

# Explorers' Edge AGM



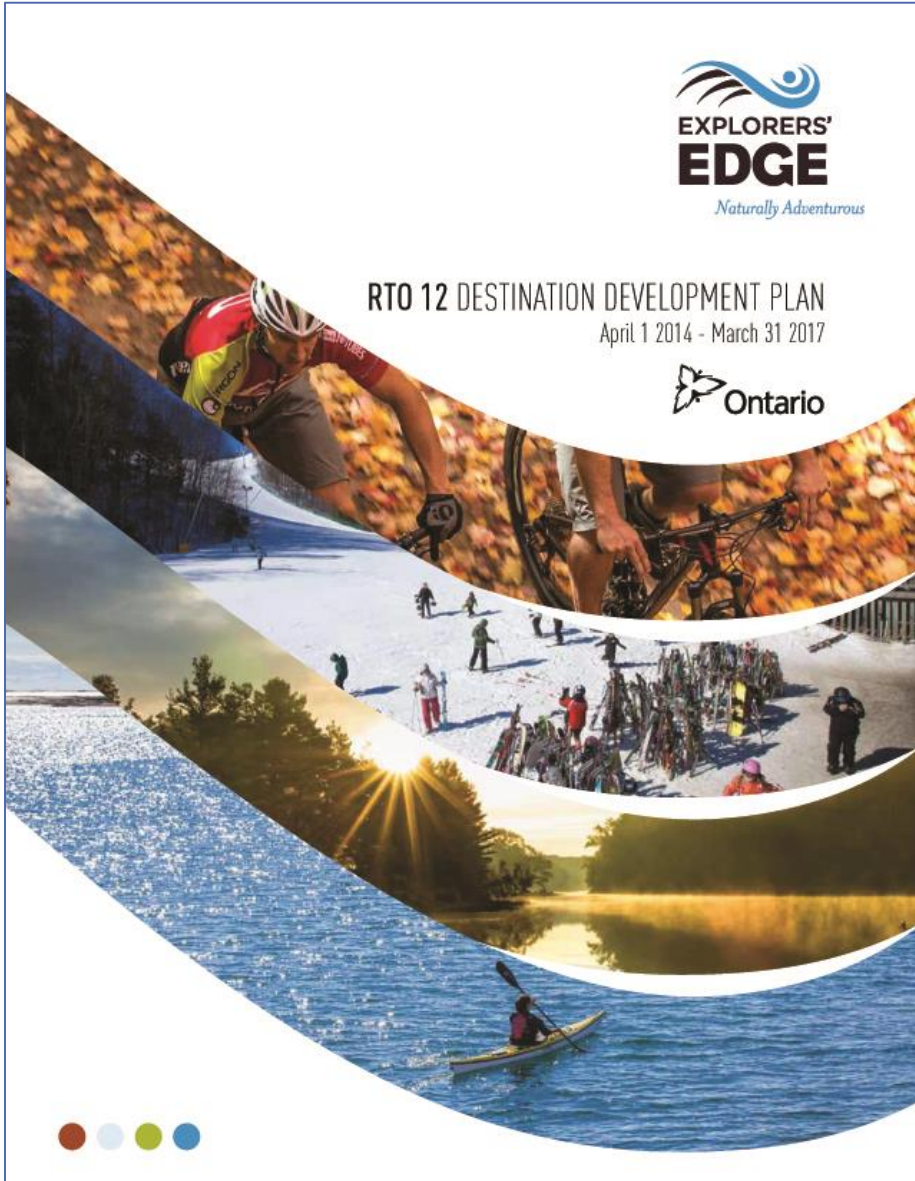
Wednesday June 22, 2016  
Hidden Valley Resort, Huntsville, ON

# Agenda

- **Year in Review**
- **Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport**
- **Looking Ahead**



RTO 12 DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
April 1 2014 - March 31 2017



# CONSUMER-CENTRIC REGIONAL PHILOSOPHY

# **Explorers' Edge Mission**

**To develop a profitable and thriving tourism  
industry in the region**

# Guiding Principles

- Leverage **strategic collaborations** to develop strategies, programs and communications to significantly increase the volume of visitors to the region.
- Use **strategy and process** as guiding beacons to ensure the success of the organizations and its initiatives.

# Operating Principles

- Build new audiences
- Change perception of the region as a summer only destination
- Engage multiple operators in every initiative
- Increase four season business
- Leverage significant strategic partnerships

# Year in Review

# Committee Structure

- Research Tracking and Measurement
- Tourism Operator Relations (Partnership Allocation)
- Marketing
- Transacting
- Community Relations
- Governance
- Executive



# Research Committee

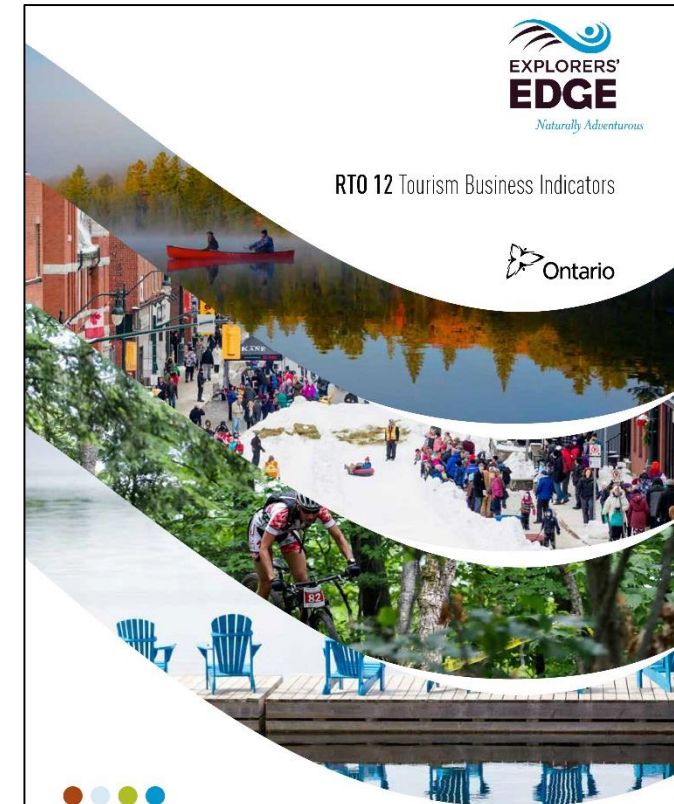
Chair Curt Dunlop

# Research, Tracking & Measurement

- Provincial Statistics
  - Canadian Travel Survey and OTMPC Consumer Segmentation
- Brand Health Study
  - Previous 2013 & 2014
  - 2016 Analysis Currently Underway
  - 500 consumer sample size

