



CENTRAL COUNTIES TOURISM

For Immediate Release

Central Counties Tourism (RTO6), in partnership with Destination Markham, to host eighth annual Tourism Symposium – *Tourism Now*

AI technology and mobile app innovation at the forefront of this year's tourism symposium.

April 5, 2024 - Courtice, Ontario – [Central Counties Tourism](#), the regional tourism organization (RTO6) for the [York, Durham, and Headwaters](#) regions of Ontario, will host, in partnership with [Destination Markham](#), the eighth annual [Tourism Symposium](#) under the guiding theme of *Tourism Now!* The conference will take place on Tuesday, April 9, 2024, at the Delta Hotels by Marriott Toronto Markham.

With an economic impact of close to \$3 Billion in 2022 from just domestic overnight visitors alone, tourism contributes significantly to the health of the regional economy. “The visitor economy is what makes our villages, towns and cities vibrant places to live, work and, of course, visit,” said Chuck Thibeault, Executive Director of [Central Counties Tourism \(CCT\)](#). “Tourism is responsible for hundreds of millions in tax revenue across all levels of government. This long-standing symposium brings together like-minded tourism-related businesses and organizations to share best practices, identify opportunities to work together, and take steps to further grow this amazing industry.”

“We are thrilled to be the presenting sponsor of an event that elevates and celebrates the important role of tourism in Markham and across Central Counties,” said Eric Lariviere, Executive Director of Destination Markham. “As a destination management organization whose goal is to grow Markham's visitor economy, we value such industry gatherings, in which participants, speakers and panels, strive to increase cultural understanding and relationship building, as well as business insights and best practices in order to build a strong, responsible, and inclusive tourism industry in the region.”

Theme highlights new technologies and their connection to tourism

During the morning program, CCT will introduce its latest innovation: the bespoke augmented reality application, AVTR¹. Tailored specifically for the tourism industry, this cutting-edge app marks a significant step forward in delivering engaging content to the market. Developed in partnership with [SimWave](#), AVTR¹ addresses the evolving needs of both tourists and businesses.

Keeping with the theme of new technologies and their connection to tourism, the event's afternoon keynote speaker, Katherine Scarrow, Manager of Creative Strategy for the [Globe and Mail's Content Studio](#), will provide a clear understanding of how Generative AI (GenAI) can be a powerful asset in the marketing toolkit of tourism professionals.

The programme includes two panel discussions; *New Experience Development through Collaboration* led by Ruida Lu, Business Development at Destination Markham. In this panel attendees will hear directly from industry leaders who are making significant contributions to the growing festivals and events, arts, and culinary economy in Markham. The *Rethinking Recruitment in a Competitive Labour Market* discussion will include recruitment and retention experts from some of Ontario's foremost tourism advocacy and training organizations, including the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario's ([TIAO](#)), Business Advisors with the Ontario Tourism Education Corporation ([OTEC](#)), and the [Better Way Alliance](#).

This year's symposium, presented by Destination Markham, was made possible through the support of additional event sponsors, including [Tourism Vaughan Corporation](#) (Platinum); [Regional Municipality of York](#) (Gold), and [The Township of Brock](#), [Durham Tourism](#), [OTEC](#), [Town of Ajax](#), [Vaughan International Film Festival](#), [Town of Caledon](#) and [Town of Whitby](#) (Silver).

About Destination Markham

[Destination Markham Corporation](#) (DMC) is an arm's length municipal corporation launched in April 2020 as the destination management organization (DMO) for the City of Markham. Its purpose is to promote Markham as a remarkable destination for visitors, including tourists, sport and festival attendees, meeting and conference delegates, and business travellers. The key tourism objectives are to research, develop, market, and grow Markham's tourism/visitor economy. This initiative will collaborate with Markham's hotel industry, festival-event conference-travel planners, attraction operators, cultural institutions, sports tourism promoters, entertainment and recreation providers, food service businesses and the City of Markham.

About Central Counties Tourism

[Central Counties Tourism](#) (CCT) was established as a regional tourism organization in 2010 under the framework developed by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Its mandate is to help stakeholders build their capacity which, in turn, grows visitation and vibrant communities throughout the York, Durham, and Headwaters regions. CCT is funded by the Ontario Government and managed as a not-for-profit organization by a voluntary tourism industry board. CCT's mission is to develop, support and promote tourism within the region.

Media Contact

Chuck Thibeault
Executive Director
Central Counties Tourism
cthibeault@centralcounties.ca