

STAKEHOLDERS HIGHLIGHT REPORT

THE  OF ONTARIO™
HAMILTON • HALTON • BRANT



RE-IMAGINING THE FUTURE TOGETHER



April 1st 2022
- March 31st
2023

A Message from our Executive Director

We have achieved a great deal this year which included the undertaking of some key strategic initiatives to support regional tourism businesses in their recovery and their growth into the future.

The Government of Canada's \$ 5-million investment in our region provided tourism businesses and operators new funds to support their economic recovery efforts from the pandemic. The funding investment helped diverse tourism operators in growing future business, enhancing their visitor experiences and creating new jobs. Additionally, HHBRTA, received \$500,000 to support our priority to increase the destination's Shoulder Season local and tourist season to increase economic development opportunity for operators to expand their business growth period.

The RTO over the decade has strengthened its role as a Marketer & Product/Experience Developer making advances in the Travel Purchase Cycle to increase consumer intentions to visit our destination. We now are making strategic advancement to evolve a Distributer Role for our regional experiences.

The RTO has invested in the development of a new 3-Year Strategic Plan for Regional Tourism Development. We have always had our eye to the future; however, the pandemic and its recovery process for our industry has presented new challenges and opportunities to strengthen our destination's development to "flourish" into the future. The strategy builds upon our existing values and pillars of performance, but it is intended to set an inspiring vision for tourism in our region. It will provide a road map for our near and future actions to co-create value with our partners and stakeholders. The new Regional Tourism Strategy will be a guidepost and I am excited about the newest journey we are more than ready to embark upon for you, and with you.

Our Values

Connecting

We facilitate relationship building and function as a conduit to connect stakeholders and partners. We are committed to ongoing communication to engage and network with the industry.

Leading

We lead by helping others grow and evolve through mentorship, partnership, and collaboration.

Inclusivity

We invite, welcome, and listen to new ideas and perspectives in our work with regional partners and stakeholders. We welcome everyone.

Check out how your business can leverage HHBRTA opportunities:



Exposure

Extend your reach through marketing opportunities. Put your business in front of new potential customers via HHBRTA's listings on our leisure website, print, digital, and media promotions.



Knowledge

Gain better understanding of your visitors through statistics, data reports, and tourism insights. Attend workshops and industry forums to learn about marketing experiences and product development.



Community

Join our tourism community and stay connected. Attend pan-regional industry events to grow your collaboration contact potential and grow your business.

Let's Work Together!

Connecting with your business is important to the team to create new opportunities for growth. Call or email us at your convenience.



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Special thanks to our HHBRTA former Associate team members, Josh Magat and Oscar Sharland. Also, we would like to extend appreciation to Brittany Hunter, who has departed from the organization and who contributed significantly to destination marketing initiatives.

Board of Directors

Kelly Harris - Chair, Ontario Tourism Education Corporation

Bridget Saulnier - Past Chair, Nuvo Network

Julian Kingston - Vice Chair, Region of Waterloo Museums

Tracey Nurmi - Secretary, Via Rail

Angela Papparizo, City of Burlington; Arts & Culture

Damian Szybalski, Town of Halton Hills; Economic Development

Dave Miller, General Industry Representative

Jaquie Jamieson, Six Nations Tourism

Lisa La Rocca, Sonic Unyon; Supercrawl

Rebecca Edgar, Visit Oakville

Trish Gerth, African Lion Safari

Garth Potruff, Grand River Rafting Company

Sara Munroe, City of Brantford

Committees of the Board

Finance & Audit

Governance & Nominating

HR & Compensation

Board Outreach

Board Education and Development

These committees advise and support Directors in applying corporate governance and principles, assist in evaluating potential board candidates, review and advise annual objectives, HR policies, plans, and oversee the administrative investment activities and financial reporting.

Marketing

The Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association exists to support market development and broaden the marketing reach of our region's diverse visitor experiences in The Heart of Ontario.

What We Do

Amplify the marketing reach for destinations, communities, and tourism business operators within Hamilton Halton Brant via crafted campaigns that are in market year-round. Additionally, HHBRTA engages strategically with travel influencers who would feature the destination to their own viewers and fan bases.



