



**Municipality of Port Hope**

56 Queen Street  
Port Hope, ON  
L1A 3Z9

**REPORT TO:** Community Development Committee

**FROM:** Kevin Narraway, Manager, Marketing & Tourism

**SUBJECT:** Visitor Information Centre

**DATE:** December 7, 2021

---

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That a resolution be presented to Council to direct staff to develop and issue a request for proposal (RFP) designed to identify local interest in staffing and managing the Visitor Information Centre.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Visitor Information Centre is a repository of information for residents and tourists who seek to learn more about the Port Hope community and the surrounding area. As part of regular function, Municipal staff are located at this site to answer and respond to economic development inquiries, develop branded tourism marketing materials, answer questions about tourist locations and upcoming events.

A recent Environics Analytics report reveals that the main retail areas in Port Hope attract over 250,000 visitors in the spring, over 300,000 in the summer, 148,000 in the fall and nearly 179,000 in the winter. This results in nearly 14,500 overnight hotel stays in the Municipality.

Provincial tourism data values same-day-visit-tourists spending at \$85 per person. Using the peak summer season of 300,000 visitors the potential value of same day tourism to the community is more than \$25 million. This is an important contribution to the local economy. Environics also notes, that due to demographic trends, Port Hope ranks slightly below the median Provincial household spend and tourism supplements this lower-than-average household spend to help keep local businesses thriving.

Other notable findings of this report identified:

- That residents of Clarington, Oshawa, Whitby, Cobourg, and Kingston are more likely to be retail visitors of Port Hope.
- Residents of Markham are more likely to be retail visitors of Port Hope during the summer months.
- The largest volume of overnight visitors in Port Hope are arriving from Cobourg, Hamilton Township, Toronto, Peterborough, Ottawa, Brampton, Mississauga, Oshawa, Kingston, and Otonabee-South Monaghan.

Staffing the visitor centre has been a challenge for the Municipality with ongoing staff turnover due in part to the part-time nature of the work. Staffing the visitor centre on weekends and weekdays has required two part-time employees to effectively operate this location 43 hours per week.

During the pandemic, the visitor centre has been shuttered with a brief opening during the September 2021 Salmon Migration.

The recent Community Development Service Delivery Review included a recommendation to contract this service to a community partner. Other communities have adopted this model whereby their BIA or Chamber have taken responsibility for management of the visitor centre.

Both Port Hope's HBIA and Chamber have expressed interest in providing these services to the Municipality as this aligns with their own mandates to promote local business and tourism. Administrative requirements for establishing an agreement would be identified later.

Working with a local partner would alleviate the ongoing need to recruit, interview and train staff for the visitor centre. Moving to this model would also allow the Municipality to relocate staff from the current visitor centre to a more centralized office location.

The downtown cleaning contract which is currently administered by the Marketing and Tourism office would be included in the RFP contract and administration of this contract assigned to a successful bid. Funding for the downtown cleaning would continue to be provided by the Municipality.

Through the development of a service agreement, functions such as the development of the visitor guide, management of the tourism website, tourism brand development, social media, advertising, wayfinding sign development, analytics, and reporting would remain a responsibility of the Municipality.

**RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

It is anticipated current budget levels will suffice to cover the cost of contracting these services.

**CONCLUSION:**

Staff will work to define the terms of an RFP, noting targeted hours of operation, seasonal fluctuations, defining metrics, desired objectives and roles and responsibilities of the visitor centre operation.

Respectfully submitted.

Kevin Narraway  
Manager, Marketing & Tourism