

# **CANADIAN SALES PLAN**

## **ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU**

**OCTOBER 1, 2007 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2008**

**Presented by:**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Convention and Visitors Bureau's visitor profile research and client statistical data, indicate that visitation figures from the Canadian market increased for the year of 2006 by 4.7 per cent compared to 2005, welcoming 339,817 overnight Canadian visitors.

The recent census report was released for 2006 confirming the population of Canada as 31.6 million people based on collected data, however, it is estimated that there is close to 33 million people, accounting for 3 per cent who did not complete the census. As of November 2006, 14.9 million Canadians visited the United States which represents 45 per cent of the Canadian population, making Canada the Number One International market, and accounting for 30 per cent of all visits to the U.S. in 2005. More Canadians visit the United States than Europeans and South Americans combined. In 2006, overnight trips by Canadians to the U.S. increased by 7.6 per cent compared to 2005, with outbound travel to the U.S. increasing for all provinces and territories, except the Yukon (-9.3%) and Nova Scotia (-1.1%). Ontario accounted for a higher proportion of visits-to-population at 39 per cent of the Canadian population, but 47 per cent of all Canadian visits to the U.S. Significant numbers of Canadian "snowbirds" continue to visit the United States to spend the winter months in Florida, which recorded 2.03 million Canadian visitors in 2005, up 6.4 per cent over 2004. Year to date as of September 2006, visitation of Canadians to Florida is up 2.7 per cent.

Close to 58 per cent of Canadians drove to the U.S., while 34 per cent used airplanes and 4 per cent traveled by bus. Approximately 83 per cent of Canadians surveyed in December 2006 stated they planned to take a summer leisure trip in 2007 and of those, 10 per cent planned to travel to the U.S. Canadians aged 30 – 49 are the most likely to take a summer vacation. Over 40 per cent of Canadians own a passport, easing transition to the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. Forecasts predict increased numbers of Canadians will visit the U.S. in 2007 and 2008.

The Canadian dollar continues to rise, relative to major currencies, increasing the attractiveness of U.S. travel destinations. It is still a very strong factor influencing the decision to travel, and is holding steady at the US\$.85 value. There is a direct correlation with exchange rate fluctuations, which have shown signs of growth in the last many months, as consumers benefit from the increased value of the dollar, reinforcing the economic attractiveness of the destination. The Canadian dollar is expected to remain strong, with additional appreciation in 2007 boosting the value into the 87-90 cent (US) range.

With the recent decrease in oil prices, a strong Canadian dollar, low unemployment, static interest rates and a high disposable income, the Canadian economy is balanced to perform very well in 2007. The GDP rate is holding steady at close to 3 per cent. Consumer confidence remains high across the nation and excellent economic conditions this year will enable consumers to spend money in support of the travel industry.

Significant employment growth this past year has boosted demand, with the 2006 annual average employment growth in Canada at 2 per cent. Continued growth in the economy will support more outbound travel to Pinellas County.

Tour operator, travel agency and online sales are up over last year, indicating that visitation from Canada is on the rise.

In spite of the demise of Canjet Airlines and the withdrawal of Skyservice/Conquest Vacations, airline capacity has remained relatively static. Sunwing Vacations (Sunwing Airlines) and Transat Tours (WestJet Airlines) have both committed to selling both ITC and FIT packages to the destination, enabling the area to maintain and grow its market share in both eastern and western Canada. The destination remains to be the number one choice for Canadians and visitation to Pinellas County is on the rise for 2007.

## 2007-2008 SALES OBJECTIVE/STRATEGIES

The following sales objectives are designed to increase visitation, length of stay and economic impact to the region from Canada while continually providing customer service through total quality commitment.

### GOAL:

*Increase visitation to the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area by 2 per cent via joint marketing efforts with travel partners.*

### STRATEGIES:

Launch and expand the Fifth Annual CAA (Canadian Automobile Association) Sweepstake sales blitz training program during the fall months to introduce the Fifth Annual Florida's Beach Sweepstake Promotion to over 3.2 million consumer members. A sales blitz and training seminar series will be conducted on 150 offices in the provinces of Alberta, B.C., Manitoba, Ontario and the Maritimes. The program will be augmented by personal sales calls, member presentations, co-operative advertising, and educational familiarization tours, in addition to attending six CAA Travel Shows in the GTA (Greater Toronto and Area) reaching over 3 million members.

Continue to promote our Website to the travel trade market by encouraging tour operators and consortiums to join our web link, reaching a high number of consumers across Canada planning a vacation with these tour companies.

