.00 (\$200 if paid before June 30/08)**
Voting membership is for resorts and other businesses in direct tourism, but is available to other businesses or individuals that want full membership rights. Free listing on the NWOTA website with hotlink to your site.
- _____ **ALLIED MEMBER – \$250.00 (\$200 if paid before June 30/08)**
Allied membership is for businesses that supply the tourism industry, but is available to non-tourism related businesses and individuals as well. Allied members are not eligible to vote.
- _____ **ASSOCIATE MEMBER - \$100.00 (\$70 if paid before June 30/08)**
Associate membership is for individuals and non-profit associations.

SUMMER OR ANNUAL ADDRESS:

Contact person(s): _____

Business Name: _____

Address: _____
Address City Prov. Postal Code

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____ Website: _____

WINTER ADDRESS if different:

Contact person(s): _____

Business Name: _____

Address: _____
Address City Prov./State Postal/Zip Code

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____ Website: _____

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You are cordially invited to attend the

**North Western Ontario Tourism Association
2008 Annual Spring Meeting**

TENTATIVE AGENDA

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Nestor Falls Community Centre, Nestor Falls, Ontario



8:30 AM Continental Breakfast & Hall Rental -
Sponsored by ***Tompkins Home Hardware & Yamaha Canada***

9:00 - 10:45 AM General Meeting – **for NWOTA members only**
Agenda will be distributed to members.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

10:45 - 11:00 AM Coffee Break – Sponsored by ***Kaemingh Fuels Ltd. ~ ESSO***

11:00 -11:30 AM Border Committee Progress Report

11:30 -12:00 NOON Northwestern Ontario Destinations Marketing Association Update

12:00 - 1:00 PM Lunch Break – Sponsored by
Nestor Falls Marine, Princecraft Boats & Mercury Outboard Motors

1:00 - 2:00 PM MNR Update – Kenora & Fort Frances District Representation

2:00 - 2:30 PM Canada Border Service Agency

2:30 - 3:00 PM Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation - Jim Grayston

3:00 - 3:15 PM Coffee Break – Sponsored by ***Falls Hardware***

3:15 - 3:35 PM National Marine Manufacturers Association – Darren Envall

3:35 - 4:00 PM KDCA/NWOTA Update

4:00 PM Members Concerns & Meeting Wrap Up

**Your attendance & participation would be appreciated.
Please try to attend.**