



CENTRAL COUNTIES TOURISM NEWSLETTER

February 2024



At Terra Cotta Conservation Area, in Headwaters

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

Good Day,

I had a lightbulb moment this morning. I was replaying a conversation I was having the other day with some friends who were complaining about government. The crux of the discontent was they felt government wasn't helping them personally. The switch turned on in my brain as I was thinking about what I was going to say in the 15 minutes I have with the Ontario Minister of Finance later this afternoon. I am bringing with me a report that shows that in 2022, overnight visitors dropped close to \$1,000,000,000 (yes, that is a billion) within Central Counties, which included close to \$140,000,000 in provincial sales tax. And I am going to talk about how close to 20% of people who shop in downtown Uxbridge (his riding) are not from Uxbridge. I am going to end by saying that Ontario's investment in the visitor economy is... [Read more.](#)

IN THIS ISSUE

**MEMBER NEED
TO KNOW • P2**

IN THE SPOTLIGHT • P3

MARKETING & MORE • P4

RESEARCH • P5

FUNDING & SUPPORT • P6

LEARNING & EVENTS • P7

INDUSTRY NEWS • P8

MEMBER NEED TO KNOW...

REMINDER: Partnership Program Deadline

Our [2024/25 Partnership Program](#) launched on February 1, 2024 with a virtual information session to kick it off, where an update on program changes and applicant requirements, including the new priority streams for support, was provided. For those that missed it, a [recording of the info session](#) is available. The first intake period deadline of **March 15, 2024** is quickly approaching, and will provide financial support to tourism projects, within our region, occurring between April 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025. A second intake period will be available. Be sure to review the partnership resources on our website and to connect with your region's Industry Relations Manager to discuss your project ahead of submitting an application. [Learn more.](#)

2024 Tourism Symposium Early Bird Deadline

Registration is well underway for our [2024 Tourism Symposium](#) and we can't wait to have you join us and your fellow tourism colleagues from across the region. Last year, we heard from attendees that more opportunities for networking throughout the day were wanted, and we listened! This year, we will be starting the day with a breakfast social hour, sponsored by [Delta Hotels by Marriott Toronto Markham](#), and ending the day with a happy hour social, sponsored by [Destination Markham](#), at Smash Kitchen and Bar in Unionville. Register today to secure your spot! The early bird rate of \$65 (+HST) is currently available until **February 29, 2024** and will increase to \$80 (+HST) as of March 1.



Keynote Speaker Announced

This year's symposium focuses on embracing new technologies and learning how they can help tourism businesses work smarter, not harder. Have you already embraced AI for your business? Still on the fence? Or maybe not even sure where to begin? Our keynote presentation '*Decoding GenAI (Generative Artificial Intelligence): A Beginner's Guide for Marketers*' by Katherine Scarrow will help to answer some of those questions, and more. As the Manager of Creative Strategy for [Globe Content Studio](#), Katherine Scarrow leads the visual direction of content marketing programs at The Globe and Mail.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

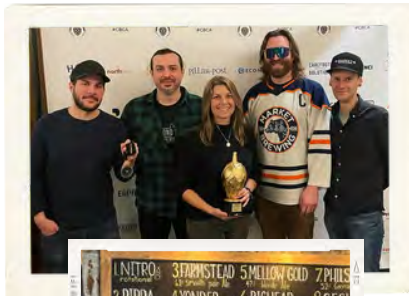
GOOD NEWS, ACCOLADES & COLLABORATION


Last Straw Distillery wins Gold

Congratulations to [Last Straw Distillery](#) in Vaughan for picking up a Gold medal with distinction, and Merit in Terroir, at the [2024 Canadian Artisan Spirits Competition](#) last month, for their [Cask #13 Rye Whisky](#). Made from 100% Ontario rye grain supplied from local farms, it has been double-distilled and aged for five and half years.



 [@laststrawdistill](#)



 [@thesecondwedge](#)
[@goodlot.beer](#)

2023 Canadian Brewers Choice Awards

The [Canadian Brewers Choice Awards](#) were hosted on January 31, 2024 and we've got some winners in YDH! [Goodlot Brewing Co.](#), in Caledon, took home the Sustainability Initiative of the Year, which recognizes sustainable development in the brewing industry through innovative, sustainable use of resources and prioritizes the needs of the wider environment and society. And [The Second Wedge Brewing Co.](#), in Uxbridge, received the inaugural Community Initiative of the Year Award, which recognizes a brewery having made a positive societal impact on its local community, and that it has! A Medal of Recognition was also awarded to [Market Brewing Company](#), who welcomed The Second Wedge into their home after a tornado ripped the roof right off their building. Its quite the story! [Read more about it in our Stakeholder Spotlight.](#)

2024 Sport Tourism Canada's PRESTIGE Awards Finalists

The 2024 finalists for [Sport Tourism Canada's PRESTIGE Awards](#), recognizing exceptional sport tourism initiatives, multisport games, and events hosted in 2023, have been announced. Amongst the finalists is Durham Region, in the [Sport Event Legacy of the Year](#) category, for their hosting of the [Ontario Parasport Games](#). The Legacy award recognizes outstanding achievements or contributions that help to advance sustainable and environmental stewardship within a national or international sport event. The PRESTIGE awards will be held on March 15 and you know who we will be rooting for!!





