

## KEY INFORMATION REPORT

CAO

10/18/2021

**SUBJECT: Economic Development and Tourism – Activities Report.** Prepared by Tara Kirkpatrick, Manager of Economic Development.

**BACKGROUND:** In early March 2021, Tara Kirkpatrick was hired as the Manager of Economic Development. The post had been vacant since December 2020, with the departure of the former Manager of Development.

In this role, Ms. Kirkpatrick is responsible for Economic Development activities, including the administration of the Regional Incentives Program, business development and expansion, corporate branding, and regional projects; as well as oversight of tourism activities, in conjunction with Tourism Coordinator Karina Belanger.

The following report is intended to provide an overview of significant projects and activities undertaken between March 2021 and October 2021.

### ***Business Retention and Expansion***

- 1) Followed up on business leads and inquiries from residents and business owners interested in relocating to SDG.
- 2) Met with numerous business owners interested in growing and expanding their businesses. In combination with Regional Incentives inquiries dealt with around 50+ individual inquiries. This included helping to launch Tranquility Acres (North Glengarry), Split Rock Farms Alpacas (South Glengarry), Lost Villages Brewery (South Stormont), Finch Laundromat (North Stormont), Fields of Gold (North Stormont), Autobound (North Glengarry), and many others.
- 3) Organized a meeting between local farmers' markets and representatives from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, as well as representatives from the Ontario Farmers' Market Association to discuss strategies to grow their organizations and respond to a variety of issues the stakeholders were facing, many related to COVID-19 restrictions.
- 4) Reached out to numerous local businesses and responded to directed inquiries related to COVID-19 grants and loan programs. Sent regular updates on grants and supports to the local economic development officers, stakeholders and chambers of commerce and arranged for the SDG Communications Officer to advertise these programs on the County social media channels.
- 5) Hosted a virtual event on April 28, with MP Jim McDonnell and the Honourable Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, to discuss

available COVID-19 grants and supports for business. More than 60 local businesses participated in the virtual event.

- 6) Helped to arrange and coordinate the 2021 SDG Tourism Sponsorship Program.
- 7) After consulting with a variety of major industrial clients, including Alexandria Moulding and Ross Video, arranged stakeholder meetings with Skills Ontario, the Eastern Ontario Training Board, Algonquin College and the City of Cornwall to discuss the ongoing shortage of millwrights and other skilled trades professionals. As a result of these meetings, the Eastern Ontario Training Board was able to pivot some of their existing programs to better meet the needs of local business. Local training colleges were also made aware of some of the local needs facing these employers. They are looking into longer term solutions to address these identified shortages.
- 8) Sponsored and helped to solicit the participation of local manufacturers in the “Skills Ontario Discovery Day – Careers in Skilled Trades & Technologies Event for Cornwall and SDG”. The event, held on May 10, attracted over 1100 participants, on a virtual forum.
- 9) Assisted with the organization of the launch of Split Rock Farms Alpacas on September 15.

### ***Conferences, training and stakeholder engagement***

- 1) Participated in the Eastern Ontario Local Food Conference.
- 2) Coordinated the monthly Economic Development Officers Working Group Meetings.
- 3) Participated in the monthly Employability Network Meetings.
- 4) Participated in the Eastern Ontario Agri-Food Network meetings.
- 5) Participated in regular meetings with the City of Cornwall regarding tourism projects and shared Economic Development initiatives.
- 6) Participated in weekly Corporate Services meetings and engaged with other departments and member municipalities on shared projects.
- 7) Participated in; and helped to organize the Regional Tourism Grant approvals meeting on April 9.
- 8) Participated in the Economic Development Council of Ontario (EDCO) Virtual Resilient Economic Development 101 for Rural Communities Conference, on April 14. Followed by EDCO’s “Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) from a Distance”! Conference on April 21; and “The New Virtual Investment Pitch”! on April 28.
- 9) Attended a May 12, information session on Ontario’s Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) and on the Regional Immigration Pilot Program. Shared this information with a number of major employers, as well as local EDOs.
- 10) Participated in training and information sessions with the Ontario East Economic Development Corporation related to the “Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance” (GHFFA).
- 11) Participated in a webinar with CrowdRift on June 9, showcasing the tourism attraction tools offered using TikTok reels. This was done as part of the research leading to the launch of SDG Tourism’s new TikTok account.

