



## The Corporation of the Township of Huron-Kinloss

---

### Staff Report

**Report Title: 2026 First Quarter Economic Development and Tourism Report**

**Date: Apr. 8, 2026**

**Report Number: BED-2026-02**

**Department: CAO**

**File Number: C11 BED 26**

**Prepared By: Amy Irwin, Economic Development Officer**

**Attachments: None**

---

#### **Recommendation:**

THAT the Township of Huron-Kinloss Committee of the Whole hereby receives for information Report BED-2026-02, as prepared by Amy Irwin, Economic Development Officer.

#### **Background:**

To provide a quarterly report on Economic Development and Tourism.

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

Staff attended the Economic Developers Council of Ontario's conference in February and will be attending the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association conference in April. These conferences provide valuable opportunities to connect with industry peers and professionals, take advantage of full-day learning opportunities on a variety of topics, gather new ideas and share best practices.

The Township partnered with the County of Bruce to host a Job and Career Fair in Lucknow on March 12. 34 businesses were represented at the event and over 150 people attended.

Two businesses were recognized through our Business Recognition Program, the Lucknow Chiropractic and Wellness Centre in honour of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and The Original Wing House, Lucknow in honour of their grand opening.

Spruce the Bruce launched their funding program on February 1 and was fully subscribed by the end of February. One Huron-Kinloss business was successful with 2 different applications, mutually supported by our Downtown Improvement program. In addition, 3 applications were received for our Downtown Improvement program, and more information will be available on these applications after the grant requirements have been fulfilled.

The annual Huron-Kinloss Discovery Guide is being printed and will be made available to all residents and to local tourist information centres in May. 41 local businesses purchased advertising in this year's Guide.

International Women's Day was recognized on our "Discover Huron-Kinloss" Facebook and Instagram accounts with a business recognition campaign of local

women business owners. 12 women applied to be recognized with a dedicated social media post, and the campaign received 101,357 views over 11 days, which brought positive awareness to female entrepreneurs and their businesses in Huron-Kinloss. Staff are collaborating with the County of Bruce to administer a Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) survey. A BR+E helps support local businesses and collects business and market data to support economic development planning. Rollout of the BR+E is expected to commence in May and run until September. County support is provided with the creation and analysis of the survey, while Huron-Kinloss staff will market and administer the survey.

### **Tourism**

The Ripley Food Art and Craft Festival is set for Saturday, August 15 at the Ripley-Huron Community Centre. This event will be rebranded over the next few years to the Back Forty Bazaar, which will more closely align with the Township's overall tourism strategy and brand. Vendor space is approximately 50% booked. Ongoing promotion of the event will occur throughout the summer.

Promotion of Secrets of the Back Forty and Back Forty Bites will continue this summer.

Huron-Kinloss will have a booth space within the Bruce County exhibit at the International Plowing Match & Rural Expo being held in September. Planning has commenced for this opportunity to promote Huron-Kinloss' assets to thousands of visitors at the 5-day event, hosted outside of Walkerton.

### **Financial Impacts:**

All projects included in this report are included in the 2026 Economic Development budget.

### **Performance Measurement:**

Increase in businesses satisfaction, retention and expansion in the Township.

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

Number of applications received for Downtown Improvement grant program.

### **Strategic Area:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Embrace a thriving rural lifestyle | <input type="checkbox"/> Enhance Municipal Service Delivery |
| <input checked="" 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