PICK, PACK, GO Marketing Campaign



We launched **Pick, Pack, Go** - a year long campaign that focused on making traveling choices easy and effortless for visitors. Visitors could narrow down their traveling plans to our region in three quick and easy steps. The campaign highlighted overnight escapes throughout our region and married the use of the Ontario's Staycation Tax Credit with our StayTripping accommodation packages for ample savings for visitors as an added incentive to travel and enjoy themselves.



1,052,448
Total Website Views



144,592
Total Referrals



16,335,270
Total Impressions

Most Popular Content Features Per Season:



Spring 2022

- Escape to the Country



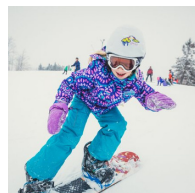
Fall 2022

- Fab Fall Road Trip Roundup
- Outdoor Activities that Deliver Thrills and Chills



Summer 2022

- The Only in Ontario Summer Road Trip Challenge
- 6 Ways to Discover First Nations Traditions in Hamilton Halton Brant



Winter 2022/2023

- Holiday Events and Happenings

StayTripping Marketing Campaign



The Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association developed a consumer marketing initiative aimed at restarting the economy in the wake of COVID-19 by encouraging locals, regional residents, and visitors to enjoy overnight stays in our region.

StayTripping supported our regional accommodation sector, rebuilding Hamilton Halton Brant's visitor economy by promoting visitation and overnight expenditure.

Locals and visitors alike were invited to stay at a participating regional accommodation partner by booking their unique StayTripping overnight package. Those who booked a stay with participating accommodations would receive a \$50.00 or \$100.00 Visa Voucher depending on the duration of the stay, incentivizing visitors to shop at local businesses during their trip.



387

Total Visa Cards Were Distributed to Hotel Guests

22

Accommodations Participated

To further engage this audience and support the revitalization of the region, we worked with partners and local partners to develop or enhance experiences to offer guests. Through our marketing campaigns, website and social media platforms, we curated elevated offers that would entice guests to explore the unique beauty and activities our region has to offer.



189

New Partner Experience & Tour Listings



5,404

Page Views of StayTripping Partner Offers



WELCOME TO THE HEART OF ONTARIO

Dear Guest,

Thank you for supporting our region's businesses and participating in The Heart of Ontario StayTripping Campaign. On behalf of the accommodations and businesses in Hamilton, Halton and Brant, we want to extend a warm welcome to the region! During your stay, we encourage you to visit and support nearby restaurants, attractions, retailers, and outfitters.

In your welcome package provided to you upon arrival, you will find key information and offers to maximize your stay - including a Stay & Play PERK card, and more. As a thank you for participating in our inaugural campaign, we have gifted you a visa voucher (limited time offer!) to be spent at a local business during your stay. The Stay & Play PERK offers are exclusive experiences at local businesses crafted specifically for StayTripping participants. We invite you to explore the region and enjoy the many PERK experiences!

We hope you have a wonderful experience in The Heart of Ontario!

Sincerely,

Maria V. Fortunato
Executive Director, Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association

** If you did not receive a Visa voucher upon check in they are no longer available due to limited quantities.



SHOW YOUR LOCAL LOVE

Since you are visiting the Hamilton Halton Brant region we encourage you to explore beyond your accommodation!

With lots to see and do, you can find hidden gems and businesses that spark your interests, and help you spend your gifted Visa voucher.

Hamilton Halton and Brant region boasts renowned heritage sites, attractions, vibrant arts scene, distinct downtowns and delectable dining.

Visit www.staytripping.ca to adventure like a local and view all the Stay & Play PERK offers!

GET SOCIAL WITH US!

Share your #HHBStaytripping experience with us! As you explore Hamilton Halton Brant during your stay, we would love to see what fun and unique activities you get up to.

Tag us in your photos (@heartofontario) and use the hashtag #HHBStaytripping to be featured on our social media and digital marketing channels.

Experience Development

What We Do

We aim to create memorable connections while leveraging high-value experiences and supporting the sustainability of tourism business operators in our region. Generating a strong visitor economy and increased visitation by leveraging iconic experiences and brands of people, place and culture within the region is key to the strategic economic success.



