



## Introduction

### Economic Development

**Background:** Economic development programs and services continue to evolve to meet the emerging needs of the business community. Business retention and expansion programs and initiatives such as tours, visits, surveys and business profiles are a mainstay of the division as they support the existing business community. Workforce development has been a consistent element due to Perth County's historically low unemployment rate and the ongoing need to support businesses in attracting and retaining workers, including youth, to live and work in the community. Foreign direct investment is a more recent but critical aspect of Perth County's program through the need to replace exiting employers and industries with new businesses that create high value jobs which in turn generate economic spin-offs throughout the community. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated changes in the business environment requiring further evolution of the economic development program.

**Overview:** Perth County Economic Development exists to support the vibrancy and sustainability of the business community in Perth County. Economic development acts as a connector, advocator, and initiator of programs and services that encourage a strong and diverse business sector. Economic development provides an internal and external liaison for Perth County businesses and ensures that they can tap into available resources including training, funding and support from upper levels of government through active communication and information sharing.

### Tourism

**Background:** In 2017, Perth County recognized that tourism was an important sector and strategically established the Perth County Tourism program to lead destination development, branding, and marketing efforts to residents, tourism partners, business owners, and prospective visitors. Perth County Tourism has been working to grow and develop the industry within the borders of the county to attract visitors and compel residents to get out and experience all that Perth County has to offer.

**Overview:** Perth County Tourism is the official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Perth County, offering services that enhance and promote the county through various destination development and destination marketing programming. Strengthened through strategic regional partnerships and ongoing collaboration with relevant stakeholders, these efforts grow brand awareness, increase tourism across the county, enhance the visitor experience, and support local tourism operators.

### Transportation

**Background:** PC Connect is the result of the Provincial Community Transportation Grant Program. In 2018, the County (in partnership with St. Marys & Stratford) and the City of Stratford (in partnership with St. Marys & North Perth) were each granted \$1.45M to implement separate, but complimentary intercommunity transportation pilot projects. In November 2020, both projects launched under unified 'PC Connect' branding. Since launch, both the County and City of Stratford have been granted an additional \$865k and \$632k of funding, respectively, to operate the pilot project until March 31, 2025.

