

# Explorers' Edge Annual General Meeting

July 15, 2020



Board of Directors **Welcome**



**EXPLORERS'**  
**EDGE**

# Explorers' Edge **Mission**

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

# Operating **Principals**

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



# Guiding **Principals**

**Leverage strategic collaborations to develop programs to significantly increase the volume of visitors to the region.**

**Use strategy and process as guiding beacons to ensure our success.**

# Regional Tourism Strategy **Year Two**

- **Dispersion**
- **International Audiences**
- **Workforce Development**
- **Product Development Framework**
- **Tourism Entrepreneurs**

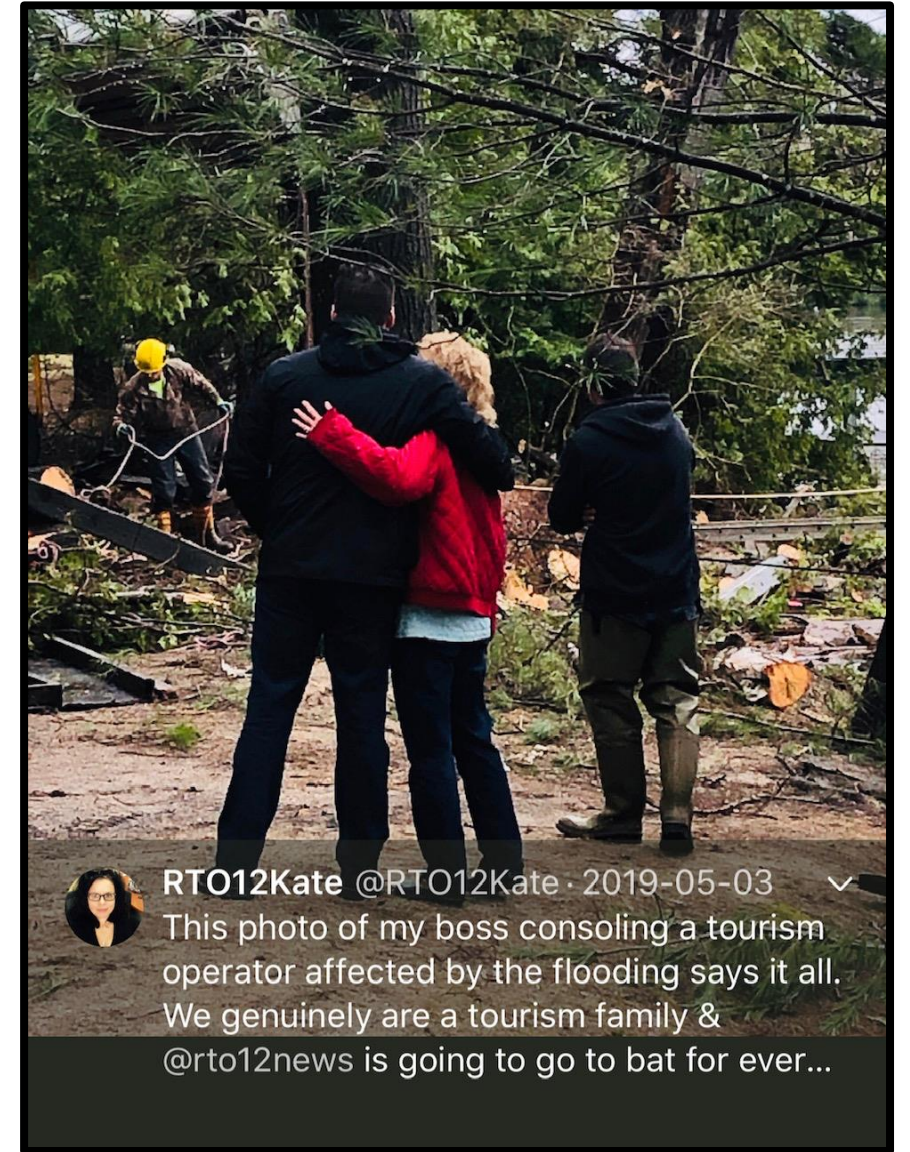


# The Year In Review: Fiscal **2019-2020**

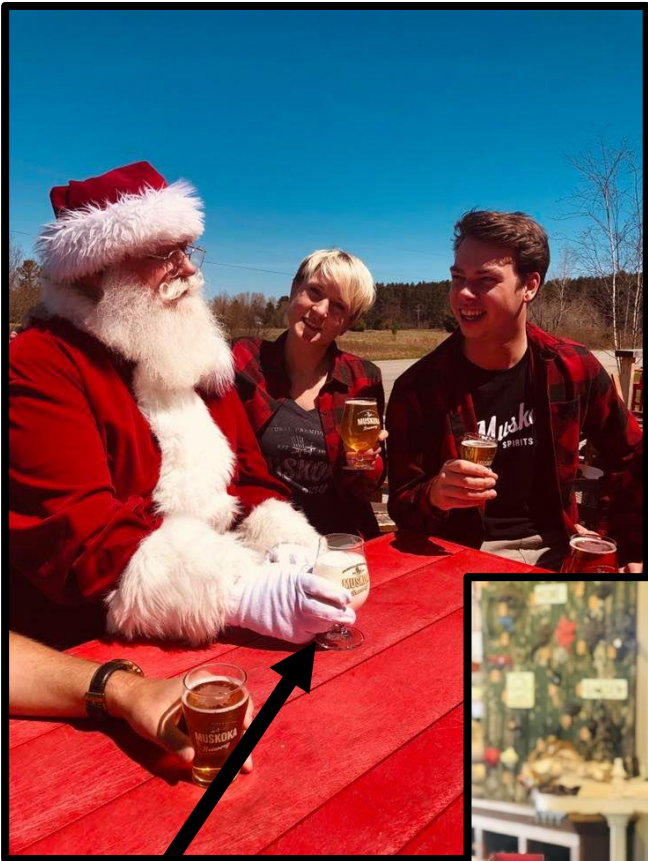
“From crisis to crisis, with a **mountain summit** in between...”

# Flood Crisis **Communication**

- **April 28 thru May 1:** telephone outreach and site visits conducted by staff for affected operators in the region – Muskoka & Almaguin Highlands hit hardest
- **May 1: operator survey** was developed and deployed to grasp impact of the flooding on tourism businesses – **60 responses**
- **May 2:** RTO Board briefed & the Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport contacted for presentation of immediate and longer term recovery steps briefing on in Toronto **May 5**
- **May 2 thru May 14:** RTO12 staff commenced touring the entire region to launch an ‘Open For Business’ social media campaign, which was – and continues to be – posted to our social assets.







(Milk for Santa  
at the Brewery...)



# Media Messaging / Destination Ontario

- RTO Survey & Recommendation Report to Ministry
- Muskoka Heritage Place ~ K96FM
- Cleveland's House ~ Fresh Radio
- Bracebridge, Patterson Kaye Lodge ~ Breakfast Television
- Destination Ontario
  - Toronto Star Content
  - Social Posts

