



**The Corporation of the City of Cornwall**  
**Regular Meeting of Council**  
**Report**

Department: Planning, Development and Recreation  
Division: Economic Development  
Report Number: 2020-361-Planning, Development and Recreation  
Prepared By: Bob Peters, Division Manager  
Meeting Date: October 13, 2020  
Subject: Economic Development – Quarterly Report

**Purpose**

To provide Council with an update on the activities of the Economic Development Department for the third quarter of 2020.

**Recommendation**

That Council receive Report 2020-361-Planning, Development and Recreation.

**Strategic Priority Implications**

Economic development activities support the City of Cornwall Strategic Plan and help to establish Cornwall as the progressive sustainable choice along the St. Lawrence River in Eastern Ontario.

The activities outlined in this report follow recommendations in the Cornwall Economic Development Strategic Plan, which was adopted in 2016.

**Background / Discussion**

Cornwall's economy continues to adapt to impacts from public safety measures that seek to contain the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. By July most business sectors had recovered a range of operations and were able to meet customer needs. Over the summer months and into the early fall, these efforts to



pivot to new business models continued, and now the community faces a second wave which could possibly result in new restrictions.

The business community has been supported with a number of programs from various levels of government, including Cornwall's Small Business Emergency Support Loan program. While this support has helped minimize negative outcomes, the overall economy remains impacted as consumer spending and commercial activity has not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Department staff continue to collaborate with other City staff, regional EDOs, provincial and federal officials as well as local community organizations to respond to the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic.

### **Major Development and Employers**

For the most part, Cornwall's largest employers have continued operations with minimal disruptions. Industrial vacancy rates in Cornwall continue to be very low, with available built space being very hard to find.

Walmart Logistics continues to increase its workforce to manage its supply chain activities and bring much needed consumer and grocery goods to Canadians.

The major expansion of the Loblaw / Shoppers Drug Mart Distribution Centre on Optimum Drive is nearing completion. The operator of the new space, Witron, has begun to recruit.





Leclerc Group is completing the installation of a second production line at its new food processing facility in the Cornwall Business Park.

SigmaPoint is maintaining high production levels and is currently recruiting. New business includes work on a major project to provide Canadian hospitals with ventilators.

Other employers that are reinvesting in local operations include Olymel, Laminacorr, Evotech and Marimac.

Interest in the Cornwall Business Park remains healthy, and new development is expected in the short to mid term.

OPG continues to invest in rehabilitation and revitalization projects at the R.H. Saunders Generating Station, although the Visitor Centre is expected to remain closed until 2021.

St. Lawrence College (SLC) has transitioned to alternative delivery methods to ensure its students were able to complete their semesters. SLC is currently offering a hybrid of on-campus and remote learning experiences with on-campus student populations at approximately 25% of traditional levels. SLC recently received a grant of \$774,000 to help provide training and education programs to assist local employers.

### **Commercial Retail and Office**

The retail mix in many communities, including Cornwall, continues to be challenged as national retailers shrink their physical store network. This trend was noticed before the pandemic and has been since exasperated by a shift in consumer spending to online platforms. Commercial landlords will be tasked over the next two years to attract tenants and repurpose existing buildings.

Despite this trend, there are positive investments in this sector.

Work on a number of new retail buildings continues, including a new building for TD Canada Trust on the corner of Pitt and Ninth, as well as 11,000 sf to accommodate two new retailers at the SmartCentres plaza. The new 25,000 sf store for Winners is ready for occupancy, however the retailer may delay a move until the New Year.

Cornwall Mitsubishi has opened its dealership on Brookdale Avenue. Cornwall Nissan has expanded used car offerings to their adjacent building.





## **Sector Specific Marketing Efforts**

The Department markets to specific key sectors that align with the community's strengths such as logistics, food processing, and advanced manufacturing.

The Department participates in collaborative efforts from the Ontario East Economic Development Commission and most recently that includes the engagement of a site selection firm that has been tasked with developing foreign investment leads that are interested in Eastern Ontario for future projects.

The Department continues to work in partnership with regional, provincial, and federal officials to facilitate trade and attract foreign investment.

## **Resident Attraction**

Work continues to attract new residents to Cornwall. Efforts are targeted to attract young families and individuals that will augment the local workforce and meet the needs of local employers.

Intake for the Regional Immigration Pilot of the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program finally opened in July. The Pilot offers a unique pathway for skilled workers who have job offers from local employers to become permanent residents. Interest from potential candidates remains high.

The Eastern Ontario Training Board (EOTB) has leveraged a \$1.15 million grant to open the Newcomer Employment Welcome Services program. The new centre, located at 55 Water Street, will support local efforts to attract, employ, integrate, settle and retain immigrants in the Cornwall region.

The Department is supporting the Employability Network in transitioning the Cornwall Job Fair to an online platform. As many as 20 local employers will be featured in individual videos that will showcase their workplace and career opportunities. These videos will be available on the Choose Cornwall YouTube channel. The Employability Network is a program of the Social Development Council of Cornwall & Area.

