

Lake of the Woods  
**KENORA**



NORTH AMERICA'S  
*Premier*  
BOATING DESTINATION

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**PREPARED BY:**

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## MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR DAVID CANFIELD

**SINCE THE MILL CLOSURE IN 2006**, Kenora has spent the last several years reinventing ourselves. We have revitalized the downtown area, rebranded ourselves as “North America’s Premier Boating Destination” and worked at transforming the forest industry.

We have worked at building positive partnerships with our neighbours and area First Nations communities. We want to work together for our mutual success.

New businesses have been opening steadily over the past few years and we will continue to see this over the next several years at an accelerated rate.

2012 was one of the busiest summers in history, with the Wednesday Farmers Markets and the Whitecap Pavilion events being a focal point of drawing 50,000 visitors to our beautifully revitalized downtown area.

The booming western economy is one of the keys to the rebuilding of our economy with our visitors increasing from this area.

Over the next several years we will see the payback from the significant investments Kenora has made in itself and the efforts of the Lake of the Woods Development Commission and the City and other community groups, including countless volunteers.

We expect to create hundreds of jobs in the next few years and rebuild our economy beyond the peak of the construction of the Weyerhaeuser Timber Strand plant in 2001.

We see great things happening for our City over the next few years!



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## MESSAGE FROM THE LAKE OF THE WOODS DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION CHAIR DON DENVER

**KENORA IS ON THE MOVE!** Business is up, visitor numbers have doubled, property values are up and the population is experiencing a modest increase. Kenora has attracted new business, investors, visitors and new residents. Clearly, Kenora's Economic Development Plan is working.

The Plan outlines an aggressive strategy to transition Kenora from a pulp and paper mill town to a destination and lifestyle community. The Plan was originally adopted in 2006 and updated in 2009. Kenora's strategy is primarily focused on western Canada and builds on our proximity to Winnipeg and southeastern Manitoba, just two hours away.

The Lake of the Woods Development Commission is moving into an exciting new phase of economic development in Kenora and Lake of the Woods with the re-branding of the community to North America's Premier Boating Destination.

*Kenora is North America's Premiere Boating Destination. We are the connection to Lake of the Woods and its 14,522 islands.*

*Through our events and amenities we celebrate our history and build our future.*

*We love our lake; we are stewards and we nurture its pristine environment.*

Working together with our partners at the City, the Kenora and District Chamber of Commerce, Harbourtown BIZ, Kenora Hospitality Alliance, Young Professionals Network, neighbouring communities and First Nations, the local business community and provincial and federal government representatives, we will be a key part of building a positive future for Kenora and area.

Let's go!



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# 1.0

## INTRODUCTION

**THE CITY OF KENORA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN WAS ADOPTED BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL IN AUGUST 2006 AND UPDATED IN 2009.** Since that time, many of the activities identified within the Plan have been completed. In addition, new information, plans and strategies have been developed by the Lake of the Woods Development Commission and its Committees. The Commission recognized that the Plan needed to be updated to reflect this new environment.

The Economic Development Plan (2006) was developed as a result of many years of hard work on a wide range of planning studies, economic development projects and research initiatives. This information was supplemented by extensive public and stakeholder consultation process.

This Plan builds on the results of the following reports and studies and synthesizes all of the previous economic development work:

1. Abitibi Action Plan dated July 27, 2005
2. The City of Kenora Strategic Plan, Vision 2009 (Oct 2005)
3. Kenora Economic Development Workshop, November 2005
4. The Downtown Revitalization Plan, September 2004
5. The Common Ground Report, March 15, 2006
6. The Performing Arts Centre Study, November 2002
7. Lake of the Woods District Property Owners' Economic Impact Study, 2003
8. Performing Arts and Convention Centre and Downtown Opportunity Assessment, Grant Thornton, September 2007
9. Community Improvement Plan (2007)

10. Tourism Strategy (2008)
11. Economic Recovery and Diversification Strategy (2008)
12. Waterfront Development Guidelines (2009)
13. Business and Industry Strategic Market Analysis (2009)
14. The Kenora Community Strategy (April 2009)
15. Education and Training Strategy (2010)
16. Beaches Parks & Trails Development Plan (2010)

The utilization of these projects, reports and studies as a base for the development of an economic development plan builds on the work of many organizations, stakeholders and First Nations partners. It also takes advantage of the public consultation process that was a cornerstone of each of these initiatives, and ensures the opinions comments and views of the community-at-large are embedded in this plan.

