



Date: February 19, 2019
Report to : Planning & Development Committee
Report from: Andrew Redden, Economic & Tourism Development Manager
Subject: Overview of Economic & Tourism Development Services

Recommendations:

1. THAT the Economic & Tourism Development Manager's staff report dated February 19, 2019 regarding an Overview of Economic and Tourism Development Services be received.

Financial Impact:

Does recommendation have a budgetary impact: Yes No

Background

The following is an overview of Economic and Tourism Development Services provided by the Hastings County Economic and Tourism Development Office. It begins with an overview of the current organization and an overview of roles to benefit new members of County Council. In addition, a review of the past year's activities is provided along with a report on the success measures scorecard.

Current organization and overview of roles:

The Economic and Tourism Development Office is situated within the Planning & Development Department. The Office consists of a Manager of Economic and Tourism Development that reports to the Director of Planning and Development (see the organization chart on the following page). Reporting to the Manager, there is a Tourism Development Coordinator, Marketing Coordinator and Small Business Coordinator. All three are full-time members of the Office.



The following provides an overview of roles:

Manager of Economic and Tourism Development	Tourism Development Coordinator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement strategies, programs and projects • Develop and process leads • Assist and provide support to local economic development efforts • Develop and support partnerships • Represent County on regional economic development initiatives • Support stakeholder relations and communication • Support coordination and collaboration • Access/facilitate external funding • Provide statistical analysis • Develop annual business plan/budget • Supervise staff • Provide annual report and support reporting to Committees and Council • Support product development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement strategies, programs and projects • Review and manage the Tourism Development Master Plan • Support product development (i.e. Arts Route) • Support tourism related task forces with coordination and facilitating collaboration • Statistical analysis and reporting • Liaison with regional tourism and destination marketing organizations • Provide advice and support to operators • Assist and provide support to local tourism development efforts • Collaborate and communicate with stakeholders

Small Business Coordinator	Marketing Coordinator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide one-on-one coaching assistance to local residents and entrepreneurs to assist with business start-up and expansion • Assist entrepreneurs find resources • Connect and network with people, businesses and organizations across the County and beyond to help facilitate connections for those wanting to start, expand or sustain their business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of marketing strategies • Implementation of the County branding strategy • Conduct investment marketing, including online marketing • Management of social media and traditional media strategies for economic and tourism development • Management of website content for economic and tourism development • Serves as a connector, and provides support for coordinated information collection and sharing • Coordinate data collection and management to help measure and track outcomes of projects and activities • Liaison with regional destination marketing organizations for Economic Development and Tourism Marketing Projects (Prince Edward County, Bay of Quinte, Belleville, Quinte West) • Assist and provide Marketing support to municipal events and initiatives • Collaborate and communicate with stakeholders

Current organization and overview of roles:

The following is an overview of the County Council adopted mandate for the Economic and Tourism Development Office:

Service Mandate – <i>Economic Development Services</i>	
Start-up and small business assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helping entrepreneurs and existing businesses with business coaching and advice• Provide them with information on available properties, financing opportunities and government resources
Investment marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing and implementing an effective brand strategy• Encouraging ‘Lone Eagles’ to re-locate to and invest in Hastings County• Promoting investment in key sectors (e.g. artisan food and beverage)
Product development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborating with member municipalities, industry and government partners to improve identified underdeveloped and underperforming economic assets
Sector development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing funding and initiative specific staff assistance to key industry sectors (e.g. agriculture and natural resources/forestry)
Culture and heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting and highlighting local culture and heritage assets and sectors as economic drivers
Strategies, partnerships and network development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitating the creation of overall economic development strategies• Supporting County advocacy initiatives on key economic development issues• Serving as a hub for information, research, analysis and communication related to economic development• Serving as a coordinating and connecting window to facilitate access and leverage the contributions of a wide range of partners and supports• Encouraging and facilitating local community development efforts by member municipalities

Service Mandate – <i>Tourism Development Services</i>	
Product Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with member municipalities, industry and government partners to improve identified underdeveloped and underperforming tourism assets • Assisting in the development of distinctive tourism experiences aimed at identified target markets
Destination marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and implementing an effective brand strategy • Developing and implementing a strategy for marketing the County as a tourism destination
Tourism sector/industry development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the profile and connectedness of the tourism industry • Providing funding and initiative specific staff assistance to tourism industry development efforts
Strategies, partnerships and network development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating the creation of overall tourism development strategies • Supporting County advocacy initiatives on key tourism development issues • Serving as a hub for information, research, analysis and communication related to tourism • Serving as a coordinating and connecting window to facilitate access to and leverage the contributions of a wide range of partners and supports • Encouraging and facilitating local tourism development efforts by member municipalities