Callout for Spring Content

The [groundhogs have spoken](#), and the consensus is that an early spring awaits us! While we'll take that prediction with a grain of salt, there is no denying that the first official day of spring (March 19) is a mere few weeks away, and we're hard at work getting ready for it. But first we can't overlook the sweetest and stickiest season of all - maple season! Our [YDH events calendar](#) is loaded with all things maple, and so much more, and we encourage you to get your upcoming events listed too. Just [login to your CCT account or create one](#) to get started!



Get listed on YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca

Have you created a free listing for your tourism business and/or event to be included on our consumer website [YorkDurhamHeadwaters.ca](#) yet? Not sure if you already have a listing? Just create a new account, search for your business and claim it, if it already exists. Take some time to review and update the listing while you're at it!



Get Tourism Social Media Ready!

We are hosting a second virtual Lunch and Learn for course one of our Learning Lab Social Media Marketing program 'Get Tourism Social Media Ready!' on **February 28, 2024** at 11:30am. Our Learning Lab courses are available 24/7, free of charge, but for those who prefer some company, or need the accountability to help them complete it, [register](#) for this session today, and together, we will navigate through the course, with certificates of completion provided to all attendees. Learn more about the [Social Media Marketing program](#).

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

2023 Q4 HOTEL REPORT

Central Counties Tourism collects aggregated quarterly hotel data from Smith Travel Research (STR) for the available properties within our region, and each quarter, share those metrics with you. The final 2023 hotel stats are in, and the aggregated CCT hotel occupancy % for 2023 is 3% higher than 2019! In this update, we continue to focus on Occupancy percentages in 2023, 2023 vs 2019, and 2023 vs historic values for annual and quarterly data.

2023 Occupancy Key Highlights:

The table below shows occupancy % levels for the following comparisons: 2023, 2019, 2023 vs 2019, 2023 vs the average of pre-COVID years (2017-2019), the max occupancy % (YEAR), and 2023 vs the max occupancy values. [Read more.](#)

Quarter / Annual	2023	2019	2023 vs 2019	2023 vs Average Pre-COVID (2017-2019)	MAX VALUES (YEAR)	2023 VS MAX VALUES
Annual	77.1%	74.1%	3.0%	1.3%	77.6% (2017)	-0.5% (2017)
Jan-Mar (Average)	68.0%	64.4%	3.6%	2.3%	68.0% (2023)	0% (2023)
Apr-Jun (Average)	81.3%	76.8%	4.5%	2.6%	81.3% (2023)	0% (2023)
Jul-Sep (Average)	86.2%	84.4%	1.8%	-0.2%	89.4% (2017)	-3.2% (2017)
Oct-Dec (Average)	72.0%	70.8%	1.2%	-0.2%	74.0% (2017)	-2.0% (2017)

TOURISM LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

The annual [Tourism Labour Force Survey](#) highlights, prepared by [Tourism HR Canada](#) from Statistic Canada's [Labour Force Survey](#), are now available. The data shows that tourism employment continues to lag behind pre-pandemic levels and that the tourism labour force accounts for a decreasing share of the overall economy implying that previously unemployed individuals have opted for jobs in other sectors rather than in tourism, making it more difficult for tourism businesses to recruit workers. The full summary explores the trends in the labour market for tourism as a whole as well as for its five industry groups, at both national and provincial levels. [Read the full report.](#)





LAST CHANCE: 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.

Propel Student Work Placement Program

Funded by the Government of Canada through the [Student Work Placement Program](#), [Propel](#) offers registered Canadian businesses, startups, and not-for-profits related to the tourism and hospitality sector a wage subsidy on each qualifying student hired through the program. To learn more, join [Tourism HR Canada](#) for their next virtual info session on **March 21, 2024** at 1pm for a full look at this program. [Advance registration required](#).

