



STAFF REPORT
Municipality of Wawa
Maury O'Neill, CAO



To: Mayor and Council	Report No.: CAO 2023-0
Date: March 31, 2023	Council Meeting Date: , 2023

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Quarterly Activity Report
April to June 2023

Recommendation

THAT the Municipal Council receive the Economic Development Quarterly Activity Report dated March 31, 2023, for information.

Background and Summary

Economic and business development activity is being led by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) with the support of an Assistant, Jessie Labonte. The Director of Community Services and Tourism provides support on matters pertaining to Tourism Planning and Development and oversees the seasonal operations of the Tourist Information Center and Wawa Goose Market.

In June 2022, Council appointed an Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee (EDTAC) to provide advice and strategic direction to Council on policies, procedures and strategic directions that should be considered for the purposes of fostering and advancing economic, business and tourism opportunities in Wawa and Area. The Committee is working on developing a work plan for 2023.

The following represents a brief summary of some of the activity relating to economic and tourism development that has taken place during the period of January to March 2023;

1. TOURISM

1.1 *Wawa Five-Year Tourism Plan*

The Consulting Firm Bannikin provided a presentation of the Wawa 5 Year Tourism Strategy and Action Plan on March 7, 2023 and it was received by Council. A press release will be sent out to local media in April 2023. Next steps for the implementation of the Plan include Bannikin providing support to the Municipality in coordinating a familiarization meeting with existing and prospective tourism partners so that the socializing of the report amongst key stakeholders and identifying actions from the action plan that partners can collaborate on or lead can begin.

1.2 **Municipal Accommodation Tax**

The CAO has begun investigating the feasibility and benefits of implementing a Municipal Accommodation Tax in Wawa. Details to be provided in a report due to Council by end of December 2023.

2. **LABOUR ATTRACTION AND RETENTION**

2.1 **CTV Northern Works – Media Campaign**

Staff continue to work in partnership with communities in Superior East and led by SECFDC, to promote and market available job opportunities in the region through a series of commercials to be aired on CTV Northern Ontario and a new Northern Works website. The second airing of Ads is scheduled to run in spring 2023 and information on Wawa's available jobs can be found on the Northern Works website, including promotion of the Regional Employment Help Centre job board.

2.2 **Francophone Immigration Capacity Building Project**

Staff continue to partner with Dubreuilville, White River and the Réseau du Nord – Francophone Immigration Program to complete the Francophone Immigration Capacity Building Project. The goal of this project is to see the area gain funding and supports to attract Francophone Immigrants to area employers and would leverage additional supports for immigrants. Staff have been invited to participate in the Magnetic North 2023 - 4th Annual forum on population growth. The conference is hosted by Northern Policy Institute in partnership with Northern Ontario Organizations and will be held June 12-14, 2023 in Sudbury at the Northbury Hotel. There would be opportunity as a region to advocate for rural northern communities and the need for improved francophone immigration services.



2.3 North Algoma Medical Recruitment and Retention Committee

A member of Council, currently Mitch Hatfield, participates on the North Algoma Medical Recruitment and Retention Committee. The Municipality committed to provide \$23,000 annually for two-years to the Committee (2021-2023) to attract and retain medical professionals in Wawa. The Committee meets quarterly and the staff attend recruitment affairs and markets opportunities, particularly to Locums, to meet local needs. The Municipality provides incentives such as access to the fitness centre to visiting medical professionals.

3. HOUSING AND LAND DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Housing and Accommodation Planning

Addressing the current shortage of local housing and accommodations continued to be the highest priority of staff over the past quarter and considerable time was spent on finding possible solutions with various partners. Several meetings with residential developers to encourage the building of new units. Over ten consultations were held with developers and four remain currently active in pursuing potential housing projects in the future for the community.

Staff have inventoried available residential lands owned by the Municipality, including the 80 un-serviced lots in Churchill Phase V, to respond to local development inquiries. Staff also supported the owners of vacant land to sell and/or develop lots for residential purposes. Several land development inquiries were responded to over the period as well as discussions held with major employers to ensure stakeholders were engaged in developing possible solutions to the housing shortage.

The responsibility to provide affordable, accessible and adequate housing is all levels of government and is governed by a complex set of policy and legislation that requires coordination between land use planning, infrastructure planning, economic development, public health, community services, housing service providers, and the development industry. Staff continue to attract housing developers and support local builders to find solutions to increasing housing supply.