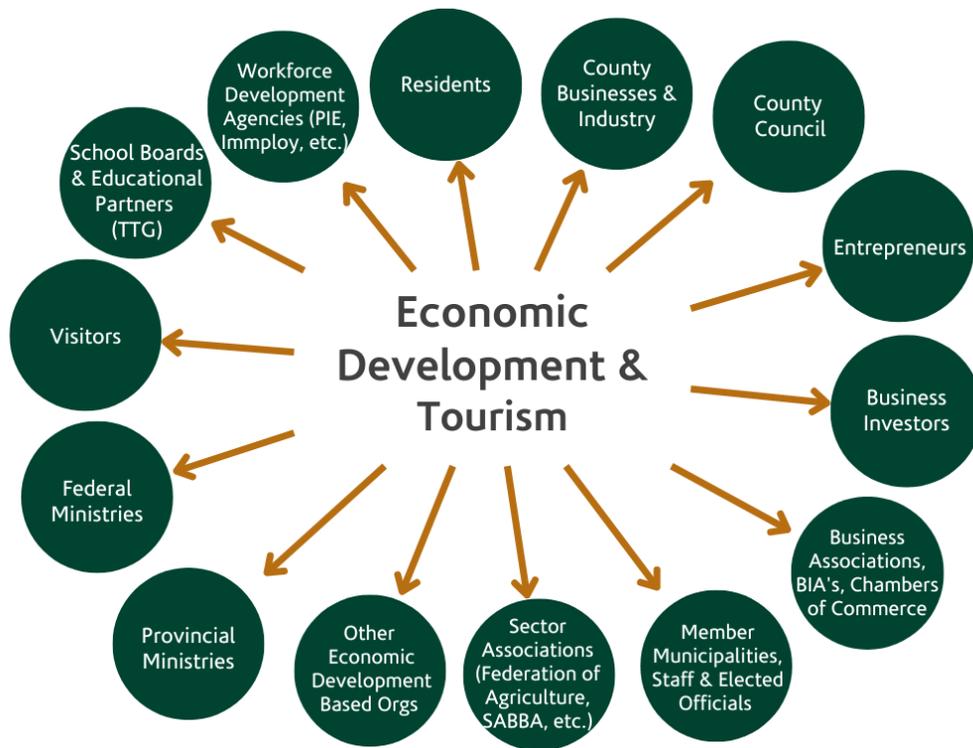


## Economic Development & Tourism Division

**Overview:** PC Connect is an affordable and accessible bus service that alleviates transportation barriers and enables residents to stay connected to their communities, access employment and social programs, attend appointments, visit friends and family, and maintain an independent and active lifestyle. Managing the service includes overseeing day-to-day operations, providing education and customer support, creatively promoting and building ridership, conducting employer and community outreach, and implementing continuous service enhancements.

### Key Customers and Stakeholders

The Economic Development, Tourism and Transportation Division is a public facing team that works collaboratively with our municipal and community partners to assist existing businesses, prospective investors, visitors and residents. The following diagram highlights the Division's diverse key stakeholders:



### Core Businesses Services

The role of the Economic Development, Tourism and Transportation Division is to facilitate and implement regional economic development and tourism strategies as a means of promoting the County as an attractive place to live, visit, work and invest in. This role is achieved by developing and delivering programs and policies that support, increase, and strengthen the business communities and destinations of Perth County. The following diagram illustrates the core business and services the Economic Development, Tourism and Transportation division provides:



## Key Linkages with the Strategic Plan and Achievements of the 2022 Program

Economic Development is a key focus of the County's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. As such, a number of goals and actions are directly linked to the County's Economic Development Division. Primarily, Goals 1, 3 and 4 and their subsequent actions are directly tied to the delivery of economic development or have overlap with economic development programs and priorities. In addition, Economic Development interests extend into other aspects of the Corporation.

The Economic Development Program continues to grow as a result of strategic planning, research, and action plans that have been developed to address issues facing businesses across Perth County: labour shortage issues, youth outmigration, lack of resources for newcomers, and workforce development to name a few. These issues have been identified in previous work on Business Retention and Expansion, the Labour Market Strategy and Perth4Youth Strategic Plan. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated changes in the business environment requiring further evolution of the economic development and tourism program. An economic development and tourism strategic plan has been identified as a priority project for 2023.

### Goal 1: Growth & Economic Development

Economic Development is a key goal identified in the strategic plan. All of the work that the division does is in support of Goal 1, Growth & Economic Development. This includes working to ensure growth and investments



are occurring throughout the County and not just in the larger centers. This goal and the actions to achieve the goal rely on our business retention and expansion, support for entrepreneurship and investment attraction initiatives outlined below. The goal also reinforces that County's growth will be driven by agri-business, value-added agriculture, agri-tourism and food processing and that Economic Development and Tourism must support this vital sector.

The 2023 business plan proposes an Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan that would directly support this goal.

The 2023 business plan also demonstrates the continued commitment to attracting residents and workers to Perth County helping drive economic growth and make the community more attractive for future residents and business investment. Economic Development and Tourism continues to participate in a variety of committees and associations that focus on workforce and resident attraction as well as supporting those who choose Perth County as a place to live, work and play.

Growth & economic development, workforce attraction & retention rely on transportation links to help move people across the County and is essential to the long-term prosperity and sustainability of the County. Continuing to market the PC Connect transportation service, building strategic partnerships to increase ridership and continuously improving the service will build the transportation links that were identified in the strategic plan.

### Goal 3: Customer Service Excellence

Perth County's Economic Development, Tourism and Transportation Division continues to mature. Through continuous outreach to businesses through phone calls, surveys, and committee and community engagement, staff are continuously working to understand and deliver on the changing needs of the business community. Our municipal partners are our customers and by continuing to engage with them through regular outreach and participation on local committees, staff will continue to work towards the best model for economic development, tourism and transportation services at both the overarching and local level.

