



**The Corporation of the  
City of Sault Ste. Marie**

**COUNCIL REPORT**

February 3, 2025

TO: Mayor Matthew Shoemaker and Members of City Council  
AUTHOR: Travis Anderson, Director Tourism and Community  
Development  
DEPARTMENT: Community Development and Enterprise Services  
RE: Tourism Development Fund Applications – January 2025

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**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide recommendations to Council from City staff and the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors for the distribution of Tourism Development Funds.

**Background**

The Tourism Development Fund (TDF) was implemented on June 1, 2021, to provide financial support to the broader tourism sector in two different streams- Festivals, Special Events and Attractions, and Product Development. The funds for both streams of the TDF are generated from revenue collected by the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT).

Consideration is given to support initiatives that produce positive results in at least one of the following criteria:

- Development of quality tourism products and events;
- Increase in overnight stays and visitor spending in Sault Ste. Marie;
- Enhancement of the Sault's tourism product offerings;
- Support of the city's reputation and position as a first-rate visitor destination;
- Fulfill a gap in the tourism visitor experience landscape; and
- Encourage private sector tourism investment in Sault Ste. Marie.

Upon receipt of a TDF application, tourism staff review it for eligibility and assessment criteria and recommends it to the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors. The Tourism Sault Ste. Marie's Board of Directors further evaluates the applications and recommends to City Council the distribution of grant funds.

**Analysis**

Tourism Development Fund applications are permitted on an ongoing intake and are reviewed monthly at the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors meetings. The recipient expenses the funds and then claims them through the Tourism Development Fund after the event is completed.

At the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors meeting held on November 26, 2024, three applications were reviewed with the following recommendations:

1. 2025 Indigenous Land Symposium (\$5,000)
2. Ringette Ontario Provincial 'A' Championships (\$20,000)
3. Searchmont Ski Runners 2025 Season (\$6,000)

At the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors meeting held January 21, 2025, the following application was reviewed with the following recommendations:

1. Sault Cycling Club \$20,400

### *2025 Indigenous Lands Symposium*

#### Background

This will be the third year for the in-person Indigenous Lands Symposium, with the previous two years being held in Timmins and Chapleau. The event is a 5-day symposium that has outgrown the capacity of the previous venues, and organizers are looking to move the event to a larger venue in Sault Ste. Marie. The symposium catalyzes Indigenous and Non-Indigenous partners to embrace sovereignty, innovation, collaboration, and the culture within sustainable forestry. The event for the past two years has brought together over 100 Indigenous practitioners representing over 20 First Nations across Northern Ontario to discuss important land management issues, share ideas, and generally network.

#### Participants/ Visitation Projections

Local: 31

Regional: 96

Ontario: 81

Canada: 50

USA: 2

#### Economic Impact

133 Out of town visitors x 5 days x \$150 per person/per day = \$99,750

In recognition of the significant positive impact the 2025 Indigenous Lands Symposium will have on the local tourism industry, the Board of Tourism Sault Ste. Marie passed the following resolution:

Be it resolved that the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors recommend a contribution of \$5,000 through the Tourism Development Fund- Conferences and Special Events Stream to support the Indigenous Land Symposium and that a report be submitted to City Council for consideration and approval.

### *Ringette Ontario Provincial 'A' Championships*

Sault Ste. Marie was selected in a competitive bid process to host the 2025 Ringette Ontario Provincial 'A' Championships, awarded by Ringette Ontario. Having demonstrated a successful 2024 North East Regional Championship event

in 2024, the local Sault Ringette Club applied to host the Provincial tournament in 2025. It has been 20+ years since Sault Ste. Marie hosted a Provincial championship event with Ringette Ontario. The host community is selected based on set criteria as outlined by Ringette Ontario. With the addition of the new Northern Community Centre twin pad and the previous history of hosting tournaments, the Sault Ringette Club demonstrated that Sault Ste. Marie is an excellent location to host this prestigious tournament. The tournament will see upwards of 40 A-level out-of-town teams from across the province competing over four days in March 2025.

#### Participants/ Visitation Projections

Local: (one team competing, estimated 500+ spectators and volunteers)

Regional: 163 (spectators)

Ontario: 2260 (700+ players + families, coaches and team staff)

Canada: 0

USA: 0

#### Economic Impact

2260 out of town visitors x 5 days x \$150 per person/ per day = \$1,695,000

In recognition of the positive impact the 2025 Provincial A Ringette Championships will have on the local tourism industry, the Board of Tourism Sault Ste. Marie passed the following resolution:

Be it resolved that the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors recommend a contribution of \$20,000 through the Tourism Development Fund- Conferences and Special Events Stream to support the 2025 Ringette Ontario Provincial “A” Championships and that a report be submitted to City Council for consideration and approval.

