



CENTRAL COUNTIES TOURISM NEWSLETTER

November 2023



At Trail Hub in Uxbridge, Durham Region

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

Good day,

I am writing this month's introduction from Orlando, Florida. I am attending the 2023 International Association of Amusement Parks & Attractions (IAAPA) Expo. It is the biggest tradeshow for the industry in the world and, with over 40,000 attendees from across North America, it gives me a strong sense of the positivity there is about the future of visitation and tourism going forward. The tradeshow floor is huge! There are over 1,100 exhibitors and you can find your next suppliers, ranging from a \$50M state-of-the-art roller coaster to one that can supply the \$0.50 plush toy for your crane game. To walk the entire thing is almost 15km. I got halfway through today, and my feet can attest to the distance.

More impressive than the show floor are the conversations taking place among the operators. The attractions industry... [Read more.](#)

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MEMBER NEED TO KNOW...

NEW: 2024/25 Partnership Program

We have been busy tackling next year's business plan, and with that several discussions around revamping our [2024/25 Partnership Program](#) have been had. Our mandate is to grow the visitor economy and, through that lens, have introduced three new priority streams for partnership support: 1) Out-of Region Marketing, 2) Multi-Stakeholder Development Initiatives, and 3) Destination Development. The application portal will open on February 1, 2024, and will have two intake periods available with deadlines of March 15 and September 13, 2024, respectively. [Learn more](#) about these changes now and connect with your region's [Industry Relations Manager](#) early to ensure your project is a fit. A virtual info session will be held in the new year ahead of the program launching. More details to come. As for the current [23/24 Partnership Program](#), the final intake period is coming to a close on **December 15, 2023**.

Lunch & Learn: Social Media Marketing

Join us on **January 17, 2024** and get a head start on tackling your New Year's resolutions! Together virtually, we will work through Part 1 of the [CCT Learning Lab](#) Social Media Marketing Program, 'Get Social Media Ready'. Part 1 will give you the foundational tools and knowledge needed to successfully engage in social media marketing for your tourism business. Additional sessions will be scheduled in the coming months to cover Part 2, 3 & 4. It is important to note that completion of the Social Media Marketing Program will be a requirement for all applicants to the 24/25 Partnership Program. [Register today](#).



LAST CHANCE: Free 2023 TIAO Membership

If you have not yet taken advantage of the complimentary [Tourism Industry Association of Ontario](#) (TIAO) membership offer, here is your reminder to do so now! The 2023 membership offer, which provides tourism operators with a free one-year membership from the date of sign up, is expiring soon. TIAO is the government recognized voice of tourism, advocating on behalf of their members on pressing policy issues impacting the Ontario tourism industry. Membership includes access to member-only resources and a collaborative network of businesses, partners and allies that support the tourism industry. More details available [here](#).



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

GOOD NEWS, ACCOLADES & COLLABORATION

Excellence in Agriculture Award: Lavender Polo Farm

The [Excellence in Agriculture program](#), which recognizes excellence in the agriculture and food industry, recently awarded Arthur Lin, from [Lavender Polo Farm](#) in East Gwillimbury, with the 2023 Youth Excellence award. The Youth Excellence award goes to an applicant under 29 years of age that demonstrates agri-food leadership and/or innovation, and how those efforts support the growth and development of Ontario's agri-food sector. Congratulations Arthur! We look forward to supporting your continued success and growth of Lavender Polo Farm.



SOURCE: [f @LavenderPoloFarm](#)



TIAC Tourism Congress Finalists

The [Canadian Tourism Awards](#), presented by the [Tourism Industry Association of Canada](#) (TIAC) was held on November 22, 2023 to recognize the best and brightest in Canada's tourism industry. Amongst this year's finalists, we were

thrilled to find two of our outstanding York Region Destination Management Organization partners: [Destination Markham](#) in the Business Event category, and [Ashley Angeloni](#), Tourism Development Officer for [Tourism Vaughan](#), in the Employee of the Year category. And guess what? Destination Markham was awarded the Business Event of the Year last night!! Congratulations/Félicitations DMC friends!! Kudos to Ashley, as well, for being recognized, on a national level, as a tourism employee of the year finalist! You are both absolute winners in our eyes.

A Bittersweet Farewell to Landman Gardens & Bakery

When we heard the news that [Landman Gardens and Bakery](#) had decided to close their, very-much successful, doors as of December 23, 2023, we reached out to Rebecca Landman for some parting words of wisdom to share with other small business owners. First opened in 2011 as a small market garden, just north of Grand Valley, Landman Gardens has evolved into so much more! We witnessed the growth and success of Landman Gardens first-hand, and they will be sorely missed in our tourism community. How did she do it? What did she learn along the way? What advice would she give? [Read more](#), and if so inspired, perhaps a final visit for some tasty treats might be in order!



