



# CENTRAL COUNTIES TOURISM NEWSLETTER

November 2025



## E.D.'S CORNER: A Word From Chuck Thibeault

Good day,

Last month, staff built out the 2026-2027 Business Plan based on direction and insights from the Board of Directors, and informed by municipal priorities, stakeholder feedback and industry trends. We presented the draft plan to the board in early November and are currently in the process of making refinements and developing a budget to meet the lofty goals and objectives. Delivering what you expect from us – and what we expect from ourselves – is expensive. And, unfortunately, the province of Ontario has not increased its allocation to regional tourism since the program's inception in 2010.

We continue to pursue new revenue streams like [AVTR<sup>1</sup>](#) (officially launched and ready for you to add augmented reality to you organization) and corporate sponsorships of our consumer and stakeholder facing assets so that we can to deliver our... [Read more.](#)

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# MEMBER NEED TO KNOW...

## SAVE THE DATE: 2026 Tourism Symposium

Our [2026 Tourism Symposium](#), presented by [Durham Tourism](#) and the [Town of Whitby](#), returns on Monday, March 2 at [Royal Ashburn Golf Club](#) in Whitby. This year's theme *Local to Limitless* explores how close-to-home strengths can create wide-reaching impact through collaboration, culinary innovation, and bundled experiences. [Sponsorship opportunities](#) are now available for organizations looking to support the sector and gain visibility at this flagship regional event. More event details and ticket information coming soon. Mark your calendar!



## REMINDER: 2025/26 Partnership Program Final Intake



There's still time to apply for the [2025/26 Partnership Program](#)! Tourism stakeholders across York, Durham, and Headwaters can access up to \$10,000 in matched funding to bring projects to life that inspire visitation and enhance the visitor experience. Funding is available through four streams (*Small Business Marketing Support, Out-of-Region Marketing Support, Route Development, and Destination Development*). Applicants must connect with their Industry Relations Manager to confirm eligibility. Applications for the final intake, supporting projects through to March 31, 2026, closes **December 15, 2025**. [Learn more.](#)

## FREE RESOURCE: CCT's Learning Lab

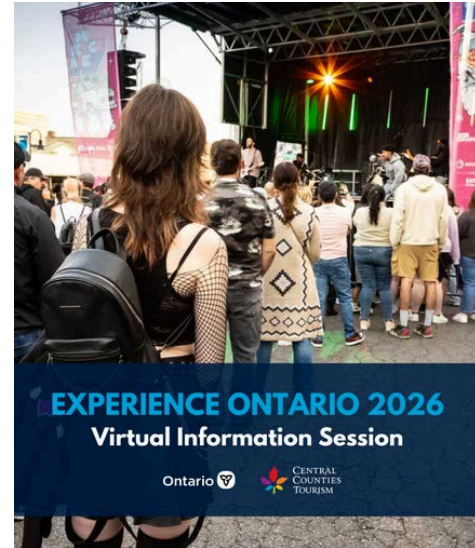
CCT's [Learning Lab](#) is your free, self-paced resource for building industry skills. Our newest module, **Tourism Route Development**, helps stakeholders create multi-stop itineraries and collaborative routes that enhance the visitor experience and strengthen regional partnerships. You'll also find a full suite of on-demand courses: **Tourism Ambassador Program**, **Tourism Grant Writing**, **Social Media Marketing Program**, **IncludeMe®**, and **Tourism Now**. Haven't checked them out yet? Get started at [learninglab.centralcounties.ca](https://learninglab.centralcounties.ca).



# MORE MEMBER NEED TO KNOW...

## INFO SESSION: Experience Ontario 2026 Funding

The provincial [Experience Ontario 2026](#) program has officially launched, providing financial support for festivals and events taking place between April 1, 2026 and March 31, 2027. Eligible applicants can receive up to 50% of project costs, with maximum funding amounts determined through the Capacity Building and Established Event streams. The deadline to apply is **December 16, 2025 at 4pm**. To better help York, Durham and Headwaters stakeholders understand eligibility, funding tiers, and how to apply, we will be hosting an information session with our Ministry Regional Development Advisor, Aruba Ahmed, on **December 2 at 12pm**. If you're considering applying, or want to learn more, we encourage you to join us for this session. [Register here to attend](#).



## We're hiring an Industry Relations Manager!



We are looking for a dynamic, relationship-driven professional to join our team as the [Headwaters Industry Relations Manager](#) to support tourism businesses and communities across the Headwaters area. This full-time, fully remote role focusses on stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and helping strengthen the local visitor economy. The deadline to apply is **December 7, 2025**. Know someone that would be a great fit? Please feel free to share this opportunity within your networks! Access the full job description [here](#).



# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## GOOD NEWS, ACCOLADES & COLLABORATION

### Order of Vaughan awarded to VFF's Co-Founder Antonio Ienco

Congratulations to Antonio Ienco, co-founder of the [Vaughan Film Festival](#), who has been awarded the [2025 Order of Vaughan](#) in the Arts and Entertainment category! This prestigious civic honour recognizes individuals whose extraordinary contributions positively impact the community. Antonio is one of nine remarkable individuals being celebrated this year and joins a distinguished list of 80 recipients who have helped shape Vaughan's civic and cultural life across arts, business, education, and more.



SOURCE: [Chris Ainsworth](#), City Councillor

### Excellence in Agriculture Awarded to Hereward Farms' Julie Thurgood-Burnett



SOURCE: [Hereward Farms](#)

Congratulations to [Hereward Farms](#) in Dufferin County for receiving an Honourable Mention at the [Excellence in Agriculture Awards](#)! Founded by Julie Thurgood-Burnett, this woman-led Ontario business cultivates lavender and sunflowers across 250 acres in East Garafraxa, producing producing all-natural, Canadian-made skincare and home products. Through its on-farm café and lounge, Hereward Farms promotes sustainability, innovation, and agri-tourism, making it a standout contributor to Ontario's vibrant \$50.7 billion agri-food sector. [Read the full media release.](#)

### Vaughan wins 2025 World Festival and Event City Award

The City of Vaughan has been recognized with a [2025 World Festival and Event City Award](#) by the [International Festivals and Events Association](#) for its leadership in supporting festivals and events. Hosting over 75 events annually, including Canada Day, Winterfest, Concerts in the Park, Festa d'Italia, and Diwali celebrations, Vaughan continues to provide cultural, social, and economic value to the community. Congratulations to the entire Events Team at the City of Vaughan for this well-deserved recognition and for creating vibrant experiences that bring people together while strengthening the local visitor economy.



SOURCE: [City of Vaughan](#)

# MORE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## GOOD NEWS, ACCOLADES & COLLABORATION

### New Hotel Opens in Vaughan

We're excited to welcome the newly built [Home2 Suites by Hilton Vaughan Toronto](#), a 148-suite, extended-stay property that brings fresh capacity, modern amenities, and a flexible, guest-focussed experience to the Vaughan market. Led by General Manager and CCT Board Member John Caneco, the hotel officially opened earlier this month on November 13. Congratulations to John and the entire team on this exciting addition to our region's accommodations!



SOURCE: [Home2 Suites Vaughan](#)



SOURCE: [City of Oshawa](#)

### New Bike Park opens in Oshawa

Oshawa's [Rose Valley Park](#) officially opened last month, featuring one of Canada's largest BMX tracks! The park offers [4.3 acres of purpose-built riding space](#), including asphalt pump tracks, a dirt jump zone, and mountain bike trails. Over 1,500 visitors attended the grand opening, enjoying BMX demos, pickleball workshops, and family-friendly activities. Designed with community input for riders of all ages, Rose Valley has quickly become a premier destination for outdoor recreation and cycling enthusiasts in Durham Region.

### The Nashville Takeover is coming to Orangeville

Exciting news! Orangeville has been selected out of hundreds of towns across Canada for [The Nashville Takeover: Summer 2026](#)! From July 10-12, 2026 Nashville and Canada's top songwriters will perform in intimate venues and hidden spaces throughout the town. Expect three days of unforgettable music, storytelling, and community connection. This is an incredible opportunity to showcase Orangeville's vibrant culture, music scene, and community spirit. We can't wait to see the town shine!



SOURCE: [The Nashville Takeover](#)



## MARKETING AND MORE

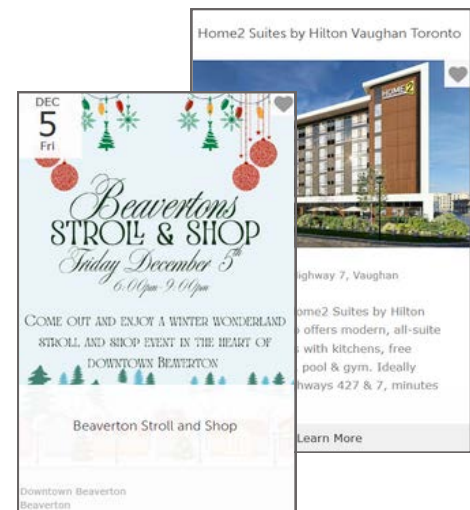
### Share Your Winter Experiences!

