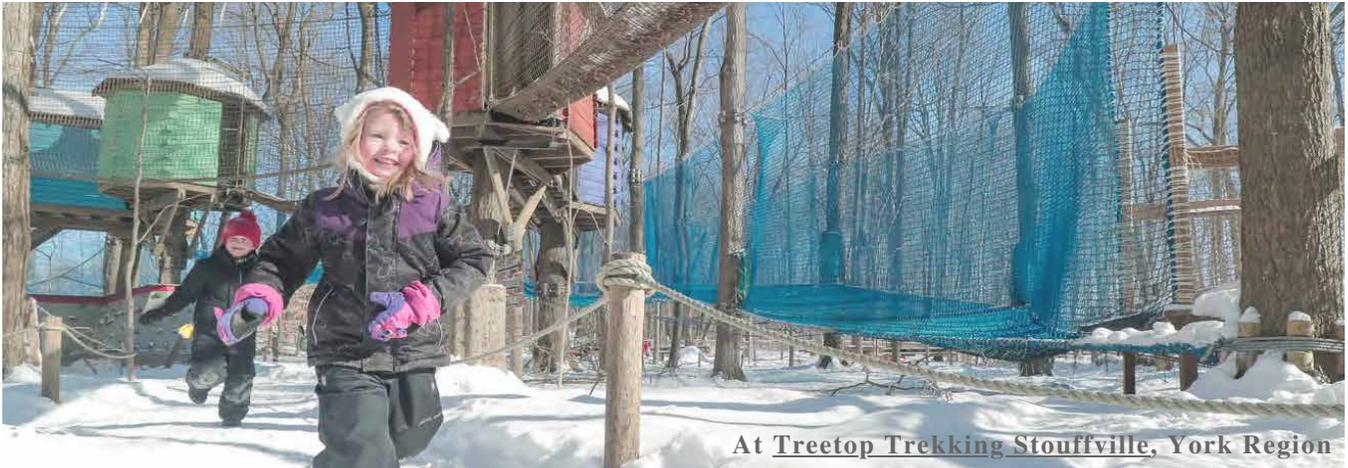




CENTRAL COUNTIES TOURISM NEWSLETTER

January 2024



At Treetop Trekking Stouffville, York Region

E.D.'S CORNER: A Word From Chuck Thibeault

Happy New Year!

The other night I was presenting at a town council meeting, the first of many I plan on doing this year to reinforce the importance of the visitor economy to businesses and residents alike. It was great timing because town staff were presenting an update on what action items from their Community Tourism Plan they accomplished in 2023 and what their goals were for 2024. Prior to the meeting, I had Tom, our Research Manager, do a little comparative research, and was able to let council know that the town saw an almost 4% increase in visitors in 2023 (the first full year of implementing their plan) over 2022. After the presentation, one of the council members asked me what one thing I would invest in to keep the momentum going.

I replied that the number one thing is to work with businesses so they understand the importance of, and have the... [Read more.](#)

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MEMBER NEED TO KNOW...

2024/25 Partnership Program

Our 2023/24 Partnership Program has come to a close, providing financial support to 69 stakeholders to enhance tourism-related projects, across the regions of York, Durham and Headwaters, that grow the visitor economy. Congratulations to all the [successful applicants](#)! Are you unfamiliar with our Partnership Program? Next week, on **February 1, 2024**, we will be launching the revamped [2024/25 Partnership Program](#) and are hosting a virtual information session at 1pm that day to provide an update on the program, the new priority streams for partnership support, and applicant requirements. Also NEW for 2024/25, there will only be two intake periods, with the first deadline being **March 15, 2024**. Register [here](#) to attend and hear all about it.



2024 Tourism Symposium

Mark your calendars for our [2024 Tourism Symposium](#) on **April 8, 2024** at the [Delta Hotels by Marriott Toronto Markham](#). This year's symposium focusses on embracing new technologies and learning how they can work for tourism. Tickets are now on sale, with an Early Bird discount in effect until February 29, 2024. [Register today to secure your spot!](#) Once again, a number of sponsorship opportunities are available for this event, including the table sponsorships which were a big hit last year! A limited number of vendor tables will also be available. Check out the [Sponsorship Opportunities deck](#) for full details.



