



City of
Peterborough

To: **Members of the General Committee**

From: **Richard Freymond, Commissioner, Finance & Corporate Support Services**
Sheldon Laidman, Commissioner, Community Services

Meeting Date: **October 20, 2025**

Report: **Peterborough Tourism Implementation Update, Report FCSSCSP25-005**

Subject

A report to provide an update on the implementation of Peterborough Tourism activities to promote the City of Peterborough as a tourism destination.

Recommendations

That Council approve the recommendations outlined in Report FCSSCSP25-005, dated October 20, 2025 of the Commissioner, Finance and Corporate Support Services and the Commissioner, Community Services as follows:

- a) That Report FCSSCSP25-005 be received for information; and
- b) That the Tourism Event Support Request Evaluation Criteria for assessing and prioritizing requests for tourism-related event support, attached as Appendix A, be endorsed.

Executive Summary

- The City of Peterborough engaged a third-party organization for the delivery of tourism services until January 1, 2025, when it transitioned to directly deliver those services on behalf of the city.

- The City has activated tourism services through destination marketing, sports tourism, cultural tourism, and visitor experience initiatives while at the same time beginning the development of the City's first City-specific Tourism Strategy that, once approved by City Council, will shape the future direction of tourism objectives and strategies.
- To ensure consistent and transparent assessment of support requests for tourism-related events, criteria will be established and provided to proponents when submitting requests, such as through the City's existing Special Events Application process.

Background

On June 24, 2024, City Council provided direction through Report CAO24-003 related to the implementation of a transition plan for the City to provide economic development and tourism related services effective January 1, 2025. The full budget for providing economic development and tourism services was available following the approval of the City's 2025 Budget on February 3, 2025, when funding previously provided to Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corporation was then available for the City to use for directly providing economic development and tourism services.

Peterborough Tourism programming by the City of Peterborough is led by staff from the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Services Division and the Strategic Communications and Service Peterborough Division. Tourism services are funded through Municipal Accommodation Tax revenue, as well as leveraging other divisional resources as needed. By integrating tourism services with the City's Recreation, Parks and Cultural Services Division and Communications, tourism activities benefit from existing event, recreation, cultural services, and communications resources.

Tourism Strategy

On February 3, 2025, through Report CSAC24-007, Council established a Capital Budget project for the development of the City's first City-specific Tourism Strategy. The contract for the development of the Tourism Strategy was awarded to Bannikin Travel & Tourism Ltd. in June 2025 through an open, competitive bidding process. A kick-off meeting for the project was held with the consultant and the project team in July 2025. An extensive engagement process started in October, following the busy summer tourism season, to connect with tourism-sector businesses and organizations as well as the broader community in the development of the Tourism Strategy. A recommended Tourism Strategy is anticipated to be presented to Council in Spring 2026.

While the Tourism Strategy will help shape the direction of tourism services moving forward, the City has immediately implemented various initiatives to begin delivering tourism services.

Promotion and Visitor Centre Operations – 2025

Staff have approached the current operations of the visitor information centre in a variety of channels to both support residents and visitors in accessing information about our community while assessing the effectiveness of each of the approaches.

The primary Visitor Centre is located at 151 Lansdowne Street at the Peterborough Memorial Centre, this location established an in-person access point while leveraging existing staff within the operations of the box office. At this location visitors can contact the centre directly via phone at 705-743-3561 or via email at hello@peterborough.ca. Visitors have access to destination guides, maps, brochures, and event information highlighting things to see and do in Peterborough and surrounding areas.

Digital access is through the new Tourism Website at www.ptbotourism.ca. This website provides comprehensive details about attractions, recreation and cultural services available in Peterborough. The website highlights upcoming events, key attractions, and various tourism business information such as places to stay, eat, and drink.

In addition to the physical location and digital platform, the city provides visitors access to tourism information at Recreation, Parks and Cultural Services facilities, with staff that provide supporting visitor information, contact information for various locations, access to the digital platforms, as well as a number of guides and maps.