Partner with key tour operators in Eastern Canada on cooperative marketing efforts targeting the consumer directly in key primary markets in Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes. Develop local radio promotions, destination training sessions, educational trips and Florida's Beach nights, reaching an estimated 5000 travel agents and millions of consumers.

Develop penetration in the secondary market of Western Canada by aligning with airlines and tour operators which are growing their product in Florida via product launches and consumer promotions.

Enhance partnerships with competitive retail consortium chain(s) by continuing the Florida's Beach Window Display blitz and by attending select agency consumer shows from October to December, targeting a total of 100 travel agencies in Ontario reaching a population of 3,000,000.

Build upon established relationships with the Internet suppliers and retailers in Canada by developing programs and promotions to augment the destination. Develop call centre training sessions on a bi-annual basis targeting over 500 agents.

Continue to support all local inquiries and leads from meeting and incentive planners to promote the destination, working closely with the CVB Convention Sales and/or Services Departments.

Encourage airline partners to promote the destination by targeting both scheduled and chartered carriers servicing the St. Petersburg/Clearwater/Tampa areas via reservation staff training, educational training trips, and via distribution of our annual Visitor Guide at airport check-in locations in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax.

Pursue incremental business and increase sales efforts in Eastern and Western Canada by sponsoring three "FLY2PIE" Events in the cities of Halifax, Toronto and Calgary in partnership with the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport or the Tampa International Airport. Concentration would be directed towards the local tour operators and retail travel agents, reaching over 500 clients.

Partner with the Visit Florida Canadian office by participating in select trade and consumer events in the Ontario and Quebec markets, in collaboration with retail chains, wholesalers and tour operators, to enhance Florida and the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area as the ideal vacation destination for Canadians, while meeting with over 5,000 travel agents and 45,000 consumers.

Promote our destination and Website to both the trade and consumer markets via joint sales missions, trade promotions, e-commerce, mailings, and in-house presentations to the large agency consortiums, attendance at trade and consumer shows, and scheduled personal sales calls on travel agents across Canada.

## **GOAL:**

***Focus on educating travel agents across Canada by increasing sales contacts by 5 per cent.***

## **STRATEGIES:**

Launch a “Your Workshop” online educational program to 16,000 travel agents across Canada to learn about the destination and become Florida’s Beach specialists over a period of three months. Unique product will be highlighted such as golf, spa, condocations, rainbow travel, multi-generational travel and adventure/eco-travel to encourage “top of mind” with travel agents. A special “How to Sell” section will be featured highlighting what is new in the destination.

Continue to promote the Florida’s Beach theme to the travel trade in Canada via personal sales calls, destination presentations, media releases, trade shows, and electronic mailings.

Introduce a “Taste of PIE” to 50 CAA Travel offices in Ontario by delivering “pies” to agencies via personal sales calls. Partner with a key tour operator to conduct destination training seminars, reaching over 500 employees, in addition to conducting a Window Display Blitz on 50 CAA offices in Ontario. The entire CAA program will be enhanced with continued sales and marketing efforts, while at the same time positioning our brand, “Florida’s Beach”.

Enhance the Open Jaw “Find Palmer” educational session online to travel agents across Canada, while at the same time promoting the Open Jaw Pink Perks program, reaching over 5000 travel agents.

Concentrate on the primary market of Ontario, and the secondary markets of Atlantic Canada and Alberta, with the assistance of local area suppliers to blitz and promote the destination, sales programs and new highlights, by hosting three major FLY2PIE events in Toronto, Ontario; Halifax, N.S., and Calgary, Alberta targeting the travel trade and reaching 500 potential clients.

Partner with Visit Florida on joint trade shows in the province of Quebec to increase business from the French Canadian market targeting a potential 200 new clients.

Continue to support the Addison Trade Shows in seven cities in Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes and Alberta. All show series target a total of 2500 travel agents increasing potential business for the spring, summer and fall seasons.

Enhance relationships with key consortiums and retail chains by supporting and/or sponsoring elements of their Annual General Meetings and Conferences. The “Florida’s Beach Brand” would continue to be introduced during events and presentations, incorporating all major consortiums and chains in the southern Ontario region targeting a total of 100 travel agencies.

Continue to participate in two tour operator educational seminars/product launch events to further penetrate the retail market in both Toronto and Montreal by reaching over 3,000 travel agents.

Partner with a key tour operator to co-sponsor the Seventh Annual Travel Courier Travel Agent Contest, targeting all 5500 agencies across Canada, to win a trip to the destination.

