

Subject: Proposed Joint Tourism Initiative

Recommendation:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report #2024-0197 Proposed Joint Tourism Initiative, for information;

AND THAT Council approve a 2 year commitment to the Niagara South Coast Tourism Association ("NSCTA") Fund as a "Class B Member", commencing January, 2025, including an annual contribution to the NSCTA in the amount of \$12,000;

AND FURTHER THAT Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to take any necessary steps to appoint staff to the Steering Group and make administrative-level commitments and contributions to the undertaking, as determined necessary by the CAO, and to report back with progress updates by Q3 of 2025.

Background:

For approximately one year, the Chief Administrative Officers of the City of Port Colborne, the Town of Fort Erie, the City of Welland, the Township of Wainfleet and the Town of Pelham have been working towards a rejuvenation of Niagara's Southcoast Tourism Association and its supporting fund. The motivation for this initiative is the creation of a fund to be used to directly promote businesses and attractions in the member municipalities, in hopes of fostering greater economic prosperity in these communities.

This report is written to endorse the Town of Pelham joining the NSCTA, as a "Class B Member", on a two-year trial basis. In return for a proposed \$12,000 annual financial contribution by the municipality, Pelham businesses would receive promotional support and be included in promotional campaigns and materials that will be marketed in Ontario and beyond. This proposal does not contemplate or require any increase in staffing for the Town of Pelham.

Analysis:

While Pelham has historically been a mix of predominantly agricultural and residential properties, with relatively little commercial and industrial activity, the Town currently boasts a number of prominent businesses which have appeal to tourists, including (in no particular order) several high-quality restaurants, a winery, a brewery, pick-your-own farm operations, maple syrup products and experiences, camping, family recreation businesses and seasonal tulip farms.

The City of Port Colborne has assumed the leadership position in this initiative because of the importance of tourism development in that municipality's strategic plan. Port Colborne already spends \$100,000 on tourism and promotion in addition to having created a tourism strategy, an NSCTA marketing plan, a work plan and hired a dedicated staff member. Port Colborne would continue to provide leadership on this file and would provide the only dedicated staff member required. As a result of its higher level of investment, Port Colborne would be the NSCTA's only "Class A" member of the Association.

In the short term, a steering committee would be created to guide specific NSCTA policy, operational and budget decisions. Eventually the steering committee would give way to seats on a formal board, which might be populated by either staff, elected officials or possibly industry representatives (presently unclear). Pelham would have two, possibly three seats on the steering committee. At time of writing the staff members involved would be the CAO, the Town Solicitor and the Director of Community Planning and Building, with a goal of reducing the Town's direct staff commitment over time.

One point of future investigation will be the ideal legal structure and status of the NSCTA, with at least some interest in exploring the concept of a municipal services corporation. It is for this reason the shared Town Solicitor is recommended to be involved in the steering committee.

Financial Considerations:

The Town is being asked to commit \$12,000 per year, for a two year period. Towards the end of the two year period, there should be a body of data and work product which can be reviewed, analyzed and commented upon prior to any decision to renew or withdraw is made.

Beyond the \$12,000 annual contribution, the Town will incur some nominal mileage costs to attend meetings in Port Colborne and the imputed value of staff time.

The City of Port Colborne has offered to match any financial contribution to the NSCTA Fund made by the municipal partners (including the Town of Pelham), which will thereby effectively double the amount contributed to the fund.

Alternatives Reviewed:

There is no obligation for the Town to participate in the South Coast Tourism Alliance; accordingly non-participation is a viable alternative.

Strategic Plan Relationship: Community Development and Growth

This initiative has the chance to support economic development, support community vitality and increase Pelham's profile. By working with other municipalities, Pelham can attain a greater impact and level of professional tourism support services than it otherwise could working on its own.

Consultation:

This project was worked on in conjunction with the Chief Administrative Officers of three other municipalities and the Tourism Coordinator for the City of Port Colborne.

Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:

City of Port Colborne NSCTA Workplan

Prepared and Submitted by:

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