

Scenic Caves Nature Adventures is Canada's New Business of the Year **Long established business recognized for recent innovations**

Whitehorse, YK -- One of Ontario's oldest tourist attractions has been named Canada's New Business of the Year. At the 2nd Annual National Awards for Tourism Excellence, Scenic Caves Nature Adventures' owner Rob Thorburn was acclaimed as an entrepreneur whose ingenuity, hard work and perseverance have created a successful business in the tourism sector.

The "new business" award might come as a surprise to tourists who have been visiting the popular Town of Blue Mountains/Collingwood area tourist centre for decades, but the new attraction bears little resemblance to the Scenic Caves of yesterday. In the last 18 months, Thorburn has made a significant investment in new attractions, and Scenic Caves Nature Adventures is now a four-season adventure destination. The Business Development Bank of Canada award recognized the introduction of the new Nordic Centre, Ontario's largest suspension bridge, and last summer's unveiling -- an EcoAdventure Tour complete with a canopy walk and zip lines high atop the Niagara Escarpment.

Ontario Minister of Tourism Jim Bradley congratulated Thorburn on winning the prestigious award. "Scenic Caves Nature Adventures offers many unique and exciting experiences," he said. "I'm pleased to see tourism strengthened through unique and creative destinations such as this one."

Thorburn himself was extremely pleased. "This is a monumental day for southern Georgian Bay tourism," he said.

Since purchasing the venerable attraction just over a decade ago, Thorburn has worked continuously to build on its basic strengths -- dramatic crevasses, great views and native history. He has landscaped the grounds, added attractions for children, and improved the site's amenities. But he has always dreamed of making the most of the location's dramatic potential and tapping into the growing eco-tourism market.

"This property is a true gem," says Thorburn. "It has natural, geological and historical features you won't find anywhere else in the province. It has everything the outdoor tourist is looking for. By enhancing the activities, we're opening up a whole world of light adventure to those who want something a little more exciting and unique."

Clearly, Thorburn is achieving his goal. In fact, Scenic Caves offers at least a dozen of the activities identified by the Canadian Tourism Commission's outdoor tourism strategy.

The first push came two winters ago with the opening of the Nordic Centre, which offers 16 kilometres of groomed trails through the rugged and beautiful Niagara Escarpment forest, complete with amazing views and a cozy chalet setting for skiers. A year later, the first visitors braved the suspension footbridge, a 126-metre span which arcs over a forest valley and offers stunning views of Georgian Bay and the surrounding countryside.

Finally, last summer, Scenic Caves introduced the EcoAdventure Tour, a 3hour guided hike through the forest canopy, offering history, heritage, flora, fauna and geology of the Niagara Escarpment ... as well as an opportunity to soar on zip lines through the forest. Each of the activities complements the other, sharing resources and offering a rich, action-packed package for visitors.

The national tourism awards were developed by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada to recognize and foster Canadian tourism excellence. In addition to its award, Scenic Caves was also a finalist for Business of the Year – one of few businesses that have been a finalist for more than one award.

Scenic Caves is located in the Town of the Blue Mountains, at the top of Scenic Caves Road. This winding, picturesque route climbs the Niagara Escarpment just minutes from the town of Collingwood and the Village at Blue Mountain. It's about 20 minutes from Wasaga Beach, and less than two hours north of Toronto. For more information, visit www.sceniccaves.com.