#### *Searchmont Ski Runners 2025 Event Season*

The Searchmont Ski Runners are scheduled to host three major alpine races during the 2025 season. The Mealey Classic in January, followed by the U16 OCUP Provincials and the Honda Cup in March. These races range from 3-5 days each, resulting in a total of 10 race dates, along with up to 7 additional training days before the events. The Searchmont Ski Runners (SSR) are committed to hosting high-quality Alpine ski races in Ontario, with a long-term goal of establishing must-attend events in Ontario’s Ski Racing Calendar.

#### Participants/ Visitation Projections

Local: 529

Regional: 85

Ontario: 976

Canada: 0

USA: 0

Economic Impact

550 out of town visitors x 11 days (total race days combined) x \$150 = \$907,500

In recognition of the positive impact the 2025 Searchmont Ski Runners Event season will have, the Board of Tourism Sault Ste. Marie passed the following resolution:

Be it resolved that the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors recommends a contribution of \$6,000 through the Tourism Development Fund- Conferences and Special Events Stream to support the Searchmont Ski Runners 2025 race season and that a report be submitted to City Council for consideration and approval.

*Sault Cycling Club Fat Bike Groomers*

The Sault Cycling Club (the Club) is requesting support from the Sault Ste. Marie Tourism Development Fund to purchase two Tinger Dog grooming machines that would allow for the expansion of the winter trail network and ensure that there is sufficient grooming equipment available to maintain the current network.

With Sault Ste. Marie's northern location and abundant snowfall make our region uniquely positioned to lead in fat biking tourism. With over 45 km of groomed trail, the Sault Cycling Club manages one of Ontario's most extensive trail networks, and with additional grooming equipment, this will grow to over 65 km. This network, in addition to those maintained by Hiawatha Highlands and Crimson Ridge, positions Sault Ste. Marie as having the largest winter fat biking network in Eastern Canada, rivaling gold-standard destinations like Marquette, Michigan. The network is a critical infrastructure component for winter tourism, as it supports tourism-related events such as the Beaver Freezer Marathon and Frozen Toe Fat Bike race, as well as numerous travelers to the region.

Current equipment constraints compromise the Club's ability to maintain the high-quality trail conditions needed to capitalize on the sport's growing popularity. The limited grooming equipment the club has available increases the risk of prolonged gaps in grooming, whether it be as a result of equipment breakdown or due to the time required to groom the full length of the network.

These issues compromise trail reliability, event quality, and visitor satisfaction. Investment in two new Tinger Dog groomers will mitigate these challenges and ensure that the Club continues to deliver high-quality grooming essential for a world-class visitor experience.

The total price for two Tinger Dog groomers is \$20,400 inclusive of tax and delivery.

In recognition of the positive tourism impact of the winter fat bike network, the Board of Tourism Sault Ste. Marie passed the following resolution:

Be it resolved that the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors recommend a contribution of \$20,400 through the Tourism Development Fund- Product Development Stream to support the Sault Cycling Club purchase of two Tinger Dogs winter fat bike groomers and a report be submitted to City Council for consideration and approval.

**Financial Implications**

No new funds would be required. The Tourism Development Fund currently has \$365,703 uncommitted for the purposes of financial assistance within the tourism sector.

**Strategic Plan / Policy Impact / Climate Impact**

This item supports the Corporate Strategic Plans Focus Area:

- Community Development and Partnership focus of Maximizing Economic Development and Investment with the commitment to maintain financial viability.
- Community Development – Develop partnerships with key stakeholders and reconciliation.

There are no climate change impacts associated with this request.

**Recommendation**

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

Resolved that the report of the Director of Tourism and Community Development dated February 3, 2025 be received and that the recommendation of the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors to allocate \$51,400 as detailed below be approved:

1. 2025 Indigenous Land Symposium (\$5,000);
2. Ringette Ontario Provincial A Championships (\$20,000);
3. Searchmont Ski Runners 2025 Season (\$6,000);
4. Sault Cycling Club Fat Bike Groomers (\$20,400).

Respectfully submitted,

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