

Municipality of Chatham-Kent
Community Development
Community Attraction & Promotion
Information Report

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Shannon Paiva, Supervisor, Tourism Development
Date: October 31, 2022
Subject: Tourism Sector Support & Activities Update - Summer 2022

This report is for the information of Council.

Background

This report provides details on initiatives to support tourism sector recovery, growth, and sustainability in Chatham-Kent and outlines the supports Community Attraction & Promotion's tourism unit offered to sector operators as they navigated summer 2022.

Comments

Tourism is defined as the activities of persons travelling and staying for leisure, business, and other purposes and travelling a minimum of 40 kms (one-way) to do so.

Tourism businesses & tourism related businesses are those that sell products and services directly to travellers and include the following industries and sub-sectors:

- Accommodations
- Food and Beverage Services
- Arts, Entertainment and Recreation
- Retail
- Transportation
- Travel services
- Other services

A [September 2022 report from Statistics Canada](#) reports tourism spending in Canada grew 19.8 per cent in the second quarter of 2022. With the easing of travel restrictions effective February 28, more visitors from outside of Canada were admitted. While there is optimism across the country, recovery is far from complete. Tourism spending in the second quarter was still 21.7 per cent lower than the pre-COVID-19-pandemic levels of the fourth quarter of 2019.

[Destination Canada](#) projects that it will be 2025 before there is a return to 2019 total domestic and international tourism spending levels. These sentiments, while national, are reflected in the sentiments of tourism operators within Chatham-Kent. While many operators are starting to see a slight increase in customers and spending, levels are nowhere near what they were pre-pandemic.

A [September 2022 report from Destination Canada](#) projected no change in domestic travel demand in Ontario for the next nine months. There is also no change in demand from outside provinces to Ontario. Chatham-Kent operators also noted this trend, anecdotally reporting that attendees to events were residents, while the number of visitors from outside of CK was minimal compared to previous years.

CK Tourism Activity

Assisting tourism operators, through direct industry support and marketing assistance, remains a top priority for CK Tourism. CK Tourism engages with operators to offer resource information including, but not limited to, training and grant opportunities, photography and videography creation and digital assistance. CK Tourism also offers marketing support through the www.visitck.ca website and associated social media channels highlighted through the “See You in CK” marketing campaign. Further detail on engagement and support work is highlighted below.

Tourism Sector Support

Sector engagement highlights between May and September, 2022, include:

- Connections with 250 tourism businesses, including 170 in-person engagements with tourism owners/operators to offer;
 - Marketing and industry support
 - Grants and provincial award nomination opportunities
- Attendance at 35 festivals/events to promote an event or place to visit to;
 - Engage with over 1,500 residents and visitors over 150+ hours
 - Distribute over 6,000 tourism brochures and maps

On-Site, In-Person Engagement Visits

In-person visits with 170 tourism businesses allowed the tourism team to learn about specific tourism business operator needs. The engagement also allowed for; information sharing on supports that CK Tourism offers year-round; connections to available resources; and the sharing of information and support through the “See You in CK” marketing campaign.

The following testimonial illustrates the benefit the support CK Tourism continues to offer:

“Ethan and Andrea came by my restaurant, Bothwell Diner this summer and they were very professional, friendly, and happy. They are a perfect pair of partners and I would love them back. They do an awesome job at what they do. I really appreciated having them come by and the assistance they offered.”

-- Bothwell Diner Pizza & Wings, Owner, Caroline Nguyen (Bothwell, Ward 3)

“I found the Chatham-Kent tourism department very supportive, especially in our new business endeavours in Wallaceburg (Whimsies Paddle Rentals). I really appreciated their enthusiasm to help as well as their encouragement. The team's offering of guidance meant a lot to us and it was very encouraging.”

--Wallaceburg BIA, Executive Director, Kelsey Nydam (Wallaceburg, Ward 5)

Outreach and On-site Promotion

May through August saw the return of many events and festivals in Chatham-Kent. CK Tourism team members attended 35 different events (across 50 event days) throughout the municipality, promoting things to do in Chatham-Kent to attendees and connecting directly with more than 1,500 people. Events included new and returning community events.

Grant Opportunities

CK Tourism actively shares funding opportunities with tourism businesses. In 2022, the Tourism Relief Fund (TRF) was made available through the Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation (SWOTC) and FedDev Ontario.

A total of \$670,189 in TRF funds were distributed to eight (8) tourism operators in Chatham-Kent including;

- Bayside Brewing Co.
- Buxton National Historic Site & Museum
- Downtown Wallaceburg BIA
- Glasstown Brewing Co.
- Hat Trick Farms
- Red Barn Brewing Co.
- Retro Suites Hotel
- Willow Barrel Retreat

The TRF investments will assist tourism operators to adapt and recover with the goal of attracting new visitors and driving economic growth in Chatham-Kent.

Award Nominations

Annually, CK Tourism identifies opportunities to nominate tourism operators and their businesses for various awards. Among winners at the 2022 Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) Resiliency awards, was Red Barn Brewing Co.

Red Barn Brewing Co. was the recipient of two TIAO awards in recognition of Farm Fest 2021, in the Beverages category. The awards were for Innovation and Collaboration. The importance of using award nominations to gain recognition for local tourism operators is encapsulated in the following testimonial:

“Working with our CK Tourism Team is always a pleasure. We never considered when we opened a few years ago that we would be considered a tourist destination for locals and travellers from across the province. #VisitCK resonates well with us because we live and breathe Chatham-Kent and we want to promote not only our own venture but the entire geography of this area to visitors abroad. Chatham-Kent has much to offer, and our local, small and mighty team does their very best on promoting new (and existing) adventures in our backyard to tourists and visitors. Winning two provincial tourism awards and being recognized for our efforts wouldn’t be possible without CK Tourism. Thank you to our amazing CK Tourism Team.”

