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Ontario Investing in Apprenticeship Training in Thunder Bay

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INSIDE

Government of Canada
invests \$1.5 million so
Lakehead University can
expand, create new
programming and form
strategic alliances

Rory McIlroy Repeats
and Wins the 2026
Masters!

 [NorthSuperiorPublishing](#)

 [@tbay25](#)  [@Scott Sumner](#)

Publication Mail Reg. # 40050324



Sovereign Dental Celebrates Oral Health Professionals with Certificates of Recognition

Sovereign Dental successfully hosted a recognition event on March 31, 2026, honouring its dentists and dental hygienists for their dedication to improving oral health outcomes across Northwestern Ontario. This builds on a recent initiative earlier in

March during Dental Assistants Recognition Week, where certificates of appreciation were also provided to Sovereign Dental's dental assistants through the office of the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay—Superior North, Minister of Jobs and



Families, and Minister responsible for FedNor.

Following that, and in recognition of National Dentist Day and National Dental Hygienists Week, the Minister's office also prepared certificates for dentists and dental hygienists, with plans for the Minister to attend in person to present them.

While the Minister was ultimately unable to attend due to illness, her office provided the certificates along with a formal message, which were shared during the event.

The semi-formal gathering brought together clinical team members from across Sovereign Dental's locations, along with local media, who had the opportunity to engage with leadership and staff. Recognizing an Often Overlooked Profession

Akash Balaji, Operations Manager (Regional) at Sovereign Dental, emphasized the importance of formally recognizing oral healthcare professionals:

"This event was about recognizing, appreciating, and celebrating dental professionals for their immense commitment to the well-being of our community. Personally, I've rarely seen dental workers receive the level of appreciation they deserve—whether it's during National Dental Hygienists Week, National Dentist Day, or Dental Assistants Recognition Week.

That realization stayed with me, and I felt that someone had to take the first step. We wanted to start that here at Sovereign Dental—to ensure these professionals feel seen and valued.

I reached out to Minister Hajdu knowing

her strong commitment to recognizing those who serve our communities, and we're truly grateful for her support in providing these certificates of appreciation. Her continued encouragement for frontline professionals like ours means a great deal."

Expanding Access to Care in Northwestern Ontario

Sovereign Dental continues to play a key role in improving access to care, particularly through its early adoption of the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP). The organization has seen a growing number of patients receiving essential treatment—many of whom previously faced barriers to care.

With increasing demand, Sovereign Dental has taken an active role in bridging the gap between patients and providers by recruiting and bringing skilled dental professionals from across Canada to Thunder Bay.

Akash Balaji added:

"With the federal government expanding access to dental coverage through CDCP, the next step is ensuring we have enough providers to deliver that care. Sovereign Dental is proud to act as a bridge—bringing skilled dental professionals from across Canada to our region so patients can receive timely care.

Our goal is simple: no one should have to wait weeks or months in pain—especially children and individuals in underserved and fly-in communities. In a region with high caries rates, timely access to oral care is critical for long-term health outcomes."



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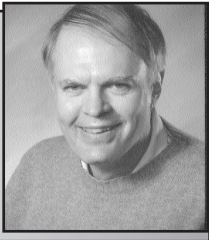
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**Publisher's
Note
Scott
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The Port of Thunder Bay is pleased to announce the MV Kathy McKeil as the recipient of the 2026 Top Hat Award, presented annually to the first domestic vessel to officially open the Port's shipping sea-

MV Kathy McKeil Named Port of Thunder Bay's 2026 Domestic Top Hat Award Winner

son. The MV Kathy McKeil, operated by McKeil Marine Limited, passed the Thunder Bay breakwall at exactly 3:23 p.m. on March 26th, marking the official start of the 2026 navigation season at the Port. In recognition of this milestone arrival, the vessel and her crew - including

a long-standing maritime tradition. The vessel berthed at Richardson International Terminal, where it will be loaded with canola before departing Thunder Bay for Windsor. The movement of agricultural commodities such as canola highlights the Port's vital role in supporting Canada's export supply

Superior and the furthest inland, the Port of Thunder Bay handles a diverse range of cargoes and plays a critical role in the regional and national economy. The arrival of the MV Kathy McKeil signals the return of vessel traffic, trade activity, and the collaborative efforts of port partners, terminal operators, marine service providers, and ship operators alike.