Through the event enhancement process staff have leveraged information booths at key events throughout the year, including Lock & Paddle. This provided staff the opportunity to directly engage with residents and visitors to assess common questions and approaches that the community would like to see developed.

Since the soft launch of the Visitor Information Centre there has been a steady growth in access to the information. The usage statistics on how information was accessed is as follows;

- 20% of information was provided in-person
- 53% of information was provided via phone
- 27% of information was provided via email
- Requests from individuals included information packages be mailed, as well as cross promotional opportunities occurred while residents were purchasing tickets for events and/or registration for various programs
- Visitors have come from across the province, with some more notable visitors coming from as far as England, Scotland, and Germany.

The Tourism Strategy will assist in forming our next steps towards visitor centre operations, with current focus placed on accessibility of information, continued presence

at key events, and further development of regional partnerships to expand destination marketing opportunities.

Tourism-related festivals, concerts and sporting events

Peterborough Tourism has supported a wide range of concerts, festivals, and sporting events while strengthening partnerships and preparing for a significant 2026 season. The focus has been on enhancing visitor experience, generating community and economic benefits, and positioning Peterborough as a host city of choice.

Enhancement activities include various types of support, such as logistics, funding, volunteer engagement, marketing and communications. This can include coordinating venues, supporting equipment needs, developing strategies to recruit volunteers, guiding groups through grant opportunities, support promotions on social media, providing on-site staff support, visitor engagement, and vendor management. Examples of these types of deployments include Women's Lacrosse Series, MusicFest, Ontario Baseball Association, CANCAST Fishing Show, the Intercollegiate Provincial Championships and Adult Flag Circuit, and the Park Canada Lock and Paddle event.

For new tourism-related events, the City has provided a range of support, from leading bids to be a host community for significant tournaments to providing in-kind support through the use of facilities. This is a new proactive and strategic approach to pursuing new events that align with Peterborough's sport, culture and entertainment strengths.

The City's Peterborough Tourism staff actively identify, develop and submit bids for the community to host events that align with priorities to attract visitors, generate economic impact, and strengthen community partnerships.

Examples of events that have been either supported or directly coordinated include:

- Major concerts and performances – Harlem Globetrotters, Bachman-Turner Overdrive, Beach Boys, Sarah McLachlan, The Tea Party, Murmuration: *Le Patin Libre*, Bryan Adams
- Festivals and community events – Kawartha Craft Beer Festival, Tacos and Beer Festival, Canada Day, Sledarama, Ribfest, Peterborough Folk Festival, Peterborough Musicfest, Snofest, Lock and Paddle event at the Peterborough Lift Lock
- Sporting Events – CANCAST Fishing and Tackle Show, Ontario Ball Hockey Association tournament, Lock & Paddle, Women's Major Series Lacrosse tournament, Intercollegiate Flag Provincial Championship and Adult Flag Circuit Championship, Ontario Baseball Association 8-AAA championship, along with planning for Hockey Canada's 2026 TELUS Cup national U18 hockey club championship
- Institutional Events – Fleming College and local high school graduations

- Ongoing Games – Regular support for Peterborough Petes and Lakers home games.

The Women's Major Series Lacrosse Championship that was held from August 15-17, 2025 was an example of an event that the City played a role in, including supporting the bid submission to be the host community and providing staffing support for preparing facilities and for support during the event. The three-day event brought 200 teams plus coaches, staff, family members, and guests for an estimated total number of attendees of 400. Eight of the 10 teams were from more than two hours away from Peterborough. Through attracting a multi-day event, the tourism activity supports accommodation stays and spending at local businesses, such as restaurants and other services for visitors.

2026 tourism event planning examples:

- 55+ Women's Ontario Senior Games Association
- Jiu-Jitsu World Championships
- Home Hardware National Event
- Sledarama
- CANCAST Fishing and Tackle Show
- Rock Orchestra
- Hockey Canada's 2026 TELUS Cup national U18 hockey club championship

Holistic Approach to Tourism and Tourism-centric Programs

As new entertainment and tourism hosting opportunities are explored, staff have taken a holistic approach to community-based programs designed to enhance the interest in various sport and cultural programs. As an example, through the bid process of Telus Cup, staff expanded the offerings of hockey skill clinics and beginner skate programs to increase opportunities to access the sport. These clinics offered through partnerships with local minor hockey associations help build sustainable registration for local association as well as build interest in the sport overall to ensure greater interest in tourism hosting opportunity. Similar approaches are currently underway for Learn to Curl, Lacrosse, Rugby, and more all with similar approaches to partnerships and expanded offerings.