The Department is looking to participate in a number of university/college career fairs in an effort to reach graduating students at a time when they are planning their careers. These career fairs have temporarily transitioned to online platforms.



Cornwall is supporting the second edition of STUFF magazine which will connect students and job seekers with career opportunities in Eastern Ontario. A number of Cornwall firms will also be profiled in the magazine, which will have both print and digital distribution.

One of the impacts of the pandemic has been an increase in people who now work remotely from home. This creates an opportunity to attract young professionals who may wish to relocate to Cornwall. Content supporting this sector has been added to the ChooseCornwall.ca website and recent ads have been taken out to support this opportunity. The Remote Work Task Force held a preliminary meeting early in the Fall.

The availability and affordability of housing has an impact on resident attraction efforts. Housing sale prices in Cornwall have risen significantly over the past several months. Reports have been received that suggest housing options, including rental apartments, are expected to remain relatively scarce over the short term.

Construction of a major expansion of Riverdale Terrace is now complete. The new 3-storey addition houses 37 residential units to add to the 92 units in the primary building. Additional housing developments to service local seniors are on the horizon as well.

The Department assists local companies in their recruitment efforts by posting job opportunities on the *ChooseCornwall.ca* job board. This section of the site has become very popular, and more and more companies are finding it very helpful in attracting quality candidates.

## **Tourism**

It continues to be an unprecedented year for tourism in Canada and around the world. Leisure travel has been severely impacted by travel restrictions, social distancing and other public health measures aimed at combating the COVID-19 pandemic. Locally, dozens of festivals and events were cancelled and a number of attractions remained closed for some or all of the main tourist season.

Occupancy at local accommodations decreased due to a decline in travellers, leading to lower than expected revenue from the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) for 2020. As of the end of the second quarter, \$163,929.19 in MAT revenue has been collected. This represents a decrease of approximately 45% compared to the first two quarters of 2019.

In light of these challenges, Cornwall Tourism revised its 2020 Marketing Plan to reflect the current reality and to align with projections which suggest a slow recovery to previous tourism activity levels in Canada. Marketing efforts are being undertaken in a multi-staged approach – focusing first on the hyper-local/regional market and gradually extending outwards as appropriate.

Efforts this summer focused primarily on promoting safe, experience-based opportunities (such as cycling and other outdoor adventure experiences) to local and regional audiences while remaining consistent with public health measures and travel restrictions in place. Support for local tourism businesses continues to be a key priority for Tourism staff.

Below are some of the tourism highlights from the past quarter:

### **TIAO Funding**

Cornwall Tourism received \$180,142 in funding from the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) to support economic recovery efforts in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with providing some financial relief to the Cornwall Tourism budget, the funds have also been used to support marketing efforts as the provincial economy reopened.

### **Staycation Guide**

Cornwall Tourism partnered with local MP Eric Duncan and SDG Tourism to send a ‘staycation’ package to every residential address in the riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. For this effort, Cornwall Tourism prepared a bilingual *Staycation Guide* to include in the package, which is also available online. Over 46,000 envelopes were prepared with the help of staff and volunteers at the Cornwall Civic Complex.

### **Tourism Minister Visit**

In July, Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries visited Cornwall as part of the Reopening Ontario Tour. The Minister visited the Cornwall Community Museum and was taken on a tour of Downtown Cornwall by Mayor Bernadette Clement where she





got to speak with local business owners and learn about community projects such as the future arts centre.

### **Visitor Services**

Cornwall Tourism secured a provincial grant to hire a student to assist with visitor services during the summer. The student was a mobile tourism ambassador and travelled mainly by bicycle to provide information to visitors along the Waterfront Trail and other parts of the city. A text service for visitors was introduced and the Tourism Ambassador Business program was launched, with over a dozen local businesses signing up to have tourism information on hand in their spaces.

### **#ExploreCornwallON**

Cornwall Tourism and local start-up FanSaves partnered to launch #ExploreCornwallON, a web and app-based platform that offers savings and discounts at local businesses including attractions, accommodations, restaurants and more. The free app allows users to redeem discounts online or at the point of purchase.

### **Cycling Campaign**

Cornwall Tourism invested significant efforts in cycling, with the development of a new Waterfront Trail map and the SDG Cornwall Adventure Club map (in partnership with SDG Tourism). A Cycle & Stay package was also developed with local accommodations. Digital marketing campaigns were carried out and enhanced through collaborations with social media influencers and key partners like the Waterfront Trail, Regional Tourism Organization 9, Destination Ontario and others. Sponsored content was also placed in the Ottawa Citizen and other Postmedia newspapers in eastern Ontario. The result was a noticeable increase in cycling tourists.

### **Spark Program**

Cornwall Tourism has partnered with the Tourism Development Corporation of Cornwall, SDG Tourism and the Ontario Tourism Innovation Lab to launch the Spark program. The Spark program will match selected applicants from the region with a tourism mentor and provide a \$3,000 grant to help take their new tourism idea to the next level of development. Three finalists will be selected by the end of the year.

