



Jean Viel, foreground, a manager of Conference Travel Canada Inc., expects visits from French people in France, represented by this group of delegates from Paris, will

continue for the next six or seven years. They toured the city on the weekend, including this stop Sunday at the College Education Centre.

Bud Berry, The Nugget

## Major influx of tourists possible

# French check out North Bay

By LINDA GUTRI  
Nugget Staff Reporter

North Bay appears to have struck a tourism gold mine.

Not only was North Bay visited Sunday by 17 delegates representing groups in France who want to visit Ontario and especially North Bay next year, the 17 delegates represent about 78,750 people in France.

North Bay tourism and convention officer Ross Kenzie estimated about \$320,000 will be brought into the North Bay and area economy by the expected visit of at least 2,000 people from France in 1986, assuming they spend a quarter of their vacation dollars on accommodation.

Jean Viel, the man in charge of the logistics of the tours, said it is expected the visits will take place each year for six or seven years. Mr. Viel is a manager with Conference Travel of Canada Inc. from Toronto. The Ontario Ministry of Industry and Tourism was involved in financing the delegates' visit, he said.

Christine Scarano of Paris, who is scouting and planning for "Project Canada 1986," said the group of delegates she was part of are elected officials responsible for the social and recreational activities of 22,500 employees of the Union of National French Radio and Television network and their families.

Project Canada 1986 will offer six tours. The tours are geared to families, youth and retirees. All of the two-week tours will stop in North Bay, and will also stop in Toronto, Sudbury, Niagara Falls, Penatanguishine, Kingston, Ottawa and Montreal, as well as Temagami.

While most of the local people admit excitement over France's interest in Canada, that must yet become a reality, most see the interest shown in Canada as a vital first step with immense potential.

"I think it's the beginning of something very, very good for the tourist industry in the Near North area," said Vern McKinnon, executive director of the Almaguin Nipissing Travel Association.

"I can see it expanding not only in the community of North Bay, but also outside of North Bay to the outdoor oriented tourist industry. I can see people going back to France and spreading the word on the excellent tourist location we have here."

Marcel Andre Sauve, of North Bay, played a key role in "selling" both Ontario and especially North Bay as a destination for the project. Mr. Sauve said some of expected visitors potentially represent industrial entrepreneurs who may decide to locate industries in this area. He said the European tourism market has been broken into.

Mrs. Scarano was at the Centre Les Compagnons des Francs Loisirs where she spoke during an interview and said she initially suggested Canada as a vacation destination last November. She has visited this country several times before and loves it.

"Because you love something, you want to share it with people," she said. Up until now, the French in France didn't even know there were French-speaking people outside of Quebec in Canada and now they also know Ontario has people who speak the French language.

Mrs. Scarano said Ontario is not only ideal language-wise, it is "the

most dynamic province in all of Canada." She said the French in France are not interested in "commercial tourism" so much as meeting the people of this country.

Mrs. Scarano said the North Bay area is the epitome of what the people in France envision of Canada — a place of lakes and forests: "What helped us to really decide to come here was Marcel Andre. He was a good salesman. He really wanted to develop cultural exchanges. That was very important to us." Mr. Sauve is president of Ontario's French cultural centres: l'Association de l'Assemblee des Centre Culturels de l'Ontario.

Mr. Sauve said the visit of the delegates was done on the short notice of only a week. He only had room for about 100 local people who attended a brunch with the delegates at Les Compagnons.

Among the crowd of 100 who welcomed the 17 delegates were anglophones, Italians, business people, as well as francophones. Mr. Sauve said he could have had about 300 people attend the brunch, but there was only room for 100.

While at Les Compagnons, the delegates also saw films of typical outdoor activities like hunting and fishing. Later they toured North Bay's College Education Centre, the Dionne Home site, Champlain Park and other points of interest.

Later in the evening, the delegates from France were wine and dined at the Pinewood Park Motor Hotel with a menu Mr. Kenzie said was probably as typically North American as one could get — venison and cranberries. They had dinner in the Pinewood's Pinecone Room with a lit fireplace helping to set as Canadian an atmosphere as possible.