Today representatives from the Port of Thunder Bay and Mayor Ken Boschcoff welcomed the captain and crew of the MV Kathy McKeil in a Top Hat Ceremony, presenting gifts of thanks for opening the shipping season, and extending best wishes for a safe and productive 2026 shipping season.



Captain Adam Barnes and Chief Engineer Matthew Rankine - have been named this year's Top Hat Award winners, continuing

chain and connecting Prairie producers to global markets. As the largest export port on Lake



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Port of Thunder Bay Names MV Sakar as This Year's International Top Hat Award Recipient

The Port of Thunder Bay is pleased to announce the MV Sakar as the recipient of this year's International Top Hat Award, recognizing the first international vessel in the Port for the opening of the navigation season.

MV Sakar, operated by Navibulgar, passed the Thunder Bay breakwall at approximately 5:25 p.m. on April 8th, signalling

the official commencement of the international shipping season.

The vessel's last foreign port-of-origin was Marina di Carrara in Italy.

After it's loaded with canola at Richardson International Terminal, the MV Sakar will depart Thunder Bay bound for France, carrying Prairie-grown agricultural products to international customers. This momentous occasion highlights the Port's ongoing



role as a key gateway between Canadian exporters and global markets.

Today, Mayor Ken Boschcoff and representatives from the Port of Thunder Bay, Lake Superior Shipping, and Richardson

standing Port of Thunder Bay tradition, presented annually to commemorate the first international vessel of the season. The award symbolizes maritime excellence and the strong relationships between the Port

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International welcomed Captain Georgi Milkov Damyanov and Chief Engineer Mihai Curbat of the MV Sakar in a Top Hat Ceremony, presenting gifts of thanks and extending best wishes for a safe and productive 2026 shipping season.

The International Top Hat Award is a long-

and the global marine community. The Port of Thunder Bay extends its congratulations to Captain Damyanov, Chief Engineer Curbat, and the officers and crew of MV Sakar, and wishes them a safe and successful voyage.

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Wake the Giant Announces 2026 Festival Lineup

Grab your Apple Bottom jeans and boots with the fur because Flo Rida is officially coming to Wake the Giant. The Grammy nominated hip-hop icon behind hits like



Low, Right Round and Good Feeling will headline the 2026 Wake the Giant Music Festival presented by the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council (NNEC), taking over the Thunder Bay Waterfront on September 12th, 2026.

Joining him is a stacked, genre spanning lineup, including storytelling rock legends The Wallflowers, pop favourites Plain White T's (Hey There Delilah will sound so epic under the Northern sky), and a powerful roster of Indigenous artists shaping today's music scene like Saddle Lake Cree Nation's soulful Tia Wood, R&B artist and Prince of the North Sebastian Gaskin of Tataskweyak Cree Nation, country powerhouse Shawnee Kish (presented by the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund), and rising artist LOV from Treaty 6 Territory.

"We wanted a lineup that hits from every angle. It's fun, nostalgic and has so much Indigenous talent behind it. This year is going to be unreal," says Wake the Giant Co-Founder and Organizer AJ Haapa.

Tickets for the 2026 Wake the Giant Music Festival went on sale today at noon at wakethegiant.ca. Tier 1 tickets are available for \$125 and limited VIP tickets for \$180. Kids 11 and under are free but still require a ticket to attend via the ticket site.

Today's announcement was not your average lineup drop. It was revealed alongside

Dennis Franklin Cromarty (DFC) students at Superior Screen Print and Ungalli Clothing Co, where they helped screen print the lineup onto plain white t's. It also included a live set from DJ

Whirlwind, who created a mix of the 2026 performers.

"Wake the Giant has always been about community and partners like Superior Screen Print who continue to show up in meaningful ways, from donating equipment to DFC students so they can create at the school, providing internships, to printing backstage festival merch year after year," says Wake the Giant Co-Founder and Organizer, Greg Chomut. "We couldn't do this festival without our community supporters."

This year marks the 7th annual Wake the Giant Music Festival. In the spirit of the Seven Generations thinking from Anishinaabe teachings, it's a chance to look back on the past seven years and the ways our community has come together for DFC students, while thinking about how our actions today can have a positive impact on the future. Organizers say this year carries extra weight, as the festival will be put on pause in 2027 as the City of Thunder Bay begins major upgrades to the Waterfront festival grounds.