--Red Barn Brewing Co., Co-Owner, Denny Vervaet, Blenheim (Ward 2)

Marketing Support

CK Tourism continues to expand on the “See You in CK” campaign which has been active since 2020. The campaign is targeted to visitors as well as residents and seeks to drive awareness of local tourism businesses and attractions in order to drive awareness, visitation, and spending.

A mix of social media marketing (organic, earned and paid), updating and creating new website content, as well as paid marketing through local radio and print media was utilized to drive the campaign in 2022.

Given the lingering pandemic and its impact on travel, CK Tourism continued to target the hyper-local (resident) market through staycation promotions. Marketing spend in the summer of 2022 was therefore allocated toward targeting local over external markets, with a 70% internal audience /30% external audience mix. The external marketing was targeted to day trippers and overnight guests living at least 40 km away.

By the summer of 2023, the overall marketing allocation will return to more normal levels with an 80% external audience/20% local audience mix, all with the goal of attracting visitors and generating economic impact for local tourism operators and the economy.

Content Creation: Social Media

CK Tourism created significant digital content through social media videos, reels, stories and photo posts during all outreach events to promote tourism businesses and events. Over 2,500 photos and videos were captured by the tourism team and resulted in the following:

May 1 – August 31, 2022**1.894 million social media total views**

- Facebook: 1.4 million
- Instagram: 474,000
- Twitter: 20,000

1.254 million unique accounts reached

- Facebook: 964,000
- Instagram: 292,000

1,052 new followers

- Facebook: 736
- Instagram: 316

Content Creation: [VisitCK.ca](https://www.visitck.ca) Website

CK Tourism continues to add new website “blogs” or “trip itinerary suggestions” and videos to showcase reasons to visit Chatham-Kent. The goal of each is dual; to reach niche markets showcasing what Chatham-Kent has to offer, and to showcase to a wider audience the variety of experiences offered in CK. All blogs offer suggested itineraries, are created seasonally, focus on supporting local tourism-oriented businesses, and encourage residents and visitors alike to increase spending across the municipality.

- [Visiting with your Dog](#)
- [Travelling with Teens and Tweens](#)
- [Summer 2022 Video](#)

Google Analytics for VisitCK for May 1 – August 31, 2022

Total page views: 103,400

Top 5 pages views (40% of all page views)

- [Events and Festivals \(landing page\)](#)
- [Events and Festivals \(July to September\)](#)
- [Events and Festivals \(April to June\)](#)
- [Homepage](#)
- [Outdoor Activities \(Beaches\)](#)

Additional content highlighting Chatham-Kent assets has been created and promoted through a number of external partnerships:

Culinary Tourism Alliance (Digital)

- [How To Go on A DIY Cheese Tour in Ontario \(Chatham-Kent Bakery Trail\)](#)
- [Our Favorite Retro Ice Cream Shops in Ontario](#)
- [Screaming For Ice Cream in Chatham-Kent](#)
- [Step Up Your Fry Game in Chatham Kent](#)

SWOTC, Global Barber (Video & Digital)

- [Cut Through Ontario's Southwest with the Global Barber](#)

Globe and Mail (Print & Digital)

- [Delicious Autumn: Three Regions to Visit For Fun, Fall Colours And Fantastic Food](#)

Ignite Magazine (Print & Digital)

- [Ontario's Southwest – 3 Unique Options for Business Events](#)

Professional Photo and Video Assets

Partnerships with the Southwestern Ontario Tourism Corporation (SWOTC) and Destination Ontario (DO) have allowed Chatham-Kent Tourism to support several photo and video shoots within CK. These photos and videos showcase not only tourism assets and businesses, but profile diversity and inclusivity in Chatham-Kent.

More than 25 tourism business and attractions/locations have been highlighted while more than 50 diverse community models have taken part in these photo and video opportunities. Year to date, CK Tourism has added over 2,000 quality photos and videos to our promotional library assets which are used to showcase Chatham-Kent.

Projects have included:

Many Faces of Tourism Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Project

- 1,452 professional photos
- 16 tourism operator businesses/attractions/locations featured
- 24 diverse community models from CK
- 1 additional shoot at 4 locations is scheduled for December

Summer Fun in CK

- 600 professional photos and videos
- 7 tourism operator businesses/attractions/locations
- 20 diverse community models from CK

Experiential Tourism

- 300 professional photos
- 2 promotional videos
- 2 tourism operator businesses/attractions/locations
- 28 diverse community models from CK

In addition to generating high-quality imagery assets and building partnerships, the following testimonial highlights additional community benefits associated with tourism engaging in these types of projects:

“It has been a pleasure working with the CK Tourism team, and we’ve had lots of opportunities in 2022. It’s turned into a great partnership as we were thrilled to be consulted, right from the beginning, on the Many Faces of Tourism project, the participation in the Pride Festival and inclusion in videos and other touchpoints in the community. The experience has been affirming and heartwarming as well as an acknowledgement of our voice as a community. Community models and the Board of Directors have appreciated the continued efforts to create a cultural context of safety and the inclusion of the CK Pride community, creating feelings of being less marginalized and more celebrated. We look forward to continuing to work with the CK Tourism and growing the relationship.”

-- Chatham-Kent Pride, Board of Directors, Marianne Willson, (Chatham, Ward 6)

Consultation

Consultation through collaboration and engagement is central to the work that occurs across Community Attraction & Promotion’s tourism area. Ongoing collaboration also occurs with regional and provincial tourism groups, including Destination Ontario (DO), Southwestern Ontario Tourism Corporation (SWOTC), the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) and the Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA).

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

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Attachment(s):

None