

PRESS RELEASE

Quebec Lower North Shore Tourism Awareness Campaign

December 2003 - The Awareness Campaign for Quebec's Lower North Shore Tourism Plan was administered by Intervale Associates and the CLD Basse-Côte-Nord in December 2003 and represents the first step in the implementation of the regional five-year tourism plan for the region that was completed in October 2002. In 2002, the call for the Tourism Plan came from a set of provincial directives to the Ministère des Régions du Québec to help revive the Quebec Lower North Shore's lagging economy in a sustainable manner.

The purpose of the Awareness Campaign was to educate and inform residents about the vision for tourism for their communities and Reserves, answer questions and concerns from residents, and also to explain how the plan will be implemented over the next five years. Foremost in the vision for tourism is a commitment to:

- 1) enhancing existing attractions and packages;
- 2) promoting clusters of activities;
- 3) giving priority to specific activities and attractions to produce the greatest economic impact for the region; and
- 4) emphasizing a coordinated market-driven strategy that captures 'real' market opportunities.

In order to convey the information contained in the plan, initial contact with residents was established through the distribution of over 105 bilingual communiqués to municipalities, Band Councils, local tourism associations, tourism businesses, radio stations and local stores to encourage participation in the meetings. Nine community consultation sessions were conducted over a period of two weeks. A total of 64 residents attended the meetings. Follow-up information was provided to participants interested in submitting tourism projects to the CLD. Finally, there were radio interviews with three local stations to provide information to the general population.

The Awareness Campaign has made substantial progress in increasing local awareness and understanding of the Tourism Plan. Information gathered at the consultation sessions reveals that the most pressing issues in regards to tourism development in the region includes the need for:

- 1) improved and more affordable access;
- 2) coordinated marketing strategy to attract visitors to the region;
- 3) strategic development of attractions (i.e., infrastructure) and services (i.e., accommodations) to keep people in the region longer;

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- 4) training and education of residents and visitors;
- 5) the development of a gateway interpretation centre in Blanc-Sablon;
- 6) the development of winter tourism opportunities (ie., snowmobile trail); and
- 7) the development of a marketing package linked to the film La Grande Seduction.

Identifying a number of regional projects that benefit all communities of the coast would be a positive first step in building local support and advancing a spirit of cooperation.

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