

Ministry of Tourism

Minister

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Dear Tourism Partner:

As the busy summer season kicks off with Tourism Week, from June 4-10, I would like to share a few updates with you on matters of interest to our industry.

Tourism Week is a Canada-wide celebration of tourism and its benefits for communities across the country. It is held each year to remind Canadians of how important this \$62.7 billion a year industry is to our prosperity. For information on Tourism Week activities and how you can get involved in promoting its aims, please visit the website of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, www.tiac-aitc.ca/english/NTAW.asp.

The McGuinty government has been working with partners in the United States to ensure that improvements are made to the **Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative** to safeguard our tourism industry. I am pleased to report that Ontario's proposal regarding driver's licences is gaining support, and our approach of encouraging like-minded U.S. officials to champion our concerns is paying off. Bills that would require that security-enhanced driver's licences be tested as land and sea border-crossing documents have been introduced in both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives.

I recently met with Department of Homeland Security officials in Washington, D.C. and believe that the U.S. government is giving favourable consideration to security-enhanced driver's licences as an alternative to passports for crossing the land border. Ontario is moving forward with a driver's licence with cutting-edge security features, and we are keen to work with the State of Michigan to pilot test an enhanced driver's licence.

Summer is right around the corner and parents and children will be glad to know that there is plenty to do in our province. At Fort Henry on June 20, I will be launching Ontario's **Fun Pass** that has been distributed again this year to school boards for elementary school children across the province to enjoy free admission to provincially owned attractions, including Ontario Place, Fort William Historical Park, and Ste. Marie-Among-the-Hurons, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary.

There are also great events related to heritage this summer. The **Rideau Canal** will be celebrating its 175th anniversary. The canal, a marvel of engineering and a major tourist attraction in Eastern Ontario, is being considered for designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. An announcement is expected on June 30 from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The ministry is supporting the development of plans to help commemorate the 200th anniversary of the **War of 1812**. This bicentennial will be a major event in North America and will shine the media spotlight on Ontario, with our large number of historic sites related to the war. My ministry is working to ensure that our province will be well prepared to capitalize on this important marketing opportunity and highlight the bi-national region.

To date, we have provided \$8,000 grants to each of the six key locales: Niagara, Toronto, Windsor/Chatham, St. Lawrence/1000 Islands, Georgian Bay and Sault Ste. Marie. These funds and staff resources of my ministry and the Ministry of Culture will assist with developing regional plans and strategies for the commemoration of the war and the celebration of our enduring friendship with our neighbours to the south.

The **Rogers Chinese Lantern Festival**, held at Ontario Place last summer, was such a hit that it is returning this year for another engagement. In addition, the **Royal Ontario Museum's** expansion, designed by world-renowned architect Daniel Libeskind, opens on June 2 and is expected to draw great fanfare and media interest.

Luminato: Toronto Festival of Arts and Creativity, an innovative and widely anticipated new arts and cultural festival will take place in Toronto from June 1-10, showcasing eclectic and cutting edge music, dance and theatre performances, as well as film, literature and visual arts design. The **Just for Laughs Comedy Festival** will host its inaugural Toronto festival this summer and has signed up celebrity comedians, such as Howie Mandel, George Lopez and Craig Ferguson to headline the three gala performances at Massey Hall from July 26-28.

I am also pleased to report that the Ministry of Tourism's **Celebrate Ontario** initiative is helping 57 organizations in communities throughout Ontario to enhance their festivals or events and promote them to new audiences. The Ottawa Tulip Festival, for example, has reported strong attendance at this year's event, which shows that our initiative has been both timely and successful in helping organizers refresh their offerings and attract visitors to partake of the many unique and exciting events available in the province. A complete list of organizations that received Celebrate Ontario grants is posted on the ministry's website: www.tourism.gov.on.ca.

The ministry will be sending out its second investment newsletter shortly, on tourism investment opportunities in Muskoka, to over 2,500 potential investors. The first newsletter on Niagara, released in early April, was successful in generating an increase in visits to our tourism investment website showcasing municipal investment opportunities. The newsletters can be viewed at: www.2ontario.com/tourism/home.asp.

I hope that the many events and attractions will encourage Ontarians to rediscover their province this summer. Thank you for your support and best wishes for a great summer season.

Yours sincerely,



Jim Bradley
Minister