Experience Development Initiatives (Product)

Grand River Visitor Brand Development

Recognizing the Grand River as a significant visitor demand asset, there is a continued need for community and economic development efforts; including the standardized upgrades to the Grand River experience. Since our inaugural Grand River Forum in March of 2019, we have continued to work with stakeholders, business operators, communities, and leaders to improve visitor readiness and build the stories that need to be shared. It is an ongoing priority to learn, listen, identify opportunities, initiate discussions, share success stories, engage together, and grow the Grand River visitor destination experience.

Grand River Forum: On November 10th, 2022, Grand River stakeholders along the watershed including Destination Marketing Organizations, gathered for a full-day forum event in Brantford.

Grand River Access Points Updates:

1. Bean Park Access Point – County of Brant is making improvements and enhancements that include the installation of a concrete ramp that will enhance the launch experience of drift boaters and paddlers.
2. Newport Bridge River Access Point – We continue to work with County of Brant, supporting a drop-off zone for visitors and local users to unload their paddling vessels on the riverside of Newport. Planning is underway that includes an archaeological assessment. Concept designs have been developed.

85
Grand River
Stakeholders

Hosted in
Collaboration
with RTO 1, 3,
4 & 6



Tourism & Destination Development

Destination Development is a key priority for HHBRTA and over time, we have expanded our marketing and product/experience role within the region. To maximize marketing investments, we have decided to undertake a distributor role.

Through FedDev Ontario funding, the RTO has invested in technology platforms to support this development. HHBRTA has partnered with the Tourism Technology Company to leverage their **Booker** platform; allowing operators to offer their products and experiences to visitors of theheartofontario.com.

We aim to work with tourism partners to learn more about **Booker**, and to develop authentic, innovative and buyable experiences that appeal to a broad range of visitor preferences.

Business & Market Development

Rendez-Vous Canada (RVC) 2022, Toronto, Ontario – May 2022

HHBRTA presented our destination and its unique selling proposition to international and domestic inbound markets and travel influencers.

A Post-Marketplace FAM Tour was hosted in partnership with Destination Ontario that leveraged the province's global tourism visitation and conversion opportunities. This FAM also aligned with Destination Canada to strengthen our market development initiatives. We worked with 5 key DMO/DMMO Partners in Brantford, Six Nations of the Grand River, Burlington, and Hamilton.



Destination Ontario Quebec Receptive Operator Sales Mission, March 2023 (Virtual)

HHBRTA leveraged Destination Ontario's strategy to strengthen Ontario's position for inbound domestic visitation. By invitation, we presented our destination and Quebec export ready experience products to eight high-volume Receptive Tour Operators in Quebec.

Swoop Airlines Partnership Market Development

The RTO has enhanced our alliance with Hamilton International Airport (YHM) and its Airline Carrier partners. In September 2022, we partnered with Swoop Airlines and Tourism Hamilton to develop and execute an exclusive FAM Tour to our destination.



Ten Retail Travel Agents and Tour Operators from Edmonton, which is identified as one of Swoop's core markets arrived to YHM for a 3-night site tour exploring Hamilton and Halton. A total of 12 regional tourism businesses were featured across Hamilton, Burlington and Halton Hills.



Tourism Relief Fund

In 2022, the Federal Economic Development Agency of Southern Ontario contributed \$78 million dollars to support the tourism and hospitality industry in Southern Ontario. The Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association received \$5-million dollars which supported 66 of our business and organizations to recover from the pandemic. Through these funds our regional industry partners were able to increase business capacity, enhance product and services, grow green economy, and invest in infrastructure. Thanks to the contribution of the Federal Government our region is positioned to grow its visitor economy and safely welcome back visitors, recover from the impacts of the pandemic, create jobs and prepare for future growth.