- 12) Participated in training sessions to learn about SDG's new website and the SDG E-Scribe Contributor Training.

### ***Community Projects***

- 1) Helped to organize the installation of a donated piece of public art in the South Stormont roundabout.
- 2) Helped to organize and coordinate the November 19<sup>th</sup> SDG Warden's Business Breakfast.
- 3) Arranged a meeting between a residential developer, Cornwall Social Housing and one of the lower-tier municipalities to discuss a proposed project.

### ***Regional Incentives Program***

- 1) Conducted a review of the existing Regional Incentives Program Policy Document and the Regional Incentives Program Terms of Reference.
  - a) Incorporated the changes proposed during the initial consultation period conducted with County Council in December 2020
  - b) Recommended administrative suggestions and clerical changes to improve the language and efficiency of the program documents.
  - c) Prepared and followed a flow-chart advising of the many steps required as part of an official plan amendment to the Regional Incentives Program. This included revising the official documents, with the consultation of the planning department and CAO; and the preparation of a draft notice to be posted by each of SDGs six municipalities.
  - d) As part of the public consultation process, a public meeting was hosted on April 8, to explain the changes to the Regional Incentives Program and to offer the public the opportunity to comment. This was followed by a consultation period, after which the final changes were incorporated into the official documents and adopted by County Council.
  - e) As a result of this extensive process to amend the Regional Incentives Program, and of some of the administrative challenges recognized in the structure of said program, a request was made by SDGs Director of Planning, to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to make the following changes to the Planning Act and associated regulations:
    - i) That Section 28 of the Planning Act be amended to allow upper-tier municipalities to have the same ability to pass Community Improvement Plans as local municipalities; or,
    - ii) That Regulation 221/07 be amended to include the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry as a prescribed upper-tier municipality to prepare Community Improvement Plans and that Regulation 550/06 is amended to allow prescribed upper-tier municipalities the ability to pass their own CIPs for the same broad purposes as local and single-tier municipalities.
- (a) This information was submitted as an Action Request to County Council on September 20.

- (b) On October 6, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs followed up to inquire in more depth about the request and to learn more about the County's Regional Incentives Program as well as the six lower-tier Community Improvement Plans – three of which were launched in order to coordinate the launch of the Regional Incentives Program. The research is part of a report being prepared by the Ministry.
- f) Advertised for lay appointees to the Regional Incentives Program Approvals Committee and organized the necessary process of approvals. Once the members were approved by the Warden, hosted a training session for the new RIPAC committee.
- g) Prepared for two Regional Incentives intake periods to take place in June and August. A total of \$250,000 had been budgeted for the program for 2021.
  - i) During the first intake period there were over a dozen inquiries related to the program. Nine applications were submitted and five were recommended for funding. A total of \$104,015 in grants were approved, representing more than \$1.2 million in construction projects. These projects include:
    - (a) Cannamore Orchards (North Dundas), \$8,775
    - (b) Heritage House Health & Spa (North Dundas), \$24,475
    - (c) Tranquility Acres (North Glengarry), \$50,000
    - (d) Henderson Abbatoir (South Dundas), \$20,000
    - (e) Upper Canada Veterinary Service (North Dundas), \$765
  - ii) During the second intake period, held in August, there were 13 applications, of which nine were recommended for funding. A total of \$173,181.90 in grants were recommended, representing more than \$1.5 million in cumulative projects. Of this funding, \$145,985 was budgeted in the total budget of \$250,000 for 2021 and the remaining \$27,196.90 represents unspent funds remaining in the program from projects that did not move forward, or which came in under budget. The recommended projects for the second intake include:
    - (a) O'Farrell Financial (North Dundas), \$19,500
    - (b) Ritchie Feed and Seed (North Dundas), \$34,000
    - (c) Smirlholm Farms Honey (North Dundas), \$9,681.80
    - (d) Finch Laundrmat (North Stormont), \$25,000
    - (e) Dentz Orchards Berry Farm (South Dundas), \$2,500
    - (f) Whittaker Storage Inc. (South Dundas), \$12,500
    - (g) Ferme Butte et Bine Farm (South Glengarry), \$22,000
    - (h) Lost Villages Brewery (South Stormont), \$45,000
    - (i) Lion Motel (South Stormont), \$3,000