Tourism event support criteria

The City has experienced exciting, early progress with its ability to bid on hosting events that generate economic activity and supporting externally organized events that enhance tourism. With strong interest in growing tourism in the City, there is a need to provide a clear, consistent framework for assessing event support requests. Tourism event organizers may request City support in the form of marketing, in-kind services,

and/or funding. The criteria in Appendix A, Report FCSSCSP25-005 will help ensure that support is directed to events that contribute to tourism, economic, cultural, and community objectives.

Event organizers will submit requests through the City's existing Special Events Application process, a Sport Facility Request Form, or a dedicated tourism support form that will include questions related to the evaluation criteria if they are seeking tourism-related support for their event.

Evaluation criteria will include:

- **Tourism impact:** Projected overnight stays, visitors from outside the region, and economic activity generated.
- **Economic contribution:** Estimated visitor spending, vendor/local business participation, and overall economic benefit.
- **Brand alignment:** Potential to enhance Peterborough's tourism profile, media coverage, and audience reach.
- **Event viability and sustainability:** Event track record, organizer experience, and potential for growth or adaptation.
- **Community and cultural benefits:** Engagement of local businesses, alignment with community and cultural priorities.
- **Strategic fit:** Alignment with the City's Tourism Strategy (pending approval of the Strategy by Council, which is anticipated in spring 2026) and broader municipal objectives.

The Tourism Strategy, when approved by Council, will be used to inform the evaluation of requests based on the criteria listed above, such as alignment with tourism priorities identified through the strategy when evaluating tourism impact.

Examples of event support that may be offered depending on the evaluation include: Direct funding, marketing, in-kind services, promotional support, event calendar listings, visitor information, provision of maps/visitor guides, volunteer recruitment support.

Destination marketing

The City's tourism website went live at PtboTourism.ca in early January 2025 to coincide with the transition to directly operated tourism services. The website features a listing of tourism-sector businesses and promotes events through a convenient, engaging format for visitors.

The City is building a library of professional images and videography for use in destination marketing, featuring the City's visitor experiences, scenic locations,

restaurants, the downtown, and tourism attractions to use in destination marketing materials.

A new destination guide has been designed and published to promote visitor experiences and attractions in the city – with copies of the booklet distributed to hotels, City facilities, and other locations throughout the city. A visitor map has been designed and published in collaboration with Peterborough County, promoting the city on one side of the publication and the county on the other side.

Peterborough's strong tourism and cultural sectors have been recognized in 2025, creating leverageable media opportunities for the city as a destination. The new Canadian Canoe Museum was featured in TIME Magazine's "The World's Greatest Places of 2025" and Trent-Severn Waterway was celebrated as one of "52 Places to Go in 2025" by New York Times.

Examples of destination marketing initiatives include:

- CP24 Breakfast Live broadcast, June 2025 – Hosted in partnership with Destination Ontario, the show featured four live cut-ins for National Canoe Day that highlighted downtown dining, Peterborough Musicfest, the Canadian Canoe Museum, and the Lock & Paddle event at the Lift Lock. CP24 reaches over 1.2 million viewers weekly.
- National Post sponsored content, May 2025 – "Paddle, Play & Stay in Peterborough" content coordinated by Peterborough Tourism that positioned the city as a family-friendly summer destination, featuring the Canadian Canoe Museum, Musicfest, the Riverview Park & Zoo, and local dining.
- Toronto Star Travel Guide, August 2025 – A feature on Peterborough as a summer getaway showcased the Canoe Museum, Trent-Severn Waterway, Musicfest, and local culinary and cultural highlights. This was featured online and in the Saturday print edition of the Toronto Star, with reach that provided significant visibility and earned media value. This was not sponsored content.
- I've Been Bit Travel Blog, August 2025 – Travel writer Lindsay Davies updated an itinerary to include Peterborough Musicfest and Canoe Museum as key summer experiences. I've Been Bit Travel Blog drives more than 19,000 unique monthly visitors who are interested in travel, community, and sustainability.
- Water Ways TV, August, and October 2025 – Brought Water Ways TV to the city for filming through a visit in the summer and a visit in the fall to capture Peterborough's waterfront experience in the two seasons. Water Ways TV has a broadcast reach of more than 250,000 per episode and a strong digital presence. The engagement will result in video, articles, and social media profile that represents an estimated \$40,000 in media value.

