



Staff Report to Council - for Information

Title: Bruce County Economic Development Annual Report 2023

From: Claire Dodds, Commissioner of Community Development

Date: March 7, 2024

Report Purpose:

This report is for information.

Report Summary:

This report provides an overview of the attached 2023 Economic Development Annual Report. The report highlights the successes and outcomes of the work undertaken during the second year of implementation of the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Background:

The Bruce County Economic Development Annual Report 2023 provides a yearly update on the economic development programs and initiatives undertaken towards economic growth and prosperity across Bruce County. As the Bruce County Economic Development Strategic Plan 2022-2026 entered its second year in 2023, the team worked with community and regional partners and developed numerous action plans to execute a robust set of actions in the future. Bruce County Economic Development aims to influence and support business growth, attract investment, foster community improvement, sustainably develop tourism, and secure a reliable and skilled workforce currently and into the future.

Overview:

The report shows the full range of economic development programs, projects, and initiatives undertaken with municipalities and community partners towards business development, investment attraction, community development, tourism development and workforce development.

A number of notable activities are highlighted below:

Business to Bruce:

- The Business to Bruce program in partnership with the Province of Ontario, continued to support entrepreneurs and existing businesses by providing business consultations, training, seminars, webinars, events, and numerous outreach activities.

- The Summer Company Program in partnership with the Province of Ontario awarded five entrepreneurs with a \$3,000 grant each.
- The Starter Company Plus Program in partnership with the Province of Ontario provided eight startup businesses with a \$5,000 grant each, along with mentorship and training.
- The Bruce County Spark Program in partnership with Tourism Innovation Lab awarded three finalists a \$3,000 grant each, along with mentorship with a seasoned tourism innovator.

Workforce Development:

- Bruce County piloted a new Job/Career Fair Support Program with the Municipality of Brockton and the Township of Huron-Kinloss.
- Bruce County supported the development of the Saugeen Sparks Centre, a new youth centre in the region aimed at sparking interest in the skilled trades and helping youth explore various trade opportunities.

Business Attraction & Investment:

- Bruce County's delegation attended MIPIM event in Cannes, France with over 26,000 attendees and 2,400 companies focused heavily on generating qualified leads of those interested in investing in the County.
- The Spruce the Bruce Program continued to support businesses, municipalities, and community groups to build vibrant and attractive communities and 76 grants were awarded in total.
- A new investment website, www.investinbruce.ca was launched dedicated to fostering business attraction and investment in the region.

Tourism:

- Bruce County partnered with Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7) for various digital advertising campaigns, including *Dare to Do Winter*, *Book and Look*, *Hidden Gems*, and *Fall Getaways*.
- Bruce County launched a Visitor Survey and a total of 1,914 surveys were completed.
- Bruce County partnered with the Township of Huron-Kinloss for the Women in Construction program which facilitated two cohorts of 10 women to the future labour force.

Partnerships and Collaboration:

- A total of \$363,000 in external funding was leveraged to support economic development work in Bruce County.
- A total of \$47,650 was provided to 28 organizations directly supporting agriculture as well as youth education, fall fairs and horticultural societies.

- Bruce County Economic Development continued to build networks and relationships with a focus on energy sector development such as participation in various Hydrogen conferences, CNA, etc.
- Bruce County implemented Phase 2 of the Virtual Familiarization & Connection Sessions for local employers and newcomers in partnership with Newcomer Centre of Peel connecting employers and employment opportunities in Bruce County with job seekers.
- Bruce County in partnership with Grey County continued to work on the actions outlined in the Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership Settlement Strategy, a roadmap to build welcoming and inclusive communities in Grey Bruce and improve the integration of newcomers.
- The Regional Support Economic Development pilot project drove an estimated savings of \$238,000 in potential expenditures for local participating municipalities.

The detailed Bruce County Economic Development Annual Report 2023 accompanies this report.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

There are no financial, staffing, legal or IT considerations related to this report.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

There was no interdepartmental consultations done for this report.

Link to Strategic Goals and Objectives:

Growth and Innovation - Promote responsible growth

Link to Departmental Plan Goals and Objectives, if any:

The annual report outlines the accomplishments of the team related to the economic development strategic plan.

Report Author:

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