NEW: Learning Lab Module - Include Me™

CCT is pleased to offer our members access to the [IncludeMe™ Workplace Mental Health Training Program](#), now available within the [Learning Lab](#). This 60-minute interactive course, using real life scenarios, empowers managers to identify and properly support employees and their mental health concerns to create a healthy, inclusive, and accommodating workplace. Get started today! Login or create your free Learning Lab account [here](#) for full access to all courses.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

GOOD NEWS, ACCOLADES & COLLABORATION

One of North America's longest Go-kart tracks coming to Durham

Opening in Clarington this Spring is [Volt Raceway](#), a new indoor electric Go-Kart experience, with a square footage of over 112,000sqft and two tracks with a combined track length of 800 meters. When it opens in May 2024, Volt Raceway will be one of the longest indoor go-karting tracks in North America - an added draw to Durham for speed enthusiasts of all-ages. [Invest Clarington](#) forecasts that "the facility will support Clarington's local economy by creating approximately 60 jobs, attracting visitor spending, fostering collaboration with local businesses, and promoting youth engagement and development" ([Durham Post](#)). That's a huge win all around!



SOURCE: FB [@Volt Raceway](#)



SOURCE: [@goodlot.beer](#)

GoodLot Farmstead Brewing Co. awarded \$50K

[GoodLot Farmstead Brewing Co.](#) was recently awarded \$50,000 as first place winners in the [Meridian Small Business Big Impact Awards](#) Environment Impact category. GoodLot Farm and Farmstead Brewing Co. is an organic hop farm and solar-powered brewery in Alton (Caledon). They are organic, regenerative carbon farmers, with the goal of capturing a greater amount of green energy than they consume. Their [environmental leadership](#) has made them a key community gathering hub, hosting numerous fundraising events for various local environmental and social issues. Congratulations Phil and Gail! So well-deserved.

Four local restaurants make OpenTable's Top 100 Restaurants

Earlier this month, OpenTable released its [Top 100 Restaurants with Healthy Bites](#) in Canada 2024 list, compiled from over 1.1 million OpenTable diner reviews and metrics, and highlighting some of the 'healthy' top spots as rated by diners across Canada. Close to 50 of those top spots are found within Ontario, with [two Durham Region](#) and [two York Region](#) restaurants making the list! Congratulations goes out to [Urban Pantry](#) in Uxbridge, and [Bistro '67](#) in Whitby, [Fishbone By The Lake](#) in Stouffville, and [Franks Organic Garden](#) in Aurora. No better time to check them out!





YDH WINTER CAMPAIGN

Our winter marketing campaign launched at the start of January, and if you haven't yet seen it, head on over to YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca now and allow us to introduce you to the [Principles of Snüg-Flaking](#), our very own fun evolution of the cozy concept of Hygge. We've reimagined coziness and comfort, infusing it with our unique Canadian spirit. From Blissplore to Hiberncaving, and everything in between, we hope you embrace a little bit of Snüg-Flaking this winter. Maple Syrup season, March Break and Valentine's Day are just around the corner so be sure to [upload](#) your events to our [YDH Events Calendar](#) or tag us @VisitYDH so we can share what you've got going on!



LEARNING LAB: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PROGRAM



Last week, we hosted a virtual Lunch and Learn for Course 1 of our [Social Media Marketing Program: 'Get Social Media Ready!'](#). Together, we walked through this introductory course to provide the foundational tools and knowledge needed to successfully engage in social media marketing for your business. This four-part program can be completed at your own pace through the [Learning Lab](#), but for those needing some extra motivation, or accountability, we are hosting a second Lunch & Learn on **February 28** at 11:30am. Register [here](#). In the meantime, our latest blog '[Get a Leg Up: Try CCT's Social Media Marketing Program today!](#)' might provide some inspiration to get you started. For those applying for support through CCT's Partnership Program, we recommend completing this module.

WE LOVE CONNECTING WITH YOU
and sharing with our followers.

Be sure to tag the correct account so your message reaches the right audience.

For all things consumer, tag [@visitydh](#)
For industry-focused news and events, tag [@centralcountiestourism](#)





RESEARCH

PUT 2023 GEOFENCE DATA TO WORK FOR YOU!

