



A community that grows together

Report To: Warden Horner and Members of County Council

Meeting Date: May 8, 2025

Subject: Tourism Development Q1 Update

From: Rajbir Sian, Director of Community Development and Tourism

Recommendation

THAT the report from the Director of Community Development and Tourism, Report #Planning and Development-2025-036, "Tourism Development Q1 Update", dated May 8, 2025, be received.

Executive Summary

- The 2025-26 edition of the Explore Dufferin Guide was launched in late April with ongoing rollout of printed copies to every household and business in Dufferin County.
- The Explore Dufferin video project is ongoing and a draft of an 8-minute documentary-style version premiered at the Explore Dufferin Investors' Tour. Edits and additional short videos will be completed soon.
- Public engagement for the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) feasibility study is ongoing with the consultant facilitating a mixture of stakeholder roundtable meetings and one-on-one interviews with key businesses.

Background & Discussion

Throughout the first quarter of the year, the Economic Development Division has embarked on and completed several milestone projects in its tourism development portfolio. These projects have included the 2025-26 edition of the Explore Dufferin Guide, the Explore Dufferin video project, and public engagement sessions for the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) feasibility study.

2025-26 Explore Dufferin Guide

The 2025-26 Explore Dufferin Guide was launched in late April with an accessible digital version available on the ExploreDufferinCounty.ca tourism website. Printed copies are being distributed to every household and business in Dufferin County with a targeted external distribution plan in development. About 27,000 Guides were printed this year, a major expansion from the 10,000 copies that were printed last year. This expansion will allow the Guide to be accessed by a larger audience within and outside the County. This year's edition of the Guide saw several key changes from the previous edition. These include the all-new agri-tourism map which was created in partnership with the Headwaters Food and Farming Alliance (HFFA) and In The Hills magazine. It also includes all-new itineraries and advertorials that place additional spotlights on local tourism businesses. These efforts and many more were an attempt to build on the successes of last year's edition of the Guide which was well received by residents and businesses and garnered several international awards. Staff will continue to monitor feedback from residents and businesses as copies reach local mailboxes.

Explore Dufferin Video Project

The Explore Dufferin Video Project commenced in Fall 2024 with several objectives. One of the main objectives was to create a video that captured the vast tourism landscape in Dufferin, including its natural assets, unique experiences, cultural hubs, and proud tourism businesses. Following an Request for Quotes process, Studio 204 was contracted to deliver a documentary-style video that captured the above elements of Dufferin's tourism landscape. An initial version video premiered at the recently concluded Explore Dufferin Investors' Tour with positive feedback and responses from the event attendees and some suggestions for improvement. The video is undergoing edits that have considered the feedback and final video is expected to be ready by Fall 2025.

As well, Studio 204 was tasked with creating several "highlight" videos that focused on the County's data-inspired "Visitor Profiles." These videos will be featured on the ExploreDufferinCounty.ca tourism website, Dufferin County website, and be used to spearhead tourism promotional campaigns across social media channels throughout the year.

Public Engagement for MAT Feasibility Study

The public engagement component of the MAT feasibility study is underway with several key stakeholders engaged in the process. CBRE Limited, the consultant contracted with spearheading this process, facilitated a stakeholder roundtable meeting

that was attended by about 25 local tourism business owners and municipal representatives. CBRE Limited provided an overview of the process, deliverables and associated timelines. They also facilitated a general discussion around the advantages and disadvantages of the MAT, how it has been implemented and used by other municipalities, and the various avenues in which it could be implemented in Dufferin County. Economic Development staff also facilitated the solicitation of responses to an online survey which garnered nearly 90 responses before closing. There is a future stakeholder roundtable scheduled for May 14, 2025, in addition to ongoing individual interviews with key short-term accommodation providers. The qualitative data being gathered through this public engagement effort will inform the analysis and recommendation that CBRE Limited provides at the completion of this project in June 2025.

Financial, Staffing, Legal, or IT Considerations

None at this time.

In Support of Strategic Plan Priorities and Objectives

Economy - advance County-wide economic development workforce development

Respectfully Submitted By:

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