

Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Community Human Services

Community Attraction and Leisure Services – Community Attraction & Promotion

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Shannon Paiva
Supervisor, Tourism Development

Date: December 16, 2019

Subject: 2020 Tourism Initiatives - Request from Reserve

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

1. The list of 2020 tourism initiatives in the amount up to \$167,534 funded by the Tourism Reserve, be approved.

Background

In 2015, the Tourism Destination Management Plan (TDMP) was approved by Council. The TDMP was structured to support tourism development in Chatham-Kent and aims to ensure that tourism operators are equipped for success in the categories of: Angling, Black History, Meetings and Conventions, First Nations and the War of 1812, Classic Cars, Agri/Culinary Tourism, Culture (Visual/Performing Arts), and Small Town Villages and Rural Landscapes. In support of this work, the Supervisor, Tourism Development was hired in 2016 and the Coordinator, Cultural Tourism Development was successfully recruited in 2019.

Since the implementation of the TDMP, Tourism has had many successful achievements to report on, including:

- Digital and online marketing of Chatham-Kent
 - through online marketing and advertising in markets outside of Chatham-Kent, CK Tourism works to elevate Chatham-Kent's profile as a tourist destination
- Hosting travel writers
 - through hosting six to seven travel writers each year, Chatham-Kent's profile in external markets is enhanced, resulting in coverage across a wide range of media platforms and showcasing Chatham-Kent to millions of potential visitors

- Maintaining visitor displays/brochure racks across Chatham-Kent
 - this activity helps ensure that both residents and visitors have access to 25 brochure racks housing the information they need when visiting the community
- Developing and distributing maps, brochures and rack cards (20,000 annually) in internal and external markets
 - this activity helps to promote Chatham-Kent's range of tourism offerings, including Black History, Angling and Classic Cars
- Promoting the range of tourism opportunities in Chatham-Kent at festivals and events within the community
 - this activity occurs mainly over the summer months and helps tourism staff to engage directly with more than 2,000 people at 50 events each year
- Assisting with the development of tourism experiences
 - CK Tourism supports tourism operators in Chatham-Kent, assisting them with bringing new ideas to market or with helping them market and promote their existing offerings

Comments

The tourism base budget was established to support the tiered categories identified in the TDMP. Since the time of the implementation of the TDMP, dollars that were unable to be spent in each category due to time and lack of resources have been transferred to a Tourism Reserve annually, with the intent that they be used for future tourism initiatives that support the ongoing development of tourism in Chatham-Kent.

The following is a list of tourism initiatives requested to be funded from the Tourism Reserve in 2020:

1) Conference Hosting in 2020 - \$25,034

Southwestern Ontario Tourism Corporation Conference

Chatham-Kent has been selected to host the 2020 Southwestern Ontario Tourism Corporation (SWOTC) Conference March 3 - 4, 2020 at the Chatham-Kent John D. Bradley Convention Centre. The SWOTC Conference is geared towards operators in Region 1, which is Southwest Ontario. The Conference offers tourism operators invaluable insight into the tourism industry, an opportunity to network and make meaningful connections, learn new skills necessary for today's market, and listen to keynote speakers. Approximately 250 attendees from across Southwestern Ontario are expected to attend the conference, with more than two-thirds coming from outside of the Chatham-Kent region.

As part of the conference, CK Tourism is sponsoring two pre-conference experiences for a total of sixty attendees. The experiences developed will see CK Tourism working with local tourism-focused operators, helping them to develop and showcase their product offerings with the aim of growing revenues from future

visitors. Each experience will be three hours in duration and will form the basis of ones that can be replicated throughout the year targeting a broader audience.

Rural Tourism Symposium

Chatham-Kent was a founding member of the national Rural Tourism Symposium and will host the third annual Rural Tourism Symposium on April 23, 2020 at Ridgetown College. The conference is designed to inspire rural tourism industry professionals and stakeholders across the province and beyond, helping them to define and drive their success. Approximately 150 attendees will attend the 2020 event, with more than half predicted to come from outside Chatham-Kent. Hosting includes rental of the location, audio visual equipment, providing lunch and refreshments for the day, keynote speakers fees (including accommodations, travel etc), creating a mini showcase of CK with various operators, etc.

The approximate cost for both conferences is \$25,034 that could be reduced further through ticket sales and sponsorships.

2) Tourism Wayfinding and Visitor Interaction Strategy - \$75,000

In tourism, wayfinding includes all of the ways in which people understand and navigate their surroundings and travel from place to place. It includes signage, landmarks, maps and new media.

In terms of signage, the province's Tourism-Oriented Directional Signage Program (TODS) manages the signs on Ontario's roadways that make it easier for tourists to find local attractions and services. The Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries along with the Ministry of Transportation supervise the delivery and maintenance of TODS by a third party – Canadian TODS Limited. Canadian TODS Ltd. works with businesses interested in placing a sign on the highway and is responsible for operating, managing, maintaining and financing the province-wide TODS program. CK Tourism currently pays for TODS signs along Highway 401 and trailblazing signs just off of the highway. These include two Experience Chatham-Kent billboard-style signs and also signs for Mitchell's Bay, Erieau and the Tecumseh Parkway. In addition to CK Tourism TODS signs, there are currently 21 businesses in Chatham-Kent with TODS signs.

In 2018, Canadian TODS gave notice of a price increase to be implemented in January of 2019. For some operators, the increase was up to 200%. Following consultations with the tourism industry, the Ontario government approved a one-year price freeze. Throughout the months of November and December of 2019, businesses were informed of the new prices for 2020; pricing has almost doubled in some instances. Due to the increases, some CK businesses are not renewing their contracts, which will leave them without promotional signage along the 401. Other Chatham-Kent operators who had hoped to initiate TODS signage are now finding it is too cost prohibitive to do so. Some operators have indicated that their targeted

clientele are using GPS or Google Maps to map their route, and signs are no longer necessary, while others state that they still rely on signs.