Our 2026 [York Durham Headwaters](#) winter campaign is all about helping Ontarians embrace winter, not escape it—and we want to showcase your best cold-weather offerings. Whether it's cozy cafés, winter patios, outdoor adventure, wellness escapes, events, or truly unique seasonal experiences, your submissions help us highlight the magic of YDH when the temperature drops. Have great winter content, new programs, or updates we should feature? Submit your winter experiences through our [Content Intake Form](#) by **December 3, 2025** for consideration to be part of this year's campaign.



### Keep Your Listings Up-to-Date

A friendly reminder to review your business listing, refresh your photos and descriptions, and submit your upcoming events to ensure visitors have the most accurate, inspiring information about what you offer. Updated listings help us promote your experiences more effectively across campaigns, itineraries, and seasonal content. Login at [centralcounties.ca](#) or create a new account to add your business and events to [yorkdurhamheadwaters.ca](#). And don't forget to stay connected with your region's [Industry Relations Manager](#). Keeping them in the loop about what's new ensures your business is top-of-mind for features, opportunities, and future promotions.



WE LOVE CONNECTING WITH YOU  
and sharing with our followers.

Be sure to tag the correct account so your message reaches  
the right audience.

For all things consumer, tag [@visitydh](#)  
For industry-focused news and events, tag [@centralcountiestourism](#)



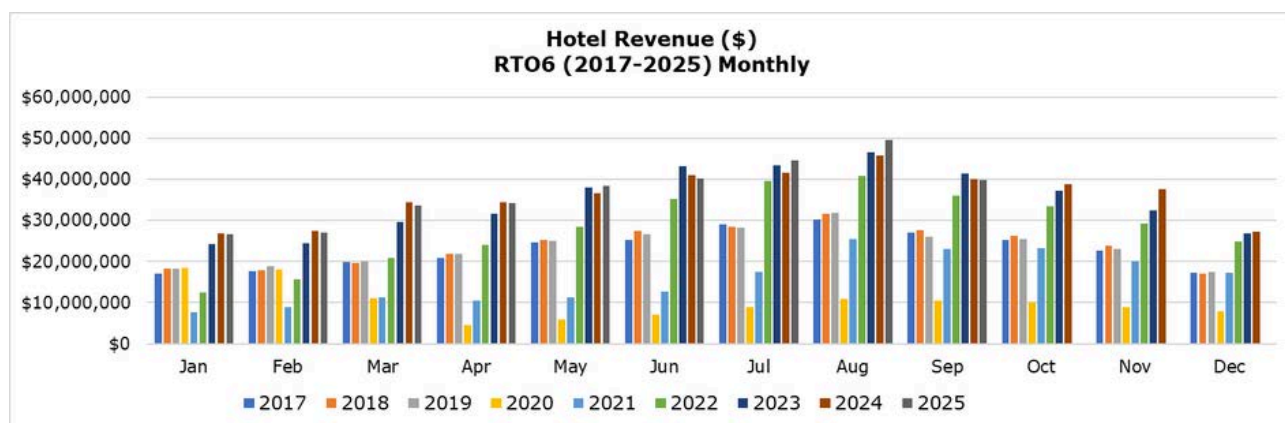




# RESEARCH

## 2025 Q3 HOTEL DATA REPORT

As our [aggregated hotel data](#) shows, the third quarter of 2025 delivered one of the strongest seasons ever recorded for our region's visitor economy, including the highest revenue month in CCT's reporting history this August. Beyond the headline numbers, the data reveals important trends about traveller behaviour, seasonality, and the growing value visitors place on quality experiences. Our latest analysis breaks down these insights and outlines actionable opportunities for hotels, attractions, restaurants, and municipalities to keep this momentum going. [Read the full report.](#)



## NEW: DESTINATION ONTARIO INSIGHTS PORTAL

[Destination Ontario](#) has launched the [Destination Ontario Insights Portal](#) — a free, one-stop resource that brings Ontario tourism research and data together in an easy-to-use platform. Developed in partnership with Context Research Group, the portal offers interactive tools, timely reports, and traveller insights to help businesses make informed, evidence-based decisions. Registered users gain access to a growing library of resources, including the Ontario Travel & Tourism Monthly report. [Sign up](#) today to explore this new tool for Ontario-wide tourism data.