The Plan outlines a bold new vision for Kenora and the Lake of the Woods area to build on the natural resources of the area, but take the City in a new direction. The Plan needed to build on the traditional strengths of the area such as forestry and tourism, while charting a course more in keeping with emerging demographic trends and the global economy. In more practical terms, the Plan communicated the future direction of the City in terms of its economic health and well being.



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The Plan became a blueprint for City Council to convey to the public how the municipality would pursue opportunities for growth and development and provided City Council with a policy document for making strategic decisions on the allocation of limited financial and human resources.

The Plan has also been used to disseminate information about Kenora's direction and priorities to potential investors and senior levels of government.

Since that time, the Economic Development Committee and, subsequently, the Lake of the Woods Development Commission have used the Economic Development Plan as their implementation strategy.

In 2008, the Commission adopted the Tourism Strategy which was developed by the Tourism Committee. The Tourism Strategy is a comprehensive plan which defines the necessary steps to turn the Kenora area into a world class tourism destination.

In December 2008, the Lake of the Woods Development Commission adopted the Economic Recovery and Diversification Strategy, which identified the major tourism and economic development infrastructure projects which will complete Kenora's transition from a pulp and paper mill town to a destination, lifestyle and tourist destination community.

In 2009, the Economic Development Plan was updated to include the Tourism Strategy and the Economic Recovery & Diversification Strategy.

This updated Economic Development Plan includes the Education & Training Strategy (2010) and the Beaches Parks & Trails Development Plan.



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# 2.0

## PRIME GOALS OF THE PLAN

**THE SUCCESS OF A GOOD PLAN CAN BE MEASURED BY THE DEGREE TO WHICH IT ACHIEVES DESIRED RESULTS.**

The following is an overview of the prime goals of the plan in terms of tracking the implementation of the plan, and monitoring the corresponding economic development program, in the years to come.

### 2.1 Job Retention & Creation

It is one of the prime objectives of the City of Kenora to increase the number of jobs available, both in the short term and the long term. However, if the City is to have a healthy local economy, it must make up for the net jobs lost in the industrial and government service sectors over the past ten years. Job creation in the tourism, industrial, commercial, professional and public service is a prime objective of this plan in order to prevent any further economic decline, and eventually stimulate future growth and development.

### 2.2 Increased Assessment

A prime objective of this plan is to attract investment in order to increase the assessment base beyond the pre-mill closure level.

### 2.3 Population Retention & Attraction

It is a prime objective of this plan to increase the population of the City of Kenora. This can be achieved through the creation of new jobs and new businesses as stated earlier, and by becoming a lifestyle and destination community for new residents. Kenora already has many of the key attributes required for people to make this move on a permanent basis.



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# 3.0

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

**THIS SECTION OF THE PLAN WILL OUTLINE THE SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN WITH RESPECT TO THE DIVERSIFICATION AND REVITALIZATION OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY.** Each strategic initiative is accompanied by a series of actions required for implementation.

There are six (6) key areas for the City of Kenora to strategically invest its financial and human resources in order to achieve the prime goals set out in the previous section. They are:

1. Business Development
2. Tourism & Special Events
3. Education & Training
4. First Nation Partnerships
5. Economic & Tourism Infrastructure
6. Communications & Outreach

Each of these initiatives has one or more projects or programs designed to accomplish the strategic objective. They are outlined below, along with the specific actions required to evaluate the Plan's implementation.

### 3.1 Business Development & Attraction

Business Development & Attraction has three main areas of focus:

#### 3.1.1 Business Attraction

Business Attraction will focus on bringing new small and medium sized businesses and industry to Kenora through economic infrastructure and targeted marketing campaigns.