Tourism Relief Fund Applicants:

Hamilton:

Art Gallery of Hamilton
Concrete Canvas
Factory Media Centre
Festitalia
Festival of Friends
Glen Drummond Farm Inc.
Golden Horseshoe Live Steamers

Hamilton Festival Theatre Company
Hamilton Waterfront Trust
John. C. Munro Hamilton International Airport
Little Rays Reptile Zoo Hamilton
New Vision United Church
Ottawa Street BIA

Redback Tours Inc.
Ridge Road Estate Winery
Rockton Agricultural Society
Sonic Unyon Records
Telling Tales
Trip Central
West Avenue Cider



Halton:

Andrews Farm Market and Winery
Backed by Bees
Burlington Museums Foundation
Burlington Sound of Music Festival
Cameron's Brewing
City of Burlington
Country Heritage Agricultural Society
Dan Lawrie International Sculpture Collection

Downtown Acton BIA
Flux Brewing Company
Furnace Room Brewery
Georgetown Agricultural Society
Georgetown Craft Beef Festival
Halton Agricultural Society
Halton Regional Conservation Authority
Light up the Hills Festival Halton

Milton BIA
NUVO Taste
Pumpkins After Dark
Royal Botanical Gardens
Town of Milton
Town of Oakville
Visit Oakville
Zen Climb



Brant:

Brantview Apples
Browndale Farm
The Corporation of The City of Brantford
Downtown Paris BIA
Federated Women's Institute of Canada
Five Oaks Centre
Galaxy Motel

Grand River Champion of Champions
Pow Wow
Grand River Rafting Company
Grant Valley Trails Association
Grand Watershed Trails Network
Langford Conservancy
Little Brown Cow
Noisemaker Presents Inc.

Ohsweken Speedway
Paris Brewing and Malting
Paris Agricultural Society
Steel Wheel Brewery
Taren White Gallery
The County of Brant
Two Row on the Grand
Woodland Cultural Centre

Funded by:
Federal Economic Development
Agency for Southern Ontario

Canada

HHB Tourism Relief Fund Initiatives

The Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association was also a recipient of the Tourism Relief Fund which supported the RTO's priority to develop the destination's shoulder season for locals and tourists. The funding also provided the RTO with the opportunity to work closely with Six Nations Tourism to expand business capacity in their local community and to create compelling authentic programming to elevate Chiefswood Park Cabins visitor experiences.



This experiential initiative was developed to enrich the experience of guests staying at Chiefswood Park Cabins or for those taking daytrips into the area. This interactive culinary enhancement promoted authentic local Indigenous food and culture. Guests have the opportunity to cook traditional foods on the fire, or in the cabins as all ingredients, menu cards, and instructional videos were provided to show guests how to properly prepare their meals the traditional way.



This immersive experience was developed to showcase local Indigenous artists and vendors through the exploration of traditional dance, music and cuisine.

This pilot event continues to be offered by Six Nations Tourism.

3
Events

10
Indigenous
Partnerships

173
Attendees

"A wonderful evening with beautiful dancing and fabulous food. An excellent way to get to know more about Indigenous culture" - Attendee



The Heart of Ontario Tour was a free immersive three-weekend event showcasing the rural areas of Paris, Milton and Binbrook within our region. From amazing local music performances and regional cuisine to local artisans, creative installations and hands-on activities, these all-ages events truly offered something for everyone.

Friday Night Culinary Initiative: Each Friday of all three weekends, an elevated culinary experience offer was available for purchase. Those who attended enjoyed live performances from local musicians and a sit-down dinner featuring regional cuisine.

Weekend Pop-Ups: On the weekend, an arts, crafts and vintage pop-up with 30+ vendors which also included Art Installations, Live music performances, children's programming and food were offered.

55
Musicians
Engaged

54
Vendors
Engaged

Industry Relations & Training

What We Do

HHBRTA is committed to facilitating training and tourism development opportunities for tourism industry stakeholders throughout the region.

