



Township of Scugog Staff Report

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Report Number: COMS-2024-010

Prepared by: Lori Bowers, Director Community Services and Communications

Department: Community Services

Report To: Council

Date: June 24, 2024

Reference: Strategic Direction 3: Economic Development & Tourism: Create, attract and retain employment opportunities and promote tourism
SD3 Objective 3: Promote tourism and attract people to Scugog

Report Title: **Scugog Tourism Relief Fund Update**

Recommendations:

1. **THAT** Report COMS-2024-010, Scugog Tourism Relief Fund, be received
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1. Background:

- 1.1. In 2018, Scugog adopted the Scugog Community Tourism Plan seizing the opportunity to work in conjunction with tourism stakeholders and direct operators, under the new Tourism Advisory Committee to deliver key action items. The main objective for Scugog Tourism is to further tourism development and partnerships within the community to increase consumer visitation and spending in the Township of Scugog. There are many organizations that play a critical role in Canada's Tourism Industry. Each of them has varying responsibilities and areas of focus aimed at attracting visitors, and maximizing the economic benefits to communities. The Township as a local government has committed to building tourism back stronger in partnership with local operators and as a key operator for well attended in-person events and experiences, promoting a four season, and inviting lakeside setting. Although the Township of Scugog has a wealth of

successful unique private and public sector tourism experiences that continue to attract consumers and economic spend, Port Perry is considered as a must see/must do destination from a consumer perspective. Due to the pandemic, we experienced a 42 per cent drop in visitors. Operators, partners and with support from upper tiers of government we have worked to build back our visitation.

A key component to gaining back visitors is to create enhancements to existing offerings as well as new opportunities to enjoy and experience Scugog. An area of focus from the Scugog Community Tourism Strategy was to enhance the visitor experiences especially during non-peak time of the year. Township staff applied for and was successful in securing grant funding from the Government of Canada Fed Dev for Southern Ontario stream to aid in delivering on the objectives of the strategy.

A package of projects was approved as part of the application and placed in our Capital Budget listing:

- Pedestrian Zones/Conversation areas
- Portable Tourism Trailer
- Storage Facility
- Pollinator and Indigenous Education Garden
- Skating Oval / Lakefront Skate and Market

As outlined in council report COMS-2023-014 – Scugog Outdoor Skating Rink the Township was approved to amend the original application to provide for an on-land skating rink and market.

This report will provide an overview of each project as well as provide information on visitation data for the Lakefront Skate and Market from December 2023 to March 2024.

2. Discussion:

2.1. There were five projects associated with the Tourism Fed Dev funding providing enhancements to downtown tourism offerings as well as needed storage and promotional trailer to support ongoing tourism items.

2.1.1. Enhanced Pedestrian Zone (EPZs) – This project was to support the work of the Open Streets Task Force in association with BIA, local business & restaurateurs to create temporary EPZs in Port Perry to enhance visitor experience and establish downtown as a tourist destination. The expected result was to provide welcoming spaces to allow for appreciation of lake viewing, conversation areas, and downtown nooks. A coordinated appearance planned across zones with seating, conversation areas, music stations, flowers, umbrellas & signage to provide a seamless visitor experience. To date red Muskoka style

seating was installed along the waterfront and outside the Old Mill. Additional items are available once the Open Streets Task Force finalizes their concept plan and identifies additional key locations. The pods along the waterfront have been very well received by the public with numerous compliments and pictures tagged on social media. Visitors can enjoy music in the park throughout the summer. The pods will be available for booking again this summer during Canada Day to help offset the expenses of the event.

2.1.2. A Visitor Kiosk/portable tourism trailer was delivered. The trailer was wrapped with Scugog Tourism branding including animal friends and Smiley, Scugog's mascot. The trailer may be used at key events in the township to provide wayfinding & concierge assistance, maps / brochure information on available experiences. The intention is the trailer can be used in partnership with the Chamber and BIA for their events to provide tourism related information. The trailer was permitted for use at the Lakefront Skate and Market for community groups to connect with visitors to provide information.

2.1.3. Tourism Storage Prefab building to house tourism streetscape to support our tourism initiatives and associated items. Currently, Christmas décor, kiosks & decorative lighting are housed. Tourism initiatives for Scugog are increasing with the use of seasonal items that require proper storage in the off season. Items like planters, benches, signage, decorative items need to be centralized in a dedicated building for tourism related equipment and streetscape.

2.1.4. Pollinator and Indigenous Education Garden located north of the boat launch was a partnership project lead by a committee of members from the Port Perry Rotary Club, BIA, Chamber, Environmental & Accessibility Committees, a Youth member, and representative from Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. The garden along Lake Scugog underwent revitalization and enhancements, to create a butterfly shaped garden with pathways tying two lakefront trail systems together. The objective was to create a natural space with pathways, benches, and lookout points to attract visitors to experience an immersive education garden in the heart of Port Perry. Included environmental revitalization provides an opportunity to rid the area of invasive plant species, re-established native and pollinator plant species, and habitats. Education elements are being installed mid-June with education stations on the importance of pollinator species and habitats, kiosks include the botanical names of the native plantings that are also translated to Anishinaabemowin. An Indigenous Land Acknowledgement plaque will be unveiled this fall to coincide with the national Truth and Reconciliation. The

garden will be a unique draw, steps away from downtown offering natural experiences alongside traditional amenities.

2.1.5. Lakefront Skate and Market launched in December 2023 with the objective of creating an inclusive outdoor community space at the Joe Fowler Ball Diamond on Water St., which combined the joys of ice skating with a market showcasing local food vendors, community groups, and artisanal goods. An ice rink was built on the ball diamond grounds with warming huts and portable toilets nearby. The market portion was hosted on the neighbouring Palmer Park parking lot using six vendor booths and the township's community trailer.

We were delighted to see strong attendance and enthusiastic participation from Scugog residents and tourists in the area. Families and friends from across the Durham region and beyond enjoyed weekends filled with fun and memorable experiences. The free to use ice-skating rink provided a safe and entertaining space for all - especially children learning to skate, teenagers looking for a social space, and seniors looking to engage in healthy physical activity throughout the winter season. Our venue served as a catalyst for community collaboration. The township also partnered with two local businesses for cross promotion and raised \$6,000 in sponsorship donations from eight local businesses. Community Services staff directed resources to ensure the operations for this project was a success. Seasonal staff created the sponsorship package, communications outreach, created and maintained vendor relationships and schedules, attended on weekends and provided excellent customer service. We are hopeful we can provide the same level of commitment for the 2024/25 season.

2.2. A Visitor Data study was conducted for the Lakefront Skate and Market by Central Counties Tourism from December 2023 to March 2024. The study created a specific geofence (a virtual geographic boundary of a particular area) around the Lakefront Skate and Market (Palmer Park) area. The study yielded thirteen reports providing an accurate estimate of the number of people that entered the area within the specified period, where they came from, the average number of times local's vs non-locals visited, and general information about the visitors' profiles (demographic and behavioural) for future marketing. The numbers are determined based on cell phone data collected from people above the age of 15 that have their location services enabled which is then filtered through a weighted statistical model. When we look at data conducted through a geo fence, we have two variables: Unique Visitors and Visits. Unique Visitors (UV) are one cell phone/person/household; and Visits (V) are repeat UV. E.g., If I went to the skating rink one hundred times, I would be counted as 1 Unique Visitor with one hundred Visits. The table below is an excerpt of the data and provides a breakdown of

tourists (those that have travelled 40 kilometres or more to visit) and local visitors. The results indicate that the site received an estimated 50,270 Visits from those who travelled more than 40 kilometres. It is estimated that 14,461 was the number of Unique Visitors from those who travelled more than 40 kilometres. We had over 26,800 Visits from Scugog residents, which contributed to about 21% of the total visits. It is important to note that 40% of the visitors to the skating rink were tourists.

Palmer Park – Lakefront Skate and Market December 16, 2023 – March 2024

Visitor Type	# of Locals (0-40km)	% of Locals	# of Tourists (40+km)	% of Tourists	% of Weekend Visits by Locals	% of Weekend Visits by Tourists
Unique Visitors	21,289	59.55%	14,461	40.45%	54.99%	45.01%
Total Daily Visits	78,219	60.88%	50,270	39.12%		
Weekend Visits	30,852	55.00%	25,248	45.00%		
Weekdays Visits	47,366	65.43%	25,024	34.57%		