#### 3.1.2 Business Retention & Expansion

Business Retention & Expansion will focus on keeping local businesses in the community and providing training, education, programming and support to grow their business.

#### 3.1.3 Destination Kenora

Destination Kenora focuses on making Kenora into a destination, lifestyle community for new residents through community infrastructure improvements and marketing campaigns.



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### 3.1.1 Business Attraction

The purpose of this initiative is to develop and implement a business attraction strategy based on the recommendations in the Business and Industry Strategic Market Analysis (2009). The objective is to build business and industry networks from Manitoba and western Canada.

#### Actions:

- Develop a targeted business attraction strategy including marketing plans and materials for the following sectors: Tourism Investment, IT, Value Added Forestry, Land Development, Mining, Renewable Energy, Health and Trades-related businesses
- Complete an inventory of available lands and buildings for use in community marketing and prospectus development
- Re-develop the Economic Development Website
- Update the Community Profile
- Work with internal city teams and external business attraction teams on business attraction site visits and opportunities
- Industrial Park re-development
- Develop a Community Improvement Plan for the former mill site to facilitate the re-development of the former mill site
- Work with existing and emerging value added businesses to eliminate barriers to their growth and development
- Support fibre allocation alternatives which ensure that fibre is available for community economic development purposes

- Assist the private sector in obtaining funding subsidies as available
- Explore partnership opportunities between potential businesses and other local partners including First Nations
- Provide a “one window” service to potential investors to maintain a business friendly and service oriented approach.
- Reach out to other jurisdictions such as Winnipeg where mutually supportive business attraction can be carried out
- Use current mechanisms to attract immigrants

### 3.1.2 Local Business Retention + Expansion Strategy

Local businesses create 80% business and job growth. These businesses must be supported in their growth and development.

#### Actions:

- Provide training and workshops for local businesses. Quality of service, working in a tourist environment and knowing your town would be some examples.
- Provide a business resource centre for local businesses
- Provide business counseling and advisory services
- Work in partnership with business organizations to develop and implement an ongoing Shop Local program
- Work in partnership with local business organizations to support and strengthen local businesses



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### 3.1.3 Destination Kenora

Develop and implement marketing strategies to attract new residents to Kenora, such as business owners, early retirees and youth, based on Kenora's attraction as a lifestyle, destination community.

Develop and implement the key economic infrastructure projects identified in Kenora's Economic Recovery & Diversification Strategy (2008) which will transition Kenora into a lifestyle, destination community.

#### Actions:

- Re-develop the Office @ the Lake campaign
- Rejuvenate the Choose Kenora youth attraction campaign
- Develop & implement a Retiree Attraction campaign
- Complete an asset inventory including quality of life amenities/infrastructure and services available and needed to attract & retain business and residents & develop a relocation guide based on this information
- Lobby governments to continue the Highway 17 west twinning project from the Manitoba border to Kenora
- Work with the Kenora Airport Commission to maximize use and opportunities at the airport

### 3.2 Tourism Development and Marketing

The Tourism Strategy will turn Kenora and the Lake of the Woods area into a world class tourist destination. The four goals within the strategy outline the steps that must be taken to become that destination.

#### 3.2.1 Four Season Marketing Plan

Increase the number of visitors to the Lake of the Woods area, including overnight stays, with a special emphasis during the shoulder and off seasons (October – May)

#### 3.2.2 Infrastructure & Product Development

Strengthen and expand the Lake of the Woods area attractions and activities for leisure and business visitors, while continually investing in basic tourism infrastructure.

#### 3.2.3 Training & Hospitality

Create a civic environment through education and training that welcomes, respects and shows gratitude towards visitors, summer residents and local residents.

#### 3.2.4 Events

Unite the human and financial resources and stakeholders of the Lake of the Woods area to coordinate the development and expansion of events for residents and visitors.