- Narcity sponsored content, fall 2025 – Feature articles and social media posts spotlight fall cultural exploration and holiday shopping through two campaigns in September and November, each estimated to deliver over 100,000 impressions.
- Modern Traveller/Roadtripper.ca, September 2025 – Featuring Peterborough a road trip destination with articles, video, social media, and photography highlighting the downtown, cultural events, and local attractions.
- Attractions Ontario collaboration, October 2025 – Family travel content creator Yashy Murphy will document a fall getaway, promoting Peterborough as a must-visit destination for family fun in collaboration with Northumberland County.
- Music Weekend Getaway Contest in collaboration with Attractions Ontario – Peterborough Tourism ran a successful Music Weekend Getaway contest in August that allowed the contest winner to win a weekend getaway with a downtown gift certificate, overnight accommodation at a local hotel, and experiences at both Peterborough Musicfest and Peterborough Folk Festival. The promotion through Attractions Ontario coincided with a significant uptick in visits on Peterborough Tourism social media and website.

Through the various marketing activities, Peterborough Tourism has leveraged collaborations with Destination Ontario, the Culinary Tourism Alliance, and Attractions Ontario. As a result of proactive engagement with Destination Ontario by the City's Peterborough Tourism staff, Destination Ontario undertook a photo and video shoot in the city to create content for its promotion of the province as a place to visit – for in-market Ontario promotion, interprovincial promotion, and international marketing.

Strategic Plan

Strategic Pillar: Growth & Economic Development

Strategic Priority: Position the City as Destination of Choice for claiming its fair share of innovative business and people in Ontario.

Tourism is a key sector of strength for Peterborough's economy. Tourism services enhance the City's position as a sought-after destination for visitors. In addition to supporting an increase in the number of visitors, overnight stays, and overall visitor spend, tourism activities can enhance quality of life, talent attraction, and the retention, expansion, and attraction of businesses through general community benefit derived from tourism attractions and events.

Engagement and Consultation

The development of the Tourism Strategy, which will inform the delivery of tourism services, includes a comprehensive engagement strategy with opportunities for

participation by tourism-sector businesses and organizations, community groups, and residents through a survey, community café sessions, focus groups, and key participant interviews.

Through the interim direction for tourism services, the City has engaged with tourism-sector businesses including hotels, with tourism organizations, and with various community groups that organize festivals, events, and tournaments.

Budget and Financial Implications

There are no direct budget or financial implications associated with the recommendations.

Tourism services are delivered through approved budgets in the Strategic Communications and Service Peterborough Division and the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Services Division utilizing Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) revenue.

With Council's approval of Report CLSFS19-016 dated April 25, 2019, Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) of 4% on the purchase price of transient accommodation was adopted. By-law 19-063 establishing MAT came into effect within the City of Peterborough on October 1, 2019. For 2025, it is estimated that the City will receive \$850,000 in MAT revenue.

Conclusion

The City has quickly established tourism services with the shift to direct delivery of tourism services effective January 1, 2025, putting in place destination marketing, visitor services, and event support as well as collaborating with community groups on attracting events and tournaments to the City. The City is currently developing a Tourism Strategy that will help guide tourism services moving forward. The event support evaluation criteria will provide a clear, consistent framework for assessing event support requests.

Attachments

Appendix A: Tourism Event Support Evaluation Criteria

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