Highlights and Progress Report:

The following provides an overview of current tourism and economic development matters and outlines year-to-date progress we have made, particularly since the Fall of 2017. There are two sections: 1) Highlights and Success Stories and 2) Report on the Success Measures Scorecard. The Highlights and Success Stories is a qualitative overview of what has taken place over the past 15 months while the Report on the Success Measures Scorecard provides more of a quantitative assessment.

1) HIGHLIGHTS AND SUCCESS STORIES

Supporting business and self-employment

- Our unique Business Facilitation program continued, coordinated by our Small Business Coordinator Mark Hanley. Mark spoke at or attended more than 60 events across Hastings County to promote his services. Detailed metrics are included in Section 2 of this report;
- Our collaboration and networking continued with the Small Business Centre in 2018. Their funding program Starter Company Plus (launched in 2016) continued providing those interested in self-employment and existing businesses with business training, skills development, mentoring and access to up to \$5,000 in seed capital to help. The program is for those 18 years of age or older. In 2018 there were two businesses, one in Stirling-Rawdon (Bluelake Enterprises Inc.) and one in Bancroft (Ro and Jo), that participated; and,

- The Summer Company Program also continued managed by the Small Business Centre. One young person in Deseronto (Payton Cherneskie – Heavenly Handmade) participated in the program in 2018.

Marketing and Communications

- Staff issued a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) to seek an experienced branding consultant to produce a new Branding Strategy to support economic development and tourism marketing efforts. The company Trajectory was hired. Staff and Trajectory worked closely with the Economic and Tourism Development Advisory Committee to develop the new Branding Strategy – “Wildly Authentic” – which was presented to and approved by County Council in the Fall;
- Staff continued to increase promotions and direct traffic to a refurbished iLeftTheCity.ca website. Improvements were made to the site to add a blog function. This allowed staff to add regular stories to showcase entrepreneurs who selected Hastings County as their home and other information of interest to potential investors. Detailed metrics are included in Section 2 of this report;
- Staff continued to partner with neighbouring Counties to promote our region for Food and Beverage Investment. With financial support from the Community Futures Development Corporation in Frontenac, an e-newsletter/blog was created to communicate with leads. Two e-newsletters were distributed to contacts in our database who are interested in craft brewing;
- Staff continued, and increased, promotions of Hastings County initiatives, attractions and events through Google Advertising, promoted posts on social media and through regular posts and engagement over our social media sites including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Detailed metrics are included in Section 2;
- The Local Wanderer Campaign continued. “Wanderers” are people that explore the County and share their stories in writing which are posted on our blog and then shared over social media. The main goal of this campaign is to recount stories about personal travel excursions featuring the uniqueness of this naturally beautiful land and to capture authentic experiences that tell the stories of our communities, our people, and our landscapes. The local wanderer is focused on creating content that will inspire and resonate with followers, encouraging and enticing them to visit and experience what Hastings County has to offer. Detailed metrics are included in Section 2;
- Staff participated in several events and trade shows throughout 2018 to help promote Hastings County as a place to live, invest and visit. This included The Toronto Outdoor Adventure Show, the Newcomer Centre of Peel Rural Job Fair, SIAL Food Industry Show in Montreal, and the Restaurant Canada Show;
- Staff collaborated with the Bay of Quinte Marketing Board and other local partners to develop and add a Hastings County landing page on the Quinte Immigration Portal. Staff were also involved with a partnership to seek funding to develop a Regional Newcomer Strategy (that will commence in 2019);
- Staff continued involvement as a member on the Public Relations Advisory Committee at Loyalist College while participating in initiatives with Public Relations students and Professionals. This included hosting speed mentoring events, offering volunteer opportunities and hosting a Public Relations intern at our office in 2018;

- A series of winter photos were taken in 2018 to help provide a high quality set of imagery to use in marketing campaigns. This project will continue in 2019 with a spring/summer photoshoot and video production campaigns; and,
- The Marketing Coordinator was actively involved in the 2018 Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO) Tourism Summit by hosting a workshop session titled: "Tell, Don't Sell: How to Tell Your Story and Attract Visitors", as well as a podcast/radio interview on the program "Hello Boss Girl" to promote Hastings County and our resources for entrepreneurs.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