# Tourism Indicator Framework

- Annual Report
  - Accommodation operators saw an increase in occupancy during the first three quarters of 4.8%, compared to Ontario overall, where operators saw a 1.8% increase
  - Attraction operators saw an increase in business of 23% over F2014
  - Golf operators in the region recorded an increase in rounds played of 27%
  - Regional provincial parks welcomed 10% more day use visitors and 12% more overnight visitors
- Weather
  - Warmest Winters in Years
- Canadian Dollar
  - Benefited the RTO – kept Canadians from travelling to the US



# Tourism Operator Relations

Chair Jeff Suddaby

# Tourism Operator Relations

- Stakeholder & Industry Outreach
- Workforce Development Program(s)
- Partnership Allocation
- Product Development Programs

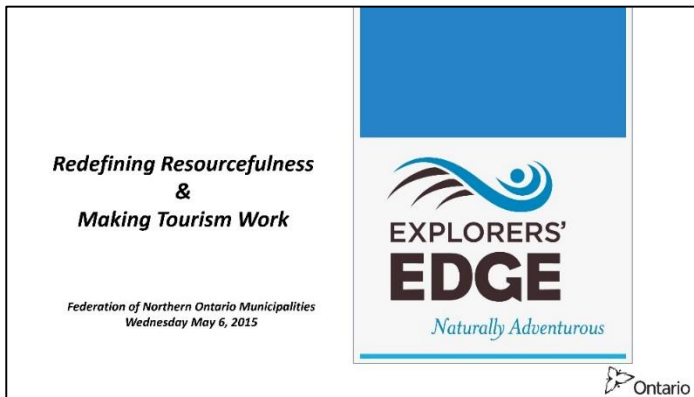
# Stakeholder / Industry Outreach

- Outreach
  - Tyler Francis – 180 operator site visits
  - Membership – 126 members
  - Website, LinkedIn, Twitter & Newsletter
- Industry Quarterly Updates
  - Strategic Framework
  - Visitor Exit Survey
  - Fuel and Fun
  - Commercial Air Service
  - Parry Sound Tourism Summit / Roles and Responsibilities



# Stakeholder / Industry Outreach

- Presentations
  - *Intro to Content Marketing at the Parry Sound Digital Event*
  - *Redefining Resourcefulness for Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities*
  - *Loring Restoule AGM and District Local Service Board*
  - *The Making of A Mobile Art Gallery – Parry Sound*
  - *Almaguin Highlands Arts Council*



# Workforce Development

- “Ask Me Anything” Sessions
  1. Golf Marketing – ONCOR Solutions
  2. Weboook – Andrew Ryeland Bear Claw Tours
  3. Periscope – Gord Bell Beauview Cottage Resort
  4. Celebrate Ontario – Laura Hernando MTCS
  5. Google Analytics - Tony Palermo
  6. Public Relations and Earned Media - Stephen Murdoch, Enterprise Canada

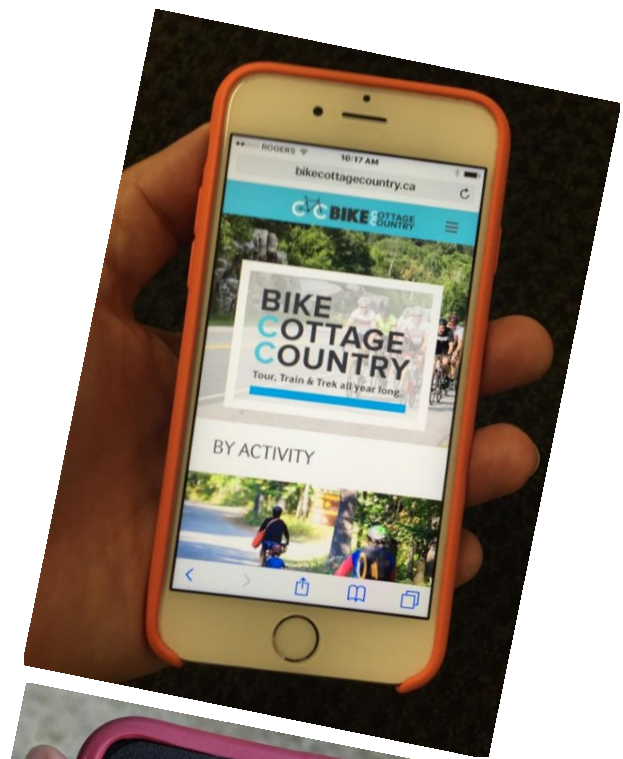


James Murphy @rto12news 2015-05-07  
SEM expert Tony Palermo is here for #AMA  
on Google Adwords & Analytics at 2pm.



# Product Development

- Self Guided Mobile Tours – targeting “Connected Explorers” and responding to increasingly mobile world
- Continuing with [www.go7murals.ca](http://www.go7murals.ca) as the template
- Craft Beer Trail - OCTA contracted for experiences inventory and to determine business alignment.
  - Expanded scope of original project because of RTO11 involvement



# www.bikecottagecountry.ca

- Brand this region as a cycling destination not just a list of routes or establishments that are bike-friendly
- Brand positioning: ***“Tour, Train & Trek – all year long”***
- Routes recommended by bike shops and other cycling organizations
- Uses Map My Ride functionality for routes
- Moving forward: develop group rides between properties
- Align with provincial cycling strategy and vision of new Minister (McMahon)



# www.bikecottagecountry.ca

- Search by activity (Tour, Train or Trek) or by sub-region
- WP functionality to allow for content marketing via EE social



The image shows a Facebook post from the page 'Explorers' Edge', dated March 31. The post features a photograph of a group of cyclists riding on a paved road. Below the photo, the text reads: 'Muskoka's Spin The Lakes Cycle Tour', 'Head to Muskoka for Ontario's favourite spring ride - the Spin the Lakes Cycle Tour on Saturday, May 28, 2016.', and 'EXPLORERSEEDGE.CA'. At the bottom of the post, it indicates '129,976 people reached' with a progress bar, and '61 Comments 374 Shares'. Interaction buttons for 'Like', 'Comment', and 'Share' are visible at the very bottom.