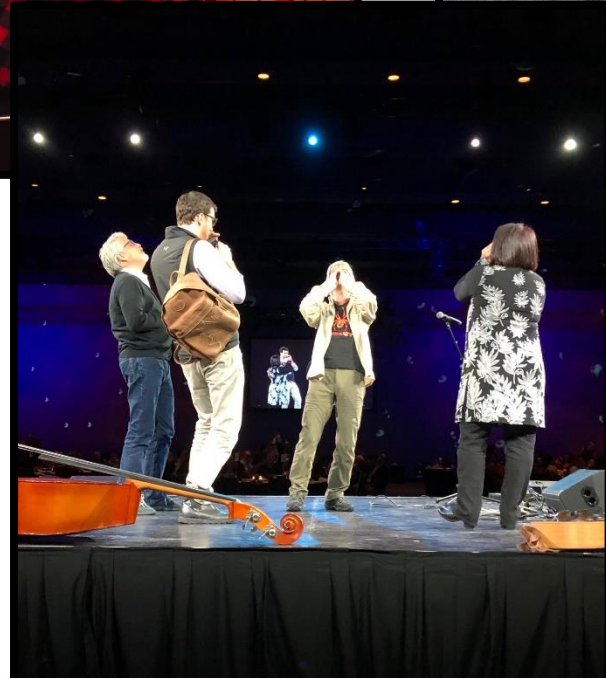


# Rendez-vous **Canada**

- **May 28 – 31, 2019**
- Activation Zone / VR headsets & campfire
- Tour Operator Meetings (30+)
- Luncheon Event (1500 delegates)









# Indigenous Tourism Development

- FedNor Partnership
- Foundational Work
- Cultural “Product” Inventory
- First Nation Outreach
- Work with **Indigenous Tourism Ontario**
- Case Study Development
  - Waaseyaa Cultural Tours
  - Dokis First Nations Trail Systems



# New York Travel Trade Mission

- Sales Trip with Destination Ontario/Sandra Rice **June 11-13**
- Includes meetings with AAA, catchment travel agents, and event at the Consulate General of Canada  
Learning experience for future marketing to Designated Marketing Areas (NY, Boston, Chicago and Washington, D.C.)





# 2019 Regional Tourism Summit: **Parry Sound**

- **June 18, 2019**
- Open Mic – focus on business successes and innovation
- Introduction of the Workforce Thrusters Strategy / Catalyst Housing concept



# Commercial Air Service **Porter Airlines**

Launch in April 2019

**500+ media hits & a estimated 35 million** impressions from  
our own media release



# Commercial Air Service **Porter Airlines**

- 3-Year Commitment
- Seasonal Summer Service  
10 Weeks
- Inaugural Flight June 27, 2019
- 4-Year Marathon



# Commercial Air Service **Dispersion**

- **Bus Shuttle Service**
- **Five Main Routes**
- **Booking Widget (RFP)**
- **185 bookings**



# Commercial Air Service **Dispersion**

- Voucher Program
- \$9,500 Regional Spend (triggers additional spend)
- Tracking & Dispersion





# Commercial Air Service **Dispersion**

- Packages – TICO Licence
- Muskoka Travel Service
- Monday Day Trip





# Commercial Air Service – YQA Site Development

- Ambassador program grew organically with RTO staff
  - Gravenhurst Chamber of Commerce assist!!
- YQA dialogue with Len O'Connor
  - Travel services
  - (Coffee & Water)
  - Rain Contingency Plan
  - (Umbrellas, Tents, Staff)



# Commercial Air Service – YQA Site Development

- Shuttle Service
  - Parking & Pickup / Signage
- CATSA Relations
  - Weekly dialogue & information sharing
- Travel Packages – testing for TICO



# Marketing Program: **Benchmark Year**


- Delayed launch meant switch to domestic marketing to ensure load factors met
- DMAs had been targeted until then (NY, Boston, Chicago, Washington, D.C.)
- Campaign ran mid-May to mid-August
- \$170K spend with **44K leads to [Flyporter.com/Muskoka](https://flyporter.com/muskoka)** (approx. \$3.90/lead)
- EE site traffic was 97% over plan with 215,000 site visits
- Leads acquisition was 65% over plan with 448 email sign-ups
- Cost per link click (CPLC) was \$0.83, well below the \$1.48 estimate used to build the annual plan



# Marketing Program: **Benchmark Year**

**Explorers' Edge** Sponsored · 🌟

Off the dock and up the CN Tower in no time. Muskoka to downtown Toronto in 20 minutes with Porter Airlines for an amazing city getaway.




MUSKOKA.FLYPORTER.COM  
**Toronto Getaways**  
Just 20 minutes from Muskoka...

