



## The Corporation of the Township of Huron-Kinloss

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### Staff Report

**Report Title: 2025 First Quarter Economic Development and Tourism Report**

**Date: May. 5, 2025**

**Report Number: BED-2025-03**

**Department: CAO**

**File Number: C11 BED 25**

**Prepared By: Amy Irwin**

**Attachments: None**

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#### **Recommendation:**

THAT the Township of Huron-Kinloss Committee of the Whole hereby receives for information Report BED-2025-03, as prepared by Amy Irwin, Economic Development Officer

#### **Background:**

To provide a quarterly report on Economic Development and Tourism.

#### **Discussion/Analysis/Overview:**

##### **Economic Development**

Staff attended the Economic Developers Council of Ontario's conference in February and the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association conference in April.

Staff partnered with the Lucknow and District Chamber of Commerce and Bruce County Economic Development team to present a "Let's Talk Tariffs" presentation on April 7 in Lucknow. Approximately 18 people were in attendance.

One business – the Ripley Pharmacy was recognized through our Business Recognition program for the addition of a Nurse Practitioner in February, with two more business recognitions planned in May.

Spruce the Bruce launched their funding program on February 1 and was fully subscribed by the end of March. Seven Huron-Kinloss businesses had successful applications, mutually supported by our Downtown Improvement program. A full list of successful applicants will be available after the grant requirements have been fulfilled.

Ripley Revitalization efforts continue with discussions with local businesses and presentations of partnership opportunities to continue to enhance the downtown. The RED grant funding period has been extended to March 2026.

The Ripley Business Community Executive has decided to cease operations. The Ripley Business Community consists of local business owners and volunteers. Over the past years, they have applied for grants and contributed membership fees towards the new mural, seasonal lighting in the park, streetscape lighting, banners,

main street flowers and other projects. This volunteer group is also responsible for Santa Skates and Christmas Celebrations, Easter in the Park, Spring social, Ripley town-wide yard sale and more.

Local events will still take place with new community partnerships in place and the Township's commitment to Ripley and area businesses will continue.

The annual 2025 Huron-Kinloss Discovery Guide has been printed and will be made available to all residents and to local tourist information centres.

The Ripley Food Art and Craft Festival is set for Saturday, August 16 at the Ripley-Huron Community Centre. Vendor space is approximately 70% sold out. Ongoing promotion of the event will occur throughout the summer.

## **Tourism**

Building off the Secrets of the Back Forty tourism initiative, staff is preparing to launch another component to the initiative, "Back Forty Bites – Discover the Best Kept Flavours". This will be an eat local campaign, targeting both residents and visitors to encourage them to discover our hidden food gems, incorporating restaurants and local food producers. It will be a phased in, multi-year initiative, heavily focused on story telling and personal connections. This year will be seasonal with a website page launching in late June and ongoing promotion until October. We will be promoting it through social media, posters, tent cards, postcards and window clings.

We have received a Spruce the Bruce Collaborative marketing grant of matched funding up to \$2500 and with a further conditional approval grant to be finalized, for social media advertising.

The Back Forty Bazaars will not be running this year, as resources will be focused on Back Forty Bites and other initiatives. The Back Forty Bazaar proved to be effective in gauging public interest in regular events and connections with small businesses. It also presented an opportunity for private businesses to hold similar events in the area, freeing up staff time but providing a similar benefit to the community.

## **Financial Impacts:**

All projects included in this report are included in the 2025 Economic Development budget.

## **Performance Measurement:**

Increase in businesses opening in the Township.

Downtown Revitalization efforts in Ripley realized through completion of action items, funded by RED grant.

Increase in visitors to our communities as measured by tourism initiatives.

Increase in awareness of programs, services, business and tourism through annual publication and distribution of the Discovery Guide.

Number of applications received for Downtown Improvement grant program.

**Strategic Area:**

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|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Embrace a thriving rural lifestyle | <input type="checkbox"/> Enhance Municipal Service Delivery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare for Inclusive Growth                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure Financial Stability         |

**Strategic Goal: Encourage economic vitality****Respectfully Submitted By:**

Amy Irwin, Economic Development Officer

**Report Approved By:**

Jodi MacArthur, Chief Administrative Officer