**Explorers' Edge**  
March 31 · 🌐

Start your training now for one of Ontario's favourite spring rides. Photo: Algonquin Outfitters.



**Muskoka's Spin The Lakes Cycle Tour**  
Head to Muskoka for Ontario's favourite spring ride - the Spin the Lakes Cycle Tour on Saturday, May 28, 2016.  
EXPLORERSEEDGE.CA

129,976 people reached

Boost Post

👍❤️👹 2.2K 61 Comments 374 Shares

👍 Like 🗨️ Comment ➦ Share

# Paddling Inventory

- Bannikin Travel/Birchbark Media/Kevin Callan (a.k.a. The Happy Camper)
  - 1) conduct outreach to paddling stakeholders
  - 2) create an inventory of paddling experiences and routes (based on skill levels and sub-regional offerings) and
  - 3) Make strategic marketing recommendations for marketing this region as a “gateway paddling experience” for canoe, kayak and SUP



# Inventory Includes:

- Guided excursions
- Where to learn
- Participatory competitions
- Events
- Routes
- Outfitter info and offerings



Part of strategy to begin ramping up marketing to international markets for Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday and to position the accessible Canadian wilderness just north of Toronto as a major Canadian paddling destination.

# Partnership Program

- 18 Partnership Projects
- \$108,000 Leveraged
- Partnerships encompassed multiple stakeholders
  - Chambers, DMOs, Municipalities, Not-For Profit, Local Service Boards, District Governing Bodies
- Content Marketing
- Event Marketing
- Familiarization Tours
- Research
- Strategy

# Content Marketing

The screenshot shows the Loring Restoule website. The main article is titled "Fishing for Pickerel" by Hilary Chambers. The article text describes the opening of Pickerel Season in the Loring-Restoule region, mentioning the Annye Fish Hatchery and the popularity of walleye. A sidebar titled "More in Fishing/Hunting" lists related articles like "Fishing for Pickerel" and "Building Wetland Beds".

The screenshot shows the TriMuskoka website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: "OUR STORY", "TRAIN", "RACE", "TRIMUSKOKAN", "RELAX", "TRIMUSKOKA TRI CLUB", and "THE STORE". The main content area features a large image of a person in a red and black triathlon suit against a sunset background. Below the image are three tabs: "TRAIN", "RACE", and "RELAX". The "THINGS TO DO" section highlights "TRISUMMIT" as a premier triathlon training camp.

The screenshot shows the Bracebridge Muskoka website. The article is titled "The Great Outdoors" and is dated 14 SEP. The text discusses the benefits of outdoor dining in Muskoka, mentioning local street food vendors and the "Street Food Diaries" project. A photo of Matt Basile, co-author of "Street Food Diaries", is included.

The screenshot shows the Johnston's Cranberry Ice Trail website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: "About Us", "Cranberries", "Shop", "News & Events", "Visit", and "Muskoka Lakes Winery". The main content area features three photos of people on the ice trail. The article is titled "Johnston's Cranberry Ice Trail" and includes "Trail Conditions" (CLOSED for the season) and "About the trail" information.

# Tourism Excellence North - TEN

Ten is a suite of self-assessment tools, group learning and personalized coaching opportunities.

- Operators
  - *Ten Essentials of Successful Travel Products & Experiences*
  - *Visitor Appeal Assessment Tool*
  - *Fast Track to Success*
- Communities and Destinations
  - *Ten Essentials of Successful Touring Routes*
  - *Community Tourism Assessment Index*
  - *Case Studies*



tourism excellence north



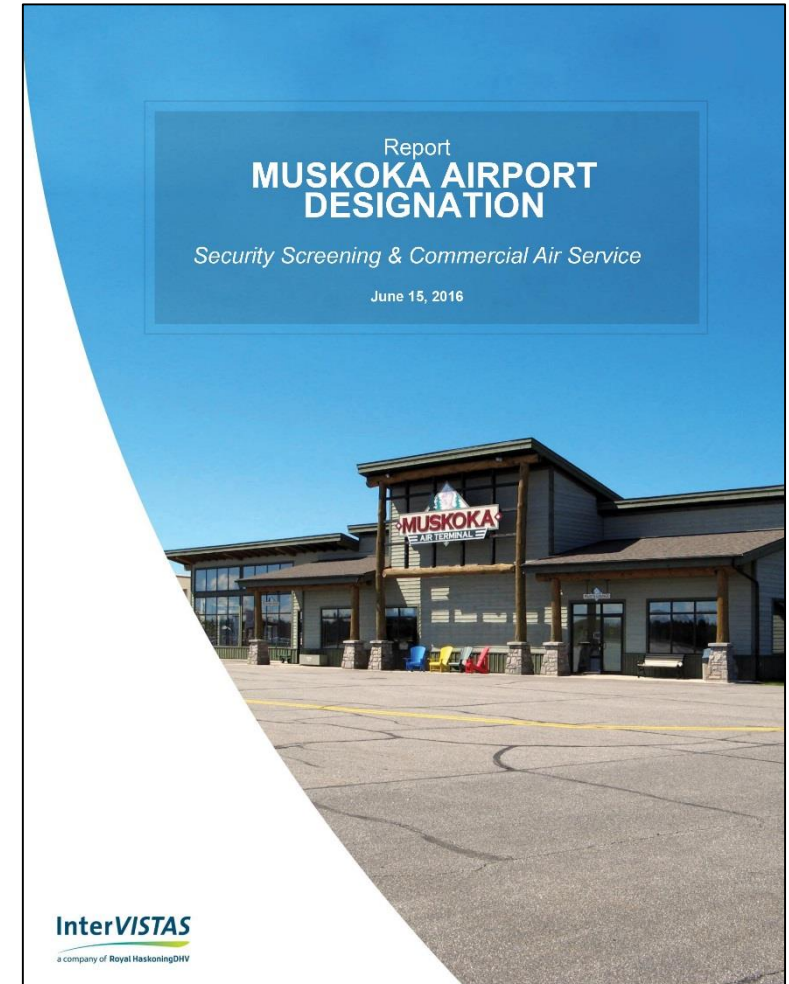
# Tourism Excellence North



- TEN coordinator recruited November, 2015
- Four self-assessment tools for operators and communities were completed, translated into French and posted on website
- Interim website giving access to self-assessment tools, program information, calendar and communications was established

# Commercial Air Service

- District of Muskoka & Town of Gravenhurst
- InterVISTAS examined the potential to obtain security screening at Muskoka Regional Airport with the eventual end objective to be able to introduce commercial air service into the airport.
- Coordination of outreach, communication and project oversight.



