

# CANADA - ONTARIO'S TOURISM DECLINES



Ontario is the second largest Canadian province. It has the largest population, some 12.7 million people live here. The province is located in the east-central part of Canada. Ontario has a strong economy. In fact in 2003 it generated some 40.6% of the Canadian Gross Domestic Product. Tourism industry is very important for the Central Ontario's economy. Tourists can enjoy fresh water recreation and wilderness in vicinity of major cities. Other parts of year are good for hunting or skiing. In Ontario's

border cities tourists can enjoy their time in large casinos. Probably the best known destination is the Niagara Falls which attracts many travelers. Nevertheless, recently the Ontario's tourism has declined in the numbers of visitors. This has been caused by a combination of several factors. Canadian dollar has risen, gas is more and more expensive and there are also more problems at the borders after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. There are also other problems, for example the confusing passport regulations. The fact is that only 28 per cent of Americans currently hold a passport and many travelers are not willing to spend their money and time on getting one. "If somebody has the option to choose where to travel, especially if it's a U.S. traveler, they have increasingly better-looking options for a number of reasons," said Mr. Forgacs, who specializes in the hotel industry. According to Mr. Girling, a former industry consultant, all the troubles started with 9/11 and the tightening of the border. "Then we proceeded along to SARS — we had SARS twice — then we had West Nile (virus)," Mr. Girling added. The industry professionals claim that it is necessary to concentrate on the domestic travel which could generate significant revenues. The Ontario's government is also making steps to improve the tourism industry situation. Governmental agencies are speaking with industry representatives to formulate a five-year marketing strategy for the North Ontario.

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