3.2 Land Development – Industrial Park and Commercial Lots

During the quarter, four vacant lots in the Industrial Park were surveyed and sold to local persons developing new or expanding existing businesses. A variety of support was provided to the purchasers and only one (1) vacant lots remains available for purchase. To address the pending shortage of suitably zoned and serviced lots for industrial development, staff is working with a private sector partner to examine the expansion potential of more land for both commercial and industrial development.

Several inquiries were responded to over the reporting period from out-of-town businesses who were looking to find space in existing commercial buildings for business expansion purposes. All inquiries were forwarded to local business persons and some companies have located branch offices locally.

A study on projected market demand for both commercial buildings and industrial land will be recommended for consideration in the 2023 budget.

4. DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Red Program – Community Improvement Plan Application

The CAO submitted an application to the OMAFRA Rural Economic Development Program (RED) for funding to update the Wawa Community Improvement Plan for Broadway Avenue to develop new financial incentives to encourage commercial and residential growth on Broadway Avenue.

4.2 Wawa Goose Summer Market

With the assistance of staff and volunteer Committee, the Wawa Goose Nest Summer Market has been preparing and scheduling this seasons events and plans to host several market events such as a Mother’s Day market and July 1 Canada Day market focussed on promoting locally produced goods. All Goose Nest events will be promoted locally and to tourists.

4.2 Investor Visit/Tour

The CAO hosted an investor who was interested in viewing available properties in Wawa. Staff provided the investor with a Community Profile tailored to their needs.

5. OTHER ACTIVITY

5.1 Take a Break on the Wawa Transit Bus – March Break Campaign

The goal of the Take a Break on the Wawa Transit Bus campaign was to promote and encourage residents in Wawa to use the transit service and increase ridership. The campaign advertised to all patrons that during the regular operating hours of the transit bus, Monday, March 13, 2023 8:45 a.m. to Friday, March 17, 2023 2:45 p.m., that the fees will be waived. Ridership numbers were.....

5.2 Inclusive Community Grants Program

Staff have requested Council's support of the Wawa Age Friendly and their goal of implementing action items outlined in the Wawa Age Friendly Plan (2021-2025) by submitting an application to the Inclusive Community Grants Program 2023 intake. Action items requested to be included in the application by the Committee include:

- One outdoor electronic board to be installed on the side of the Municipal townhall building facing the Canada Post Office (identified as a high traffic area)
- Hire a Wawa Age Friendly Coordinator for a six-month contract from September to March 2024.

5.3 Business Management Placement

Staff are hosting a student at the municipal townhall from Tuesday April 11, 2023 to Friday, May 5, 2023. His name is Nicholas Corbett and to graduate from a business management course he is required to do 140 hours of placement. Tasks that staff hope to involve Nicholas with include:

- Update Wawa Business Directory
- Create a "Business Start-Up Toolkit"
- Attending Committee Meetings with Staff
- Participate in Economic Development/Tourism Projects where appropriate

5.4 Community Economic Development 101

Staff, Council and the EDTAC attended a webinar on Thursday, March 23, 2023, which provided information on what economic development is and how community members can foster initiatives and promote growth.

5.5 Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee

Staff continue to coordinate and organize EDTAC meetings and continue to assist the Committee in drafting a strategic economic development workplan for 2023. Items identified as priorities in consultation with the Committee include:

- Housing
- Tourism
- Labour Attraction
- Downtown Revitalization/Community Improvement
- Business Development
- Investment Attraction
- Economic Development Strategic Plan

The Committee with assistance from Staff continues to develop a strategic work plan for 2023.

6. **NEXT QUARTER PLANNED ACTIVITY – April – June 2023**

During the next quarter, economic development and tourism efforts will focus on:

- Wawa Community Improvement Plan Project (subject to funding)
- Implementation of the Wawa 5 Year Tourism Strategy and Action Plan
- EDTAC Committee
- Municipal Accommodation Tax report to be completed by December
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Wawa Strategic Plan

The staff activities presented in this report meet the goals and objectives set-out in the Wawa Strategic Plan (2021-2025). Under the key priority of Tourism and Economic Development, all set-out action items have been implemented or are underway. The Report also meets the vision and mission statements of the Wawa Strategic Plan which focus on meeting community needs with quality services that are financially viable.

Conclusion

Staff recommends that Council receive this report for information.

Sincerely,



Maury O'Neill, CAO/Deputy-Clerk

cc: Jessie Labonte, Assistant