## **Tourism Development Fund**

Many local events make use of the Tourism Development Fund, which is supported by revenues from the Municipal Accommodation Tax and is overseen by a separate, stand-alone entity, the Tourism Development Corporation of Cornwall (TDCC). The TDCC recently completed a review of the application process with a view to making it more efficient for applicants and officials alike. In light of COVID-19, the TDCC is continuing to accept applications for the fund and they will be reviewed and conditionally awarded subject to the event or project taking place.

To date this year, a total of \$69,000 in funding has been awarded. There have been 23 applications to the Tourism Development Fund. Nine applications have been granted funding, six have been retracted due to event/project cancellation and one has been approved pending the hosting of the event in 2021. The remaining applications are awaiting review.

Cornwall Tourism continues to add content to its website, CornwallTourism.com, as well as its social media channels on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

## **Cornwall Planning Programs Evaluation Group**

Efforts to engage local property owners in improving their properties continue with the administration of community improvement plans, overseen by the Cornwall Planning Programs Evaluation Group (CPPEG).

CPPEG continues to review applications within the CIP's Policy Areas under three community improvement plans in place: Heart of the City CIP, Brownfields CIP and Renaissance Housing Rehabilitation Program.

Notable projects include:

- 163-167 Pitt St – Renovations to this location have been completed that have seen The Co.Lab relocate to the downtown.



- The trend of reclaiming the brick facades has continued under new ownership, with 100-106 Pitt St and 33 First St E; with the intention to reintroduce residential on the second floors. The mural located on the south wall of 100 Pitt has been returned to Sign-It for restoration.
- 110 Sydney – renovation and relocation of Dr. Paul Mikhail Dentistry office
- Completion of renovations in the downtown at First and Pitt from 101 to 113 Pitt and eastward along First St E; the completed wall along First St E provided a wall accessible to Art Walk in July and August.
- The southeast side of Tenth St E and McConnell (former CN Rail Lands) has been purchased and the new owner has started environmental testing under the Brownfield Program.



## **Cornwall Business Enterprise Centre**

The Cornwall Business Enterprise Centre (CBEC) remains busy connecting with area entrepreneurs to discuss business planning, marketing, and financial forecasting.

## **Webinars**

The Business Enterprise Centre quickly pivoted seminars into webinars in March and have since hosted 20 different webinars. The response has been good with approximately 40 registrations per webinar.

A new series is currently being scheduled that will run through October, November and early December.

## **Summer Company**

Five students operated this summer, providing online sales and in person services. All students were successful and completed the program. One student participated in the popular Downtown pop-up unit program on two different occasions, both times with excellent sales.

## **Starter Company PLUS**

The Spring cohort of this program completed in mid-July by awarding \$38,000 to 11 different entrepreneurs. Successful applicant businesses were quite varied - physiotherapists, photographers, RMT's, home inspectors, construction design, farming and retail sales.



The fall cohort for the Starter Company PLUS program has now accepted 19 applications. Webinars will be held throughout the fall with the next grant panel scheduled for mid-December. At that time an additional \$20,000 will be awarded.

### **Client Consultations**

The Centre has been busy with client consultations by phone and through the Zoom web conferencing platform. A significant number of these consultations are with existing business owners and involve COVID-19 programs and regulations. Staff have kept up to date with government programs and recommendations from the EOHU and have referred clients as required. The Choose Cornwall COVID Business Digest has been an excellent resource for clients.

### **Digital Main Street**

The Business Enterprise Centre is participating with the Digital Main Street Program that seeks to help small businesses in Eastern Ontario increase their use of digital media. Local businesses are being encouraged to take advantage of any of the 3 digital programs being offered.

- **ShopHERE** provides assistance to create a Shopify cart that will be set up on an existing webpage for free by a digital team from Toronto.
- **Future Proof** provides a deeper level of support for the digital side of a business. Teams of five students are assigned to work on the marketing, branding, social media, and other digital aspects that a business either doesn't have the time to do themselves or the experience to build.
- **Digital Transformation Grant** A \$2,500 grant to help upgrade the equipment, bring in specialists, or upgrade the business website to enhance their digital footprint.

### **Medical Recruitment/Scholarship**

The Medical Scholarship program continues to be promoted via ChooseCornwall.ca, the City website, social media, and sector specific career fairs. Two scholarship recipients completed their studies in June 2020, will write their final exams in October (delayed due to COVID-19) and look to begin their family practice in November 2020.

The Adopt a Medical Resident program continues in partnership with the Cornwall Community Hospital. A medical resident has been selected for the 2021 year.



Efforts to facilitate the recruitment of medical professionals to Cornwall continues as well. Three physicians have been recruited to Cornwall since January 2020, and two more are expected before the end of this year pending Medical Recruitment Agreements.

Available jobs in the health care sector are promoted on the [ChooseCornwall.ca](http://ChooseCornwall.ca) Job Board.

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Attachments:	
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This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Mark A. Boileau - Oct 7, 2020 - 3:15 PM**

**Maureen Adams - Oct 7, 2020 - 5:00 PM**