2.3. As part of the analysis, Central Counties supplied a report generated by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) - Tourism Regional Economic Impact (TREIM) model. This report (Attachment 2) provides an estimate of the economic impact that Palmer Park Skating Rink 2023-2024 is expected to have on Ontario’s economy, in terms of Gross Domestic Product, employment and taxes generated. The analysis is based on the information provided to the MTCS Tourism Regional Economic Impact. The analyst shared: “The data entered for TRIEM is based on the number of Visits from Tourists, 50,270 (only those who travelled 40KM+, and separated by the number of tourists from Ontario and the Rest of Canada (the geo-fence data is only for domestic, we are not able to count US/International visitors), who travelled to the Skating Rink geo-fenced area during

the timeframe of the geo-fence (Dec 2023 – March 2024). To be conservative, we assumed that those 50,270 tourists were 100%-day trips and since it is an outdoor skating rink, selected 'Any Outdoors' activity. The estimated visitor spend from your tourists to the skating rink during that specific period is \$6 Million for Durham Region (we cannot get more granular for Scugog).” To summarize, the formula model indicates that the Lakefront Skate and Market along with the investment made in Scugog by the Federal grant program generated a strong contribution to the local economy.



3. Financial Implications:

- 3.1. The total cost of all the projects and the funding claimed to the Government of Canada Fed Dev stream was \$479,745.17. We are very grateful for the support and investment in our community.

4. Communication Considerations:

- 4.1. Communications and social media promotion of our enhanced tourism offerings were published in collaboration with Central Counties Tourism and Durham Region Tourism assisting to produce professional photography and video content that will become seasonal staples in our annual social media content. Communications staff generated 30 unique social media posts for the venue, promotion of local collaboration specials like Louis Lakefront Chicken and Waffle special, the Lakefront skate and soup promotion with Mrs. Fields. Content with reels and stories were shared across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram from Nov. 2023 – Mar. 2024 with a reach (total estimated # of views) of posts to be 132, 629. Engagement (total estimated # of likes, comments, shares, and click throughs) was 17,611. Unique photo-based posts were deemed more successful than graphics-based content.
- 4.2. Community Services staff conducted a vendor feedback survey and received mostly positive evaluations for year one. Overall, a highly successful inaugural season with lessons learned and suggestions that will be incorporated into operating processes for the next season of the market. Positive testimonials were received like this one from Imran Mohammad, Louie's Café - "It was wonderful working with the township, it helped bring in new business and I'm so grateful and thankful for this. Really easy to communicate and everything was very seamless."
- 4.3. The objective of the tourism grant was to provide unique offerings to bolster visitation to Scugog especially during the winter months when visitation can be markedly lower post-holiday season. Communications and collaboration plan successfully promoted the site to entice visitors. It is notable that there were over 25 thousand weekday visits which was a pleasant outcome of the project. There was significant feedback regarding the size of the rink. Therefore, project funds were directed to support the successful Lakefront Skate and Market project to acquire an expansion pack that will double the size of the ice surface for next season. The hope is to allocate more resources from operations and an Associate leading the work to pursue partnerships and collaboration opportunities for the

future sponsorship and vendor management to grow this initiative into a thriving and measurable tourism program.

5. **Conclusion:** The work of tourism has been building through our partnerships, collaborations and strong tourist operators both downtown and in the rural setting. An analysis of overall tourism recovery data was commissioned by Durham Tourism and conducted by Central Counties Tourism for 2023 and indicates that Scugog has fully recovered for tourism visitation better than pre-pandemic levels. Highlights of the report include:

- 2023 visitation is 6.6 % higher than 2019- Full recovery and more
- Almost 578 thousand visitors to downtown
- \$49 Million Visitor Spending from the downtown alone- (TREIM Ministry report for 2023)

An analysis of 2024 is pending for the down town and the data collected from the Lakefront Skate and Market as well as the upcoming Canada Day event will be included.

The objective of the tourism grant was to provide unique offerings to bolster visitation to Scugog especially during the winter months. As part of the recovery process for our tourism sector, staff pursued and successfully executed over \$470 thousand in tourism related projects establishing long lasting day trip experiences, attracting visitors to the downtown to enjoy four season offerings and recognizing that once they experience Port Perry, they are sure to return time and again.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Lori Bowers
Director Community Services and Communications

Reviewed By:

Ken Nix
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Palmer Park Skating Rink 2023 – 2024

Attachment 2: Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) - Tourism Regional Economic Impact (TREIM) model

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Scugog Tourism Relief Fund Update - COMS-2024-010.docx
Attachments:	- Palmer Park Skating Rink 2023-2024 1pager.pdf - TREIM Palmer Park Skating Rink 2023 - 2024.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jun 19, 2024

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



Kenneth Nix