# Parry Sound Tourism Summit

- The RTO formed a working relationship with the Town of Parry Sound and surrounding Municipalities to better understand and ascertain information as it relates to the roles and responsibilities of tourism stakeholders in Parry Sound
- Eight key areas were identified as tourism focus aspects:
  - Investment attraction
  - Training and development
  - Product/experience development
  - Visitor services and signage
  - Community engagement
  - Marketing
  - Motor coach/sports tourism and meetings/conferences
  - Research and planning



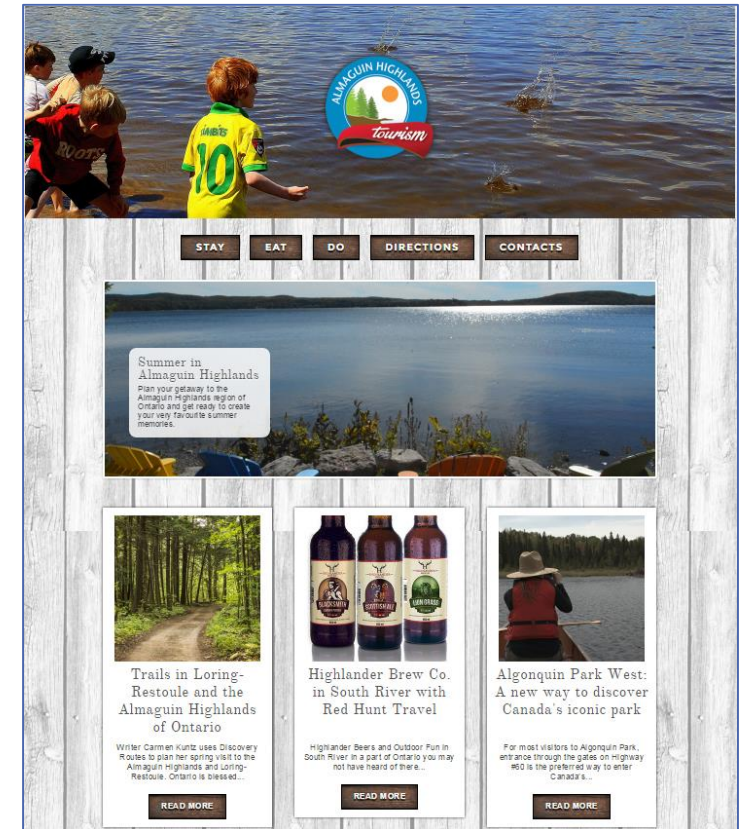
**James Murphy** @rto12news

2015-12-15

Great enthusiasm in Parry Sound at the tourism summit @stockeycentre - well done to all that are in attendance.

# Almaguin Highlands Tourism

- One year stewardship of AHIC website that was funded by FEDNOR
- Enhancements and branding implemented for content marketing capabilities
- Grew FB from 87 to over 500 fans
- All tourism operators get a business listing (was membership based previously)



# Partnership Allocation

- Town of Parry Sound
- RTO13, FedNor, NOHFC
- Resorts of Ontario
- MTMA Corporate Travel
- MTMA Entertainment
- MTMA Winter
- Seguin Valley Golf and Country Club
- Beyond – Santa’s Village
- Loring Restoule Business Association
- Muskoka Beer Festival
- Arrowhead Ski Club
- Town of Bracebridge – What's Cooking Bracebridge
- Town of Huntsville – IronMan
- Muskoka Boat and Heritage Centre
- Bracebridge BIA – Fire and Ice
- Parry Sound Chamber of Commerce – Not Dead Yet Fest
- District of Muskoka & Town of Gravenhurst
- Johnston’s Cranberry Marsh – Ice Trail

# Marketing Committee

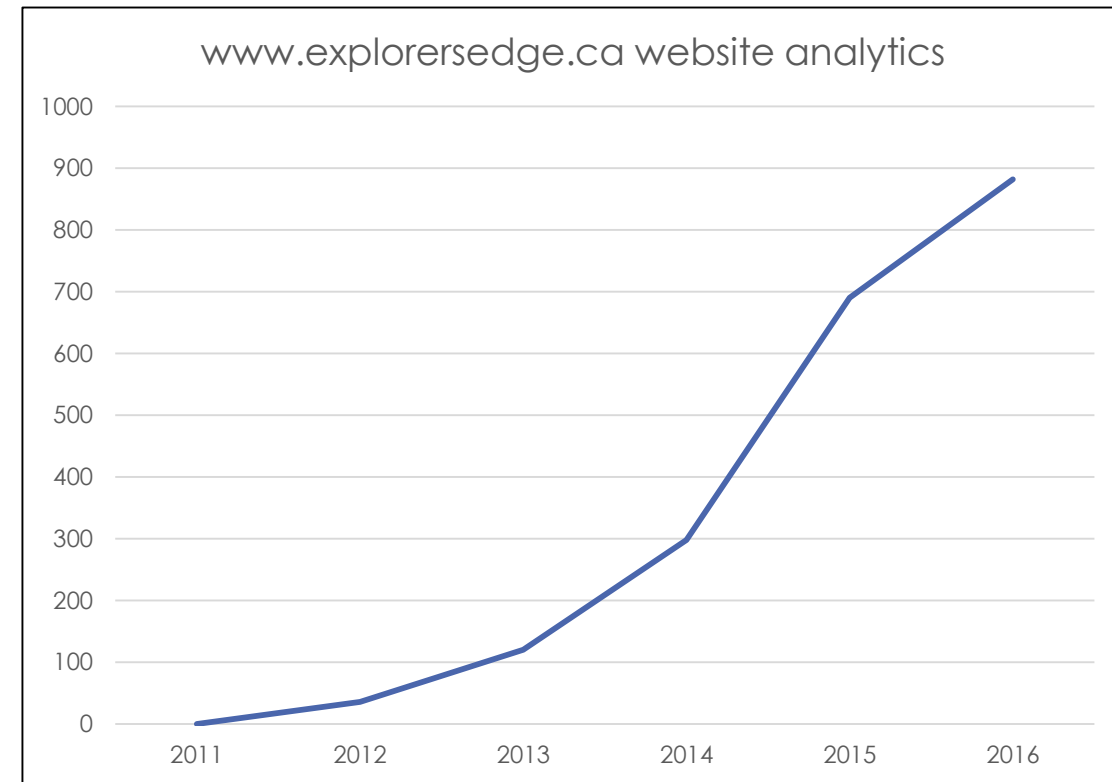
Chair Hilary Chambers

# Key Performance Indicators for 2015

- Site visits were 25% over plan, up 28% over 2014
- Referrals to third party sites were 50% over plan & up 289% over 2014
- Facebook followers broke 100K
- Email leads acquired was 101% of target, and up 285% over 2014
- Google searches for the sub-regions up 29% over 2014

