CENTRAL COUNTIES TOURISM NEWSLETTER

June 2026

Beaverton Harbour Park, Durham Region

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

Good day,

I want to talk a little bit about success and that is because, for the most part, I tend to focus on owner/operators when discussing it. But the truth is, regardless of your role within the industry, there is success to be had and measured. Take Central Counties as an example. We don't own a storefront or attraction. There are no consumer revenues that we can use as a measure of success. And yet, we are constantly measuring our impact and success, based on your success.

One of the reasons I love this job so much is that the "your successes" are all along the funnel of visitor development and growth. I get to work with the owner/operators whose livelihood relies on attracting and retaining the right customer mix. I get to work with BIAs and associations/societies who are directly supporting clusters of owner/operators by... Read more.

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MEMBER NEED TO KNOW...

AGM Recap & New Board Members

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our Annual General Meeting on June 17. The AGM was an opportunity to reflect on our work over the past year, share updates, and confirm our 2026/27 Board of Directors. We're pleased to welcome three new Board members and extend our sincere appreciation to those who completed their terms for their leadership and contributions to the organization. Missed the meeting? Watch the AGM recording and meet our new directors.

2026/27 Partnership Program Recipients Announced

We're pleased to announce the approved recipients for the 2026/27 Tourism Partnership Program through our CCT Partnered Projects, Destination Development Projects, and High Impact Festivals & Events streams. Funding will support a variety of tourism-focussed initiatives across York, Durham, and Headwaters. View the full list of approved recipients and funded projects on our website. Applications for the Tourism Marketing Support stream remain open and will continue to be reviewed monthly until available funding has been fully allocated. Contact your region's Industry Relations Manager to learn more.

New Digital Asset Library Now Live

By now, you should be familiar with the CCT Image Bank, but did you know that it has recently been upgraded with improved search functionality and can now be accessed through your existing CCT login? With thousands of high-quality photos and videos showcasing experiences across York, Durham, and Headwaters, it's easier than ever to find the assets you need for websites, social media, advertising, and other marketing materials. Learn more about the latest enhancements and how to make the most of this valuable stakeholder resource in our latest blog article.

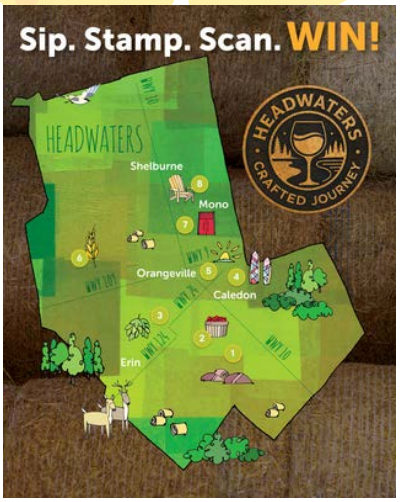
Lynde Shores Conservation Area CCT Photo Shoot

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

GOOD NEWS, ACCOLADES & COLLABORATION

NEW: Headwaters Crafted Journey Launched

The Headwaters Crafted Journey has officially launched, introducing a new self-guided craft beverage trail connecting eight breweries, cideries, and wineries across Caledon, Erin, Orangeville, Mono, and Grand Valley. This passport-style experience invites visitors to explore the region through local craft beverage stops, scenic routes, and vibrant communities, with opportunities to participate in the "Sip. Stamp. Scan. Win." contest along the way. Developed through a regional collaboration between producers, municipalities, BIAs, and Central Counties Tourism, the initiative highlights the strength of partnership in creating authentic, place-based visitor experiences. Read the full media release to learn more.



Uxbridge Earns Spotlight in Narcity

Congratulations to Uxbridge on recently being featured by Narcity as one of Ontario's standout summer day-trip destinations. Known as Canada's Trail Capital, the Township of Uxbridge was recognized for its extensive trail network, charming downtown, local shops, and outdoor experiences that make it an ideal getaway for visitors looking to explore beyond the city. Read the full article to discover why Uxbridge continues to attract attention as a must-visit destination in Durham Region.

NEW: Explore Georgina with Lake Drive LOOP

A new way to explore Georgina has arrived with the launch of Lake Drive LOOP, a locally rooted e-bike experience designed to help visitors discover the Lake Simcoe shoreline beyond the beach. Based in Jackson's Point, the experience offers guided routes and easy access to local cafés, waterfront trails, and hidden gems along Lake Drive and surrounding communities. Blending mobility with discovery, Lake Drive LOOP encourages visitors to experience Georgina like a local while supporting a more sustainable and connected way to explore the destination. A welcome addition to Georgina's visitor experience offering.