### Goal 4: Community Development & Planning

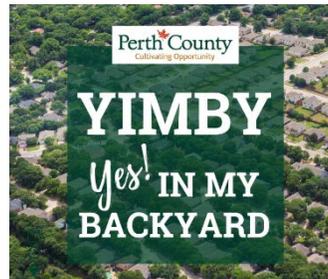
The goal of community development goes hand in hand with economic development. As the County looks to grow and diversify its economic base, it must also work to ensure that it remains an attractive destination for residents of all ages. Through the division's workforce development activities, the goal of building community ensures that Perth County remains vibrant, livable and attractive. Support for business and community organizations is a critical piece of this community development and engagement goal and the 2023 business plan demonstrates how the County will continue to work with its partners to build a community that is welcoming and inclusive.



# Economic Development & Tourism Division

## 2022 Achievements

- Developed, printed, and distributed 110,000 *Discover More* Tourism Brochures and 30,000 *Discover More Flavour* Farm Gate Maps across Ontario
- Held 113 Meetings with investors who have identified they were interested in expanding or relocating to Ontario
- Developed and completed a Cycle Tourism Strategy
- Completed a targeted three-phase email campaign to over 2000+ contacts as part of a lead nurturing and follow-up project on behalf of the Southwestern Ontario Marketing Alliance (SOMA)
- Developed 8 new Signature Experiences through our award-winning *Discover More Adventures* experiential tourism program
- Hosted a 'Yes in my Backyard' (YIMBY) session for 41 community members
- Sourced \$274,112 in external funding through applications to various funders for new projects and programs
- Provided 15 local tourism business professional photography packages through the Snapshot Program
- Developed 3 newsletters and 6 e-blasts
- Delivered a business resource mail-out through Canada Post to all business addresses across Perth County
- Hosted a Succession Planning webinar with 30 registrations
- Hosted 5 media trips for Ontario travel content creators/influencers
- Participated in and supported a number of community and facility tours with investors and companies considering Perth County sites for establishing operations
- Continued to offer Welcoming Communities training through a partnership with Fanshawe College
- Developed 7 articles for the Culinary Tourism Alliance through their Great Taste of Ontario program
- Conducted over 94 business consultations delivering various Digital Service Squad services including digital assessments, Google My Business





## Economic Development & Tourism Division

Listings, 360-degree photos, and Digital Transformation Grants applications and more

- Developed a PC Connect for Employers Campaign, including a toolkit to promote PC Connect and reduce barriers for both employees and employers
- Provided over 7,000 rides on PC Connect (Jan – Oct 2022)
- Successfully grew PC Connect ridership, averaging 17% growth month-over-month
- Sold over 1,600 pre-paid fare passes to local organizations and employers
- Designed and executed multiple multi-media campaigns, one of which resulted in 2.6x ridership during the month, and 117% ridership growth post-campaign.
- Launched PC Connect on Google Maps

### Major Initiatives for 2023

#### Advertising / Marketing

- Continuous multimedia marketing & advertising (social media advertising, print, radio, billboards, etc.) that promotes Perth County as a great place to visit, grow and prosper. Extend the target market for tourism attraction beyond neighbouring regions and into the GTA as tourism assets and marketing collaterals continue to be developed.

#### Tourism Brochure

- Design and distribute tourism brochures to local and regional points of interest. Direct mailout of brochure to targeted markets within day trip distance.

#### Digital Influencer Partnerships

- Partner with strategic content creators to access organic online communities on various platforms. Each influencer attracted brings a unique audience and connection with organic online communities.

#### Discover More Adventures

- Continue to grow and enhance this experiential tourism program. Engage existing Signature Experiences to ensure continued support including online training, one-on-one development meetings, comprehensive marketing packages, signage, digital support, and more. Add new Signature Experiences to build a greater catalogue of engaging local experiences.

#### Discover More Flavour

- Continue the expansion of the Discover More Flavour Farm Gate Map program including enhanced signage, marketing, digital programming, and participating business development.