### Canada Summer Jobs Program

The [2026 Canada Summer Jobs program](#) is now accepting applications, offering wage subsidies to help not-for-profit, public sector, and small private-sector employers hire youth ages 15–30 for summer positions. Not-for-profits can receive up to 100% of minimum wage, while public and private employers are eligible for up to 50%. Jobs must run 6–16 weeks between April 20 and August 29, 2026. Applications are due **December 11, 2025**. [Learn more and apply.](#)

### Experience Ontario 2026

The provincial [Experience Ontario](#) program is now accepting applications to support in-person festivals and events taking place between April 1, 2026 and March 31, 2027. Eligible organizers can receive up to 50% of project costs through the Capacity Building and Established Event streams, helping enhance programming, boost attendance, and strengthen local visitor economies. Deadline to apply is **December 16, 2025**. Attend our [info session on December 2](#) to [learn more](#).

### Ontario Sport Hosting Program

The 2026–27 intake for the [Ontario Sport Hosting Program](#) is now open, offering financial support to help Ontario communities host national and international sport events. The program aims to strengthen local economies, attract visitors, and elevate sport development across the province. Application deadline is **January 15, 2026**. Review the [Sport Hosting Program Guidelines](#) to learn more.

### Skills That Travel Workforce Development

The [Tourism Industry Association of Ontario](#) (TIAO) has launched [Skills That Travel](#), a new online resource hub designed to support every stage of a tourism career, from entry-level to advanced. The platform offers a curated mix of courses and training streams to help individuals gain practical experience, develop leadership skills, and build transferable expertise for a thriving career in tourism. This initiative aims to build a stronger, more resilient tourism workforce across Ontario. Complimentary access to training is available for eligible Ontario residents until **March 30, 2026**, or until programs reach capacity. [Learn more.](#)





### **Boost Your Tourism Brand: AI Tools, Visual Content & Strategic Partnerships**

Join [Durham Tourism](#), [The Business Advisory Centre of Durham](#), and Central Counties Tourism on **December 2, 2025** at the [Uxbridge Historical Centre](#) for an engaging session designed to help tourism operators stand out. Learn how to use AI tools to streamline marketing and content creation, capture stunning visuals with just your smartphone, and build strategic partnerships to strengthen your tourism brand. Whether you're a small business owner, local attraction, or part of a tourism organization, this event offers practical insights to connect with more visitors. [Register here](#) to secure your spot!

### **Hired: How to Get the Most of Your Hiring Events**

Join the [Hospitality Workers Training Centre](#) (HWTC) on **December 2, 2025** for [Hired: How to Get the Most of Your Hiring Events](#), a practical 60-minute webinar for leaders, owners, and HR professionals in the tourism and hospitality sector. Learn how to plan and execute high-impact hiring events that go beyond resume collection to generate real hires, drawing on HWTC's experience in hospitality and foodservice workforce development. This session offers insights on creating efficient, inclusive, and strategic recruitment experiences that deliver results. [Advanced registration required.](#)

### **The Sales Lab: Networking as a Marketing Superpower**

Hosted by the [Canadian Queer Chamber of Commerce](#), [The Sales Lab: Networking as a Marketing Superpower](#) on **December 11, 2025** is an interactive online workshop that will help you turn networking into your most effective marketing tool. Led by Lindsay Johnson, [The Radical Connector](#), this session will show you how to choose the right events, start authentic conversations, identify ideal clients, build quick rapport, and invite potential partners into consent-based sales conversations. Great networkers aren't born, they're made! [Register to learn more.](#)

# TOURISM

## INDUSTRY NEWS

### Canada's Tourism Sector Hits Record Summer

[Destination Canada](#) reports that Canada's tourism sector achieved a record-breaking summer in 2025, generating nearly \$60B in revenue between May and August — a 6% increase over 2024. Domestic travel, especially inter-provincial trips, and a 10% rise in international visitor spending drove the growth. Hotel occupancy reached 80.7% in August, the highest since 2014, with strong gains across rural and urban regions nationwide. This performance underscores the resilience of Canada's tourism industry and its vital role in communities coast to coast. [Read the full media release.](#)

### GreenStep Launches Destination360

[GreenStep](#) has launched [Destination360](#), a suite of services designed to help destinations measure, plan, and accelerate sustainability and climate action efforts. The program provides a structured approach from early engagement to continuous improvement, helping destinations engage stakeholders, track performance, implement strategies, pursue global certification, and report progress. Destination360 enables destinations to take confident action toward a more sustainable and regenerative future while supporting tourism businesses in reducing environmental impact and improving competitiveness. [Read the full media release.](#)

Connect with us on social!