SOURCE: LakeDriveLOOP

MARKETING AND MORE

YDH Summer Campaigns Now Underway

This summer, we are promoting York, Durham, and Headwaters through a mix of print and out-of-home advertising designed to inspire visitation and showcase the region's diverse experiences. Current campaign placements include a double-page spread and full-page advertisement in Foodism Magazine (on pages 10 & 90)highlighting our region's culinary experiences, Tasty Trails, and the newly launched Headwaters Crafted Journey, along with a full-page ad in The Canada Magazine. Several of

our stakeholders were also recently featured in the Globe and Mail's Taste Ontario special report, while two strategically placed billboards extend our reach to travellers throughout the summer season.

Looking ahead, fall co-op advertising opportunities are just around the corner. Watch your inbox for details on our August 13 fall-themed Globe & Mail co-op campaign, with its Expression of Interest opening July 6, and the September 11 Fall Explore Ontario insert, opening July 14.

Find Us on TikTok and Pinterest!

We have expanded our digital presence with the launch of a VisitYDH TikTok channel and a refreshed Pinterest account, showcasing York, Durham, and Headwaters through engaging visual content. These platforms highlight seasonal experiences, local stories, and destination inspiration designed to connect with potential visitors and inspire future travel. Follow along for inspiration, content ideas, and to see the stories, experiences, and destinations we are sharing across these channels.

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

2026 Q1 HOTEL DATA REPORT

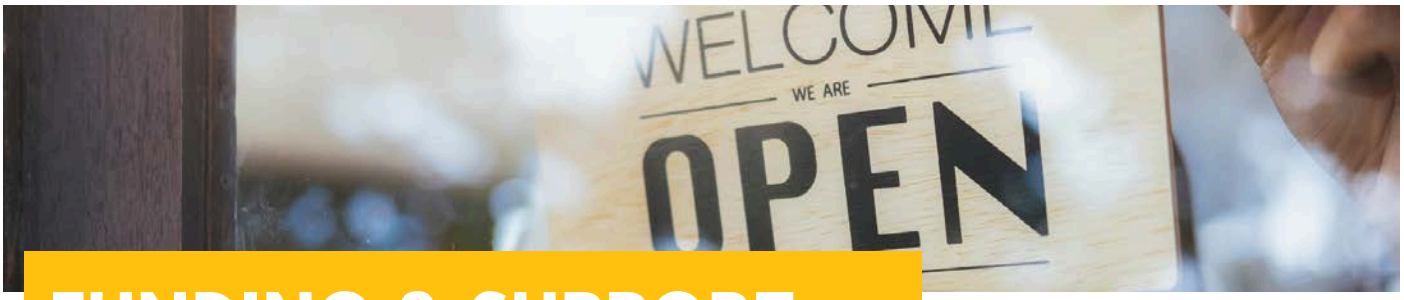
The **Q1 2026 hotel performance data** for our region is now available. The latest report reveals a mixed picture, with participating hotels generating a record-breaking **$88.7 million** in revenue, while occupancy declined to its lowest first-quarter level in four years. Higher room rates helped offset softer demand, though RevPAR remained relatively flat compared to recent years. The analysis explores these trends in greater detail, including monthly performance, the impact of winter weather, and opportunities to support future growth across the accommodation sector.
Read the full Q1 2026 Hotel Performance Analysis.

FROM DATA TO DECISIONS

Tourism organizations across Ontario are increasingly turning to visitor research to guide marketing, destination development, and investment decisions. This spring, our Research & Development Manager, Tom Guerquin, was invited to present at Explorers' Edge's Big Applause Awards, sharing how geofencing and visitor mobility data can help destinations better understand visitation patterns and support more informed decision-making. The session reinforced a key message: reliable data leads to stronger tourism planning and better outcomes for communities and businesses alike. As demand for tourism data continues to grow, our research programs, including postal code analysis, geofencing analysis, and municipal overnight analysis, help municipalities, tourism businesses, and destination partners turn information into actionable strategy. Learn more about our available programs.

RESEARCH AT WORK: TESTIMONIAL

> *Working with Central Counties Tourism has been very valuable for the Village of Stouffville. The visitor data and insights provided by CCT have strengthened our approach to tourism development, event planning, and marketing in the Village. In particular, insights into visitor movement between Memorial Park and Main Street have helped us better understand connectivity and identify opportunities to further support businesses during major events. CCT has made the data easy to understand, and we look forward to continuing this work through upcoming workshops with local businesses.*
>
> ***Madison Kennedy, Economic Development and Tourism Officer | Town of Stouffville***



FUNDING & SUPPORT

Explore Georgina Grant
The 2026 Explore Georgina Grant provides up to $5,000 in matched funding for events, programs, or initiatives that enhance the Town's identity, support community betterment, and create economic impact, while celebrating local culture, history, and diversity. Applications for the second intake are now being accepted with a **June 26, 2026 deadline**, for projects across three streams: Community Betterment, Community Culture, and Economic Development. Learn more.