#### Perth County Tourism Social Media Content Creation & Online Growth

- Grow online following through engaging and consistent content creation, content posting and audience engagement on Perth County Tourism social media accounts. This includes creative use of photography





and videography for various posts (Reels, Stories, Guides, etc.), blog post creation, digital influencer partnerships, and other online growth strategies.

### Seasonal Tourism Campaign Development

- Develop and launch seasonal campaigns to promote tourism offerings in our rural region throughout the year. These campaigns include marketing and various business support services to enhance visitation during specific seasons (ex. maple, harvest, holiday, etc.)

### CTA Great Taste of Ontario Road Trip

- Continue to develop itineraries for the CTA Great Taste of Ontario Road Trip featuring Perth County businesses and attractions to be featured on the online digital passport and Globe and Mail special travel editions.

### Photo and Video Library Expansion

- Continue to build our photo/video library with updated, seasonal local photography and videography. This includes business photography support programming.

### Spark Mentorship and Grants Program

- Investigate the potential of hosting the “Spark” tourism program. The Spark program will match selected candidates with a tourism mentor and provide a financial support to help execute a new tourism idea and help with the product development

### Canada’s LGBTQ2+ Chamber of Commerce Rainbow Registered Accreditation

- Perth County Tourism to investigate joining Canada’s LGBTQ2+ Chamber of Commerce Rainbow Registered Program. Accreditation grant available through FedDev funding program that covers program fees for the first year.

### Southwestern Ontario Marketing Alliance

- The Southwestern Ontario Marketing Alliance (SOMA) is a partnership of Southwestern Ontario communities, grown out of natural economic ties. This region, known as Canada's Industrial Heartland, encompasses the municipalities of Ingersoll, Perth, Stratford, St. Thomas, Tillsonburg, and Woodstock. It stretches across Elgin, Oxford and Perth Counties. Continue to take a leadership role in the pursuit of agri-business attraction through FDI outreach and lead generation/follow-up.

### Development of an Economic Development and Tourism Strategy

- Build an updated framework to guide the direction and activities of economic development and tourism post-COVID economic realities and understand emerging opportunities/priorities.

### Economic Development and Tourism Webpages

- Update industry page for business owners and operators to connect with current and available information and resources.



- Revamp employment support and resource pages.

### Co-Op Placement

- Work with Secondary schools to resume taking on a co-op student.

### Summer Students

- Recruit and train two Tourism Summer Students. Source funding through the Summer Experience Program.

### Youth Engagement Programming

- Joint projects with education and training partners to promote career opportunities and support resident retention and attraction.

### Workforce Attraction and Retention Employer Toolkit (WASET)

- The Workplace Attraction & Retention Employer Toolkit is a resource that businesses can access to view best practices and tools in:
  - Recruitment
  - Employee Retention
  - Employee Engagement
  - Flexible Job Design
  - Employee Housing Initiatives
  - Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Shared on an easy-to-use platform, the toolkit will serve as a reference and instructional guide to successfully implement programming.

### Workforce Housing Initiatives

- Continue to source and find creative workforce housing programs and promote to business community through our Business Retention and Expansion program.

### Local Business Information and Training Sessions

- Continue to host and support the Perth Community Futures Development Corporation and the Stratford Perth Centre for Business activities and programming.

### Welcoming Communities Online Training

- Continue to offer the online modules of the three Welcoming Communities Training developed in partnership with Fanshawe's Corporate Training Solutions and Intercultural Competency Advantage Program. Training modules include:
  - Essentials of Intercultural Competency
  - Effective Intercultural Communications



- Power Dynamics and Systemic Discrimination.