- Staff helped Harvest Hastings launch their new magazine-style directory. It includes a directory of local producers, points of sale and information on farmers' markets with maps and articles about Hastings County, the traditions of agriculture and forestry, buying local, agri-tourism and the rural renaissance;
- Staff assisted with the Future of Farming project led by Harvest Hastings. Dr. Peter Andree and Kim Bittermann from Carleton University coordinated the initiative as part of their work with FLEdGE (Food Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged). This is a research and knowledge sharing partnership, exploring the role of community food initiatives across Canada and internationally in the quest for community-focused, sustainable food systems. Consultations and interviews took place throughout 2017 and 2018. A final report with recommendations will be completed soon; and,
- Through financial support to the Bancroft and Area Forest Industry Association, on Wednesday, May 23 a Forestry Day was held for grades 7 and 8 students. In addition approximately 275 people were reached through their Nature Connects and Forestry Education program. This includes local students ranging in age from 5 years old to high school age to inspire them to learn more about our Forest Industry and learn about careers in forestry, forest products, tree planting, forest management, wildlife values and facts about forestry.

Workshops

- Collaborated with the Municipality of Hastings Highlands to host two workshops titled "Becoming an AirBnB Destination" on September 18 and 20, 2018;
- Hosted two OntarioTravel.net workshops in Tweed and Bancroft on March 27, 2018. These offered a step by step process on how to add a business, packages and events to Ontariotravel.net. A total of 25 businesses attended and more than 40 businesses, organizations and events across Hastings County are now live on the site;
- Assisted with the coordination and development of a Cycle Ready Workshop on March 6, 2018, where 34 people attended; and,
- The Small Business Centre coordinated several workshops throughout the year focusing on how to start a business and sessions on their various programs including Starter Company and Starter Company Plus. They hosted two workshops in our region which were both Starter Plus information workshops. One was in Bancroft and the other in Madoc with a total of 12 attendees.

Working with Member Municipalities and local community groups

- Collaborated with the Cities of Belleville and Quinte West to host the Cultural Summit on September 25, 2018. Greg Tehven from Fargo, North Dakota was the keynote speaker, and, 161 people attended;
- Connected with both the North and South Hastings Stewardship Councils regarding a new County-wide Crown Land Recreation Map. It would feature lake depths, stocked lakes, elk hunting grounds etc. After much consideration, meetings and work, and discussions with Hastings County GIS staff, it was determined this was not a project that we could move forward with due to licensing contracts with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry;
- Staff continued to actively assist the North Hastings Trails Committee and the North Hastings Economic Development Committee and other stakeholders with plans to expand non-motorized trails; and,
- In partnership with the Town of Bancroft, pursued implementation of the Earth Sciences Centre Master Plan by coordinating and chairing stakeholder meetings in Bancroft on October 11 and November 28, 2018.

Tourism

- Continued promotions of public activities taking place across the County in our email newsletter, on our blog and on our social media channels;
- Conducted a First Impressions Community Exchange (FICE) with Simcoe County focusing on tourism;
- Continued the “Local Wanderer Initiative” that was launched in 2017. This is a program that involves the development of stories that are unique to Hastings County and can be promoted through our online marketing tools (e.g. Twitter, Facebook);
- The Arts Route continued with four new members bringing the total locations to 18. Staff met with existing studio tour operators to explore their interest in sharing the Arts Route with their mailing lists. Arts related event information was also added to the website; and,
- November 23, 2018 the seventh Annual Tourism Awards and Celebration was held at the Marble Arts Centre in Tweed.

Municipal Economic and Tourism Development Partners Group

- Notes and updates from the meetings are shared with the Planning and Development Committee. Some examples of projects and items being discussed include Digital Service Squads to assist businesses with their digital technologies, and usage and reviewing virtual visitor information technologies.

Economic and Tourism Development Advisory Committee

- County Council approved a formal Terms of Reference in 2017 for this Committee. Ten members of the public were appointed for a one-year term (and recently re-appointed after the municipal election) including representatives from the tourism sector, manufacturing, agriculture, forestry, and the creative economy;
- The main focus of the Advisory Committee in 2018 was the development of the Branding and Positioning Strategy. At least five of the monthly meetings in 2018 were focused solely on development of the Branding Strategy;

- The Advisory Committee also made a priority to conduct a First Impressions Community Exchange with another County. Simcoe County was selected. A team of volunteer visitors travelled to Simcoe County and a group from Simcoe came to Hastings. Reports on First Impressions have been finalized and the Advisory Committee is in the process of reviewing and prioritizing the recommendations.