My Main Street

Applications are now open for [My Main Street](#), a \$15-million investment to support main street businesses and communities across southern Ontario. Funded by the Government of Canada, through the [Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario \(FedDev Ontario\)](#), My Main Street is being delivered through two new streams: 1) [Business Sustainability](#) and 2) [Community Activator](#). Several virtual information sessions are being held on **February 29, March 1, 4 and 5** to learn more about My Main Street, eligibility criteria and how to apply, with examples of past projects and eligible expenses provided along with an opportunity to answer your questions. [Register for one today!](#) Deadline to apply is **March 31, 2024**.

Grow Your Business Online Micro-grant

As part of the [Canada Digital Adoption Program](#), the [Grow Your Business Online](#) grant helps small businesses take advantage of e-commerce opportunities to get their business online, give their e-commerce presence a boost, or help digitalize their business's operations. Eligible businesses will receive a micro-grant of up to \$2,400 to help cover the cost of new e-commerce tools, supported by a network of e-commerce advisors. [Learn more](#).



LEARNING & EVENTS

2SLGBTQI+ Travel Market-Ready Webinar

Hosted by [CGLCC](#), the [2SLGBTQI+ Travel Market-Ready](#) virtual webinar, on **February 27, 2024** from 9-11am EST, will share exclusive 2SLGBTQI+ travel market info and case study best practices from around the world, as well as expose you to a number of custom 2SLGBTQI+ products to help inspire your own successful 2SLGBTQI+ tourism-welcoming strategy. [Register here.](#)

Hosting the Little Native Hockey League Tournament in Markham Workshop

Join [Destination Markham](#) and [Indigenous Tourism Ontario](#) on **February 28, 2024** at the [Markham Pan Am Centre](#) for a free Indigenous-led workshop designed to prepare businesses for the [Little Native Hockey League](#) (LNHL) tournament coming to Markham this March Break. This workshop will offer invaluable insights, business tools and cultural understandings to help provide an exceptional experience for the LNHL tournament, anticipated to bring together more than 5,000 Indigenous athletes, families and spectators from across Ontario. [Pre-registration is required.](#)

Breaking the Silence

Join [OTEC](#) on **February 29th, 2024** in their LinkedIn Audio room for a dynamic discussion on disability disclosure in the workplace and how to cultivate a culture of inclusion. They will delve into the importance of creating environments where individuals feel comfortable disclosing disabilities, the benefits of doing so for both employees and employers and strategies for fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace culture. [Register to attend.](#)

Tourism Workforce Sustainability Program

Running until **March 31, 2024**, TIAO's [Tourism Workforce Sustainability Program](#) (TWSP) aims to enhance and diversify Ontario's tourism workforce while assisting employers in fostering long-term sustainability. Register for the TWSP and access the resource-rich Employer Guide prepared for tourism businesses across Ontario. Find new ways to attract, recruit and retain your staff. Discover programs available to support you and your teams and see if you're eligible for the Living Wage top-up to help attract and retain talent. Get started at [TIAOntario.ca/TWSP](#).

TOURISM

INDUSTRY NEWS

Disability Inclusion Survey for Tourism Employers

[Tourism HR Canada](#) is seeking input from tourism businesses to gauge employers' awareness and practices related to disability inclusion, workplace culture, recruitment, training, and accommodations for individuals with disabilities. Feedback received will inform the development of tools and training for tourism operators to increase tourism employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Canada, as part of their new, three-year project called [Belong](#). Complete the survey [here](#).

York Region's new Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Strategy

Contribute to York Region's new [Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Strategy](#)! They are looking for farmers, food and beverage processors, agri-tech businesses and agriculture-related professionals and partners to provide input on strengths, challenges and opportunities for growth in York Region's agriculture and agri-food sector. [Complete the survey](#) - \$1 will be donated to York Region Food Network for each completed survey!

National Tourism Week

[National Tourism Week](#) (NTW) is a dynamic, weeklong national social media campaign orchestrated by [Tourism Industry Association of Canada](#) (TIAC). This event, scheduled for **April 15 to 19, 2024**, is a crucial platform for highlighting the pivotal role of tourism in Canada. TIAC, along with their partners, enthusiastically invites all Canadians to partake in celebrating the nation's finest offerings to the world, under the inspiring banner of NTW 2024's theme: Canada: Powered by Tourism. [Learn more](#).

Ontario Cycle Tourism & Cycling Activity Report 2023

A new study published by [Ontario By Bike](#) provides detailed insight into cyclists' riding habits and trip preferences, highlighting the fact that cycle tourism in Ontario is growing and making a valuable contribution to the tourism economy in the province. Based on responses collected in the Fall of 2023, Ontario cyclists shared that 58% did one or more overnight trips that included cycling, and 68% did three or more day trips that included cycling in 2023. [Read the full report](#).

Connect with us on social!