SOURCE: [CCT Image Bank](#)

ydh presents A Holiday Romance♥



MARKETING AND MORE

YDH HOLIDAY CAMPAIGN

Our holiday campaign themed '[YDH presents A Holiday Romance](#)', where we invite visitors from all over Ontario to fall in love with York Durham Headwaters, has launched. From festive events for visitors to explore to Hallmark movie inspired moments to recreate, cozy places to visit, gift ideas for family and friends, and so much more, we've got all the inspiration needed for the perfect day out! Don't see your event or business included, connect with your region's [Industry Relations Manager](#) and let them know what you've got going on, or [upload](#) your holiday event to your profile today.



CALLOUT FOR WINTER CONTENT

Winter is almost upon us! And while this cold, grey and gloomy time of the year can turn the best of us into hibernating homebodies, tourism demands the exact opposite! We want to encourage visitors to get out and discover, or rediscover, the winter wonderland that is York Durham Headwaters, and we need your help to do so. This year's winter theme is 'Chills, Thrills and Get Cozy' and is set to launch January 6, 2024. The team is busy at work pulling together their content ideas for the season, and if you have something great going on, they want to hear about it! Upload your winter events to the [YDH Events Calendar](#) or reach out to region's [Industry Relations Manager](#) today.



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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](#)



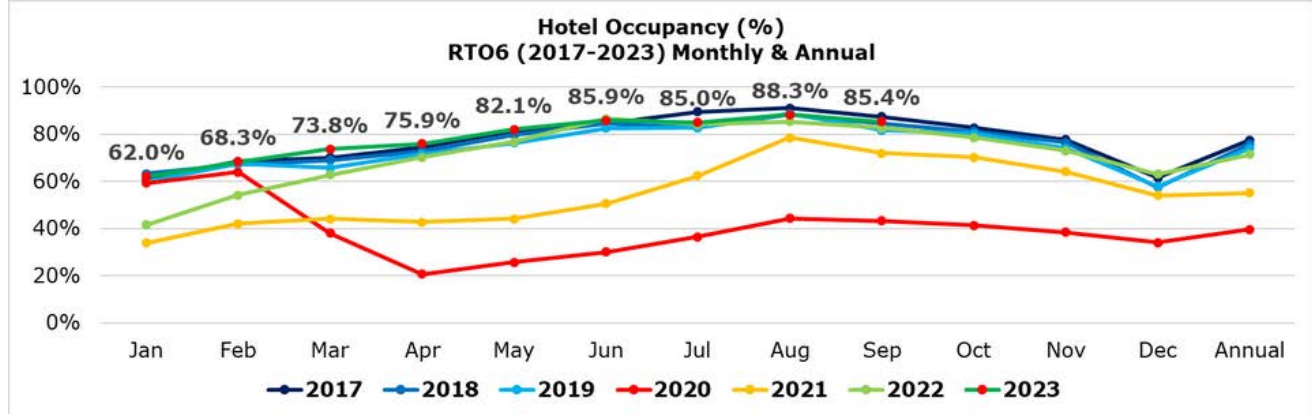


RESEARCH

2023 Q3 HOTEL REPORT

Central Counties Tourism collects aggregated quarterly hotel data from Smith Travel Research (STR) for the available properties within our regions and, each quarter, share those metrics with you. The third quarter 2023 hotel stats are in, and we are happy to report that those numbers continue to surpass the 2019 (pre-COVID) figures. In this update, we continue to focus on Hotel Occupancy in 2023, Year-to-Date averages, and 2023 vs 2019.

2023 Occupancy Key Highlights: Historically, Q3 experiences the highest of volume of overnight visitation into the region, and 2023 Q3 was pleasantly no exception. It was a busy summer for the region, the average occupancy percentage for Q3 was 1.8% higher. [Read more.](#)



RESEARCH AT WORK: TESTIMONIAL

Working with the team at RTO6 has been such a pleasure. We worked with Tom Guerquin on Geofence reports to collect Visitor Data and Metrics. The information and visitor reports that came back have been the most useful tool in understanding our tourists and will assist us in our future marketing, product development, share the story with not only our local businesses and attractions but how we identify who we are targeting. Data and metrics are key to everything we do in municipal tourism and this service is well worth the time, expertise, and cost. It truly is the best third-party tourism research available and will continue to provide us with valuable insights as our visitor economy grows.

-- Lara Toman,
B.S.Sc., CFEE,
Program Manager,
Events, Tourism
and Culture
Strategic Initiatives,
Town of Whitby



Government of Canada launches new Tourism Growth Program

[Announced this week](#), the new federal [Tourism Growth Program](#), delivered by FedDev Ontario, will provide \$108 million over 3 years to support Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, small- and medium-sized businesses, and not-for-profit organizations develop local tourism products and experiences. Applicants are eligible to apply for a maximum of \$250,000 per project, with applications now being accepted until **February 29, 2024**. To learn more, review [program details](#) and register for one of the upcoming virtual [information sessions](#) on **December 4 or 7, 2023**.

