



Happy New Year!

My apologies for the delay in this edition of our stakeholder newsletter. The plan was to launch this with the 2015-2016 Business Plan. In the last two and half years, there have been a lot of changes in the way Central Counties communicates, supports and markets our stakeholders. Instead of just charging into 2015-2016 with guns blazing, the board has decided to press the pause button to ensure that our decisions are in-line with what you need/expect while fulfilling our Ministry of Tourism mandate. This is a good news story for all of us.

The main component of the Transition Plan is the creation of a three year Destination Development Plan. Once the consultant is contracted, they will be expected to get out and talk with operators and other tourism stakeholders to frame and draft the plan. Deliverables will include a full Role and Function study and recommendations. We need to clearly understand the operator expectations of who does what from municipalities to DMO's to Central Counties and the capacity of each to meet the expectations. There will also be a strategy and three-year implementation plan for each of the four pillars the Ministry holds us accountable for – Marketing, Product Development, Investment Attraction and Workforce Development.

The Destination Development Plan will probably take around four months (beginning April 1) to complete and then require a couple of months to integrate the implementation. Do not fear! As the Destination Development Plan is being created, we are not going to stop the presses. In fact, we will be moving ahead with activities that support our operators and our pillars. The biggest change you will see will be in consumer marketing and communications. The board believes that driving consumers to the Central Counties Tourism website and marketing the Central Counties Brand confuses consumers and competes with the more established regional brands of Durham Tourism, YorkScene and Headwaters. For both the spring and summer, we will be piloting a test with our three sub-regions that drives the call to action under their brands and websites.

For example, Durham Tourism is focusing on cycling. Central Counties will support the campaign by working with operators and other stakeholders to develop itineraries, experiences and stories that support the campaign. The difference will be that the campaign will live on www.durhamtourism.ca and all advertising and media will be branded as Durham Tourism. Through the transition, Central Counties will mirror some content with a link back to the regional page just in case some consumers end up on www.centralcounties.ca. We believe that this will reduce consumer confusion and enhance and solidify our three DMO brands in the consumer's eyes.

The Partnership Program is also back for fiscal 2015-2016. By mid-February, the new guidelines will be available for applicants. We will accept applications for Spring/Summer partnerships until mid-March, evaluate and inform successful applicants by the end of the month. What we are really hoping to do is incorporate more activities that support CCT goals and benefit the partner in the partnerships. For example, if you are hosting a festival, we may insist that you complete an exit survey. Central Counties will supply the equipment and both organizations benefit from the data that is collected.

Anyway, that's it for now. Please enjoy the rest of the newsletter. As always, it is chalk-full of useful information. Remember, I am only an email away; cthibeault@centralcounties.ca and if you want to



ensure you have your say as part of the Destination Development Plan, please email Kelly Ing and she will connect you with the successful consultant. We also plan on having the consultant conduct a session at our three tourism symposiums taking place this March.

Have a great day!

Chuck