# The Evolution of ExplorersEdge.ca

- Sept 2011 – March 2012 – 36K
- April 2012 – March 2013 – 120K
- April 2013 – March 2014 – 298K
- April 2014 – March 2015 – 690K
- April 2015 – March 2016 – 882K






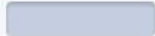







# Where's The Traffic Coming From

- Facebook continues to be the most cost-effective traffic generator:
  - Facebook was 72 % of total traffic this year, versus 52% in 2014
- Other traffic acquisition methods were tested this year, including Programmatic Native, FB Exchange and Instagram – none came close to the performance of Facebook

# Referral Performance

- Referrals up 289% in 2015, totaling 225,000 outbound clicks
  - 19K+ referrals to Jack Rabbit booking widget
- Overall referral rate in 2015 was 25 clicks per 100 visits, versus 16 in 2014 (up 63%)
- Of paid sources, Facebook is the most effective, generating referrals at cost that is less than half that of Google CPC

# Facebook Performance

Page	Total Page Likes	From Last Week	Posts This Week	Engagement This Week
<b>1</b>  <b>Ontario Travel</b>	252.6K 	▲ 0.2%	8	2.5K 
<b>YOU</b> <b>2</b>  <b>Explorers' Edge</b>	113K 	▲ 1.7%	14	11.3K 
<b>3</b>  <b>Visit Toronto</b>	112.6K 	▲ 0.1%	5	116 

The Explorers' Edge Page is now the 23rd biggest in the country.

# Lead Nurturing

- Hubspot lead nurturing software fully implemented by the third quarter of F2015
- 4,033 leads acquired, versus 1,400 in 2014
- Launched persona segmentation (6)
  - This effort yielded almost 2,700 segmented leads
  - Open rates were almost 54% higher than in 2014, while click rates were 150% higher

# Other Social Platforms

- **Twitter** account grew by 1,099 to finish year with 4,433 followers:
  - The account achieved almost 300K Tweet impressions and over 11K profile visits with no advertising support
- **Instagram** account grew by almost 300% in 2015 to 1,337 followers:
  - Posts have an average engagement rate of almost 5% over the past 3 months

# Google Organic Search Performance

Keyword	2015	2014	Change
Algonquin Park	33,100.00	27,100.00	22%
Muskoka	18,100.00	12,100.00	50%
Parry Sound	8,100.00	6,600.00	23%
Almaguin Highlands	320.00	260.00	23%
Restoule	390.00	320.00	22%

# Media / PR Program

Media Visits  
9

Impressions  
21,341,483

Est. PR Value  
\$1,001,141

**Canada MotoGuide** 2016 Motorcycle BUYERS GUIDE Compare Many. Compare the Latest 1 to More on All 2016 M

2016 Motorcycle BUYERS GUIDE Compare Many. Compare the Latest 1 to More on All 2016 M

HOME NEW 2016 BUYER'S GUIDE MOTORCYCLES FEATURES GRANDSTAND TOURING FORUM

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Weekly Newsletter

SUBSCRIBE

SUMMER OF ADVENTURE

Devils Quagmire Challenge 24th Jun 2016 - 24th Jun 2016

Ouellet's Adventure Rally 8th Jul 2016 - 10th Jul 2016

Competition 14th Jul 2016 - 24th Jul 2016

12th Aug 2016 - 14th Aug 2016

Panorama

Adventure Weekend Rally 27th Jul 2016 - 30th Aug 2016

Highway 31

Adventure MTCAN, Gaspere on the Rocks 12th Aug 2016 - 14th Aug 2016

Motors

RECENT COMMENTS

Harry Freeman on Mark Richardson for the big haul

Patrick McKay on New Year for beginner riders from Saskatchewan gov?

Roland Simon on BMW's Toughest Trophy Ever

VerticalScope Systems Hacked - 45 Million Users Affected on VerticalScope hacked, forum users' data stolen

Travis Frank's on Report: Harley Davidson confirms electric motorcycle plans

Tom W. on Report: Harley Davidson confirms electric motorcycle plans

Dir McFree on VerticalScope

**THE ULTIMATE ONTARIO TOUR**

© NOVEMBER 4, 2015 EDITOR ARRIS 10 COMMENTS

All tours have to start and end somewhere. Mine started at a friend's place close to the main Toronto airport, where a lipstick red MV Agusta Tourismo Luazzo was waiting for me. I was asked by the MV rep to drop it off at their HQ in Montreal, so I mapped out a route that would take me due north before swooping through Algonquin Park and then dropping south to Brockville and the dreaded -01 for a quick blast to Quebec.

The Luazzo lives up to MV's tagline relatively well - Motorcycle Art. It's a gorgeously sculpted machine, tall and taught, with three stacked tailpipes framing perfectly the single sided swing arm and subtly telling the admirer that this machine comes with three pots instead of the usual four. It also comes with the all-important bags, that though oddly shaped, with a bit of coercion held my three days of travel supplies well.

After a dubious meal at Boston Pizza, I slogged north out of Toronto on the busy highway to cottage country. The temperature was falling sharply as the sun had dropped below the horizon around my fifth

**GET DIRTY DOWN EAST**  
SEPT 8-11, 2016  
SUSSEX, NB

FUNDIRY ADVENTURE RALLY

CMG BMW HONDA SP4

**MARKETING** BRANDS ADVERTISING CONSUMER MEDIA TECH CANNES TV PREVIEW SUBSCRIBE

**EXPLORERS' EDGE TAKES AN ADVENTURE IN CONTENT MARKETING**

Regional Tourism Organization's move away from traditional advertising pays off

DANNY KUCHARSKY | JANUARY 14, 2016

A shift from traditional marketing to a content marketing strategy has helped transform the region that includes Muskoka and Algonquin Park from a summer destination to a year-round tourism hotspot.