Could 2023 have been a better year for tourism than 2019? Understanding the volume and type of tourists coming into a community, city, or region has always been a difficult endeavor to measure because how do you count, analyze them, and differentiate a local vs a tourist? The answer for us, CCT, is to use mobility data through geofencing - a virtual geographic boundary around a particular area. Similar to surveying attendees at a large festival, we are able to collect a sample of mobile devices within the selected area and can extrapolate those numbers for an estimated weighted count (based on StatsCanada data). In addition to those calculations, we are also able to connect the sample devices that 'ping-ed' to their household locations to: 1) discover if they travelled less than 40KM, indicating that they are a local, or further than 40km, identifying them as a tourist... [Read more.](#)



RESEARCH AT WORK: TESTIMONIAL

"In 2021 the City of Pickering conducted surveys of waterfront users and concluded that 80% of visitors were not from Pickering, with many tourists coming from Markham, Toronto and the GTHA. In 2022 the waterfront area had 790,000 visitors...Understanding who these visitors are, where they are from, and why they chose our waterfront to visit were unknowns. In 2023 the City utilized Central Counties Tourism (CCT) Geofencing products to generate several reports to assist in developing our first Community Tourism Plan. In addition to providing knowledge about who our waterfront visitors are, this project set baseline 2022 data so we can track the impact of our new Tourism Plan, Marketing Campaigns, and other tourism product development over 2023 and beyond. The Geo Fencing Team at CCT explained all the data sets and took the time to ensure we understood the information and how to utilize it in our Tourism program development."

Jesse St. Amant, Coordinator, Cultural Services,
Community Services Department, City of Pickering



FUNDING & SUPPORT

Indigenous Tourism Skode Program

[Indigenous Tourism Ontario](#) and the [Tourism Innovation Lab](#) have partnered to offer a fourth round of the [Indigenous Tourism Skode Program](#) in Ontario. The program matches selected applicants with a mentor and provides a \$5,000 non-repayable financial contribution to advance their new tourism ideas. A grand prize is also awarded to one of the program winners. Application deadline is **February 2, 2024**. [Learn more](#).

My Main Street Funding

[FedDev Ontario](#) recently [announced](#) a \$15million investment to continue the recovery and revitalization of main streets across southern Ontario through [My Main Street](#). This investment will support up to 325 businesses on main streets across 100 communities, along with 75 community projects promoting high-impact placemaking activities through the launch of two new programs: [Business Sustainability Program](#) and [Community Activator](#). Applications open **February 15, 2024**. [Learn more](#).

Tourism Growth Program

The federal [Tourism Growth Program](#) provides support to communities, small- and medium-sized businesses, and not-for-profit organizations across Canada to develop local tourism products and experiences. Applicants can request up to 50% of project costs to a maximum of \$250,000 per project. The deadline to apply is **February 29, 2024**. Visit the [FedDev Ontario website](#) to review program eligibility, funding priorities and application guidelines.

AgriWorkplace Skills Training Program

Developed and run by the [Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council](#), the [AgriWorkplace Skills Training Program](#), is designed to help support employers and workers in primary agriculture through e-learning and on-the-job training, wage subsidies, and wrap-around supports. This pilot program is open to producers from primary agriculture in Apples, Beef, Crops, Dairy, Greenhousing, Mushrooms, and Swine on a **first-come, first-served basis**, providing employers with a \$5,000 wage subsidy per trained employee. Applicants must complete the required training materials before **March 1, 2024**. [Learn more](#).

Ontario Trillium Foundation - Capital Grant

The [Ontario Trillium Foundation - Capital Grant](#) provides funding of up to \$200,000 to help organizations improve community facilities and spaces across Ontario. The deadline to apply is **March 6, 2024**. [Learn more about the application and grant requirements](#).



