



REPORT

TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

FROM: Allison Nap, Economic Development and Tourism Officer

DATE: January 24, 2022

REPORT NO.: ADMIN-2022-0006

SUBJECT: Hamilton, Halton, Brant Regional Tourism Association (HHBRTA) Partnership Funding Program Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. ADMIN-2022-0006, dated January 24, 2022, regarding the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Town of Halton Hills and the Hamilton, Halton, Brant Regional Tourism Association (HHBRTA) for the Partnership Funding Program, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council authorize the Clerk to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the HHBRTA, attached to this report, on behalf of the Town of Halton Hills along with any ancillary documents, to receive a 50% matching grant up to \$2,500, in order to develop a high-quality tourism brochure.

KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- Halton Hills' broader tourism sector is an important contributor to the local economy and quality of life.
- The tourism sector has been one of the hardest hit sectors during the pandemic.
- A new, high-quality, tourism brochure will contribute to the implementation of the Town's Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.
- The Town has an opportunity to leverage funding support from the Regional Tourism Organization 3 (RTO3) to fund 50% of the brochure.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

Tourism plays an important role in Ontario's economy. Prior to the pandemic, tourism generated more than \$36 billion in economic activity and supported hundreds of thousands of jobs in Ontario. According to Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, tourism-related industries lost 94,000 jobs between August 2019 and August 2021. In Halton Hills, a significant number of local jobs relate to and support the broader tourism sector. Therefore, supporting this sector continues to be important to the overall economic recovery and ongoing vitality of the local economy.

Through funding provided via a proposed Memorandum of Understanding with the Hamilton, Halton, Brant Regional Tourism Association, Halton Hills will be able to proceed with the development of a new brochure (both in paper and digital format) to market new tourism products and experiences provided by Halton Hills' tourism-related businesses and organizations. It will also support implementation of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy by helping to drive new visits and spending to Halton Hills, while recognizing and adapting to changing pandemic conditions. Three of the Strategy's goals are of most relevance:

- Tourism Goal 2 - Increased Tourism Product and Experience Offerings
- Tourism Goal 5 - Halton Hills is Promoted as a Unified Tourism Destination
- Tourism Goal 7 - Strong Regional Partnerships with Pooled Resources

Delivery of the new tourism brochure will:

- Support and help build a strong tourism-related business community by promoting the visithaltonhills.ca brand and tourism offerings.
- Engage residents and provide them with resources that can help increase visits by family and friends. The brochure will be distributed locally, to neighbouring municipalities as well as to the Ontario Travel Centres.
- Continue to develop regional partnerships that help elevate Halton Hills as a tourism destination.

Through its most recent Travel Outlook Survey (December 2021) taken during the pandemic, Destination Ontario (the lead tourism marketing organization for Ontario and an agency of the Province) found that 81% of Ontarians feel safe when thinking about travelling to nearby communities.

In 2021, despite the severe and widespread impacts of the pandemic on the tourism sector and hence no active marketing of the visithaltonhills.ca tourism website, the website was visited by over 22,000 people. About 25% of these visitors were from the GTA (e.g. Toronto, Peel) and an additional 14% from within Halton Hills. Building on past digital advertising, as tourism opportunities expand, the new brochure will further

encourage tourists, visitors and town residents and friends to visit the Town's tourism website to discover everything that Halton Hills has to offer. This includes local restaurants, unique shopping, arts and culture offerings and activities, recreational activities, and more.

HHBRTA Partnership MOU

Ontario's Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) receive funding from the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries (MHSTCI) to develop and deliver strategies that support destination management priorities, including marketing and tourism product development. The Regional Tourism Organization 3 (RTO3) or HHBRTA, which applies to the Halton Hills area, has identified that a partnership project with the Town to develop a new tourism brochure supports its marketing priorities.

As noted in the attached MOU, the HHBRTA will support 50% of the cost to design the brochure as well as the first round of printing.

In terms of responsibilities, the Town's Economic Development and Tourism Officer will be responsible for sourcing a graphic designer and working with the designer to develop the layout and content for the brochure as well as for compiling and sending invoices to HHBRTA for payment. Throughout the design process, Town staff will gather feedback from the Tourism Advisory Committee and Corporate Communications. Staff will also provide project updates and submit a final report to HHBRTA.

HHBRTA will be responsible for invoicing the Town for the matching funds, managing overall project finances, and providing feedback on the final brochure design.

It is anticipated that the brochure will be completed and distributed by May 2022.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report aligns to the Town's Strategic plan recognizing the value to foster a prosperous economy, maintain and enhance the economic vitality of the town through the provision of a wide range of opportunities for economic development.

This report also identifies shaping growth as one of the Town's Strategic priorities.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement was not needed as this report is administrative in nature.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Corporate Communications and the Town's Tourism Advisory Committee will be engaged in the development of the brochure.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report will be funded through an existing approved budget source.

The financial impact of the MOU is that the Town will pay a total of \$2,500 to HHBRTA as a 50% matching contribution towards the total project cost of \$5,000.

Town funding will be derived from the existing Economic Investment Attraction Fund. There is no new financial impact.

Reviewed and approved by,

Damian Szybalski, Director of Economic Development, Innovation & Culture

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer