



CENTRAL COUNTIES TOURISM NEWSLETTER

February 2023



Old Firehall Confectionery, Unionville, Markham

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



I am not sure if you have noticed, but I really like writing these monthly introductions to the newsletter. I will typically reach out to the staff a week or so in advance and ask for themes that I should write about. I then take time to mull over in my head what I think I should write about that will both connect with the theme, and more importantly, resonate with you. When Sandra reached out this morning asking if I would have the intro complete by end of day, I assured her I would (and I did), but it was the very first time I thought about it since I ignored the reminder 10 days ago to start writing it! So, you are getting me unprepared and unscripted - writing a paragraph here and there between meetings and other deadlines. My apologies in advance if it isn't up to snuff.

Having said that, the theme came easy today. Money. More specifically, the lack thereof. Our year-end is looming, the Tourism Relief Fund has closed and we are busily trying to reconcile all of the contracts; I am crafting the...[Read more.](#)

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MEMBER NEED TO KNOW...

2023/2024 Partnership Program

Our [2023/2024 Partnership Opportunities Program](#) is launching in the coming weeks! Aimed at supporting the project efforts of our tourism stakeholders in the York, Durham, and Headwaters regions, the Partnership Program has three main areas of focus: 1) Capacity Building, 2) Product/Experience Development, and 3) Communications/Marketing. The first intake period will provide support for projects occurring between April 1 and May 31, 2023, and has an application deadline of **March 24, 2023**. [More details coming soon](#).

Over 90% Sold Out - 2023 Tourism Symposium

There are just a few tickets remaining for our 2023 Tourism Symposium, *Together in Tourism*, hosted in partnership with [Destination Markham](#). Don't miss out on a day of insightful speakers and panels designed to help inform the way we think about tourism and community relationships, as well as address questions submitted by you regarding your HR and social media challenges.

Join us for [Dakota Brant](#), Mohawk Nation, Entrepreneur, Speaker and Artist as she discusses *5 Questions to Guide Indigenous representation and relationship building in the Canadian tourism landscape*, as well as Philip Mondor, President and CEO of [Tourism HR Canada](#), for a talk on new ways to build your workforce in an increasingly challenging labour market.

The program also features peer and expert panel sessions on Community Tourism Planning, Product Development and Collaboration, and Elevating the Social Media Experience. Visit our [website](#) for full program details. [Register](#) now to secure your spot!

Upskill Your Staff with the Tourism Ambassador Program



The visitor season is just around the corner and Central Counties Tourism is here to support your staff training with the [Tourism Ambassador Program \(TAP\)](#).

This online, self-paced course includes lessons on customer service excellence, who is visiting Central Counties and how to reach them, as well as how to be an ambassador for your business, community, and region. All CCT Learning Lab courses are free. [Register here for TAP](#), or checkout our four-part Social Media Marketing course, which is also available.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

GOOD NEWS & COLLABORATION

New Experience Trail Marker Installation
[The YR Experience Trail Marker](#) project is a collaborative interactive art project designed to re-connect people, on the land presently known as York Region, through art. Featuring original artworks by Indigenous artist Donald Chretien that focus on seed spreaders and pollinators, the fifth installment of The Experience Trail Marker program, depicting the [Blue Jay](#), will be unveiled on **March 4, 2023** at Vandorf Community Park in Stouffville. Previously installed locations can be found [here](#). The Experience Trail Marker program has been supported by Central Counties Tourism's Partnership Program, the Government of Canada - FedDev Ontario and the Ontario Arts Council.



The Hummingbird Trail Marker, Kortright Centre



Last Straw Distillery wins Gold!
Congratulations to [Last Straw Distillery](#), one of our [Temperance and Temptation](#) partners, for bringing home a GOLD medal and an Ultra-Premium Whisky of the Year - Domestic Award for their [Stout Whisky](#), at last month's Canadian Whisky Awards. This award-winning whisky was Last Straw's first whisky collaboration (with Lake Wilcox Brewing Co.) and they are always looking to collaborate with different breweries for future releases. Now the bad news, this whisky is currently sold out! So, if you'd like to try it out, you'll have to join their mailing list to find out when the remaining cases will become available. Last Straw also received two bronze medals this year for their [Corn Whisky & Rye Whisky Cask 6](#).
Way to go Last Straw Distillery!

SOURCE: [Facebook, Last Straw Distillery](#).



RESEARCH

2022 HOTEL NUMBERS IN REVIEW

By no means are we saying that COVID-19 is over, but as we reflect back on 2022, the hotel industry tells us an optimistic story. This month, we look at the 2022 hotel stats for our region and compare them to the pre-COVID-19 hotel stats. First, by looking at the demand for hotel rooms in our region as a whole, 2022 finished the year with an occupancy rate of 71.5% vs 2019's occupancy rate of 74.1% - down by a small difference of 2.6%. Not only is it a relief to see travel demand returning, but the data also shows us that hotel occupancy, within our region, slightly surpassed 2019 occupancy levels (for the period of May thru December 2022... [continue reading](#)).



TOP 10 TARGET MARKETS - OVERNIGHT VISITATION

When looking at overall domestic visitation to our region, we use mobility data of visitors who have travelled 60KM+ and spent the night in Central Counties (RTO6) at either at a hotel, with friends or relatives, Airbnb, or cottage. This dataset provides us with a ranking of which markets (cities) have visited RTO6 based on the number of visitors, number of trips that they took, and the number of nights they stayed; as well as validating which cities we should continue to target through various marketing initiatives and campaigns. As the region started to recover post COVID-19, our target markets in 2022 remained consistent, with Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa holding the Top 3 spots for the number of nights spent in RTO6...[continue reading](#).





The Rural Economic Development Program

Ontario's Rural Economic Development (RED) program provides cost-share funding to rural municipalities, Indigenous communities, and not-for-profit entities to support activities that create strong rural communities in Ontario and open doors to rural economic development. For more information on how RED can help your community, visit www.ontario.ca/redprogram. Deadline to apply is **February 23, 2023 at 5pm ET**.

The Discover Ability Network

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO), in collaboration with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) is now accepting applications for the [Discover Ability Network](#) - a program providing resources and training to help businesses become more inclusive. Join the Discover Ability Network to connect with candidates through their job matching portal, engage in disability-confidence training, and access the best disability and employment resources and tools. Register by **March 31st, 2023** to be eligible for a \$1,500 subsidy for each employee hired before December 31, 2023. Complete the [online form](#) for more information and details on how to register.

Digital Main Street Digital Transformation Grant

The Digital Transformation Grant (DTG) program, administered by the Ontario BIA Association (OBIAA), is designed to assist small businesses with the adoption of technologies. The program will provide training, advisory support and grants to brick-and-mortar small businesses looking to increase their capacity through digital transformation. The portal is now open and applications will be accepted until **September 30, 2023**. Learn more about the grant objectives, participant requirements and criteria [here](#).

Propel Student Work Placement

Aimed squarely at the tourism and hospitality sector, the [Propel Student Work Placement Program](#) is helping the hardest-hit sector recover from the impacts of the pandemic. Funded by the [Government of Canada's Student Work Placement Program](#), Propel offers post-secondary students opportunities to develop the work-ready skills required to secure meaningful employment upon graduation. Qualifying employers are provided with a wage subsidy for each qualifying student hired through the program. [Learn more](#).



LEARNING & EVENTS

Social Media for Your Business

Not understanding how to use social media effectively can leave you overwhelmed and ultimately hurt your bottom line as your potential customers can easily find your competitors. Join Digital Main Street's online workshop on **February 28th, 2023** to gain a better understanding of how to leverage the power of social media to grow your online community, drive sales and reduce marketing costs. [Advance registration](#) required.

LAST CHANCE TO REGISTER: Cycle Tourism Conference 2023 - Ontario By Bike

The [2023 Cycle Tourism Conference](#) is coordinated by Ontario By Bike, a program of [Transportation Options](#). On **March 2, 2023** learn from and join the conversations and discussions with keynote presentations and concurrent sessions from Canadian and international speakers that will feature the latest trends and opportunities relating to one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in Canada, and worldwide: cycle tourism. [Register here.](#)

LAST CHANCE TO REGISTER: 2023 FEO Celebrate Conference

This year's [Festivals and Events Ontario Conference](#), taking place from **March 6 to 8, 2023**, will celebrate the successes and help you better prepare for the issues that caused problems or challenges for festival and event organizers over the last two years. Content will be geared towards celebrating the strong comeback of the festival and event industry and planning for the future. [Register here.](#)

Advancing Sustainable Tourism in Ontario

Join TIAO and the GreenStep team on **March 21, 2023** to learn more about taking the [Sustainable Tourism 2030 Pledge](#) in support of the goal to see Ontario as most committed to sustainable tourism. This webinar is intended for business owners, managers, destination management team members, or any staff who can influence operational improvement within their organization. Register [here](#) to learn more.

T O U R I S M

INDUSTRY NEWS

Attractions Ontario Passport

Attractions Ontario is continuing its partnership with Destination Ontario for the 2023/24 Passport Magazine and Coupon Book, a 64-page full colour advertorial focusing on the wide variety of attractions Ontario has to offer. The Magazine will be in market as of May 2023 and includes an effective and measurable value-added component with over \$1,400 worth of savings in discount coupons. To learn more, contact Phil Casey at Attractions Ontario at 416-868-4386, ext. 223 or at phil@attractionsontario.ca. **Booking deadline is April 17, 2023.**

The Great Taste of Canada

[The Great Taste of Canada](#) is a nation-wide cooperative program by the Culinary Tourism Alliance as part of their national culinary and agritourism development and marketing efforts, supported by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC). From coast to coast to coast, destinations, sector organizations, and tourism stakeholders will put their brands front and centre to amplify the foodways unique to their region. Visit their [website](#) to find out how your business can get involved.

"Maple Leave" Campaign

Last month Destination Canada launched their [Maple Leave campaign](#) which invites our U.S. neighbours, Canada's largest inbound visitor market, to go on a "Maple Leave" in Canada and experience the openness that our country has to offer. Watch their fun campaign video [here](#) encouraging visitors to pack their bags and "leave" their worries behind at home.

Connect with us on social!