Promote our website and brand via product presentations, educational seminars, co-operative marketing and advertising, while continuing to enhance relationships with travel agents across Canada.

Host two educational training trips, in cooperation with key tour operator partners, airline partners, retail consortiums and chains, and corporate sponsors, targeting our primary markets of Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada to further promote the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area to 50+ travel agents.

Continue to focus on the educational aspect of the destination by distributing detailed sales material to travel agents via 50 personal sales calls per month. In addition, continue to distribute the travel agent information package via fulfillment and mailings.

## **GOAL:**

### **Increase penetration to consumers via existing and new sales programs**

## **STRATEGIES:**

Promote the Fifth Annual CAA Florida's Beach Sweepstake Campaign to over 2 million consumers and members in the provinces of Manitoba, Ontario and the Maritimes in partnership with CAA magazines in these three markets and with key travel trade partners.

Coordinate a cooperative promotion with a major internet supplier to create awareness of the destination and increase sales to the area by targeting millions of Canadian consumers.

Expand the outreach to the Canadian consumer by continuing a Florida's Beach Window Display Blitz, in 100 key travel agency consortium offices, targeting a population of 3,000,000 consumers in Ontario.

Build awareness of the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area by aligning with both scheduled and charter airline partners to promote the destination on cooperative marketing programs, in addition to supplying our Visitor Guide at all airline check-in positions for flights to our destination.

Continue to build a strong strategic alliance with the Toronto Blue Jays Baseball Club by partnering with the club on local area consumer promotions, radio contests, in-stadium programs and season ticket holder mailings. Direct marketing efforts will influence thousands of consumers in the Greater Toronto Area and region.

Expand the consumer market segment by participating in six key CAA Travel Shows, reaching approximately 8,000 consumers in Southern Ontario.

Participate in four key golf shows in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, in partnership with two key golf tour operators, reaching over 30,000 consumers who are key golf vacation travelers. Continue to promote all golf facilities via Canadian golf associations, clubs, organizations and golf tour operators.

Continue to support the two largest consumer Travel Shows in Canada, namely, the SITV PromExpo show in Montreal and the Travel & Leisure Fall shows in Toronto, penetrating over 50,000 consumers.

Pursue opportunities with special interest groups in the areas of sports (major league, Indy car races), outdoor activities (hiking, biking, canoeing), cultural organizations, the rainbow market, spa vacations, weddings, and the arts (Jazz festivals) via sales and presentation meetings, consumer shows and mailings.

Continue to be receptive to cooperative advertising promotional opportunities by working closely with our major tour operators and key retail agency consortiums targeting the consumer market.

Partner with Visit Florida on two consumer shows, namely the Outdoor Adventure Travel Show in Toronto and the Vacation Travel Show in Ottawa, to increase penetration in our primary and secondary markets.

## **GOAL:**

***Seek promotional opportunities in both mature and emerging markets by aligning with partners for long-term relationships***

## **STRATEGIES:**

Continue to develop regional co-operative sales and marketing campaigns with all major tour operators, wholesalers and internet providers in Ontario, the Maritimes, Alberta and Quebec, in order to enhance the awareness of the Florida's Beach destination.

Establish strong relationships with all major retail consortiums and chains, promoting the "Florida's Beach" brand by promoting the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area at their local regional meetings and annual conferences, golf tournaments and educational sessions.

Continue to play a prominent role within the SeeAmerica Committee Canada, while at the same time promoting the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area.

Continue to support the Visit Florida office staff in Toronto by co-hosting educational training trips to the Gulf Coast region, by aligning with their staff on joint trade and consumer shows, sales seminars and presentations, by examining promotional opportunities targeted towards the consumer and by supporting public relations campaigns, which are targeted towards Pinellas County.

Encourage the Canadian Travel Advisory Committee, made up of travel industry representatives from the tour operator and airline sectors, to continue to share ideas with our local area suppliers to enhance the knowledge of the Canadian marketplace and the specifics required to increase visitation to our area.

Assist the Director of Public Relations, the Director of Advertising, the Director of Convention Services and the advertising agency with Canadian contacts and opportunities.

Maintain membership in the following trade associations:

- ⇒ ACTA (Alliance of Canadian Travel Agents) National
- ⇒ ANTOR (National Tourist Board Associations)
- ⇒ SKAL International Hamilton
- ⇒ SeeAmerica Committee Canada
- ⇒ Travel Media Association of Canada (TMAC)