



Committee of the Whole Report

Report Number: ED2022-012

Meeting Date: March 8, 2022

Title: 2022 Summer Tourism Experience Program

Description: Request to extend the 2021 Summer Tourism Experience Program for 2022

Author and Title: Rebecca Mustard, Manager of Economic Development

Recommendations:

That Report ED2022-012, **2022 Summer Tourism Experience Program**, be received;

That \$58,094.66 from the 2021 Pandemic Enhancements funding, or up to this amount as recovered from the 2021 My Main Street Funding Program, be brought forward to 2022 for the 2022 Summer Tourism Experience Program as outlined in Appendix A; and

That this recommendation be brought forward to Council for consideration at the next Regular Council Meeting.

Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Background:

In 2020 and 2021, the Economic Recovery Task Force made a number of recommendations to Council to accelerate the recovery of our local economy. One of the recommendations considered in the 2021 budget process was the approval of up to \$200,000 to fund various City service enhancements to support pandemic response and recovery efforts in the community. The 2021 Summer Tourism Experience Program was one of those initiatives with an allocation of \$60,000.

The 2021 Summer Tourism Experience program was created to welcome and celebrate visitors, and connect visitors to local businesses and experiences in four Kawartha Lakes tourism focused downtown main streets; Bobcaygeon, Coboconk-Norland, Fenelon Falls, and Lindsay. The funding was provided to the four (4) area local Chambers of Commerce. The Chambers of Commerce work in collaboration with the City to provide a network of visitor information services in key tourism communities in Kawartha Lakes.

The Municipal Act, Section 107 (1), general power to make grants, acknowledges Council's authority to provide financial assistance through the following statement;

Despite any provision of this or any other Act relating to the giving of grants or aid by a municipality, subject to section 106, a municipality may make grants, on such terms as to security and otherwise as the council considers appropriate, to any person, group or body, including a fund, within or outside the boundaries of the municipality for any purpose that council considers to be in the interests of the municipality.

In late 2021, the municipality retroactively received up to \$8,094.66 in funding through the My Main Street Program for the 2021 Summer Tourism Experience Program. This funding covered the program expenses for 2021.

This report requests that the 2021 Service Enhancement funding that was offset by the My Main Street Program be brought forward to fund the Summer Tourism Experience Program in 2022.

Rationale:

The 2021 Summer Tourism Experience program operated throughout the Summer and concluded on December 31, 2021, with the majority of activities taking place during the Summer 2021 season.

The program provided funding for activities that advance community based visitor information services and met the following objectives;

- Welcomed all visitors to Kawartha Lakes by having a physical presence at key downtown tourist destinations;
- Encouraged visitors to increase their length of stay in Kawartha Lakes by supporting on the ground trip planning and encourage visitation to multiple tourism assets; and,
- Provided activities or interactions that enhance the visitors experience while in Kawartha Lakes.

Each community was able to tailor their program to best activate their downtown areas and engage with visitors, which included;

- Outdoor experience booth and activations in Bobcaygeon;
- Virtual tourism experience for Coboconk-Norland to increase long term in-person visitation;
- Outdoor tourism tent and shoulder season promotions in Fenelon Falls; and,
- Outdoor visitor information kiosk and activations in Lindsay.

The program was successful in engaging over 3,600 people and benefiting more than 4,300 people in tourism focused downtowns across the municipality.

Following the success of the 2021 program, the continuation of the pandemic, and My Main Street Program funding received to cover costs for the 2021 program, a 2022 Summer Tourism Experience Program is proposed as an initiative to support the local tourism industry this year.

The 2022 Summer Tourism Experience Program is proposed to follow the same framework as 2021. The program will provide up to \$15,000 for activities that advance community based visitor information services and meet the following objectives;

- Welcome visitors to Kawartha Lakes and be physically out in the community where tourists gather;
- Encourage visitors to increase their length of stay in Kawartha Lakes by supporting on the ground trip planning and encourage visitation to multiple tourism assets;

- Provide activities or interactions that enhance the visitors experience while in Kawartha Lakes; and,
- Engage local businesses in activities to support the visitor experience and support long term programming (e.g. Kawartha Lakes Business Count).

The last objective, engaging local businesses in activities to support the visitor experience and support long term programming, is an addition for the 2022 program. Throughout the 2021 Program, Chambers found that this became an important part of the program scope to help deliver on the other program objectives. The Chambers also became active participants in the inaugural 2021 Kawartha Lakes Business Count with ambassadors completing surveys door to door in their respective communities. A similar engagement process is proposed in 2022. Adding this objective better captures the scope of the Summer Tourism Experience Program.

Other Alternatives Considered:

Council may choose not to bring 2021 funds into 2022 to fund another year of the Tourism Experience Fund. This however, is not recommended.

The tourism sector in Ontario and globally has been recognized as one of the hardest hit sectors by the pandemic. In Kawartha Lakes, recovery and resilience of this sector is important to the economic recovery of the region. The Summer Tourism Enhancement Program is an economic recovery initiative in response to the pandemic. The program was designed to enhance visitor experience across the municipality by implementing summer student tourism ambassadors. The return of visitors to Kawartha Lakes and their engagement in multiple activities in the community is important to local economic recovery and long term development of Kawartha Lakes as a destination.

As the pandemic continues, Council's original intent to support the economic recovery of the tourism sector remains current. The benefit of receiving the My Main Street Program funding allows Council to continue to offer programming that supports economic recovery.

Alignment to Strategic Priorities

The 2022 Summer Tourism Enhancement Program implements the 2020-2023 Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan priority;

- A vibrant and growing economy

This is achieved through stimulating the tourism sector and downtowns by promoting visitor engagement in the community. The encouragement to extend visitor stay and engagement with the local economy is also a goal of the Kawartha Lakes Destination Development Plan.

Financial/Operation Impacts:

The My Main Street Program is a funding program administered through the Canadian Urban Institute to support recovery from the pandemic across Southern Ontario by revitalizing main streets and facilitating the return of locally owned independent businesses. In the Fall of 2021, Staff successfully applied to the My Main Street Program for funding to retroactively offset the expenses incurred in the 2021 Summer Tourism Experience Program. The final amount of funding to be received is in the process of being finalized and will be up to \$58,094.66.

The 2022 Summer Tourism Enhancement Program is proposed as a \$60,000 initiative based off the 2021 program. The funding required to bridge the gap between the My Main Street funding and the total cost of \$60,000 will be covered through the Economic Development Operating Budget.

Consultations:


Director, Corporate Services

Senior Accountant

Area Chambers of Commerce

Attachments:

Appendix A – 2022 Summer Tourism Experience Program Outline


2022 Service
Enhancements_Char

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Department Head: Richard Holy, Director of Development Services