Host in Whitby Grant Program
The Host in Whitby Grant Program offers up to $5,000 in financial assistance to owner/operators, private event organizers, and not-for-profit organizations hosting events that attract visitors and showcase Whitby as a vibrant destination. Designed to support both existing and new tourism-focused events, the program helps boost the local economy, foster inclusivity, and strengthen community connections. The next application deadline is **July1, 2026**. Find out more.

Ontario Sport Hosting Program
The Ontario government is now accepting applications for the second intake of the 2026-27 Sport Hosting Program, which provides project-based funding to help communities and sport organizations host major national and international amateur sport events. The program supports events that generate tourism and economic impact, while building sport capacity, strengthening community engagement, and creating opportunities for Ontario athletes, coaches, officials, and volunteers. Applications are open until **July 13, 2026**.

Rural Ontario Development Program
The third intake of the provincial Rural Ontario Development (ROD) Program opens **August 17, 2026**, offering cost-share funding to support business growth, job creation, and infrastructure projects in rural communities across Ontario. Eligible applicants include municipalities, not-for-profits, Indigenous organizations, and small businesses with 1–20 employees. Deadline to apply is **October 1, 2026**. Learn more.

LEARNING & EVENTS

Search Engine Optimization: Understanding SEO Basics
Search visibility is more important than ever, and it's changing quickly with the rise of AI. Join the Digital Service Squad on **June 30, 2026** for a webinar on Search Engine Optimization: Understanding SEO Basics. Ideal for businesses looking to strengthen their digital presence and reach more customers online, this session will cover SEO fundamentals, keyword strategy, on-page and off-page tactics, technical SEO, and how AI is shaping search behaviour. Advance registration is required.

Tourism Golf Group Ontario Golf Tournament
Golf with purpose at the Tourism Golf Group Ontario Golf Tournament, taking place **September 16, 2026** at Nottawasaga Resort and Golf. Hosted by a group of retired tourism professionals, this inaugural event will bring together industry peers for a day of golf, networking, and giving back in support of Starlight Children's Foundation Canada. Registration includes golf, dinner, and a charitable donation, with opportunities to participate as a player, sponsor, donor, or volunteer. **Early bird rates available until June 30**. Learn more and register.

Workplace Violence Risk Assessment Tool – Practical Workshop
Workplace violence and harassment remain among the most common compliance issues identified by Ontario's Ministry of Labour. To support employers in addressing these requirements, the Workplace Violence Risk Assessment Tool - Practical Workshop will take place on **October 29, 2026**. The session is designed to help organizations meet their obligations under Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act. Participants will explore the WSPS Workplace Violence Risk Assessment Tool, a free digital resource that supports compliance and helps organizations build documented assessments, action plans, and next steps. Register today.

INDUSTRY NEWS

TIAO's Forward Motion Survey
The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) is requesting input from tourism partners as the Ontario Tourism Strategic Alignment Council advances implementation of Forward Motion: Ontario's Tourism Strategy (2025–2030) and focuses on three 2026/27 priorities: international market growth, tourism investment attraction, and workforce development. The survey seeks to identify current initiatives across Ontario, highlight opportunities for collaboration, avoid duplication, and strengthen industry-wide advocacy through real-world examples and case studies. Share your thoughts by **June 30, 2026**. Complete the survey here.

Town of Stouffville Agritourism Survey
The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, in partnership with York Region, is currently developing an Agritourism Strategy and Toolkit to support the growth of local farm-based experiences and strengthen the connection between agriculture, tourism, and the community. As part of this work, a survey is being conducted to better understand current agritourism activity, identify opportunities for growth, and inform the tools and supports needed to help farmers and businesses expand into tourism. Share your input by completing the survey by **June 30, 2026**.

CTA's National Culinary and Agritourism Action Plan
The Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA) has launched its National Culinary + Agritourism Action Plan, a multi-year roadmap designed to strengthen culinary and agritourism experiences across Canada and position the country as a leading global destination by 2030. Developed through national engagement with industry leaders, destinations, Indigenous tourism organizations, educators, and tourism partners, the plan outlines key priorities related to leadership and collaboration, experience development, marketing, and the reputation of Canadian food and drink. Learn more.

Connect with us on social!