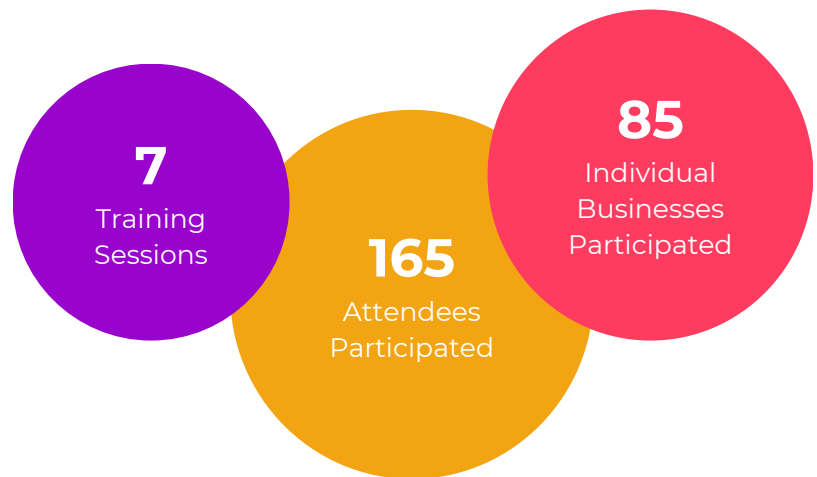
Workforce Development Training

Fall Training Week:

This training series, hosted annually in the first week of October, was developed to help build tourism business opportunities and steward progression of business development priorities in the region. Training Sessions took place in person and virtually.

Topics included:

- Digital Marketing on a Shoestring Budget
- Culinary Tourism with a Sustainable Lens
- Crafting Content for Social Media
- Influence in 2022
- Recruitment and Retention
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Google Analytics for Small Business



Youth and College Training Support:

Successfully partnered with eight universities/colleges resulting in 26 students participating at the Annual Southern Ontario Tourism Conference. Schools included:

- George Brown College
- Waterloo University
- Guelph University
- Fanshawe College
- Toronto Metropolitan University
- Centennial College
- Mohawk College
- Niagara College



Elevating Ontario Experiences

In partnership with the Tourism Association Industry of Ontario (TIAO), HHBRTA hosted two virtual Experience Development Training Workshops aimed to assist tourism operators to uncover potential growth areas in their business within culinary or winter/shoulder season tourism development. Participants also received a dedicated 30-minute virtual coaching session to help explore the development of their new or elevated tourism experience.



This exclusive RTO initiative was designed to build on the existing foundation while ensuring we further stimulate and drive economic growth.

The Elevating Experience workshops offered individual recommendations that incorporate the development of a unique and innovative tourism experience or product that can be implemented by the operator to expand their existing business.

Session 1: **Elevating Ontario's "Taste of Place" Experiences**
with Culinary Tourism Alliance; Held November 1, 2022,
6 Participants



Session 2: **Elevating Ontario's Shoulder Season Experiences**
with BC Hughes; Held November 30, 2022,
12 Participants (SOLD OUT)



"As a small business it's sometimes hard to stay positive and focused on your goals, sessions like this really do keep you motivated."
- Workshop Participant



2023 Southern Ontario Tourism Conference



This annual conference, hosted jointly by RTO 1 and RTO 3, aims to increase operator networking beyond borders. The conference program aims to help with aspiration and innovation as industry operators collectively forge paths to economic recovery, and create new future experiences.

Conference Program Included:

- 3 Pre-conference Learning Tours
- 3 Keynote Speakers
- 9 Educational Breakout Sessions
- Network Opportunities: Welcome Reception, Breaks and So Social



250

Attendees
SOLD OUT
CONFERENCE

96%

of Attendees said they
would attend next year's
conference

92%

of Attendees said they
would recommend this
conference to a colleague

Attendee Feedback:

"I was amazed at the diversity of businesses attending the Southern Ontario Tourism Conference. The speakers, workshops and networking opportunities were great! Thank you RTO1 & RTO3 for highlighting successful businesses and their ingenuity and implementation of ideas to attract the public to Tourism Ontario destinations!"

- Margaret Byl, FWIC/WI Canada and the Adelaide Hunter Hoodless Homestead (RTO3)

"A must attend! Networking, educational speakers and tourism takeaways. Worth the catch up at the office afterwards!"

- Anonymous

"The SOTC is a great place to listen, learn, and participate in an environment that allows people to uplift each other in an industry that has been hard hit. Two and a half days of sharing ideas, and learning from one another. All for the benefit of our own organizations and the benefit of the industry as a whole!"

