



## CENTRAL COUNTIES

Happy Holidays!

I sit on the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) Board of Directors and was at our board meeting yesterday. One topic of discussion was the TIAO Listens Report on Tourism (<http://www.tiaontario.ca/tiaolistens>), the comments and feedback TIAO has been receiving and the next steps. During a particularly animated discussion about various stakeholders' willingness for change, one of my fellow board members made a comment that resonated deeply. "Too many times we have watched this industry sit back on its laurels, safely doing the same thing it has always done, while the world continues to evolve around them and in spite of them."

Change is good. Change is necessary. Change is survival.

Our young organization continues to evolve year-after-year as we find our place in the industry and our roles within it. When I first started just over two years ago now (sometimes it seems like just yesterday), Central Counties was doing a lot of marketing of the brand. When I started, it was because the board (an incredible, engaged group of industry professionals) saw the need for change. They believed, as I did and do, that experience/destination development and stakeholder relations creates compelling stories to take to market. And that has been working for us thanks to all of the operators and stakeholders that are engaged and participate.

I am excited to tell you that the board continues to push forward for change with the goal of delivering the best value to our operators and stakeholders. On December 8, the board underwent a facilitated strategic planning session that began with thinking about what, in an ideal world, the tourism industry looked like in five years and then coming to consensus on six broad "buckets" that will get us there. The staff is currently in the process of developing a plan that brings us further to delivering results within each bucket and we will be sharing it with you once approved by the Board in January.

There are two natural reactions to change – fear and excitement. The funny thing is, both reactions are based on the exact same thought: How is this going to affect me? I'd be lying if I told you I sat through the planning session without any trepidation. However, it didn't take long for it to convert to excitement as I watched the board fully engage in the process, leaning in, expressing opinions, smiling. I realized at that moment that I, and the staff, are ready for new challenges and will be successful delivering the vision of the board. And at that moment, I became excited about where we are heading.

I would like to take a moment to thank you for taking time each month to read our B2B newsletter, to answer our calls and to take time to call us. We are only as successful as you are engaged with us and I truly believe we are one of the strongest regions in Ontario and getting stronger every day. My best to you and your family over the holiday season and I look forward to our future successes.

Have a great day!

*Chuck*