

trade shows
festivals
shopping
sporting events
events



Mississauga Tourism
Premier Ranked Tourism Destination Evaluation
Executive Summary
March 2004

Canada



Ontario



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What is a Premier Ranked Tourism Destination Evaluation?

In Mississauga it is a process designed to help assess “market status” and its relation to moving toward being the best destination Mississauga can be, given its resources.

The City of Mississauga and its tourism stakeholders acknowledge much work needs to be done before we associate our destination with this lofty term.

Using the Premier Ranked Tourism Destination Framework developed by the Investment and Development Office of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, we undertook the evaluation process, identifying gaps, recommendations and specific actions. The industry-led evaluation process has helped determine Mississauga’s current state and its future potential to attract visitors based on its perceived and real assets and liabilities, as well as its specific product attributes.

Through ongoing consultations with the Industry Committees, each specific to sectors within Mississauga’s tourism and hospitality industry, the evaluation process commenced. Surveys were completed by the travel trade; buyers of tourism products, tour wholesalers from the Ontario Motor Coach Association, and visitors to the city. An Audit Team was assembled to do the majority of the field work. Secondary research was employed and all statistical data was assembled from several reputable industry sources including Statistics Canada and the Ontario Travel Monitor. When completed, Mississauga had been thoroughly evaluated within a tourism destination context.



Why did we undertake the evaluation process?

Over the past 2 years, the City of Mississauga and those involved in the tourism and hospitality industry in Mississauga have been working together to capitalize on the business opportunities available through increased visitation to Mississauga. Through this work the City has determined that it is now appropriate to formalize the destination marketing effort through the creation of an industry-led Convention and Visitor’s Bureau: Mississauga Tourism. Given where Mississauga is in its desire to establish a destination marketing organization, the Premier Ranked Evaluation process could not have been completed at a more opportune time.

It was also determined that the process would result in actionable outputs and provide focus for ongoing tourism development. The process involved three steps and their simplicity had significant appeal to all involved:

1. Evaluation

- Complete the “Resource Audit”
- Measure product, performance and futurity

2. Interpretation

- Complete the “Performance Summary”
- Identify areas of strength, weakness and opportunity

3. Planning

- Recommendations and Action Steps

The process also shed light on many significant areas related to tourism sustainability and growth in Mississauga.



What did the process determine?

The evaluation process identified a set of core attractions:

The Core Attractions

- Shopping
- Attending Festivals & Events
- Attending Consumer Shows and Trade Shows
- Participating In and Watching Sporting Events

For each core attraction, specific opportunities and gaps & barriers were identified and they are as follows:

Shopping

Opportunities

- Capitalize on existing retail area animation
- Make centres more visitor-friendly
- More neighbourhood retail beautification, strive for character and personality
- Increase high-end shopping opportunities
- Capitalize on ethnic diversity of shopping experience

Gaps & Barriers

- Mississauga geography: no core shopping areas, too spread out
- Limited convenient transportation between shopping areas and neighbourhoods
- Lack of unique and high-end merchandise
- Signage bylaws: visitors not directed to shopping areas
- Merchant apathy to become "market ready": hours of operation vary

Festivals & Events

Opportunities

- Good variety, quality and appeal
- Develop a signature event, ideally in winter
- Cluster event experiences geographically

Gaps & Barriers

- Few Tier One events, many Tier Two events

- Community based, volunteer run, designed for the local market
- No signature event that positions Mississauga
- No October to May events, limited shelf life of 2 – 5 days
- Linkages from one event to another limited: marketing, shared resources
- Convenient transportation from hotels and visitor cluster areas to event locations limited
- Event venues limited in parking and capacity

Consumer and Trade Shows

Opportunities

- Some already packaging with hotels
- Great appeal to visitor market, "best in class" shows
- Year round with lots of capacity

Gaps & Barriers

- Show venues far from attractions and city centre
- Convenient transportation to venues very limited, except on the airport strip
- Limited shelf life of 1 – 5 days
- Arms-length relationship with show producers; difficult to get their attention

Sporting Events

Opportunities

- Multiple community bids a real possibility
- Track record in hosting international, national, provincial and regional events
- The new Mississauga Marathon
- Water sports shows potential for growth, regattas, rowing, sailing, fishing
- Significant downtime between games to engage visitors
- Partner with neighboring communities to host tournaments

