



## Staff Report

**Report Title: August 2020 Project Update – Business and Economic Officer**

**Prepared By: Nicole Griffin**

**Department: CAO Department**

**Date: Aug. 31, 2020**

**Report Number: BED-2020-09-25**

**File Number:**

**Attachments:**

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**Recommendation:**

That the Township of Huron-Kinloss Council hereby receives for information Report Number BED-2020-09-25 prepared by Nicole Griffin, Business and Economic Officer.

**Background:**

August 2020 Project Update

**Discussion:**

**Economic Development**

August was definitely a month of transition for businesses as Stage 3 of re-opening was really hitting its stride. There still seems to be a bit of an overwhelming feeling associated with all of the new protocols in place, but in general the new practices (mask wearing, sanitizing stations) have been integrated well and are being respected by patrons.

The Lucknow Chamber of Commerce executive met in-person for their first time since the beginning of the pandemic and is reporting that they are considering a marketing program to help give support to their members.

The Ripley Business Community has their first in-person meeting scheduled for September 1st at FIG Studio Kitchen, which will be attended by myself, Taralyn who is returning from her maternity leave, and Lauren who will introduce the committee to The Hub and it's functions.

The weekly Regional Working Group meeting has ceased and will return to its regular scheduling shortly after the Economic Task Force was struck.

The continued promotion of any supports that may assist our local businesses in both weathering the COVID storm and/or being prepared for any future incidents continues to be a priority. Currently at the top of those recommendations is:

- Digital Main Street, Digital Transformation Program – 2.5 hours of online, self-paced education that encourages a business to improve their digital footprint. Completion of this learning makes a business eligible for up to \$2,500 of granting. Businesses must be in C.I.P. (Community improvement Plan) Area, or zoned C1 or C2 to be eligible for funding.
- Digital Main Street, ShopHERE – partners a business with a dedicated consultant to assist with the set-up and launching of online retail store via Shopify. Shopify offers a three month free trial to businesses as well. This program is open to any business – home based, artist, or traditional brick and mortar.
- Digital Main Street, Future Proof – for those businesses wanting to transform their business model or looking to develop/implement a digital transformation plan that's more robust. This is a 6 week program with a significant daily time commitment required by the applicant.
- Many of the Business to Bruce funding programs are fully allocated and are now closed, and several of our businesses were the fortunate recipients.

Last, but not least, Taralyn's return to our team from her maternity leave on August 31st was a wonderful conclusion to the month. We've been actively transitioning projects and bringing her up to speed so that the positive work of the Business and Economic Officer can continue.

### **Explore H-K, Social Media and Communications**

The end of August brought with it the conclusion of the "31 Days" component of our Explore H-K Program. Both businesses and participants alike enthusiastically received the program, and I've already been hearing requests to make a recommendation to repeat the program in the future.

Statistical evidence of the program's success from Facebook analytics for Do Business in Huron-Kinloss:

- Page Followers as of June 27th when main advertising push began: 88
- Page Followers as of August 31st: 1,630
- Average reach of each post: 10,688
- Peak reach over a 28 day period: 128,863
- Most popular post of the campaign:  
August 22nd Featuring Holyrood General Store  
with 91.5k reach and 9.3k post clicks

This increase in followers for the Do Business in Huron-Kinloss Facebook page will be a great asset come September when Lauren begins to integrate The Hub's communications into the schedule, giving them a significant audience to market the new incubator and its programs.

The Huron-Kinloss Facebook page continues to transition to “traditional” content and away from pandemic-related posts. There is a planned push after Labour Day for the Snapshot Photography Contest to increase participation, as well as components encouraging individuals to continue checking items off of their personal 100 Ways to Explore H-K list.

**Spruce the Bruce Program**

The weekly Spruce the Bruce meetings were ended and a meeting for early September has been called to review the status of the program in each participating community.

There were a dozen applications made in Huron-Kinloss to the Spruce the Bruce program this year, with the majority taking advantage of the Façade Improvement program.

**Financial Impacts:**

None at this time.

**Strategic Alignment / Link:**

The information provided in this report is consistent with and in keeping with the Municipality’s Vision and Mission. The recommendations contribute to our goals in achieving a prosperous community, a vibrant community, and a spirited community.

**Respectfully Submitted By:**

Nicole Griffin, Business and Economic Officer

**Approved By:**

Mary Rose Walden, Chief Administrative Officer