CENTRAL COUNTIES TOURISM NEWSLETTER

October 2026

Dixie Orchards, Caledon (Headwaters)

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

CIAO!!

I have just returned home from two weeks in Italy with Trish, my dad and my sister. We spent six days in Tuscany, four in Sorrento and four in Sicily. I had no idea how hilly the Italian coast is. If it weren't for the wine and incredible food that I gorged myself on, I may have actually lost some weight on this trip…

I also have a new respect for our roads and traffic systems. I expected Italy to be much like the other European countries I have been to, meaning that walking and public transit were the main transportation methods, minimizing the traffic on the narrow roads that were first built long before cars were a thing. While there are fairly robust transportation systems in place (we took the high-speed train from Florence to Naples), the citizens of the country love their personal vehicles. Every street is... Read more.

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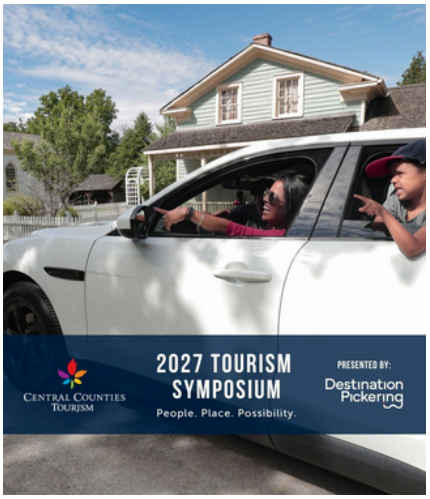
MEMBER NEED TO KNOW...

Save the Date: 2027 Tourism Symposium

Mark your calendars for our 2027 Tourism Symposium on **March 23, 2027.** Presented by Destination Pickering and themed *People. Place. Possibility: Creating Destinations That Work for Residents and Visitors*, the Symposium will bring together tourism partners from across York, Durham and Headwaters to celebrate Pride of Place — the people, places and experiences that define our regions — and explore how we can build on that pride to strengthen our tourism destinations. We're also switching things up this year with an optional evening component the night before (March 22). Stay tuned for more details and registration information coming soon! Interested in supporting the event? View our Sponsorship Deck to learn about available sponsorship opportunities.



LAST CHANCE: Understanding Overnight Visitors Webinar

There's still time to register for our Research webinar, Understanding Overnight Visitors to York, Durham & Headwaters, taking place **October 28 at 12pm**. Join Tom, our Research Manager, as he shares key findings from the latest overnight visitation data and explores what it reveals about who is staying in the region. Whether you're involved in tourism marketing, destination development, economic development or business planning, this webinar will provide valuable insights to help you better understand your overnight visitor economy. Register now.

Partnership Program: Tourism Marketing Support Stream

Looking for support to promote your tourism business, organization or event? The **Tourism Marketing Support** stream for our 2026-2027 Partnership Program is still open, offering up to $2,000 in matching funds for eligible projects. Applications are reviewed monthly until funding is exhausted, so don't miss the opportunity to explore how we can help support marketing efforts. Visit the Partnership Program page for more information and speak with your region's Industry Relations Manager to discuss your project's eligibilty.

MORE MEMBER NEED TO KNOW...

AVTR[1] at the TIAO Summit: The Power of Connection

Last week, Mohammed was at TIAO's Ontario Tourism Summit demonstrating AVTR[1] as a digital tourism concierge and showcasing how avatar-led augmented reality can open up new opportunities for tourism businesses and visitor experiences.
Beyond the technology, Mohammed has come to appreciate how much the tourism industry is built on relationships. Through conversations with tourism businesses and destination stakeholders, he's seen how sharing ideas, learning from one another and making connections can lead to new opportunities and more meaningful visitor experiences. In his recent article, Great Tourism Experiences Begin with Connection, Mohammed reflects on the value of those conversations and why some of the best ideas start with a simple connection. Read the article.

REMINDER: Agritourism Networking Event

There's still time to join us for our upcoming Agritourism Networking Event at Elliott Tree Farm on **November 10, 2026**. Bringing together tourism and agriculture partners from across York, Durham and Headwaters, this event is an opportunity to make connections, exchange ideas and explore opportunities for collaboration. Whether agritourism is already part of your business or you're curious about its potential, we'd love to see you there! **RSVP by October 30**.

Free Training Through the Learning Lab

Looking to build skills across your team? The CCT Learning Lab offers free, self-paced training for tourism businesses across Ontario, covering topics such as customer service, route development, grant writing, social media marketing, accessibility and workplace inclusion, with recent additions focused on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Whether you're looking to strengthen existing skills or explore new areas of learning, visit the Learning Lab to discover available courses and support your team's professional development.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

GOOD NEWS, ACCOLADES & COLLABORATION

YDH Restaurants Earn MICHELIN Guide Recognition

From Markham to Uxbridge, our region's culinary scene continues to earn recognition in the MICHELIN Guide. Zen Japanese Restaurant in Markham has been named MICHELIN Recommended for the third consecutive year, while Sundays in Uxbridge retains its Bib Gourmand distinction for quality dining at good value. Congratulations to the chefs and teams at both restaurants on this well-deserved recognition! These honours shine a spotlight on the talent and creativity of culinary businesses across York, Durham and Headwaters.

SOURCE: Destination Markham

Uxbridge Studio Tour Finds New Ways to Inspire Exploration

The 2026 Uxbridge Studio Tour is a great example of how creative marketing can build on an established annual event to attract visitors and encourage broader exploration of a destination. Through themed itineraries and curated routes introduced for this year's tour, organizers connected participating artist studios with scenic drives, local food and other experiences, giving visitors from across Southern Ontario new ways to plan their day and discover more of Uxbridge and North Durham along the way. By presenting a familiar event through different interests and experiences, the tour demonstrates how thoughtful storytelling can extend the visitor experience beyond the main attraction. Discover the themed itineraries and creative storytelling behind this year's tour on their blog.