[BOOK NOW](#)

👍❤️😮 Andrew Ryeland and 1.3K others

**Explorers' Edge** Sponsored · 🌟

Book your flight to Muskoka with Porter Airlines and then get to your final vacation destination on one of 5 new shuttle routes that ...[See More](#)




EXPLORERSEEDGE.CA  
**The Explorers' Edge Shuttle Service at Muskoka Airport**

👍❤️😮 712 89 Comments 144 Shares

👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share

**Explorers' Edge** Sponsored · 🌟

Get to Ontario's favourite vacation destination this summer in no time with Porter Airlines.



EXPLORERSEEDGE.CA  
**Fly to Muskoka With Porter Airlines This Summer**

👍❤️😮 2.9K 441 Comments 480 Shares

# Marketing Program

- Retargeting with MTMA, Parry Sound Tourism, Santa's Village, The Kee to Bala, Huntsville Adventures (TESTING)
- 4,500 entries for the 54.40 contest (also goodwill with Nieuport Aviation)
- Outbound contest/marketing with Moose FM in Parry Sound and Muskoka





# TIAO Summit

TWO THOUSAND NINETEEN  
ONTARIO  
TOURISM  
SUMMIT  
Growing Tourism in Ontario  
TOURISM MATTERS



- Kate Monk presented on social media at the Ontario Tourism Summit in October
- James Murphy facilitated panel of winter tourism operators from our region
- Planning for the 2021 Summit – was to be hosted at Deerhurst Resort

# Workforce Development: Education

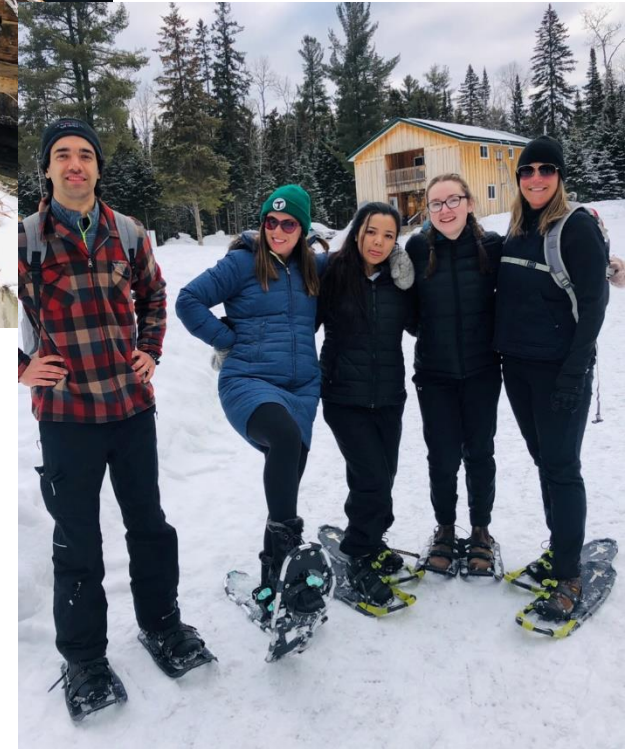
- Work-Integrated Learning
- Georgian College
  - Curriculum Development by RTO12
  - Tour & Package Sales
  - TICO training
  - “Master Classes” from regional tourism professionals





# Georgian Fam Tours

- Summer July 2019
  - Parry Sound - 23 Students
- Fall September 2019
  - Huntsville – 28 Students
- Winter March 2020
  - Almaguin Highlands – 50 Students





# Ryerson University

*School of Hospitality & Tourism Management*

- James Murphy / Kate Monk guest lecturers
- Explorers' Edge **VFR Case Study Competition** between Universite du Quebec a Montreal, University of Guelph and Ryerson University teams
- Jack Hopkins – student conference panelist



# Workforce **Development**



3 Taylor Road, Bracebridge, ON P1L 1S6  
1-800-835-7303  
Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka,  
Parry Sound & South Algonquin  
[www.explorersedge.ca](http://www.explorersedge.ca)



## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

**Social Enterprise Catalyst Housing:  
*Concept Research & Report***

# Partnership Program

- Parry Sound Cruise Ship Program
- Parry Sound Tourism Signage
- Parry Sound DBA Girlfriends Weekend
- Parry Sound Cycling Event Series
- Parry Sound Hop on Hop off Night
- Parry Sound One of a Kind Christmas Show
- Great Muskoka Paddling Experience
- Ontario Dinner – Huntsville Chamber of Commerce
- Golf Muskoka
- Muskoka Chamber of Commerce Event

# Partnership Program

- Almaguin Highlands Winter Product Development
- Huntsville Snowfest - Huntsville Chamber of Commerce
- MTMA – Domestic Content Marketing
- Muskoka Chautauqua
- Deerhurst Resort – Lakeside Lodge
- Commercial Air Service (Bracebridge, Huntsville, Gravenhurst, Loring Restoule)
- Georgian College – FAM Trips
- Fire & Ice Festival Bracebridge

# Partnership Program



**Huntsville's Winter Wonders Package: Free Gas, Spending Vouchers And Tons of Vacation Fun!**

By Kate in Accommodations, Arts & Entertainment, Attractions, Culture, News, Outdoor Adventures on January 17, 2020




f t p +

**SOLD OUT**

Book your winter getaway to Huntsville, Muskoka and get up to \$350 worth of free gas and spending vouchers to make your stay in Ontario's cottage country even better!

**Mid-Week Magic: Huntsville, Muskoka's Winter Wonders Travel Package**

By Kate in Accommodations, Arts & Entertainment, Attractions, Culture, Outdoor Adventures on February 4, 2020



f t p +

**SOLD OUT**

If you've got time during the week, take advantage of Huntsville, Muskoka's Winter Wonders Package and get \$150 in free gas and cash vouchers to spend!

**Huntsville's Winter Wonders Travel Package: Great Value & Fun for Families**

By Kate in Accommodations, Arts & Entertainment, Attractions, Culture, Outdoor Adventures, Spas & Wellness on January 21, 2020




f t p +

**SOLD OUT**

Head to Huntsville, Muskoka with the family for a classic Canadian winter getaway and take advantage of up to \$150 in free gas and spending vouchers!

Explorers' Edge  
EDGE Published by Kate Edge [1] · January 17 ·

What an amazing getaway package from a ton of businesses in Huntsville, Muskoka! Free gas and spending vouchers for your stay.




EXPLORERSEEDGE.CA  
Huntsville's Winter Wonders Package: Free Gas, Spending Vouchers And Tons of Vacation Fun!

751,018 People Reached 34,421 Engagements Boost Post

1.8K 268 Comments 550 Shares

Explorers' Edge  
EDGE Published by Kate Edge [1] · February 4 ·

Book a mid-week winter getaway to Huntsville, Muskoka and get up to \$150 in free gas and cash vouchers to spend!




EXPLORERSEEDGE.CA  
Mid-Week Magic: Huntsville, Muskoka's Winter Wonders Travel Package

382,726 People Reached 4,947 Engagements Boost Post

463 26 Comments 72 Shares

Explorers' Edge  
EDGE Published by Kate Edge [1] · January 21 ·

Serious fun and amazing value - book your 'Winter Wonders' getaway today.