So says James Murphy, executive director of the bureaucratic ally-named Regional Tourism Organization (RTO) 12 - better known to consumers as Explorers' Edge - which also includes Parry Sound and more than a dozen provincial and national parks. Its one of 13 RTOs that were created about five years ago by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, aimed at marketing tourism in the province more efficiently.

Content marketing about unique winter tourism attractions, such as the 4-year-old Arrowhead Ice Trail - a 1.8 km, skating trail through a forest, has helped develop a shoulder season for the region, he says. As a result, Huntsville, which is close to the provincial park trail, is achieving full occupancy in the winter, compared to the 15% occupancy it used to get.

The Ice-Skating Trail at Arrowhead Provincial Park

Murphy says a year-round content and social marketing strategy has paid off big for Explorers' Edge

**MOUNTAIN LIFE** LIVE IT UP MORE GOLF, MORE OFTEN

Four of Canada's Best Self-Propelled Stay and Play Lodges

SEPTEMBER 16, 2015

Two feet and a heartbeat, goes the saying. With the growing interest in self-propelled recreation, we rundown four of Canada's best stay and play lodges, as featured in the 2015-16 edition of the *Mountain Life Annual*.

Four by Two

ARTICLE CONTINUES BELOW

**MOVE FREELY, EXPAND YOUR PLAYGROUND**

salomon

ALGONQUIN ECO-LODGE

Winner of a 2012 Ontario Tourism Award for sustainable tourism, this small, friendly lodge with dedicated microhydro sits on the southern border of venerable Algonquin Provincial Park. Summer and fall activities for wilderness enthusiasts are obvious in this hiking and paddling paradise, but there's also plenty to do and see in winter—wildlife included. One of the largest single trail systems in Southern Ontario includes over 40 km of groomed trackset and wilderness trails for cross-country skiing, dog-sledding, and snowshoeing. A perfect base from which to experience the brumal charms of Algonquin Park and its eastern Canadian sub-boreal forest.

**CP24** SNOWMOBILERS ARE OUT IN FORCE ON ONTARIO TRAILS

StatsCan data shows Ontario was the only province with employment growth last month.

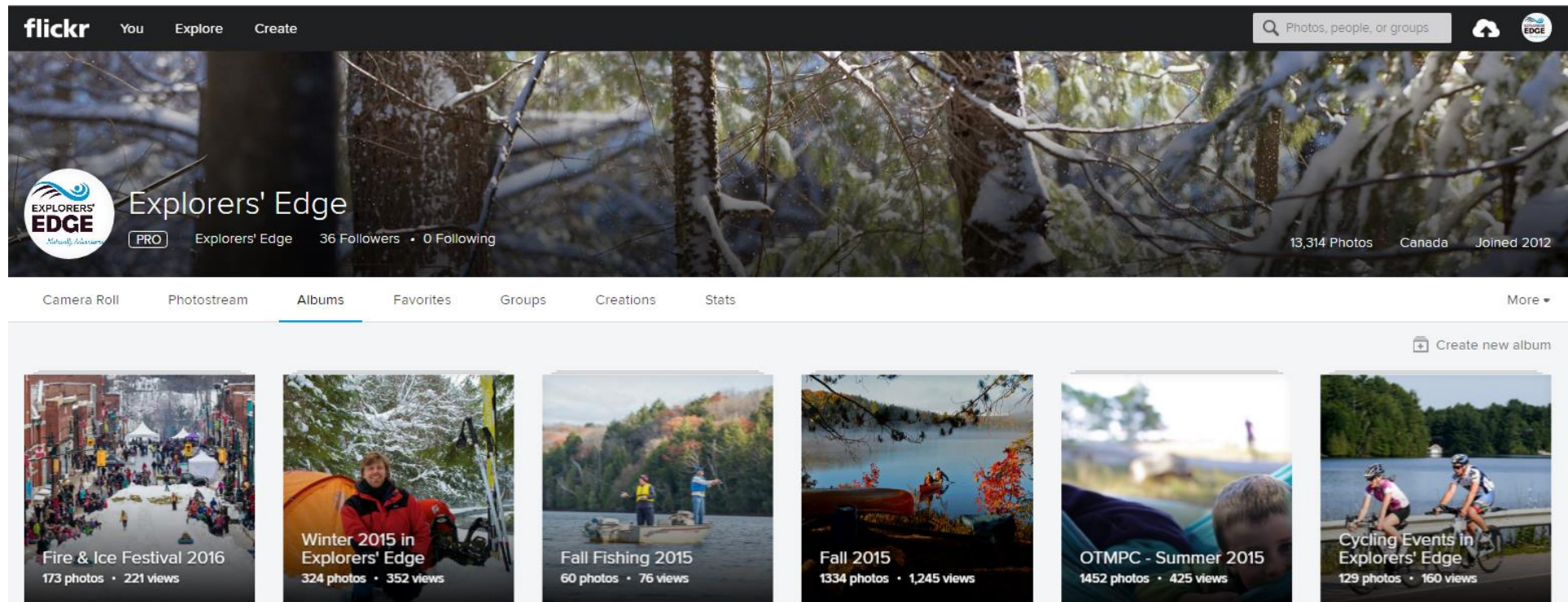
NBA MOMENIX 198 eat

James Murphy @rto12news 2016-01-09

Great job on @CP24 this morning John Massey @Marriott, great sledding in @explorersedge @DiscoverMuskoka

# Image Bank

- 4-season deployment of multiple photographers to replenish the image bank
- Partnership with OTMPC Northern for fishing video and photos





# Development of U.S. / U.K. Strategy

- Enterprise Canada
- Leverage the upcoming Canada 150<sup>th</sup> marketing thrust to target ex-pats; turn them into roving ambassadors for Canada and for the quintessential Canadian wilderness experience that is offered here



**James Murphy** @rto12news 2015-06-02  
@canadianprguy online answering our stakeholder PR questions during today's Ask Me Anything forum.