Vaughan Spark Mentorship & Grant Program

Launching **December 6, 2023**, the 2024 [Vaughan "Spark" Mentorship and Grant Program](#), offered through the [Tourism Innovation Lab](#), is open to individual, start-up, and established small Vaughan businesses or non-profit organizations. The "Spark" program matches selected candidates with a tourism mentor and provides seed funds to help take their new tourism ideas to the next level of development. To learn more about this program, eligibility and application process, join [Tourism Vaughan](#) as they kick off the launch with a networking complimentary lunch. [Register by December 1, 2023](#) to attend.

Racialized and Indigenous Supports for Entrepreneurs Grant Program

The [Racialized and Indigenous Supports for Entrepreneurs](#) (RAISE) grant program provides eligible self-identified Indigenous, Black and other racialized entrepreneurs with: business development training, culturally responsive and tailored business coaching, networking opportunities, and a one-time grant of \$10,000. Review the [Application Guide](#) for more information. Deadline to apply is **December 8, 2023**.

Reimagine to Succeed: Bringing Diversity to Tourism & Hospitality

[Reimagine to Succeed](#) is an innovative program designed to equip employers with the training, advice and confidence they need to hire and retain people with disabilities and build more inclusive workplaces. Offered through [Tourism Skillsnet Ontario](#), this program is free for businesses in Ontario and will provide access to the Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN) Disability Awareness & Confidence Training for Business. [Learn more](#).



LEARNING & EVENTS

Empowering Businesses to be Cyber Resilient

To empower small businesses with the tools and knowledge to fortify their operations against the growing threat of cybercrime, [Digital Main Street](#) recently introduced a complimentary on-demand cybersecurity course, [Empowering Businesses to be Cyber Resilient](#). This course offers practical tactics to shield your business, effective strategies to train your employees against cyber threats, and proven methods to safeguard your customer's data. Login or sign-up to access the course [here](#).

Tourism Ready: Little Native Hockey League Tournament in Markham

On **November 28, 2023**, [Destination Markham Corporation](#) will be hosting a special Indigenous-led workshop, for Markham businesses, to offer invaluable insights, business tools and cultural understandings to provide an exceptional experience for the Little Native Hockey League tournament, which is anticipated to bring together more than 5,000 Indigenous athletes, families and spectators from across Ontario to Markham during March Break 2024! This workshop is a free workshop but pre-registration is required. Spots are limited. [Reserve your spot](#).

Innovations in Rural Destination Development

Join rural destination development colleagues from coast to coast, online on **November 29, 2023**, for [Destination Dialogues: Innovations in Rural Destination Development](#). Designed to foster innovation, this intimate gathering provides rural destination management professionals with a unique opportunity to gather insights into destination development and regenerative approaches with peers from across the country. [Register here](#).

Diversity Recruitment & Retention Strategies

Join the [Culinary Tourism Alliance](#) on **December 4, 2023** for a virtual workshop [Diversity Recruitment & Retention Strategies](#) to learn more about avenues to recruit and retain a diverse workforce. Hosted in partnership with the [Ontario Tourism Education Corporation](#), this workshop will also provide an overview of two of their new training programs (Accelerated Leadership Training Series & Reimagine to Succeed) which assist employers with their employee recruitment and retention. [Register now](#).

AODA - Have you filed yet? (and why it matters)

Join the [Ontario Chamber of Commerce](#) on **December 7, 2023**, to learn about the benefits of becoming accessible, your business obligations under the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act](#) (AODA), and the compliance report requirements before the December 31, 2023 deadline. [Register here](#).

TOURISM

INDUSTRY NEWS

Indigenous Tourism Ontario and Sport Tourism Canada MOU

[Indigenous Tourism Ontario](#) has officially partnered, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with [Sport Tourism Canada](#) recognizing the organization as their national supporting partner with ITO's undertaking of a provincial Indigenous sport tourism strategy. This collaborative work signifies a significant step forward in building a bridge between Indigenous communities and the sport tourism sector. [Read the full media release.](#)

Government of Canada extends Workforce Solutions Road Map

The [Temporary Foreign Worker \(TFW\) Program](#) Workforce Solutions Road Map, introduced in April 2022, to help employers fill job vacancies in the wake of labour shortages, was recently modified to better reflect current labour market conditions and the economic outlook for the future, and extended through to August 30, 2024. Additionally as of January 1, 2024, new wage requirements are being introduced. [Read more.](#)

Canadian Tourism Labour Market Snapshot

[Tourism HR Canada](#)'s October 2023 Market Snapshot is now available. Highlights include: the tourism labour force accounted for 10.1% of the total Canadian labour force; tourism employment accounted for 10.0% of all employment in Canada, which represented 9.5% of the total Canadian labour force; and unemployment in the tourism sector in October was slightly higher than that of the total Canadian economy. Read the full report [here](#).

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

The second edition of the [Tourism SkillsNet Ontario: Workforce Issues, Opportunities, and Impact Report](#) is now available. This quarterly report highlights the most up-to-date workforce intelligence data, local workforce issues, critical needs and opportunities for the sector, and policy progress to support recovery. [Read it now.](#)

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