EXPLORERSEEDGE.CA  
Huntsville's Winter Wonders Travel Package: Great Value & Fun For Families

309,467 People Reached 2,655 Engagements Boost Post





- Marketing January 17 to February 10
- 487 packages redeemed
- 8.7K referrals to businesses in the HMATA catchment
- \$10K spend on marketing
- 3.8 million impressions, 1 million reached on FB
- CPC of .42 cents – 20% below forecast
- 25K blog page views
- 31K post engagements (4% engagement – excellent)

# Tourism Town Halls

**4 town hall in two days!**

**Gravenhurst, Parry Sound, Huntsville & South River**

**60 stakeholders in total**

## **Workforce Discussion**

- Catalyst Housing, Regional Currency, Cross-Ministerial Approach, Sustainable Industry
- Education Programs

## **Rail Discussion**

- Next Steps



# Minister Brief

- Attempt to unify RTOs and strengthen the RTO model, rather than relying on TIAO or Destination Ontario to do so
- Survey deployed to RTO EDs and Chairs
- Well received by ADM McKinnel / shout out to the RTO12 work
- Chaired the session – asked to continue
- Streamlines the messaging ahead of time and finds common points of interest/output/strategy

🔄 You Retweeted



**Michael Tibollo** ✓  
@MichaelTibollo

Thank you to all the representatives from Regional Tourism Organizations across the province who took the time to meet with me today at [@Rendez\\_VousCAN!](#)





# Ministry of Heritage, Sport, **Tourism** & Culture Industries

- New Ministry Name & Introduction
  - Provided the Ministry with a regional brief
- RTO Council Development and Communication
- Minister meeting with RTO Executive Directors – TIAO Summit
  - Vision Session with RTO
  - Meeting with the Ministry of Finance
  - Outcomes, Culture & Heritage, Economic Development

# Minister Brief

- Minister MacLeod Regional Round Table
- Norm Miller, Steamships, Gravenhurst Opera House, Town of Bracebridge, JW Marriott
- Workforce Development Solutions



# COVID-19 Crisis Communication

**March 14: Recommendations to Finance Minister Bill Morneau via TIAO/TIAC**

**March 16: Crisis Communications Constituents and foundational strategy development**

- Small business owners
- Staff
- Consumers/Travellers
- Students
- RTO12 staff
  
- **RTO12 Business Group on Facebook**
- **Surveys**
- **CFIB advocacy**
- **Digital Campfire Content**





# Relentless Communication

- Helping to explain government programs / CFIB webinar
- Lobbying for tax relief for businesses from area municipalities to ensure liquidity
- Adding voice to calls for greater wage subsidies and cash flow to businesses (not just loans)
- Advocating for a loosening of rules for BTIF grants (eliminate 50 cent collars from Parry Sound Muskoka Community Network so businesses can pivot to e-commerce)
- Met with Minister / TIAO regularly
- Established working group of SMEs for feedback
- Development of Wednesday Webinars
- Mental health assistance for business owners

# Minister Brief

- Federal Level - Minister Joly via Terry Sheehan, MPP and Parliamentary Secretary for FedNor





# RTO Model: 10 Year **Anniversary!**

“Double tourism receipts by 2020”