Gaps & Barriers

- Limited Tier One venues, both indoor and outdoor, and several Tier Two venues
- Limited tournament play fields, quality of venues inconsistent
- Convenient transportation to venues limited, spread out, limits playing time

Mississauga Offers:

- Significant surrounding populations
- Accessibility utilizing all primary modes of transportation
- A solid, branded commercial accommodation base
- An infrastructure that can handle and fuel visitor growth
- A population base that demands and fosters quality cultural entertainment, shopping, attractions and dining options
- A waterfront that is accessible and scenic
- Substantial financial investment in key areas of attractiveness
- Several Tier One events and festivals
- Sporting venues and events that offer significant drawing power

However, Mississauga has:

- Core attractions that require attention before they go to market
- Core attractions that have appeal but are not unique or distinct
- Product clusters that are separated by many kilometres
- Transportation issues related to easily moving visitors
- Underdeveloped and underperforming market characteristics
- Significant gaps in terms of securing its share of visitors and visitor expenditures
- Product attributes and offerings that do not compel visitors to stay overnight
- Product attributes and offerings that are not easily purchased
- Gaps in perceptions and awareness related to critical acclaim

What are the recommendations?

Based on the findings, specific recommendations have been identified which will form the focus for ongoing improvement and development.

1. Mississauga's tourism stakeholders should organize and understand the findings from this comprehensive evaluation process and begin to take advantage of the opportunities and tackle the challenges.
2. The City of Mississauga must place tourism high on its priority list and assist the industry where possible in organizing and acting in collaborative ways to capitalize on the business of tourism.
3. The formalization of Mississauga Tourism as a viable destination marketing organization must happen as soon as possible.
4. Internal transportation issues need to be addressed if we want visitors to move about the city to experience the range of attractions.
5. Individual businesses that are directly or indirectly involved in tourism must ensure they take the necessary steps in becoming "market ready".
6. A mechanism to develop easy-to-purchase packages using core attractions must be developed.
7. Event and festival organizers must produce their events with the knowledge of the potentially lucrative visitor market.
8. The entertainment, attraction and event sectors must collaborate to make the purchase of their products more accessible to visitor markets.
9. Retail merchants located in clusters throughout the city must organize and collaborate to create attractive and evolving streetscapes that have potential to attract large volumes of visitors.
10. Once formed Mississauga Tourism must facilitate supplier and industry training in areas of product development, quality control, packaging, travel trade, and market readiness.
11. Mississauga Tourism must move to secure a solid funding mechanism through membership dues, sponsorship, and creation of cooperative marketing initiatives, Destination Marketing Fee, and City grants.
12. Industry stakeholders and City officials must foster the development of a "Signature Event" that helps position the city in the minds of visitors; this could be the elevation of an existing event or festival.

Contributions

Many individuals contributed to the completion of this process. We thank the members of the Audit Committees, the Audit Team, and The Ontario Ministry of Tourism & Recreation, Human Resources & Skills Development Canada, Research Resolutions, and Brain Trust Marketing & Communications.
For more information about this report or for membership information contact Mississauga Tourism at 905-896-5998.



Next Steps and Actions

The following action steps have been identified. It will be the joint responsibility of industry and Mississauga Tourism to initiate these steps:

1. Form a Standing Committee of the Mississauga Tourism Steering Committee to understand and address the recommendations identified in the Premier Ranked Tourism Destination Evaluation process. Specifically, the Committee would:
 - a. Prioritize the recommendations in terms of importance
 - b. Determine a timeline for recommendation implementation
 - c. Identify specific actions to address the top 5 recommendations
 - d. Solicit assistance from Mississauga Tourism and the tourism industry to move forward on the recommendations
2. Identify a strategy to package core attractions as soon as possible which will include facilitating understanding around experience definition and package pricing. Build these packages where possible into the products being included in the 2004 Mississauga Tourism Programs.
3. Utilize the "Market Ready" checklist as a way to encourage tourism stakeholders to improve their product offerings to the visitor markets.

What can you do?

- Consider becoming a member of Mississauga Tourism.
- Review the "Market Ready" checklist on www.mississauga.ca and perform an evaluation of your business.
- Collaborate with your peers and business colleagues and collectively increase your understanding of the visitor market. Determine your part in improving your product through creativity and cooperative thinking.