### ***Miscellaneous***

- 1) Joined the SDG County Emergency Management Team as the Alternate to the Emergency Information Officer.
- 2) Assisted in the hiring panel for the new SDG Community Outreach Librarian.

# SDG TOURISM

## *RTO9 Drive for Excellence program*

1) SDG Tourism received \$25,000 from RTO9 as part of their Drive for Excellence program. The Drive for Excellence Program is intended to help Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO's) start, build, or grow a specific component of their marketing program - from strategy development to marketing campaign support, and many other options. A variety of assistance was available tailored towards destinations needs. From the list of offerings, SDG Tourism chose to apply for photo/video asset development and the marketing strategy which is being used for the Historic SDG Jail feasibility study.

### **a) Tourism Video (\$15,000 from the Drive for Excellence Program)**

- i) Issued a Request for Tender (RFQ) in the Spring 2021 for a two-minute tourism video; ten, 30-45 second vignettes, and 250 still photography images.
- ii) Creative Good was awarded the contract. Their team is represented by Laura Bombier the director and professional photographer; and Max Attwood a professional cinematographer. Laura and Max have an impressive portfolio producing work for the likes of National Geographic, CBC and other main stream television companies. They also produced a signature video for Lennox and Addington Tourism, which was the inspiration for this piece.
- iii) Our mission statement was the baseline for the creative and inspired the script.
- iv) The project includes a signature tourism video and 12 smaller vignettes, which feature: accommodations, heritage, water sports, food, alcohol, family attractions, agri-tourism, sports, scenic views of the region, a teaser video, fall video, winter video. In addition to the tourism videos, a worker attraction video was also commissioned to align with economic development strategies.
- v) Visited more than 50 locations for the filming of this project. In conjunction with this project, liaised with tourism business owners and conducted site visits to learn more about their needs and how the County might be able to further assist them.
- vi) Film crew returning for both fall and winter film sessions.
- vii) The content generated from this project remains the property of the County and can be remixed and edited to create further targeted campaigns.
- viii) Special COVID-19 funding was accessed to offset part of the cost of this project. The soft launch of the main tourism video will take place at the October 18 meeting of County Council and it will also appear at the Ontario East Municipal Conference. A comprehensive launch and campaign is being organized for Spring 2022 and will include television placements on CVT Ottawa.

**b) Historic SDG Jail Study (\$10,000 from the Drive for Excellence Program)**

- i) Through our partnership with RTO9 and Alphabet Creative, Loren Christie Solutions was contracted to complete the jail feasibility study. This will be a perfect way to understand the opportunities of the facility. We began the work in September with a tour of the facility and internal meetings. This will be followed by interviews with key stakeholders, and further work such as comparing our site to similar venues across Canada. We expect to receive the final report by March of 2022.

**2) SDG Discover Guide**

- a) Ordered 65,000 copies of the 2021 Discover Guide.
- b) Over 47,000 were delivered via a direct mailing in partnership with MP Eric Duncan's office and the City of Cornwall. Additionally, over 3,000 copies were delivered to North Glengarry residents via Canada Post.
- c) Our three summer students delivered most of the remaining guides to local businesses across SDG, along with branded tourism face masks.

**3) Summer Students**

- a) Visitors and "staycationers" were met by three SDG Cycling Ambassador students this summer, Andy, Kyra, and Isabelle. They were out patrolling locations and events such as the Long Sault Parkway, the Morrisburg Beach, and Fields of Gold, offering help with everything from finding the most picturesque cycling route in the Counties, to helping change a bike tire.
- b) The students assisted with delivering guides across SDG, and they acted as local ambassadors at the Ontario by Bike ride in August.
- c) The students also created and posted content for the SDG Tourism social media accounts and created and launched the SDG Tourism TikTok account.
- d) 72% of our summer student wages and benefits were covered by grants. We received \$3,723 from the Provincial Student Experience Program and \$11,224.50 from the Federal Canada Summer Jobs Grant. Total student wages and benefits = \$20,557.