"This is the year to definitely show up. It's a chance to come together, celebrate what we've built, and honour the land that's hosted us," continued Chomut.

Wake the Giant is Canada's largest student focused cultural awareness project and one of the most meaningful music festivals in

the country. "This isn't your typical music festival, it's a cultural celebration and a massive welcome party for Indigenous youth who move to Thunder Bay each year to attend DFC," continued Haapa. "One minute you're singing along to a headliner, the next you're in a Round Dance with people you just met."

Indigenous Craft Market featuring hand-made creations from northern artists, fresh bannock cooked over open flame by local Elders, community art activations and interactive experiences, a Kids Zone for families, local food vendors serving everything from bannock tacos to northern inspired dishes and a Wellness Tent, offering space for rest and support.

The 2026 festival will also include an






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Government of Canada invests nearly \$ 2 million to expansion of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine University

FedNor funding will help increase enrollment and graduate and retain more doctors in Northern Ontario

In a rapidly changing world, we are focusing on what we can control: building a stronger, fairer and more resilient Canada. Ensuring workers are empowered is essential to building a strong economy and supporting the workforce of today and tomorrow.



row.

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for FedNor, and Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay—Superior North, today announced a FedNor investment of \$1,968,386 so the Northern Ontario School of Medicine University (NOSM University) can establish and expand training facilities in 87 municipalities and Indigenous communities across Northern Ontario.

Provided through Northern Ontario Development Program (NODP), this investment will allow NOSM University teaching sites, across the North, to retrofit learner spaces and purchase specialised equipment to support in-community training. This includes modernizing the facilities with enhancements such as video conferencing and information and communications technology capabilities.

Once fully established, the new training space will be well equipped to deliver the highest standard of education expected from modern medical schools. As a result of this expansion, NOSM University's Doctor of Medicine (MD) program is expected to increase from 425 to 852 learners within the next four years.

Of the 87 training facilities, five will be located at larger hospitals in Sudbury, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder

Bay and Timmins. An additional 13 locations will be classified as Comprehensive Community Clerkship sites, with the remaining 69 residing in community-based clinical locations, 43 of which will be within Indigenous communities, with the balance serving rural and Francophone populations.

Quotes

“Northern Ontario thrives when communities are stronger. By helping NOSM University establish training facilities across the region, we are focused on what we can control and on building resilient communities. To benefit generations, this project will help the University double its enrollment so they can graduate more doctors that will have established roots here at home.”

· The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister Jobs and Families and Minister Responsible for FedNor

“We are grateful to the Government of Canada for this investment, which advances NOSM University's expansion across Northern Ontario by funding the infrastructure required to deliver high-quality, accredited programming. By training more doctors in the North, we are strengthening regional economies and helping communities thrive through improved access to care.”

· Dr. Michael Green, President, Vice Chancellor, Dean and CEO, NOSM

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The Construction Climate in Thunder Bay and area - May Feature



Government of Canada invests \$1.5 million so Lakehead University can expand, create new programming

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for FedNor, and Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay—Superior North, announced a FedNor investment of \$1.5 million to help establish the Collaborative Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program (CDVMP) at Lakehead University, one of Canada's first veterinary programs designed for Northern and rural agricultural economies.

Provided through the Northern Ontario Development Program, this investment will allow Lakehead University to purchase the specialized laboratory and research equipment required to launch the CDVMP. This partnership initiative with the University of Guelph will train future veterinarians with the goal of addressing the shortage of veterinary professionals living and working in Northern Ontario.

Starting in 2027, students will begin their studies at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay as part of the Collaborative Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program and complete their training at the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph. Graduates will receive a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from the University of Guelph.

This joint venture will help anchor veterinary talent in the North. It will ensure sustained access to veterinary expertise to strengthen agribusiness, improve livestock health, and protect food production. The CDVMP will pave the way for increased agricultural productivity by expanding veterinary capacity and training veterinarians in biosecurity, herd management, and disease response. In partnership with Indigenous communities and businesses, the program will also deliver culturally



relevant training related to livestock, food security, and economic development.

Quotes

“Northern Ontario grows stronger when local partners bring new ideas and build lasting partnerships. To build on this strength, investing in projects like this will preserve and protect key industries, while helping communities and businesses tackle today's challenges and prepare for tomorrow's economy. A resilient Northern Ontario is one that keeps building for the future and investing in talent that will benefit generations to come.”

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister Responsible for FedNor, and Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay—Superior North

“We are grateful to FedNor and Minister Hajdu for this important investment, which will help bring the Collaborative Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program to life at Lakehead University. This program represents a major step forward for Northern Ontario by helping to address long-standing veterinary shortages while supporting the growth of the agri-food sector and strengthening rural and Indigenous communities. We are proud to partner with the University of Guelph on this initiative, and together we are building a program that will train the next generation of veterinarians where they are most needed.”

Dr. Gillian Siddall, President and Vice-Chancellor, Lakehead University

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FedNor funds will support sustained access to veterinary expertise in Thunder Bay and across Northern Ontario

Continued

"FedNor's investment is a game-changer. It empowers Lakehead to build the foundation needed to train the next generation of veterinarians from Northern Ontario to serve the communities that need them most. This support fuels an innovative program designed to close long-standing gaps in veterinary care and strengthen the

health and well-being of underserved regions across the North."

Dr. Jeffrey Wichtel, Dean, Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph.

Quick facts

The funding announced today is provided through Northern Ontario Development Program (NODP), through which FedNor



invests in projects led by municipalities, First Nations, and other organizations and institutions that support community economic development, diversification, job creation and self-reliant communities in Northern Ontario.

Lakehead University is a learner-centred post-secondary institution that operates campuses in Thunder Bay

and Orillia.

Lakehead is proud host to 11 Canada Research Chairs and revolutionary facilities such as the world-renowned Paleo-DNA Laboratory and the Biorefining Research Institute.

Lakehead also offers a blend of academic excellence and opportunity with a rich variety of social and recreational activities.

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Ontario Investing in Apprenticeship Training in Thunder Bay

The Ontario government is investing more than \$409,000 to expand apprenticeship training at LIUNA Local 607 and the Vedic Cultural Centre, helping more people in Thunder Bay gain the skills and experience needed for good-paying, in-demand careers in the skilled trades. This investment is part of the government’s annual \$29 million commitment through the Apprenticeship Capital Grant program, which supports upgrades to training facilities and equipment to ensure apprentices receive hands-on learning that reflects current industry standards. “Thunder Bay has a strong workforce and a proud history in the skilled trades,” said the Hon. Kevin Holland, MPP for Thunder Bay–Atikokan. “This investment will help more people access hands-on training, connect with local employers, and build rewarding careers right here in our community, while supporting the growth of our regional economy.”



Through the Apprenticeship Capital Grant program, Ontario is supporting training delivery agents across the province to strengthen apprenticeship opportunities in 2025–26. \$225,064 - LIUNA Local 607 will use this

funding in 2026 to deliver back-to-back training in the Red Seal trades of Construction Craft Worker and Cement Finisher. The program will include 12 weeks of in-class training followed by 12 weeks of on-the-job experience, supporting participants as they transition directly into employment.

\$184,000 - The Vedic Cultural Centre will use this funding to support culinary training by upgrading equipment and enhancing training capacity. This investment will provide participants with hands-on experience while helping them develop practical, job-ready skills and strengthening the centre’s ability to serve the community.

“Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is proud to invest in programs that modernize training and strengthen Ontario’s apprenticeship system,” said David Piccini, Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. “At a time when many people are looking for stability and opportuni-



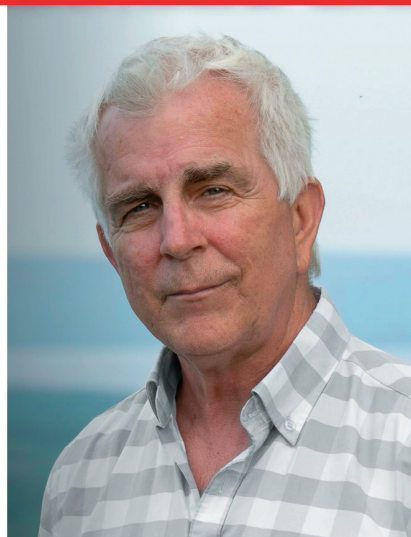
ty, these investments are helping more people train for rewarding, in-demand careers close to home, while ensuring employers can find the skilled workers they need to fill critical labour gaps.”

Continued

Marcus Powlowski

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The federal government continues to support construction in Thunder Bay through investments that create good-paying jobs and strengthen local infrastructure.