### Formalize Business Retention and Expansion Program

- Formalize Business Retention and Expansion Program with new CRM program

### Business Tours

- Continue business outreach and re-start business tours which were postponed due to the pandemic

### Business Visits and Spotlights

- Continue business spotlight stories for website and newsletter

### Business Retention and Expansion Survey

- Conduct an annual County-wide survey of all businesses through either a direct telephone survey, online survey, mail out survey or survey with local municipal partners

### Cycle Strategy Implementation

- Implementation of short-term and quick-win recommendations and pursue funding for medium-long term initiatives

### Available Lands and Building Inventory

- Updated the available lands and building inventory information

### CanExport Community Investments 2022 Application (Applied for funding November 2022)

- Lead generation services and direct meetings with companies considering expansion into Ontario. Implementation of best practices through enhanced staff training

### Digital Service Squad 4.0

- Continue to deliver digital support service to businesses including website/social media assistance, Google My Business listing support, digital assessments, 360-degree photos, Digital Transformation Grant application support and more. Implement new marketing strategies to reach new business clients including webinars, drop-in sessions and partnerships with local BIAs or Chambers

### Economic Development Newsletters and Publications

- Continue to produce quarterly newsletters, including updating format to suit both email and magazine style.

### Government Relations

- Participate in Queen's Engagement days with EDCO, TIAO, and Perth County Federation of Agriculture/ Rural Farm Day. Take every opportunity to engage with local politicians, MPP, MP's to discuss rural issues such as transportation, housing, workforce development, etc.

### Tradeshows/Events



- Participate in consumer tradeshows promoting Perth County as a destination.

### Annual Business Directory Update

- Continue to update with new businesses, update old and closed businesses and ensure CASSL consent.

### Job Fairs and Workforce Projects

- Partner and support employers with job and career fairs

### PC Connect Service Renewal

- Renew the PC Connect service for additional years of service by executing new operating contracts, bus stop agreements, technology, etc.

### PC Connect Community Outreach

- Continue to build the ridership of the service through sustained marketing efforts. Establish strategic partnerships with community groups and social service providers to provide a cost-effective option for their members and clients and generate ongoing and predictable ridership.

### PC Connect Employer Outreach

- Continue to develop the PC Connect for Employers Campaign, and meet with large employers across the County to market the service to their employee base and potential employees. Develop partnerships that generate recurring revenue and ridership that both assists with longer term sustainability and addresses acute labour force challenges.

### PC Connect Funding Alternatives

- Investigate alternative sources of funding for the longer-term sustainability of the PC Connect service including Gas Tax, FCM grants and any infrastructure and community funding released. Investigate advertising and sponsorships with private businesses to diversify revenue streams beyond ridership.

### PC Connect Advertising Packages

- Develop a program that sells advertising spaces on PC Connect fleet to local businesses and services, in order to generate additional revenue to fund the PC Connect service.

### PC Connect Service Enhancements

- Leverage service data and community feedback to determine and implement necessary service enhancements. Investigate creative ways to integrate demand-responsive-transit features in order to provide a more sustainable service.

### PC Connect Service Integration

- Work with project partners, SCT and Metrolinx to better connect Southwestern Ontario, and position PC Connect as a feeder service into other services such as GO, in order to further extend connectivity and transportation options for residents.



## PC Connect Advocacy

- Work with project partners and stakeholders to advocate for additional funding and a sustainable public transportation service beyond the grant funding currently provided.

## PC Connect Testimonial Program

- Develop a testimonial program that features PC Connect riders and highlights the impact PC Connect has had on our community. Compile testimonials into a compelling format that serves as a useful tool for advocacy efforts.

## University of Waterloo Economic Development Certificate Program Student Projects

- Provide case studies for students of the Economic Development Certificate Program. These case studies both serve as educational tools for students and opportunities/business cases for new County programs and projects.

## Relationship Development & Networking

- Build and nurture relationships with staff in trade commissions and economic development ministries to highlight Perth County opportunities

## Entrepreneurship and New Business Support

- Build and nurture relationships with staff in trade commissions and economic development ministries to highlight Perth County opportunities

## Entrepreneurship and New Business Support

- Provide new businesses and entrepreneurs with information, resources and contacts with business support organizations, connections to internal and external divisions and government programs

## Economic and Industry Data Sharing

- Develop, publish and distribute economic and industry data and information for the existing business community and potential new investors