Tourism operators are hopeful that CK Tourism can work with them to find solutions to wayfinding and visitor information in the community and have expressed frustration at the lack of wayfinding for businesses throughout the Municipality of Chatham-Kent in general (separate from TODS). There is desire to see this change, with more signs similar to neighbouring municipalities.

Chatham-Kent Tourism is committed to improving visitor experiences and proposes addressing the way-finding issues by contracting the services of a consultant to review the industry needs. The successful consultant would design a community-wide wayfinding system that addresses the navigation needs of visitors and residents and would make recommendations on the best ways to interact and share information with visitors so that they are successfully moved around and within Chatham-Kent. The recommendations of the Wayfinding Strategy would be brought forward to Council for discussion and approval once complete.

3) Industry Equipping - \$37,500

Industry equipping is a term used to define the tools, knowledge, and insights tourism operators need to succeed in their business. Conferences are designed to provide this information. Through attendance at conferences, tourism operators gain a better knowledge of what is happening in tourism across the region they are located in, which ultimately leads to understanding how to increase traffic and revenues, create experiential tourism products, understand their customer better, compete with other tourism operators across the region, collaborate with like-minded stakeholders, and step up their social media game, among other things.

The two annual conferences, SWOTC and the Rural Tourism Symposium, provide an opportunity for tourism operators to learn about industry trends and offer invaluable insight into the tourism industry, thus equipping them in their tourism businesses.

Some of the 250 Chatham-Kent tourism operators have indicated to CK Tourism that they would like to attend but cannot due to limited funds for this type of activity in their budget.

The proposal is to cost share the registration fees by 50% for a three year period (2020-2022) for the first 50 registrants to sign up for the conferences, providing they are first time attendees. As the conference fees are \$125 per person, this would lower the cost per participant to \$62.50. The maximum cost (providing the registration cost does not increase) would be \$6,250 per conference for a total of \$37,500 over the three years.

There may be other conferences that arise that would be of great benefit to local tourism operators. If so, these will also be included in future Reserve requests.

4) Tourism Website Redevelopment and Launch - \$30,000

In order to remain competitive in the tourism market, CK Tourism is taking a dedicated approach to improving the “VisitCK” tourism website. Working with a municipal team comprising representatives from Corporate Communications and Information Technology Services, tourism’s goal is to update the current version of the website to increase website traffic and social media engagement, increase traffic throughout tourism stakeholder operator locations, convert daytrips to overnight stays to increase economic impact and to compete with other tourism websites in the region. The “VisitCK” website will be photo and video rich, and will allow users to plan and save tourism itineraries, therefore requiring separate “plug-ins” and applications at an additional cost. Following the redevelopment, it is anticipated that a significant launch plan to market the new site will follow. It is estimated the “plug ins”, applications and the marketing plan will cost approximately \$30,000.

Therefore, it is recommended that the list of 2020 tourism initiatives in the amount up to \$167,534 funded by the Tourism Reserve, be approved.

Potential future reserve requests will include:

- Implementation of the Wayfinding and Visitor Interaction Strategy
- Continuation of industry equipping conference cost-sharing
- Development of marketing materials and implementation of marketing plans (digital and print) to support the tiers in the Tourism Master Plan
- Seasonal Event Assistance Program – Resource support to attend internal/external events to promote Chatham-Kent
- Chatham-Kent Lifestyle and Experience Guide

Areas of Strategic Focus and Critical Success Factors

The recommendation in this report supports the following areas of strategic focus:

Economic Prosperity:

Chatham-Kent is an innovative and thriving community with a diversified economy

A Healthy and Safe Community:

Chatham-Kent is a healthy and safe community with sustainable population growth

People and Culture:

Chatham-Kent is recognized as a culturally vibrant, dynamic, and creative community

Environmental Sustainability:

Chatham-Kent is a community that is environmentally sustainable and promotes stewardship of our natural resources

The recommendation in this report supports the following critical success factors:

Financial Sustainability:

The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is financially sustainable

Open, Transparent and Effective Governance:

The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is open, transparent and effectively governed with efficient and bold, visionary leadership

Has the potential to support all areas of strategic focus & critical success factors

Neutral issues (does not support negatively or positively)

Consultation

The Chatham-Kent Tourism Stakeholders' Advisory Council (TSAC) was consulted on the requests and agree with all of the proposals.

Financial Services has verified the current balance in the Tourism Reserve for the year 2019.

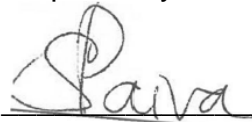
Financial Implications

Tourism Reserve

Tourism Reserve Balance To Date	(\$446,248)
Total Funding Available for Tourism Initiatives	(\$446,248)
Proposed 2020 Tourism Initiatives:	
Conference Hosting	\$25,034
Tourism Wayfinding and Visitor Interaction Strategy Development	\$75,000
Industry Equipping Subsidization Program	\$37,500
Tourism Website Redevelopment and Launch Plan	<u>\$30,000</u>
2020 Proposed Reserve Request Total	\$167,534
Balance remaining in reserve	(\$278,714)


The balance remaining in the Tourism Reserve at the end of 2020 will be used for future projects.

Prepared by:



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Attachments: none

Consulted and confirmed the content of the consultation section of the report by:

Brock Priddle, CPA, CGA
Manager, Corporate Accounting

Attachments: none

c. Chatham-Kent Tourism Stakeholders' Advisory Council
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