2) REPORT ON THE SUCCESS MEASURES SCORECARD

The following section outlines progress made (since the last report in October, 2017) in support of the following four key areas:

- 1. Business Coaching and Creating a Culture of Entrepreneurship**
- 2. Enticing People to Locate in Hastings County**
- 3. Educating Tourists by Telling our Story**
- 4. Revitalizing and Enhancing our Assets and Attractions**

Strategic Direction 1: Business Coaching and Creating a Culture of Entrepreneurship

New start-ups and entrepreneurs are key to our economy and growth. Utilizing the successful model of business coaching developed by Dr. Ernesto Sirolli and working with partners in our community, we support, develop and nurture a culture of entrepreneurship.

Objective: Support entrepreneurs start, prosper and grow in the County of Hastings

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
Start-up and small business assistance	<p>Assisting individuals to start businesses and assisting existing businesses with survival, expansion or succession</p> <p>Small Business Coordinator attended or presented at a minimum 63 events in Hastings County to promote our business facilitation service</p> <p>Individual clients met with: 97 (201 since April 1, 2017)</p> <p>Consultations: 275 (483 since April 1, 2017)</p> <p>Existing Businesses Assisted: 32 (49 since April 1, 2017)</p>	<p>Job growth, Capital Investment and More Businesses Operating in Hastings County including:</p> <p>New Start-ups: 25 (38 since April 1, 2017)</p> <p>Jobs Created: 52 (64 since April 1, 2017)</p> <p>Total Investment by clients: \$2.9 Million (\$3.25 Million in investment since April 1, 2017)</p> <p>In addition from amongst consultations, there is potential for a further 12 New Businesses, 7 Expansions, 26 new jobs and \$3 Million in Investment.</p>

Strategic Direction 2: Enticing People to Relocate To Hastings County

We are committed to attracting people and ‘Lone Eagles’ to choose Hastings County as the place to live and operate their business.

Objective: Attract entrepreneurs and ‘Lone Eagles’ to Hastings County

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
Investment Marketing	Continued to expand and build upon the ‘I Left The City’ show and marketing campaign Views of ileftthecity.ca: in 2018, 6,910 people visited the website, where 66.7% of them were on a mobile device and 33.3% on a desktop device. Plays of the Video Interviews: 2,427 views	Have directly connected with 20 individuals who completed the Contact Form on the website interested in moving here. They are each contacted immediately after completing the form and remain on our email distribution list to receive information and news from us.
	This year Prince Edward County and Lennox and Addington County chose not to continue with the FAB Region ‘Start a Brewery’ campaign. Hastings County, however, continued working with Frontenac Community Futures Development Corporation to prepare and distribute a newsletter by email to more than 130 craft brewery contacts in our email database to promote our region as a place to invest and to promote our services to help.	Greater awareness of our region and services that we offer to help setup a craft brewery. Our office handled at least three serious inquiries from potential craft brewers over the past 15 months & worked closely with Member Municipal Partners to help try and locate properties meeting their needs.
	Developed a new Branding Strategy and Positioning.	Branding Strategy and Positioning in place to help better inform investment marketing strategies.
	Attended the Peel Region Rural Job Fair in Mississauga (in May and November 2018). Met with over 200 people looking to find work in rural Ontario. Hastings County was also included (with a presentation prepared by staff) in a webinar for professional immigrants on small-town Ontario. These professionals are considering moving from the city to the country and want to learn more about their options.	With increased exposure, 80 new qualified contacts subscribed to our newsletter, and a couple of enquiries were received by the Peel Region Settlement Worker on opening a small business in Hastings County. Staff continue to remain in touch with any leads.

	<p>As a member of the Ontario East Economic Development Commission's Food Sector Investment Team, we participated in the SIAL and Restaurant Canada Food Shows.</p>	<p>At the Restaurant Canada Show (a Food Service and Hospitality Event connecting 1,000 exhibitors and 700+ brands in the food industry) we helped raise brand awareness with visitors and exhibitors. At the SIAL 2018 Show in Montreal (A Canadian Food Industry show), there were 18,500 professional visitors, 80% of which have a decision making role within the buying process in their organization. At our booth with Ontario East, more than 300 contacts were made.</p>
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Strategic Direction 3: Educating Tourists by Telling our Story

Hastings County is home to many natural and people-made attractions. We showcase Hastings County’s unique advantages and differentiate our region from others.