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**Actions:**

- Analyze the Lake of the Woods area internal and external tourism environment
- Conduct market research in concert with other partners such as the Ontario Tourism Partnership and City of Winnipeg Economic Development Commission.
- Establish a tourism research program
- Develop a four season advertising plan including web based, print, radio and television media
- Create one detailed calendar of events and activities
- Create a cooperative advertising campaign
- Source & leverage marketing funding from senior levels of government
- Implement a media relations program
- Develop packages and itineraries for events, tournaments & conferences
- Create an up to date, high quality image and video library
- Increase internal communication between stakeholders and partners
- Determine appropriate location(s), hours of operation and service levels for Visitor Information Centre(s)
- Support area First Nations Tourism Development Projects
- Encourage and Monitor use of the brand and logo

**3.2.2 Infrastructure & Product Development**

Strengthen and expand the Lake of the Woods area attractions and activities for leisure and business visitors, while continually investing in basic tourism infrastructure.

**Actions:**

- Assist with implementation of Kenora's Downtown Revitalization Plan
- Develop an investment plan for trails
- Develop and promote public amenities for tourists and residents
- Encourage the development of a public arts space
- Support the development of First Nation tourism products
- Support the development of the heritage sector
- Identify current and potential magnet attractions
- Support the development and expansion of sports venues
- Encourage repairs to Coney Island infrastructure
- Support highway twinning



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### 3.2.3 Training & Hospitality

Create a civic environment through education and training that welcomes, respects and shows gratitude towards visitors, summer residents and local residents.

#### Actions:

- Develop a customer service strategy
- Create a program to develop an informed community
- Develop a Home Town Tourism familiarization tour strategy
- Develop an Ambassador program
- Coordinate, identify and fill gaps in visitor information materials
- Improve levels of visitor satisfaction
- Generate goodwill and understanding of tourism and its benefits
- Support an increased presence of tourism curriculum in high schools and college campuses

### 3.2.4 Special Events

Unite the human and financial resources and stakeholders of the Lake of the Woods area to coordinate the development and expansion of events for residents and visitors.

#### Actions:

- Provide one-stop assistance to groups and organizations involved in community events, conferences and conventions
- Utilization of special events infrastructure
- Create “grab bags” for community organizations, events, conferences and conventions to encourage visitors to explore the community
- Work with hotels, resorts, attractions, recreation providers and restaurants to create packages and itineraries which complement special events.

### 3.3 Education and Training

Increase the presence of training and post secondary education institutions and opportunities in the Kenora area

#### 3.3.1 Partnership Development

To facilitate the development of strong partnerships in the education and training sector while honouring guiding principles and ensuring open communication.

#### Actions:

- Define the role of private sector partners
- Implement broad community engagement strategy



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### 3.3.2 Retention/Expansion of Existing Programs

To retain existing programs and to expand programs to proactively suit the needs of the community and to attract an increased number of students to the city.

### 3.3.3 Infrastructure Development

To demonstrate feasible education and training infrastructure development opportunities and to encourage diversified investment.

**Actions:**

- Facilitate implementation of local solutions
- Encourage diversified Investment

### 3.3.4 Niche Program Development

To support and encourage the development of niche program opportunities by stakeholders that would make Kenora a destination for learning.

**Actions:**

- Facilitate development of niche opportunities
- Facilitate public and private investment partnerships

### 3.4 First Nation Partnership Initiatives

Work with area First Nation communities and Grand Council Treaty #3 to identify economic development and relationship based opportunities which will strengthen the area

**Actions:**

- Support area First Nations' Economic Development Projects
- Create a regional staff-based Economic Development Network
- Economic Development and Relationship Building Conference
- Identify joint infrastructure and venues to attract visitors
- Consider development of joint marketing strategy



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### 3.4.1 Common Ground/Tunnel Island

This project is a partnership between three area First Nations, the City of Kenora and Grand Council Treaty #3 and has been developed to protect Tunnel Island, respect First Nation interests and history, illustrate European history and continue current community and First Nations' use of the property.

