

Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Community Human Services

Community Attraction & Leisure Services / Community Attraction & Promotion

Information Report

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Audrey Ansell
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Date: August 31, 2020

Subject: CK Tourism Sector Recovery - TIAO Regional Relief & Recovery Funding

This report is for the information of Council.

Background

In May 2020, the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) announced that \$35m of funding would be made available through the Ontario Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF) to enable the tourism sector to recover from economic disruptions associated with COVID-19. The funds targeted to the tourism sector were to be distributed to destination management organizations (DMOs) in southern Ontario via the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO), a provincial not-for-profit of which Chatham-Kent Tourism is a member.

In June 2020, Chatham-Kent Tourism, as the DMO for Chatham-Kent submitted a funding application to TIAO and on June 25, 2020, TIAO made an announcement regarding the recipients funding, which included Chatham-Kent Tourism.

Chatham-Kent Tourism is receiving \$90,492.25 in funding, which must be spent, by December 31, 2020. The funding will be applied to supporting tourism operators and to helping the Chatham-Kent tourism sector recover in the wake of COVID-19.

Comments

The tourism sector has been substantially impacted by COVID-19. Tourism oriented businesses felt the immediate impact of provincially mandated closures in March, with many unable to open until Phase 3. Even at that, with international travel restricted, inter- and intra-provincial travel reduced, and day trips curtailed, confidence and willingness to travel will undoubtedly be impacted for the foreseeable future.

The funding received is to be allocated towards supporting tourism sector recovery in the wake of COVID-19 and towards marketing Chatham-Kent's tourism assets.

TIAO guidance

The guidance issued by TIAO is as follows;

- **Hyper-local** – encourage residents to explore the community and to shop, buy, eat and stay local.
This phase will support areas such as food & drink, retail, artists, attractions, and agri-tourism – encouraging residents to get out and explore their own community.
- **Visit Next Door** – promoting day trips
As Ontarians regain confidence and are willing to travel a little farther afield they will be encouraged to explore the region or the one next door (think revisiting parks, trails, and attractions).
- **Ontario Bucket List** – promote must see and must do iconic experiences
- **Great Taste of Ontario Road Trip** – promoting road trips in tandem with the Culinary Tourism Alliance, with a focus on local food and beverages.

Chatham-Kent Tourism Plan

A two-pronged approach to allocating the funds received to support tourism sector recovery has been developed with input and support from local tourism operators. The two key approaches are outlined below.

1. **Direct support to tourism businesses** – tourism operators in Chatham-Kent have identified the need to reopen safely and the importance of working towards reassuring visitors regarding enhanced COVID-19 cleaning and other protocols. Chatham-Kent Tourism will work to support the sector in the following ways;
 - a. TIAO and Destination Ontario plan to rollout a “Safe Travels stamp” issued by the World Travel Council. Chatham-Kent Tourism will support local tourism businesses in attaining this stamp.
 - b. A CK Tourism Toolkit will be issued to CK Tourism operators. The kit will contain hand sanitizer, reusable masks, mandatory mask signage, Safe Travels stamp application information, and a visitor confidence information sheet (Attachment A) – all designed to assist CK-based operators. The planned distribution methods for the Tourism Toolkit are through (a) community drive-thru events and/or (b) direct delivery in September 2020.
2. **Marketing and promotion of Chatham-Kent tourism businesses** – the foundational marketing campaign is “See you in CK”. The campaign showcases all of the things that there are to do in CK and is based on a series of itineraries designed to move people around the community, asking them to outline their dream days in CK.

The initial focus of the campaign is on hyper-local, thus encouraging CK residents to get out to support local tourism businesses and to enjoy local tourism experiences. As market conditions permit, regional and national advertising and promotion elements will be considered.

Key components of the “See you in CK” campaign include;

- a. Advertising - in local print, radio and digital media that will run to December 2020 and that will transition from summer to fall and into winter
- b. Visitck.ca website and social media content and story telling
- c. Production of videos to showcase Chatham-Kent’s range of tourism assets. The videos will showcase seasonal activities in CK and will feature a range of operators and communities. The video storytelling tools will range in length from 15-30 seconds and will be produced with web and digital audiences in mind.
- d. “Win your dream day in CK” competition – promoted through a “See you in CK” postcard (Attachment B) delivered to all households in Chatham-Kent and through ongoing social media marketing and advertising. The competition offers the opportunity for 10 CK residents to describe and win their Dream Day in CK, to the value of \$1,000 per winner. Suggested dream days and iconic experiences are showcased on the VisitCK.ca website and entrants can select these or create their own based off tourism website information. The competition’s goals are to; drive awareness of all the great things that there are to do in CK; encourage residents to explore the community; and to put money directly into local tourism operations
- e. Great Taste of Ontario Road Trip – showcasing CK road trip itineraries that feature food, beverage, hospitality and CK experiences. Featured businesses will be required to have the Safe Travels stamp or to be working towards FeastON (local food sourcing) certification. Supporting CK tourism businesses to achieve these certifications will be reinforced by CK Tourism and the Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA). The road trips will be promoted at provincial and regional levels as part of the CTA of Ontario’s marketing outreach and campaigns and will run through to December 31, 2021.