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KEVIN HOLLAND, MPP
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Grant funding supports upgrades to training facilities and equipment at LIUNA 607 and Vedic Cultural Centre

Continued

With the funding from the Apprenticeship Capital Grant, the Pre Apprenticeship program at LIUNA Local 607 will support 12 apprentices with meaningful training to employment with Local 607. LIUNA will strengthen hands-on training and give more people access to equipment that reflect current employer needs.

LIUNA will prepare trainees with Level 1 training in Construction Craft Worker and Cement Finishing with the financial support that Training Delivery Agents



require in keeping pace with evolving technologies and industry demands. "Pre-apprenticeship funding is crucial to bridge the gap between education and employment by providing participants with essential hands-on skills, safety certifications, and trade readiness at no cost." said Andy Nieweglowski, Director of Training at LIUNA 607. "It serves as a vital pipeline to fill high-demand labor shortages by giving trainees, particularly from underrepresented groups, practical experience, work placements, and a clear path into competitive apprenticeship opportunities."

"We are grateful to MPP Holland and the Ontario government for supporting this initiative." Said Dr. Prashant Jani, Director of the Vedic Cultural Centre. "This funding will help us provide hands-on culinary training and create pathways to meaningful employment for individuals in our community."

Ontario continues to take action to protect workers, businesses and communities by investing in skills training that responds to labour market needs. This investment will continue to develop our world class workforce, connect employers to skilled workers, support economic growth and build a stronger, more competitive and resilient Ontario.

Quick Facts

- There are 144 skilled trades in Ontario.
- Ontario will need an additional 400,000 skilled trades workers over the next decade to meet demand for housing, infrastructure, transit, energy and industrial projects.



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Good Construction Activity in Thunder Bay

BY SCOTT A. SUMNER
Thunder Bay BUSINESS

The construction industry is very busy in Thunder Bay with many projects on the go in both the residential and commercial areas.

There is a shortage of residential homes in Thunder Bay and this is definitely being addressed in the city with many new projects, multi unit projects being approved, including large land sales from the city of Thunder Bay. One large project includes a local developer purchasing three different land sites from the city of Thunder Bay



City of Thunder Bay Indoor Turf Facility Beverly Street



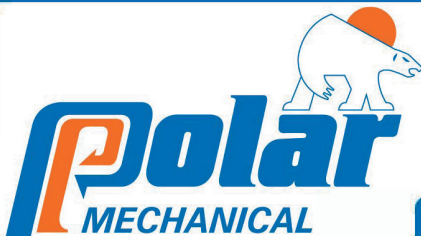
Thunder Bay Correctional Complex

and intending to build multi residential unit apartment buildings with close to 1000 units. These multi residential apartment buildings will help the overall market in the sense some people will sell their longtime family homes to downsize and move to an apartment type setting and this will free up other homes in the area.

Continued



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Good Construction Activity in Thunder Bay



New Cardiac Surgery Care wing at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Center

Continued

If you look around Thunder Bay, probably the largest project that has been underway for several years now is the

Center

Thunder Bay Correctional Complex on Highway 61, which is a \$1.25 billion project with an opening date slated for 2027.



The new Thunder Bay Art Gallery on the Waterfront

The Thunder Bay Turf Centre is also undergoing construction near the Thunder Bay Community Auditorium and is a large project.

Science Centre is building a new wing to hold cardiac surgery for the first time in Northwestern Ontario.

Continued

The Thunder Bay Regional Health



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Good Construction Activity in Thunder Bay



The Ontario Power Generation (OPG)
new building facility at the Innova
Business Park

Continued

On the waterfront, the Thunder Bay Art Gallery continues work on their large new facility at the Prince Arthur's Landing area.

A huge retail development can be seen in the Golf Links Road and Harbourview Expressway area. Forum Properties has sold a large land site for the construction of a Costco store in Thunder Bay, much talked about for many years. In addition, Forum is developing Forum Centrepoint with their buildings, including a McDonald's restaurant and other properties that will come in phases.

In Innova Business Park Ontario

Power Generation is producing a large office building to house their operations.

Overall it is a very strong construction market in Thunder Bay which signals a fairly stable economy.