# Package & Itinerary Development

- Target CTC EQ segments – Authentic Experiencers and Free Spirits
- Based on rational routes, on sub-regional considerations, market-readiness, alignment with product and branding
- 100 survey responses to date
- Currently being developed



# Transacting Committee

Chair Jerry Feltis

# Jack Rabbit

- **Explorers' Edge**

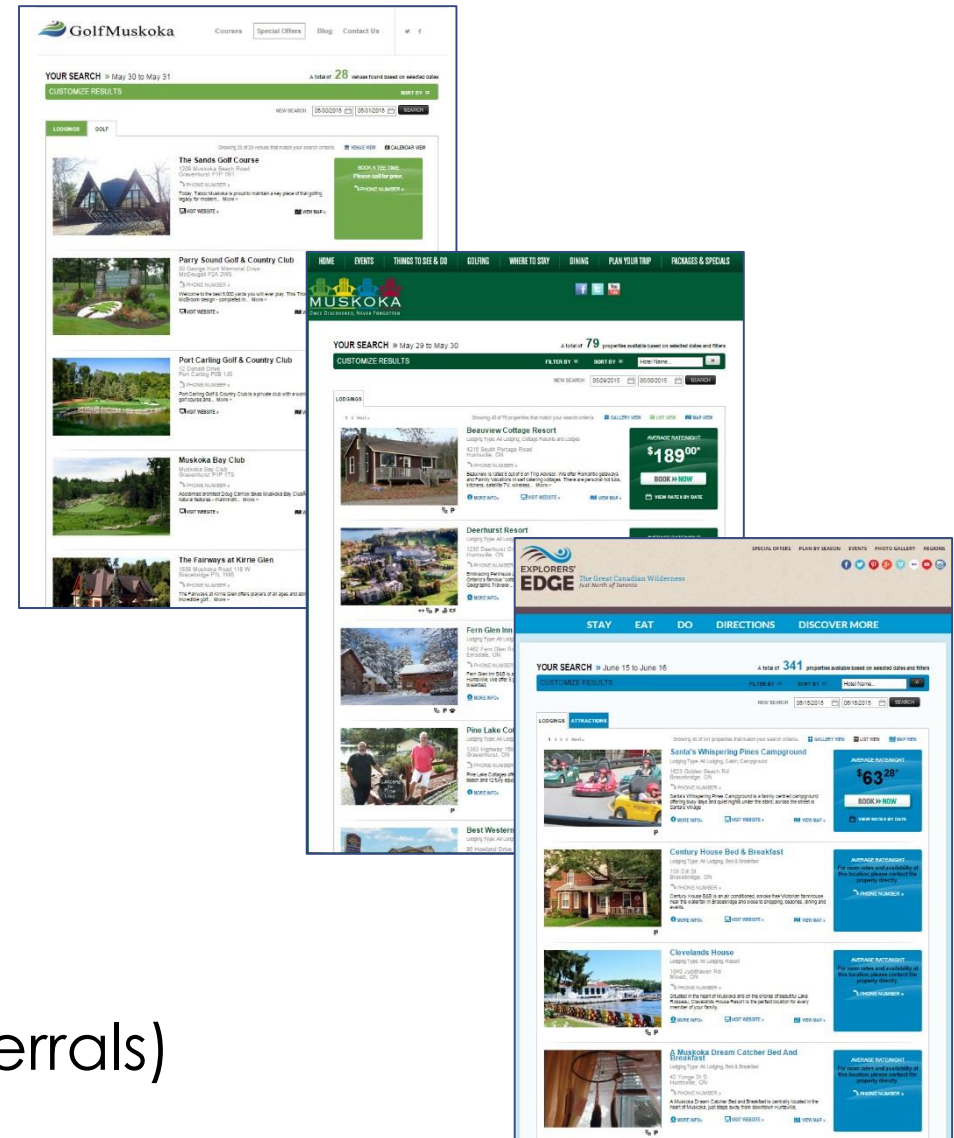
- Searches ~ 2015: 34,733
- Search – Referral Ratio: 38%

- **MTMA**

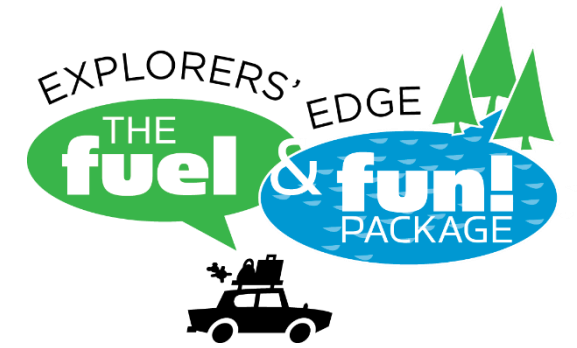
- Searches ~ 2015: 21,682
- Search – Referral Ratio: 75%

- **Golf Muskoka**

- Searches ~ 2015: 1,110
- Search – Referral Ratio: 29% (480 referrals)



# Fuel and Fun



James Murphy @rto12news 2015-09-18  
All hands on deck delivering F&F packages,  
personally stopped by to see Michelle KOA  
PS @mpinkie @explorersedge

- Spring Fuel & Fun
  - Package Registrations - 404 packages vs. 278 in 2014
  - Voucher Redemption - 55% vs. 54% in 2014
  - Operator Participation - 162 vs. 148 in 2014
  - Survey - 120/379 (32%) first visit
  - 325/379 (86%) pre-planned
- Fall Fuel & Fun
  - Package Registrations - 456
  - Voucher Redemption – 35%
  - Operator Participation – 180 vs 156 in 2014
  - Survey: 120/402 (33%) first visit
  - 325/402 (85%) pre-planned

# Community Relations Committee

Chair Esa Paltanen

# Community Relations Committee

- Operational Plan Feedback and Insight
  - Partnership Allocation Alignment – Festivals & Events
- Ontario Trillium Foundation – New Funding Program
- Tourism Excellence North (TEN)

# Governance Committee

Chair Anthony Rizzo



# Governance Committee

- Director on-boarding
- Operational Plan 2015 – 2016
- Director Skills Matrix
- Nomination Process
- Committee terms of reference review & update

# Committee Structure

- Governance
- Community Relations
- Research Tracking and Measurement
- Tourism Operator Relations (Partnership Allocation)
- Marketing
- Transacting
- Executive
- Ad Hoc (Workforce, HR & Nomination)