Chatham-Kent tourism will follow all prevailing CK Public Health Unit advice and guidelines and will support all businesses and visitors in doing likewise. A phased approach to marketing and promotional activity is being adopted and the transition from promoting to local audiences towards promoting to regional and national ones will be made with due caution so as to help ensure the Chatham-Kent community and tourism operators are equipped and ready to welcome visitors.

Consultation

Chatham-Kent Tourism consulted with a range of partners in the preparation of steps to support tourism sector economic recovery and on the “See you in CK” marketing plan that is supported by the government funds received.

The Tourism Stakeholders’ Advisory Committee (TSAC) provided feedback on the activities outlined in this report and are in agreement with the contents. In addition, a range of CK tourism operators were consulted regarding the “See you in CK” marketing activities and other initiatives and protocols designed to support safe opening.

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario was consulted regarding allocating the funds received in order to support FedDev Ontario's sector recovery goals.

Financial Implications

All activities outlined in this report are supported by the \$90,492.25 funding received. In line with the requirements of the funding agreement, the funds are clearly delineated within the existing tourism budget to facilitate interim and final reporting requirements.

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Attachments: A – CK Tourism Tip Sheet – Strategies to build visitor confidence
B – “See you in CK” campaign postcard

c: Beth Potter / Carol Greenwood, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO)
CK Tourism Stakeholders' Advisory Committee
Denny Vervaet, Red Barn Brewing Company
Dave Barnier, Erieau Marina
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Strategies to Build Visitor Confidence in Your Tourism and Hospitality Business

As businesses apply robust safety measures, as recommended by CK Public Health, the process of rebuilding customer confidence begins once again making Chatham-Kent a trustworthy environment to visit, shop and play. Customers fearful and nervous to venture out and re-experience what your business has to offer can be reassured by following eight simple strategies.

Recent Ontario research tells us the majority of people will travel no further than their immediate region up to and including small and rural areas across the province as they look for less risky options. Reduced numbers of people frequenting businesses will help reduce anxiety and fear, and engaging your customers to inform them of proactive changes to promote a safe environment will encourage patrons to return. Customers will come back!

If you promote the changes you are making to your business, to keep your customers safe while they visit, the more likely they are to return. Proactively advertising your safety policies translates into reduced anxiety and fear for your customers.

Proactive strategies for building customer confidence:

1

Show, don't tell. Use video to help relieve anxiety around visiting your business. A short video demonstrating what you've done to address their safety concerns about what it is like to visit.



2

Emphasize your commitment to cleaning and social distancing protocols. Customers want reassurance.



3

Give specifics about how your business has changed. Advance booking needed? Different entrances and exits? Limit to the number of people allowed in your establishment? Have you provided directional arrows and spacing markers?



4

Showcase your cleaning skills. B.C. (before COVID), cleaning was something you did after closing or when you had a break. These days, visibility rules. Clients want to see you wiping and disinfecting.



5

Share your messaging around safety far and wide on social media, including Instagram and Twitter. On Facebook, pin your protocols to the top of your page, whether it's a video or a message about steps you've taken. Make sure you've updated details regarding new business hours or changes in what you're offering.



6

Use your website to amplify your commitment to COVID safety. Consider a pop-up message or include a COVID update featured prominently on your home page.



7

Post your policies. Add signage to front door about COVID protocols. reminders for customers inside, about maintaining social distancing, a please and thank you. Politeness goes a long way.



8

Mind your tone. Present your message confidently, show your customers you care about their safety and welcome doing business with them again.



“See you in CK” campaign postcard

Front of postcard:



Back of postcard

The back of the postcard features a dark overlay with white text. At the top, it reads 'Win your Dream Day in CK with Chatham-Kent Tourism!'. Below this, it asks 'What's your Dream Day in CK? Let us know and you could be 1 of 10 residents in CK to win*'. The 'How do I enter?' section provides instructions to follow on social media and message with ideas, including the email 'cktourism@chatham-kent.ca'. It also provides the website 'www.visitck.ca/daysinck'. The contest dates are 'Starting on October 2, 2020 and running for 10 weeks, a weekly winner will be announced on our social media at:'. Social media handles are listed: Facebook '@VisitCK', Instagram '@VisitChathamKent', and Twitter '@VisitCK'. A footnote states '*Complete contest rules at www.visitck.ca/dreamdayinckcontest'. The bottom of the card features logos for the 'Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario' and 'Chatham-Kent Visit CK'.