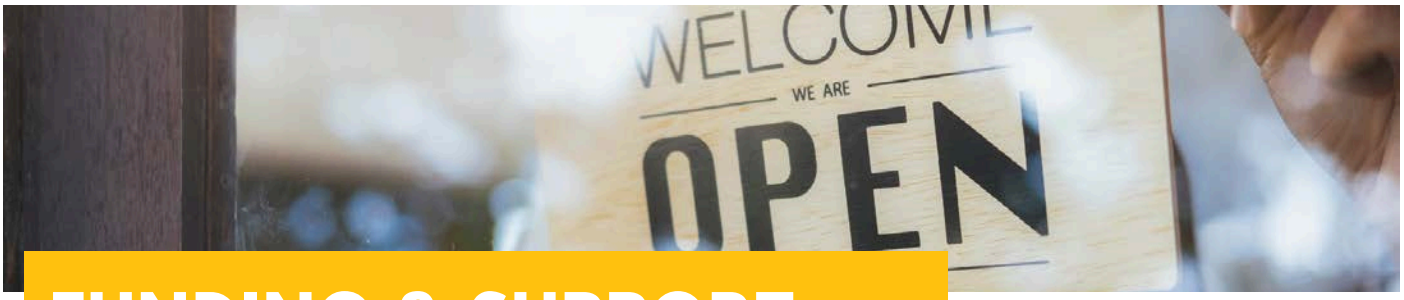
RESEARCH

2026 Overnight Visitation into YDH

New overnight visitor data is providing destinations with deeper insight into who is staying in their communities and how often they visit. From visitor volumes and length of stay to trip frequency and visitor origin data, this information can help destinations gain a more complete understanding of their overnight visitor economy. Explore the latest regional insights in our recent blog article, A Closer Look at Overnight Visitor Data, and connect with Tom to learn how overnight visitor data can support your destination's goals. **Looking for a deeper dive? Register for our October 28 webinar**, Understanding Overnight Visitors to York, Durham & Headwaters where Tom will share key findings from the latest overnight visitation data and answer your questions.

Canadian Tourism Outlook 2026–2035

Where are the biggest growth opportunities for Canadian tourism over the next decade? Destination Canada's latest outlook projects tourism spending in Canada to grow by 6% in 2026, with spending from overseas markets forecast to increase by 9.8% annually through 2035 — nearly twice the projected growth rate of the U.S. market. The report explores emerging markets, shifting demand and the opportunities shaping Canada's tourism future, offering valuable insights for businesses and destinations planning for long-term growth. Explore the Canadian Tourism Outlook to learn more.



FUNDING & SUPPORT

MeetOnTheSpectrum Job Fair
Are you hiring? MeetOnTheSpectrum is inviting businesses in Vaughan and neighbouring communities to participate in its **November 10, 2026** job fair at the Civic Centre Resource Library in Vaughan, helping connect employers with neurodivergent individuals seeking employment opportunities. It's an opportunity to support inclusive hiring while welcoming the unique strengths, skills and perspectives neurodivergent individuals bring to the workplace. To learn more about participating, visit MeetOnTheSpectrum.com or contact Tony at 416-347-5287.

Propel Winter Applications Now Open
Looking to bring new talent into your tourism business? Tourism HR Canada's Propel Student Work Placement Program is accepting applications for winter placements, offering eligible employers a wage subsidy covering 50% of gross wages, up to $5,000 per placement, when they hire post-secondary students for paid co-ops, internships and other work-integrated learning opportunities. Want to learn more about eligibility and the application process? Join Tourism HR Canada's **November 12, 2026** webinar for an overview of the program and key dates. Learn more.

Canada Summer Jobs Applications Now Open
Planning to hire summer staff? The Government of Canada's Canada Summer Jobs program is now accepting applications for 2027, offering wage subsidies to eligible employers creating summer job opportunities for youth aged 15 to 30. Not-for-profit employers may receive funding for up to 100% of the provincial or territorial minimum wage, while eligible public- and private-sector employers may receive up to 50%. Review the applicant guide for program information and application details.

NEED MORE SUPPORT?

Explore our Partner Support page for additional funding programs, business resources, certifications, training opportunities and support tools.

LEARNING, EVENTS & INDUSTRY NEWS

Future Proofing Businesses with AI
Looking to put AI to work in your business? Digital Main Street offers a free, four-week training program for Ontario small and medium-sized businesses, with practical applications for marketing, operations and business management. The next intake for Future Proofing Businesses with AI closes **November 1, 2026** and runs November 2–30. Programs combine online learning, live sessions and in-person workshops. A second intake is available until November 15, with training beginning November 16. Visit the program page to learn more and register.

Propel Student Work Placement Program Info Session
Interested in hiring a post-secondary student for a co-op, internship or other work-integrated learning placement? Join Tourism HR Canada on **November 12, 2026** for a free, one-hour virtual information session on the Propel Student Work Placement Program. Learn about employer eligibility, available wage subsidies, how to post a job and apply, and the information you'll need to get started. A Q&A will follow the presentation, and registrants can submit questions in advance. Register now.

Tourism HR Canada Launches Daisy, a New Workforce Resource
Looking for practical ways to strengthen your team? Tourism HR Canada has launched Daisy, an AI-powered platform that brings together more than 450 industry-vetted tourism competencies and tools to support workforce development. Tourism businesses can use Daisy to create job descriptions, compare roles, identify skills gaps and training needs, and support employee development and career progression. Sign up and get started with Daisy to explore tools that can help you recruit, develop and retain talent.

Connect with us on social!