**4) Regional Tourism Grant**

- a) A total of \$25,000 in grants were dispersed in 2021. This included \$4,000 in funding that was allocated to recipients in 2020 for projects that were delayed due to the pandemic and an additional \$21,000 in funds budgeted for 2021.
- b) Funded projects include:
  - i) Art on the Waterfront, \$2,500
  - ii) Cannamore Orchards, \$1,500
  - iii) Cornwall Township Historical Society, \$2,500
  - iv) Dalkeith Historical Society, \$1,000
  - v) Eastern Ontario Maple Syrup Producers, \$1,500

- vi) MCM Festival, \$2,500
  - vii) Mountain Township Agricultural Society, \$1,000
  - viii) Oneida Grand Event Centre and Bistro, \$1,500
  - ix) Priest's Mill Art Centre, \$1,000
  - x) Smokie Ridge Vineyard, \$1,000
  - xi) South Stormont Fun Raisers, \$1,000
  - xii) The Lost Villages Historical Society, \$1,000
  - xiii) Vanderlaand the Barnyard Zoo, \$3,000
  - xiv) Mountain Township Agricultural Society Rodeo, \$2,500 (2020 funds)
  - xv) Winchester Downtown Revitalization Committee, \$1,500 (2020 funds)
- c) Four of the projects have indicated they will not be moving forward, due to Covid-19 constraints. These include the projects for Art on the Waterfront, Oneida Grand Event Centre and Bistro, Vanderlaand the Barnyard Zoo and the Winchester Downtown Revitalization.

## **5) Spark Tourism Program**

- a) On September 29<sup>th</sup>, we launched the second round of Spark Tourism Funding. This program is dedicated to helping to launch three new tourism projects, from which winners will be selected to represent SDG Counties, Cornwall and Akwesasne. Each of these three regions has provided funding to the project, which is further supported by the Cornwall Tourism Development Fund. The program is open to individuals, start-ups or established small businesses or non-profit organizations, who have a new tourism idea, experience or partnership to fruition.
- b) The "Spark" Program will match selected candidates with a tourism mentor and provide a source of financial support to help take their great new tourism idea to the next level of development.
- c) Applications are being accepted until November 5<sup>th</sup> and there are two info sessions that prospective applicants can register for:
  - i) Info Session #1: Wednesday, October 13 @ 5:00-5:45pm
  - ii) Info Session #2: Thursday, October 28 @ 11:30am-12:15pm
- d) We had a great first year of the Spark Program and awarded three winners who have launched their businesses this year. Fields of Gold an agri-tourism destination in Monkland, Cornwall Food Tours who have been extremely innovative with their approach during COVID offering pickup meals and Zoom calls, in place of in restaurant dining. Finally, there was Oneida Grand in Iroquois, who have also launched their event space, and we hope to see their Classic Car events soon.

## **6) Tourism Signage Program**

- a) In October, renewal letters and invoicing will be going out for 40 SDG tourism signs.

- b) So far in 2021, there were 22 new tourism sign requests. The signs are currently in the process of being installed, with installations expected to be completed by late October.

**7) *Upcoming Marketing projects for SDG Tourism***

- a) Narcity Blog – being prepared in partnership with Cornwall Tourism to promote the top Fall destinations and activities to participate in within our region.
- b) Big Catch Media has been hired to assist with a comprehensive social media campaign running for the remainder of the year.
- c) Blogs and social media contests will be held featuring local destinations.
- d) The “Christmas in the Counties” radio campaign will be returning.
- e) SDG Counties is sponsoring the Cornwall Chamber of Commerce “Shop Local” campaign running in November. This project is also being sponsored by the City of Cornwall and it was the recipient of a \$110,000 grant from Fed. Dev.

**COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:**