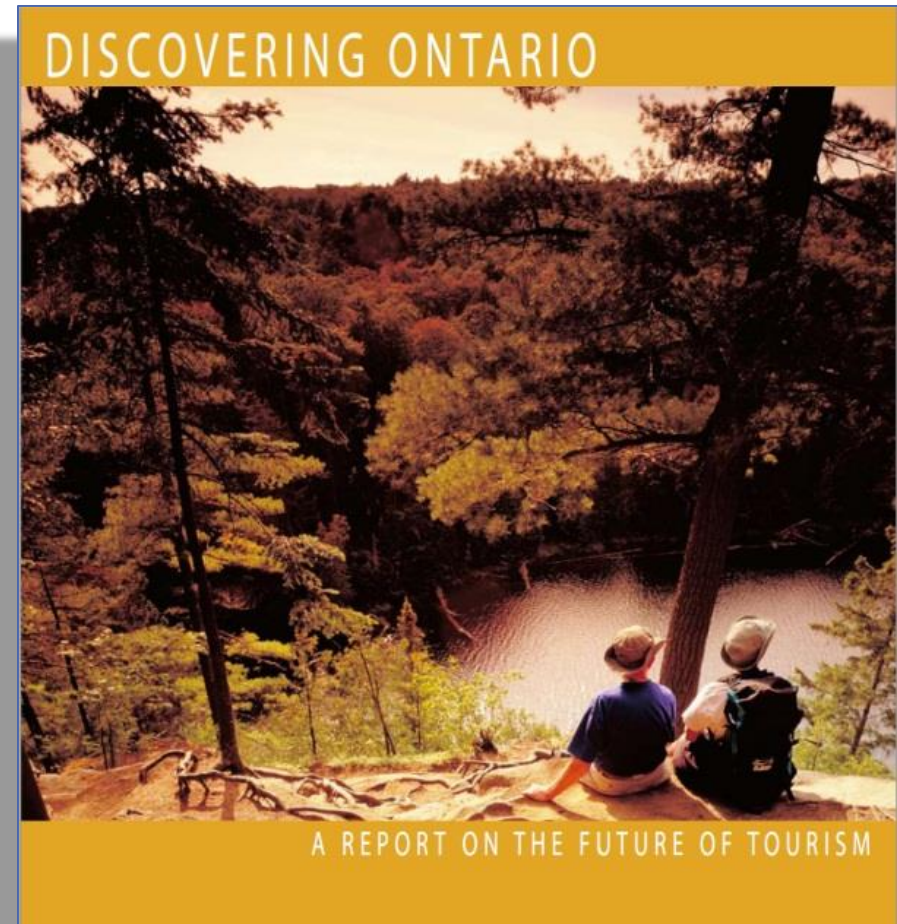
# MTCS

Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport

Tourism Advisor Laura Hernando

# Accountability to the Province

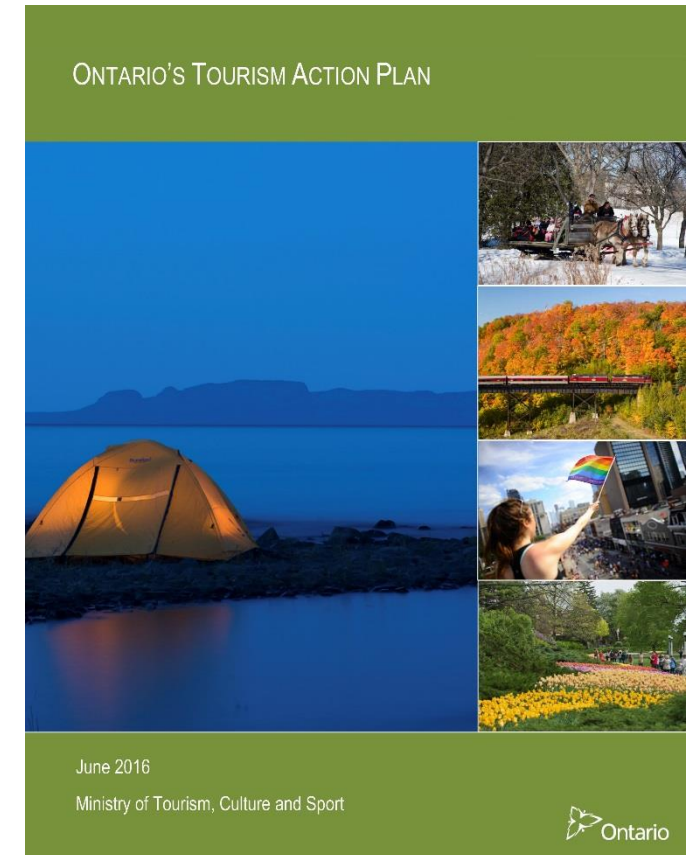
- Five Pillars
  - Governance
  - Investment Attraction
  - Workforce Development
  - Product Development
  - Marketing



# Ontario's Tourism Action Plan

## 12 Action Items

- Proactive Investment Approach for Economic Growth
- Deliver on the Attractions Study to Target New Investment
- Collaborate with Municipal and Economic Development Partners to Grow Tourism
- Working Together to Support Workforce Development in the Tourism Industry
- Improve Marketing Alignment for Better Results
- Host an Annual Minister's Forum to Promote Government-Industry Collaboration
- Review Ministry Tourism Funding Programs to Enhance Program Outcomes
- Explore Opportunities for Multicultural, Francophone and Indigenous-led Tourism
- Working Together to Improve the Business Climate for Tourism - Reduce Regulatory Burdens
- New Approach to Data Collection to Improve Data Quality and Availability
- Establish a Tourism Research Community of Practice to Improve Sharing of Data
- Enhance the Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)



2015 - 2016

# Moving Forward

## ***Guiding Beacon of Process and Strategy***

- Committee Structure
- Continued Industry Outreach
- Community Relations
- Research
- Transacting

# Moving Forward – Marketing Priorities

- Continue Benchmark Content Marketing
- Lead Nurturing (HubSpot)
- US & UK
- Package and Itinerary Development





## **James Murphy**

Executive Director, Explorers' Edge

3 Taylor Road

Bracebridge, ON P1L 1S6

[james@explorersedge.ca](mailto:james@explorersedge.ca)

[www.rto12.ca](http://www.rto12.ca) ~ [www.explorersedge.ca](http://www.explorersedge.ca)