\$20Billion industry in 2010  
**\$36Billion in 2020 (pre-covid)**





# 10 Year Anniversary

## Two Additional Subregions

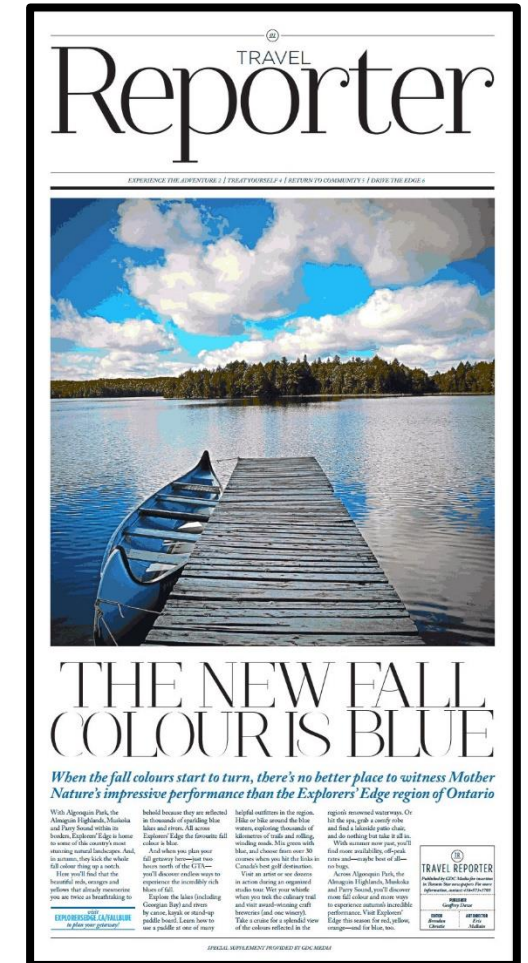
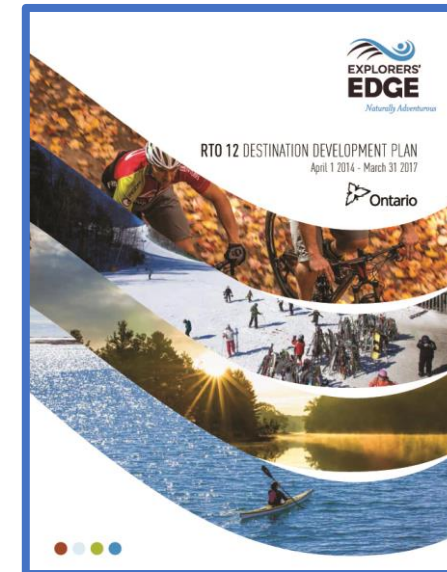
- Port Loring Restoule
- South Algonquin

## Domestic Marketing

- Traditional Campaigns
- Content Marketing
- Social Mobile Content Marketing
- Social Media Audience

## Guiding Documents

- Three Destination Development Plan
- Trails Inventory
- Package and Itinerary Development
- Product Development Framework
- Research Dashboard
- Commercial Air Service Feasibility



# 10 Year Anniversary

## International Marketing

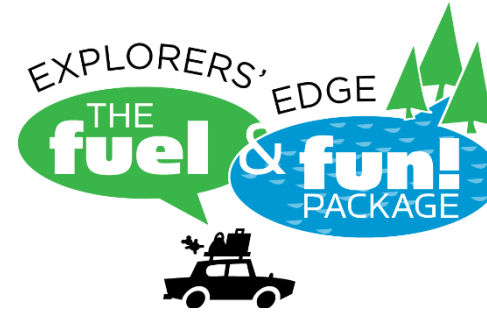
- Canada 150
- Trade Missions
- Great Canadian Wilderness Just North of Toronto

## Transacting Tipping Point Voucher Programs

- Fuel and Fun
- Explore The Edge
- Fly & Explore
- Winter Wonders
- Cottage Country Spirit

## Regional Partnership

- 182 regional partnerships 2010 – 2020!



# 2020 – 2030: **The Next Marathon**

- Sustainable Destination Development
- Research
- Product Development 2.0
- Workforce Thrusters Strategy (housing, education, regional currency)
- International Audiences – Commercial Air Service
- Business Pivot – winter retrofitting
- Spatial Distancing



# Explorers' Edge Team



- Peter Coish – Kuration
- Stephen Murdoch – Enterprise Canada
- Laura Ross - MHSTCI
- Nuku Kolmar – Better Art Direction & Design
- Scott Adams – Birchbark Media
- Kim Knight – Knight Design
- Jason Rosewell – Linkhouse Media
- Brandy Harris – Harris Gingrich
- Solomon Wong and Marcus Lam - InterVISTAS
- Andrew Smellie – Smellies' Print House
- Adrienne Goldman Book Keeping
- Porter Airlines Team
- Nieuport Aviation and Ports Toronto Teams
- Muskoka Airport Team
- Stuart Morley – Morley Consulting

Thank You

# Thank You & Questions

James Murphy

- Executive Director

Kate Monk

- Senior Director, Strategy & Communications

Erin Smit

- Tourism Administration Manager

- Jack Hopkins

- Product Coordinator
- 