Stakeholders in the partnership have formed a corporation to manage the Tunnel Island property, undertake studies to seek historic site status, engage elders, and engage respective communities in guiding and shaping a shared land use plan

#### **Actions:**

- Support the Rat Portage Common Ground Conservation Organization
- Assist the corporation in the development of a work plan
- Assist the corporation with funding applications
- Work with the Community University Research Alliance project team to develop research projects for the community

### 3.5 Economic Infrastructure

There are a number of key economic and tourism infrastructure projects identified in the Economic Recovery & Diversification Strategy. These projects are also embedded within both the Business Attraction and Tourism Strategies. Without these major capital investments, the Economic Development Plan and Kenora's plans for recovery and diversification will not succeed.

#### **Actions:**

#### **3.5.1 Downtown Revitalization and Waterfront Development / Hennepin Lane Heritage Project**

The goal of the downtown revitalization project is to turn Kenora's harbourfront and downtown into a destination for residents, seasonal residents, and tourists. In the development of the Downtown Revitalization Plan, these key principles were agreed upon:

The original Downtown Revitalization Plan, which outlined a phased approach to downtown revitalization, was completed in September 2004.

Phase I underground infrastructure and streetscaping on Main Street was completed in 2008.



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Phase II Harbourfront, Lake of the Woods pedestrian plaza and the White Cap Pavillion were completed in 2011.

Phase III planning and design was initiated in 2012.

### 3.5.2 Beaches, Parks & Trails Norman Park Heritage Transportation Centre

The Beaches Parks & Trails Development Plan was adopted in 2010. The Plan identifies upgrades to Kenora's public beaches, parks and green spaces which would take them from local amenities to destination locations which can be used to attract more visitors and new residents to the community.

Trail development, including the identification of preliminary bicycle routes, is included in the Plan.

### 3.5.3 Training & Education Centre of Excellence

A business plan, including recommendations for facility location was completed for this project in 2011. Increased post secondary opportunities will retain and attract more young people to the community.

### 3.5.4 Arts Centre

The Lake of the Woods Centre for the Arts incorporated in Jun 2010. The corporation's main purpose is to create an Arts Centre in Kenora by identifying a venue or site for a centre, and developing a capital plan for the construction of the facility and a business plan for the development and operation of the facility

### 3.5.5 Industrial Park Servicing Upgrade

Kenora has an opportunity to extend municipal services at its Jones Road industrial park, once tenants for the land have been confirmed.

### 3.5.6 Tunnel Island Legacy Project

Tunnel Island is a 400 acre green space which is owned by the City of Kenora in partnership with Grand Council Treaty #3 and three area First Nation Communities. The area has the potential to become a focal point for local and area residents and visitors.

### 3.5.7 Twinning Trans-Canada Highway from Manitoba to Kenora

Twinning the Trans Canada highway from Manitoba to Kenora will bring more visitors and businesses from Winnipeg and Manitoba and western Canada.



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### 3.5.8 Casino Development

Kenora and Wauzhusk Onigum have been identified by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming (OLG) Modernization process as a potential location for a 300 slot casino development. OLG is expected to announce successful proponents in 2013.

### 3.5.9 Venue Attractions

The Tourism Strategy identifies the need for more attractions for visitors – more things to see and do.

### 3.5.10 Hotel Upgrades and Attractions

In order to complete the transition to a destination community, Kenora will require a broader spectrum of accommodations, particularly at the higher end. Unique accommodations for modern travelers seeking experiential tourism experiences have been identified as a further need.

### 3.5.11 Former Mill Site Re-Development

The 82 acre mill site is being re-developed by a private sector developer as a business park with a mix of light industrial and commercial developments.

## 3.6 Communications & Outreach

The Economic Development Plan outlines a vision for Kenora's future. In order to succeed, the vision within the Plan must be widely communicated and understood. In this way, the community will embrace the common vision and everyone in the community will be working towards the same vision. A Communication Strategy has been developed to keep Mayor and Council, key stakeholder groups and organizations and the community at large informed about the Plan and the progress within the Plan.

#### Actions:

- Quarterly reporting to Mayor and Council
- Stakeholder and partner meetings
- Public and targeted speaking opportunities
- Communications re progress via traditional media
- Communication through social media
- Updated web site



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