Objective: Raise awareness of Hastings County as a place to visit

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
Marketing Hastings County to visitors	Developed a new Branding Strategy and Positioning.	NOTE: Staff are currently working to collect baseline data on Tourist Information Centre Visits, Key Event Attendance and Hotel, Accommodations Occupancy Rates and other related metrics including online sentiments. These can be influenced by a variety of factors.
	2018 Website traffic: Visit page 14,685 views, 17% more than in 2017. “Rockhounding” website page 6,215 views, vs 4,210 in 2017, 34% increase. “Parks & Trails” website page 1,473 views. “Things to See & Do” page 25% increase in views, with 1,289 views in 2018 vs 921 views in 2017. In the business section, “Available Properties” page increased visitation by 33% with 1,455 views. Hastings County Blog: 2,151 views.	
	Local Wanderer Campaign continued. Since January, 2018 the social media channels have seen an increase in followers and engagement. In 2018, 2.6K people clicked on the Twitter links, 4.2K clicked on the Facebook links, 13K engaged with the FB content. With 615 FB posts in a year, we gained 461 new fans and 9.5k reactions, shares and 760 comments. On Instagram we enjoyed 4.2K likes, more than double the 1.8K of 2017. In 2018, the Instagram platform gained a 41% increase in followers, 4.3K engagement, up 1.8K from 2.5K in 2017.	
Promoted Hastings County at events including the Plowing Match and Farm Show and Toronto Outdoor Adventure Show.		

Strategic Direction 4: Revitalizing and Enhancing our Assets and Attractions

We understand the benefits of quality of place. Revitalizing and enhancing our offerings attracts people and when we attract people businesses will follow. People like to explore and experience a place before they choose to locate there. We work with our partners and member municipalities to enhance identified existing and underperforming or underdeveloped assets.

Objective: Help Improve and Profile Hastings County's offerings

Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
Industry Development	<p>Collaborated with Hastings Highlands to coordinate AirBnB Workshops attended by 35 people.</p> <p>Hosted two OntarioTravel.net workshops in Tweed and Bancroft; 25 businesses attended.</p> <p>Hosted the 7th Annual Tourism Awards Celebration in Tweed; a combined total of 21 nominations received.</p>	<p>NOTE: Staff are currently working to collect baseline data on Tourist Information Centre Visits, Key Event Attendance and Hotel, Accommodations Occupancy Rates and other related metrics including online sentiments. These can be influenced by a variety of factors.</p>
Product Development	<p>Coordinated and Chaired two meetings of stakeholders to discuss plans for establishing an incorporated Earth Sciences Centre Working Group</p> <p>Staff worked with and attended meetings of the new North Hastings Non-Motorized Trails Committee. Provided support to their strategic planning.</p>	
Culture and Heritage	<p>Arts Route members: 18 (four new members added in 2018)</p> <p>Traffic to ArtsRoute.ca: 940 page views</p> <p>Hosted the Cultural Summit in partnership with the Cities of Belleville and Quinte West. 161 people attended.</p>	
Agriculture and Natural Resources / Forestry	<p>New HarvestHastings.ca launched. Website visited by 29,781 (up from 19,000 30% the previous year). New Magazine Style Directory was produced in 2018.</p>	

3) 2019 Objectives and Initiatives

The following is a list of objectives and initiatives in progress or proposed for 2019:

Supporting business and self-employment

- Continue our cost-effective and successful program of “Business Facilitation” to help support existing businesses in our County and also assist start-ups;
- Continue to work with the Bay of Quinte Marketing Board, the Centre for Workforce Development and other local partners to seek funding to develop a Regional Newcomer Strategy to attract skilled and talented entrepreneurs, workers and new residents; and,
- Collect feedback from local businesses to obtain an updated understanding of their priorities and how the community can support their growth. This will be done through direct meetings with a cross-section of at least 100 businesses throughout our 14 member municipalities.

