



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

FROM: Allison Nap, Economic Development and Tourism Officer

DATE: October 21, 2022

MEMO NO.: BEC-2022-0003

SUBJECT: Tourism Advisory Committee – Accomplishments and Update

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide Council with an update on the Tourism Advisory Committee, established in August 2019.

BACKGROUND:

The Tourism Advisory Committee was formed to advise and make recommendations on matters pertaining to tourism destination development and growing tourism services in Halton Hills. The committee met between September 2019 and September 2022.

The goals and objectives of the Tourism Advisory Committee were:

- To advise and make recommendations pertaining to local tourism;
- To assist with the development and implementation of the tourism workplan;
- To increase awareness and elevate discussions on tourism issues;
- To be a centralized focal point for effectively building tourism as a key economic driver within Halton Hills; and
- To build on existing tourism programs and services, with a focus on optimizing resources and facilitating collaboration/coordination amongst community service providers and other industry stakeholders.

In addition to Councillor Lawlor, Council representative and Chair of the Committee, over time, membership of the Tourism Advisory Committee included representation from a major tourism destination (Toronto Premium Outlets), tourism-related businesses

and organizations, tourism industry association, and Halton Region. Individual Committee members included:

- Councillor Lawlor, Chair (2019 – 2022)
- Leith Bengtson (2019 - 2020)
- Kathy Gastle (2019 – 2022)
- Amy Sykes / Melanie Frazer (2019 – 2022)
- Greg Coman (2019 – 2022)
- Cari Bower (2019 – 2022)
- Chuck Thibeault (2019 – 2022)
- Peter Rowe (2019 – 2020)
- Leslie Adams (2019)
- Stephanie Mazhari (2019 – 2022)

The staff liaison for the Tourism Advisory Committee was the Town's Economic Development and Tourism Officer.

COMMENTS:

Halton Hills' tourism sector is primarily comprised of small businesses in the destination, retail, hospitality and agriculture sectors. Locally, it is estimated that approximately over 7,000 jobs relate to the broader tourism sector - meaning that approximately 30% of local jobs relate to the tourism industry (pre-COVID conditions). Tourism is also a major regional and provincial sector. Recognizing the importance of the sector, collaborating with key stakeholders such as the downtown Acton and Georgetown Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) and the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, the Town has been focused on amplifying the economic and community benefits of tourism.

Shortly after the Tourism Advisory Committee was established in the fall of 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic began. In response to public health measures, the original (pre-COVID) objective of promoting Halton Hills as a visitor destination pivoted to supporting small businesses and to using existing tourism platforms for local initiatives.

Some of the primary tourism drivers, including festivals and events and sports and recreation activities, were put on hold in 2020 and 2021. As a result, the Committee supported the promotion of other activities that could be safely enjoyed during that time, including outdoor recreation and agri-tourism destinations such as Pick Your Own Farms. In addition, the Committee supported the development of self-guided tours and day-trip itineraries to combine outdoor activities with opportunities to support small businesses such as restaurants and local retailers.

Throughout 2020 and 2021, the Economic Development division continued to create and deliver tourism content to appropriate markets, while positioning Halton Hills to be ready to welcome visitors when it is safe to do so.

The Committee was instrumental in providing feedback on key deliverables such as the new visitHaltonHills.ca website and tourism marketing brochures. It also provided valuable input in the development of the Town's comprehensive Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, and assisted in the prioritization of the Strategy's recommendations.

The Committee provided insight into new partnerships, including with the Culinary Tourism Alliance and the Regional Tourism Organization (Heart of Ontario). It provided feedback on visitor markets that can be targeted via a post-COVID advertising campaign.

The Committee shared information about new tourism initiatives with their networks, and provided a local and visitor perspective on content delivered through the Visit Halton Hills brand.

Below are additional highlights of projects supported by the Tourism Advisory Committee:

- [Economic Development and Tourism Strategy](#)
- [New visithaltonhills.ca tourism website launch](#)
- [Self-guided tours and itineraries published on the tourism website](#)
- [New Community Improvement Plan \(CIP\)](#)
- [Shop Local initiative, Explore the Hills Contest](#)
- [Al Fresco in the Hills program](#)
- Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Action Plan
- [Tourism Business Digital Tool Kits](#)
- [Culinary Tourism Alliance Partnership, Great Taste of Ontario Passport](#)
- [New Printed Visitor Brochure](#)
- Metroland Media Digital Marketing Campaign

Recognizing the tourism accomplishments achieved to date and the completion of its term, the Tourism Advisory Committee has been sunset. The potential re-establishment of the Tourism Advisory Committee or another committee/group to assist the Town with the implementation of a tourism workplan in order to support the sector and amplify its economic benefits, will be considered at a later date.

As part of the next annual Invest Halton Hills Report, planned for Q1 2023, Town staff will provide Council with additional highlights of successes achieved in supporting the local tourism sector.

CONCLUSION:

Despite the unprecedented challenges caused by COVID-19, including on the tourism and hospitality sectors, the Tourism Advisory Committee provided valuable and creative

solutions to help market Halton Hills as a tourism destination, while responding to public health and travel restrictions.

The Committee was instrumental to advancing the tourism workplan. Its valuable contributions and dedication are very much appreciated.

Reviewed and approved by,

Erin Kaiser, Manager of Economic Development and Innovation

Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Business, Environment & Culture

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer