



The Corporation of the
City of Sault Ste. Marie

COUNCIL REPORT

March 17, 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 – February 2025

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 and 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 SSM.

Upon receipt of a TDF application, Tourism staff review it for eligibility and assessment criteria and makes recommendations to the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors. The Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors further evaluates the applications and makes recommendations to Council for 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 claims them through the Tourism Development Fund after the event is completed.

At the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Director's meeting held on February 25, 2025, two applications were reviewed with the following recommendations:

1. Sault Surge Aquatic Team Myrtha Backstroke System \$8,000
2. Sault Ste. Marie Kennel Club \$4,000

Sault Surge Aquatic Team – Myrtha Backstroke System

Product Development Application

The Sault Surge Aquatic Team, a registered not-for-profit organization, provides competitive swim programming for all ages in Sault Ste. Marie. The club operates out of the John Rhodes Community Centre and hosts multiple events each year, attracting visitors from across Ontario and the U.S. Building on the success of its annual spring invitational meet, the club is poised for continued growth, bringing even more tourism to the region.

To enhance its competition facilities, Sault Surge is requesting \$8,000 to purchase the Myrtha Backstroke System. This specialized equipment attaches to the starting blocks, improving safety, optimizing push-off power, and providing a more stable start for backstroke swimmers. The system integrates seamlessly with modern starting blocks and automatically retracts when not in use.

Investing in this upgrade will help position the John Rhodes Community Centre as a premier venue for regional and annual swim meets, further boosting Sault Ste. Marie's reputation as a destination for competitive swimming events.

In recognition of the positive impact on the tourism sector the Sault Surge Aquatic Team has, the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors passed the following resolution: "Be it resolved that the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors recommend a contribution of \$8,000 through the Tourism Development Fund - Product Development Stream to support the Sault Surge Aquatic Team for the purchase of the Myrtha Backstroke System and a report be submitted to City Council for consideration and approval."

Sault Ste. Marie Kennel Club Annual Dog Show – 2025

The Sault Ste. Marie Kennel Club (SSMKC) has hosted its annual three-day Canadian Kennel Club-sanctioned Dog Show for over 50 years, attracting dog enthusiasts, breeders, and competitors from across Canada and the United States. The 2025 event is scheduled for July 11-13 at the YNCU Soo Pee Wee Arena.

The show features six conformation shows, where purebred dogs are judged against breed standards, and four rally/obedience trials, open to both purebred and mixed-breed dogs. Top competitors earn points toward national championships and may receive invitations to prestigious international competitions such as the Westminster Dog Show.

Visitor Projections and Economic Impact

The 2025 event is expected to attract approximately 426 attendees, including:

196 local participants

60 regional visitors

100 from across Ontario

30 from other parts of Canada

40 from the United States

230 visitors x 4 days x \$175 pp/pd = \$161,000

The dog show has consistently demonstrated a strong tourism impact. In 2023, with \$3,000 in Tourism Development Fund (TDF) support, the event drew 368 visitors to Sault Ste. Marie. In 2024, despite receiving the same level of funding, attendance dropped to 260 out-of-town visitors, including 25 from the U.S., primarily due to U.S. border restrictions affecting canine travel. Projections for 2025 will once again be influenced by political climate and additional funds are recommended for use towards marketing.

The event plays a vital role in driving tourism, generating economic benefits through accommodations, dining, and retail spending. Competitors carefully select shows based on organization and participant experience, and SSMKC has consistently maintained a reputation for delivering high-quality events.

Recommendation

Despite challenges such as pandemic disruptions, competing events, and border restrictions, the SSMKC Dog Show has demonstrated resiliency. It remains a key contributor to tourism in the region, supported by a dedicated and experienced organizing team.

Based on its proven track record and alignment with the Tourism Development Fund's objectives, the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors recommend a \$4,000 contribution to support the 2025 Sault Ste. Marie Kennel Club Dog Show and passed the following resolution "Be it resolved that the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors recommend a contribution of \$4000 through the Tourism Development Fund- Conferences and Special Events Stream to support the 2025 Sault Ste. Marie Kennel Club Dog Show to be hosted July 11-13, 2025 and that 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 \$796,645 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-related impacts associated with this report.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

Resolved that the report of the Director of Tourism and Community Development dated March 17, 2024, be received and that the recommendation of the Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Board of Directors to allocate \$12,000 as detailed below be approved.

1. Sault Surge Aquatic Team – Myrtha Backstroke System – \$8,000
2. Sault Ste. Marie Kennel Club – \$4,000

Respectfully submitted,

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