Marketing and Communications

- Implement our new Branding and Positioning Strategy such as:
 - Finalizing the Identity and Applications Guidelines;
 - Developing a new Hastings.ca economic development and tourism website;
 - Hosting a formal launch and education session for member municipalities and stakeholders;
 - Completing an overview of baseline metrics for 2018/2019; and,
 - Developing a 3 year Marketing Plan 2020-2022.
- Continue to add stories about entrepreneurs, and increase promotions and direct more traffic, to the iLeftTheCity.ca website;
- Continue to improve and expand digital marketing strategies (i.e. social media communications) encouraging our target audiences to visit our website(s) for smartphone and printer-friendly information;
- Leverage the Local Wanderer campaign by adding detailed itineraries that people can download or print to follow the same routes; and,
- Continue to partner with the Ontario East Economic Development Commission and Ontario’s Highlands Tourism Organization to participate in trade shows and events.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

- Partner with Harvest Hastings, Quintevation and other agriculture and food organizations to host an Agri-Tech Meet and Greet (planned for April 4). This, and future events, will focus on agriculture, technology and innovation in Hastings County and the Quinte Region;
- Partner with Potter Settlement Winery to coordinate a formal seminar/course that encourages more viticulture in Hastings County. It will share information on the benefits of planting grapes, the costs, how to prune and care for them, machinery needed, and laws and licenses to establish a winery; and,

- Continue to support the Bancroft and Area Forest Industry Association “Forestry Day” to inspire and educate young people about our Forest Industry and learn about careers in forestry, forest products, tree planting, forest management, wildlife values and facts about forestry.

Workshops

- Continue and expand industry development opportunities through workshops and training, including: how to get listed on OntarioTravel.net and the benefits to be listed; how to list on TripAdvisor and enhance your listing; and, a series on short-term accommodations and using Airbnb as a business opportunity; and,
- Continue to partner with the Small Business Centre and Community Futures to provide business development training opportunities for businesses and organizations within the region.

Working with Member Municipalities and local community groups

- Build on the successful Cultural Summit by continuing to partner with the Cities of Belleville and Quinte West and aim to host three Creative / Culture Networking events in different locations around the region;
- Continue collaboration with the Town of Bancroft on the development of a Recreational Geology Action/Resource Committee to review and support recreational geology as a tourism generator;
- Continue and complete meetings with all fourteen Heads of Council and senior staff to develop specific, tangible and measurable goals to be completed by the end of the current Council term; and,
- Continue to provide in-kind support to the Hastings Trails Inc. and their non-motorized trails development in North Hastings.

Tourism

- Partner with Ontario’s Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO) to host their Experiential Training program, IGNITE, for tourism stakeholders in Hastings County in April;
- Develop a Tourism Market Readiness program that will assist tourism operators with enhancing their marketability with our target markets. This program will look at their online presence, their tourism offering, and customer service;
- Work with member municipalities to identify their core tourism theme and develop a half-day itinerary that highlights their signature theme experiences. These itineraries will be created through the lens of the new County tourism brand;
- Review and update the Tourism Master Plan (2016) to create a Tourism Development Plan 2020-2022 that aligns with the new Marketing Plan 2020-2022 and the updated Economic Development Action Plan;
- Continue promotions of public activities taking place across the County in our email newsletter, on our blog and on our social media channels;
- Implement the recommendations contained within the First Impressions Community Exchange (FICE) report from Simcoe County including:
 - Launch the new Hastings.ca;

- Expand the Wanderer Blog to include user-friendly itinerary maps that can be handed out by businesses to tourists; and,
 - Developing new entrance signage on highways featuring the new Brand.
- Review the Arts Route program and consult with members to determine how best to proceed with the initiative and long-term sustainability; and,
- Staff will review the Annual Tourism Awards and will consult with the Economic and Tourism Development Advisory Committee on what the eighth edition of the Celebration will look like in late 2019.

Municipal Economic and Tourism Development Partners Group

- This Group will continue meeting every other month or as needed. Some examples of projects that will be discussed by the Group going forward includes Digital Service Squads (funded by the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association) to assist businesses with their digital technologies and usage, exploring digital technologies to assist with visitor information, recreational asset mapping, and assisting with the implementation of the new Branding and Positioning Strategy.

Economic and Tourism Development Advisory Committee

- This is the second year of the Advisory Committee. The main focus of the Advisory Committee going forward will be assisting with the review and update of economic and tourism development action plans, implementation of the Branding and Positioning Strategy, review and development of a three-year Marketing Strategy, and implementation of the recommendations from the First Impressions Community Exchange with Simcoe County.

Summary:

This staff report provides an overview of current tourism and economic development matters and outlines year-to-date progress we have made.



Economic & Tourism Development Manager

Andrew Redden