LEARNING & EVENTS

Feast On® = Certified Local Information Session

Join us on **February 12, 2024** at 10am for a virtual information session, hosted by the [Culinary Tourism Alliance](#) for CCT members, to learn more about the [Feast On®](#) program (which recognizes food tourism businesses committed to sourcing Ontario-grown food & drink), its current network, and certification benefits. [Register here.](#)

Scugog Tourism Networking: Collaborating For Success

Join us on **February 29, 2024**, from 4pm to 6pm, at [The Piano Inn & Café](#) for our next [‘Collaborating for Success’](#) networking event, for tourism stakeholders, hosted by CCT in partnership with [Scugog Tourism](#) and [Durham Tourism](#). Contact Lisa John-Mackenzie, our Durham Industry Relations Manager, at ljohn-mackenzie@centralcounties.ca, by February 22 to confirm your attendance.



Navigating 2SLGBTQI+ Diversity & Inclusion in the Tourism Industry

Join CGLCC’s [Navigating 2SLGBTQI+ Diversity and Inclusion in the Tourism Industry](#) webinar on **February 1, 2024**, at 12pm, to learn about 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion and how to effectively understand, value, and serve 2SLGBTQI+ customers and employees to support efforts in developing market-ready products. [Register here.](#)

Become a Certified Living Wage Employer

The [Ontario Living Wage Network](#) is hosting a webinar, on **February 6, 2024** at 2pm, for employers in the restaurant/service sector who are interested in learning more about becoming [Living Wage Certified](#). The webinar will feature certified business owners who will share information and answer questions about paying a living wage in the service sector. [Register here.](#)

Flip the Fair presented by Tourism Industry Association of Ontario

Taking place on on **February 16, 2024**, [Flip the Fair](#), is a unique virtual event where qualified hospitality and tourism candidates set up booths, and employers have the chance to visit them. Participating employers will gain access to 250+ candidate booths, each featuring detailed profiles and resumes, and the opportunity to virtually meet during the event or schedule meetings for a later date. [Learn more.](#)

2024 FEO “Imagine” Conference

[Festival and Events Ontario](#)’s annual conference, taking place **February 26-28, 2024**, brings together 250+ festival and event planners from across Ontario for a day of networking, idea exchange, insight gathering, and skills honing. Review the conference schedule, speaker sessions, and registration info [here.](#)

TOURISM

INDUSTRY NEWS

New President & CEO for Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO)

Effective January 21, 2024, [TIAO](#) welcomed Andrew Siegwart as its new President and CEO to guide the organization in promoting and advancing Ontario's tourism industry while ensuring its growth, sustainability, and alignment with important societal goals.. Andrew Siegwart brings a wealth of experience and a diverse skill set to his role at TIAO - previously as the President and CEO of the Blue Mountain Village Association, and prior to that the Senior Vice-President at the Retail Council of Canada. [Read more.](#)

OMCA's Group Strategies Announced

In partnership with Alternative Sales Strategies, the [Ontario Motorcoach Association of Ontario](#) (OMCA) is launching 'Group Strategies' - a consulting arm of the association that can assist you in building customized destination development group strategies and targeted plans to bring more group sales to your destination or business. OMCA's Group Strategies can also help you with tracking economic impact, industry training, research, and developing tools to help make your destination group-oriented and friendly. Contact membership@omca.com to learn more about this opportunity or register for the upcoming [info session](#) on **January 31, 2024**.

Tourism Outlook: Unlocking Opportunities for the Sector

Last month, [Destination Canada](#) released its latest [Tourism Outlook: Unlocking Opportunities for the Sector](#), showing total tourism revenue is set to exceed 2019 levels, generating \$109.5 billion by the end of 2023. This represents the recovery of the tourism sector from the COVID-19 pandemic, one year earlier than projected. Additionally, the industry, post recovery, is expected to grow faster than the general economy at 5.8%, reflecting its resilience and importance to the economic vitality of the country, with the potential to generate \$160 billion in revenue by 2030. [Read the full report.](#)

Tourism SkillsNet Ontario: Workforce Issues, Opportunities, and Impact Report

The third edition of the [Tourism SkillsNet Ontario: Workforce Issues, Opportunities, and Impact Report](#), an initiative led by [OTEC](#) in partnership with [TIAO](#), is now available. This quarterly report highlights the most up-to-date workforce intelligence data, local workforce issues, critical needs and opportunities for the tourism and hospitality sector, and policy progress to support recovery. [Read it now.](#)

Connect with us on social!