- Jenna, Willow Barrel Retreat (RTO1)

"An excellent Tourism Event, once again. The conference is one of the events we look forward to each year.- great speakers, great contacts, lots of food and friendship."

- Marc Alton, Alton Farms Estate Winery (RTO1)

Corporate Communications

What We Do

HHBRTA is committed to providing ongoing communications through a variety of different outlets including:

Corporate Channels

HHBRTA's corporate industry communication channels are a great way to stay connected and up-to-date with current industry news, marketing opportunities, industry resources and more.



www.hamiltonhaltonbrant.com



@HHBTourism



@theheartofontario



Industry Exchange Forum

Each year, HHBRTA facilitates a pan-regional industry exchange to encourage networking and information sharing between tourism industry colleagues from across Hamilton Halton Brant. This event includes an education/training component, networking time, regional tourism updates and communications focused on current industry initiatives aimed at increasing tourism spending.

Corporate E-Newsletters

Get the latest news on HHBRTA's upcoming marketing campaigns, workshops and training, industry highlights and funding opportunities delivered right to your inbox! Subscribers to our e-newsletter also receive Special Bulletins as time-sensitive news and opportunities become available which impacts the local tourism industry.

7,316

Corporate
Website Visits

25,581

Total
Page Views

31

Industry
E-Newsletters

Partnerships & Collaborations

What We Do

Develop partnerships with the tourism industry to identify and support new opportunities for business and other tourism stakeholders to grow business, foster strategic alliances and attract new marketing alliances.

Partnership Funding Opportunity

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport allocates funds to Regional Tourism Organizations to support co-invested partner initiatives that aligns with the RTO Business Plan.

Partnership Program Funding Recipients

- Attractions Ontario - Destination Marketing Initiative
- City of Brantford - Trail Mix Project (Year 1)
- City of Brantford/County of Brant - Grand River Loop
- Culinary Tourism Alliance - Great Taste of Ontario
- Destination Ontario Fall Campaign
- Experience Program Launch - Booker Platform
- Grand River Rafting Co. - Wincey Mills Dollar Project
- Paris to Ancaster Bike Race - Global Cycling Network
- Regional Cycling Map - Hamilton Area
- SuperCrawl 2022, Hamilton
- Tourism Hamilton - CCMA Country Crawl (Phase 1)



Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Award Recognition Program



This program recognizes regional tourism industry partners and operators who have demonstrated excellence in product development, business innovation, partnerships/collaborations, sustainability, and job creation/workforce development.

2023 Award Categories

1. Innovative New Experience or Product Development Award

This Award recognizes a tourism business/organization that has demonstrated innovation in the development of a new or enhanced tourism product or visitor experience. The new offering should be tourism focused, open to the public and contribute to a better regional visitor experience.

2023 Recipient: Downtown Oakville BIA - Augmented Reality Holiday Experience



2. Partnership & Collaboration Award

This Award recognizes a partnered initiative (including a tourism experience, product, or marketing campaign) that successfully attracts and encourages visitors to experience the Hamilton Halton Brant region. Partnerships can include collaboration with private and/or public sector entities.

2023 Recipient: Two Row on the Grand - Indigenous Paddle and Camping Experience



3. Responsible Tourism Award

Sustainability is a deciding factor for more and more visitors when choosing their travel experiences. This award recognizes demonstrated innovation from tourism industry partners/organizations who are leading the way in encouraging sustainable tourism.

2023 Recipient: West Avenue Cider





3 Ways We Can Help Grow Your Tourism Business

1. List your business, offers and events on our website so you can be considered for inclusion in our marketing tactics and gain exposure in regional marketing campaigns. It is free and easy to do.

Contact Aiden Eng to learn more:

aiden.eng@theheartofontario.com

2. Get the latest news about upcoming marketing campaigns, tourism workshops and other great opportunities to grow your business.

Sign up to receive our tourism partner communications:

hamiltonhaltonbrant.com/newsletter-sign-up

3. Follow and chime in on our consumer social channels to gain access to the region's engaged audiences.



@HeartofOntario



The Heart of Ontario



**HAMILTON
HALTON
BRANT**

FIND YOUR WAY TO
THE HEART OF ONTARIO