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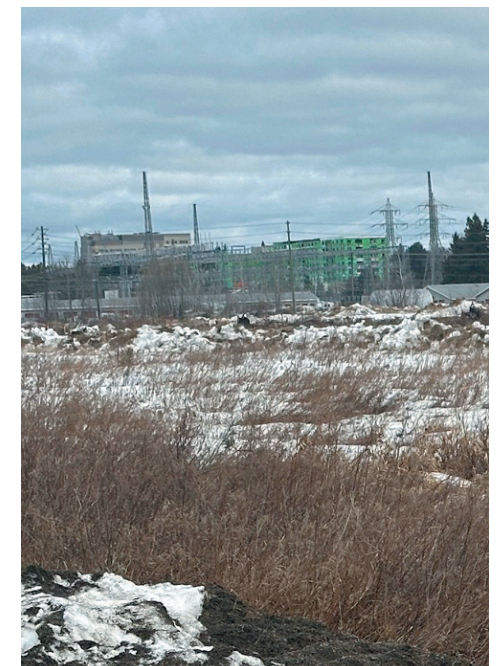
Good Construction Activity in Thunder Bay



The new Pavilion Enclosure at Chippewa Park



The Forum Centrepoint property development at the corner of Harbour Expressway in Golf Links Road



The new Costco site



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Rory McIlroy Repeats - Wins the 2026 Masters!

BY SCOTT A. SUMNER

Great Outdoors

Each April I always look forward to the Masters tournament held at Augusta,



Georgia. It is the first major of the year and really the start of the golf season in Canada for many, although in Thunder Bay it is about 1 month away.

My favourite golfer is Rory McIlroy and I got to see him do a complete range warm up at a recent RBC Canadian Open in Hamilton. I also had the good fortune of attending one Masters event several years ago in which Phil

Mickelson won. This definitely gave me a great insight into the tournament and how it is run on such a grand level.

This year, as for many years previously, Rory McIlroy had so much media attention at this event as by winning the 2025 Masters he did complete the career grand slam. The career grand slam means winning all four majors, the Masters, PGA, U.S. Open, and the Open championships in your career. Only five other players have done this in history and the last one was many years ago in 2000 by Tiger Woods.

This year's 2026 Masters tournament ended up with several golfers in contention after Rory lost a 6 shot lead he had built up coming into the weekend. The other major figure in golf today, Scottie Scheffler, who after a slow start came just one shot short of Rory.

Rory repeats as Masters Champ in 2026 and becomes one of only 4 golfers to do that! There's no doubt that golf is a great sport, and it was awesome to see this very popular player finally accomplish the grand slam and then repeat at the Masters!

We can all look forward to a great golf season in the beautiful Thunder Bay area. Our golf courses are great and the short season we have means get out and enjoy the game!



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Positive 2026 NOMA Conference & AGM

BY SCOTT A. SUMNER

Thunder Bay BUSINESS

I asked Rick Dumas, Mayor of Marathon and President of NOMA some questions about this years Conference and AGM.

How has this years event gone?

“ We have close to 400 delegates that are attending our 2 and 1/2 day conference in Thunder Bay. It has been great with presentations and many break out sessions where you have an opportunity to learn about topics important to your community. You can also meet with Ontario government Ministers with some 40 delegations for smaller communities that can't always really



go to Ottawa or Toronto for conferences. It is a great opportunity for them to have 15 minute delegations with Ministers. It has been really good for our membership. All of the Ministers are here to listen to the issues so you have the opportunity to bring your concerns or issues to them while participat-

ing in the NOMA conference.”

How do you feel our economy has been doing in NW Ontario?

“ We have been taking about the forestry sector and critical minerals sector that is taking off. Our economy is fairly strong in the north, we know that and Premier Ford and Prime Minister Carney talk about our vast mineral resources.”

“ In the forestry sector there is change. The days of making pulp and paper to write on have past, but there are other opportunities in the sector to make chemicals, fuels etc. We are talking about information sharing and what our economy is driven by. The speakers themselves can get their view

across as well.”

How are you doing in the town of Marathon?

“ In Marathon we are doing well. Hemlo started in 1985 and they said it would be a 17 year life span and here we are 41 years later and still going strong. Last year it was repurchased from another group of individuals who are great and focussed on the enhancement and life of the mine. We also have a critical minerals mine coming on stream soon, Generation Mining, which is copper and palladium. It is 100 % permitted and First Nations supported so we are excited about that and hope they start construction soon.”

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