## Associations and Memberships

- Tourism Industry Association of Ontario
- Economic Development Council of Ontario (voting board member)
- Ontario By Bike
- Culinary Tourism Alliance
- Stratford and Area Human Resources Association
- North Perth Chamber of Commerce
- Stratford and Area Builders Association
- United Way Perth Huron Social Research Planning Council
- Western Ontario Marketing Alliance
- Southwest Community Transit Association
- Southwestern Ontario Marketing Alliance (SOMA) including:
  - Ontario Food Cluster (OFC)
  - Ontario Manufacturing Communities Alliance (OMCA)



## Economic Development & Tourism Division

- South Central Ontario Regions (SCOR)
- Center for Automotive Research (CAR)/Automotive Communities Partnership (CAP)
- Japan Society and Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ)
- Site Selectors Guild

### Active Partnerships

- investStratford
- Town of St. Marys
- City of Stratford
- Province of Ontario (Various Ministries)
- Stratford Perth Center for Business
- Stratford Perth Community Futures Development Corporation
- Ontario Investment Office (Invest in Ontario)
- Rural Economic Development Program
- Invest Canada
- Destination Stratford
- Listowel BIA
- Mitchell BIA
- Millbank BA
- Milverton BA
- Stratford Perth Community Foundation
- Conestoga Career Centre
- Four County Labour Marketing Planning Board
- Huron Perth Association of Realtors
- Partners in Resources for Employment (PREP)
- Cycle Stratford
- Friends of Ellice (UTRCA)
- G2G Rail Trail Inc.
- Huron Perth Ag Science Centre
- Immploy

### Committees and Boards

- North Perth Ec Dev (staff liaison and support)
- West Perth Ec Dev (staff liaison and support)
- Economic Development Council of Ontario (EDCO) (voting board member)
- EDCO Stakeholder Relations Committee (chair and voting member)
- Southern Ontario Marketing Alliance (voting board member)
- Technical Training Group (voting board member)
- Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance Patient and Caregiver Committee

### Initiatives for 2024

- Implementation of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy
- Advertising / Marketing
- Tourism Brochure
- Digital Influencer Partnerships
- Discover More Adventures
- Discover More Flavour
- Perth County Tourism Social Media Content Creation & Online Growth
- Seasonal Tourism Campaign Development



# Economic Development & Tourism Division

- CTA Great Taste of Ontario Road Trip
- Photo and Video Library Expansion
- Southwestern Ontario Marketing Alliance
- Summer Students
- Youth Engagement Programming
- Workforce Housing Initiatives
- Local Business Information and Training Sessions
- Welcoming Communities Online Training
- Business Retention and Expansion Program (Continue to track Business Retention and Expansion initiatives through CRM program)
- Business Tours
- Business Retention and Expansion Survey
- Available Lands and Building Inventory
- Economic Development Newsletters and Publications
- Government Relations
- Relationship Development & Networking (Build and nurture relationships with staff in trade commissions and economic development ministries to highlight Perth County opportunities)
- Tradeshows/Events
- Presentations/Outreach
- Annual Business Directory Update
- Job Fairs and Workforce
- PC Connect Community Outreach
- PC Connect Employer Outreach
- PC Connect Funding Alternatives
- PC Connect Advertising Packages
- PC Connect Service Enhancements
- PC Connect Service Integration
- PC Connect Advocacy
- University of Waterloo Economic Development Certificate Program Student Projects
- Entrepreneurship and New Business Support
- Economic and Industry Data Sharing

## Financial Allocation

Services	FTE Requirements by Year			
	2022	2023	2024	2026
<b>Economic Development/Tourism Division</b>				
<b>Total Program FTE Requirements</b>	5	5	4	4

## FTE Variances

- Transportation Coordinator position (1FTE) operates within the division, funded through the CT Grant
- The Digital Service Squad staff are fully funded through the Digital Main St program. (2PTE)



## Economic Development & Tourism Division

### Training and Development

- Annual Association Conferences
  - Annual Economic Development Council of Ontario Conference
  - Annual Tourism Industry Association of Ontario Conference
  - Sector specific workshops or training provided by Ministry (OMAFRA, Ministry of Economic Development)
  - Various training workshops pertinent to positions within the Economic Development, Tourism and Transportation Division.