

## **Staff Report 2022-0025**

---

Meeting Date: January 18, 2022

Subject: Proposed Visitor Management Task Force

Submitted By: Jason Schildroth, Manager, Economic Development

---

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Visitor Management Task Force Terms of Reference attached as Schedule A to Staff Report 2022-0025, be adopted; and

That staff be directed to begin the recruitment process for the Task Force.

### **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- Staff have engaged with the West Caledon Communities Tourism and Traffic group to understand and implement tactics to manage visitors to Caledon's scenic areas.
- Staff consulted businesses, residents, and stakeholders to identify service centre-specific visitor management challenges and connections to tourism anchors (conservation areas, provincial parks, accommodations, scenic areas, etc.).
- Management of traffic related issues requires a concerted effort from multiple levels of government and agencies working together, and it outside the scope of the proposed task force. Traffic issues and will be addressed as distinct and critical priorities.
- Staff suggest a Visitor Management Task Force be established comprised of members of the community, local businesses, staff and other agencies, to address to develop and implement an action plan to address visitor management issues as identified in the stakeholder engagement exercise highlighted in this report.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Background**

The Caledon Tourism Strategy (2014) identified that Caledon's villages and hamlets serve as service centres (defined as an area providing visitor amenities such as food, beverage, and retail), and that each village has a unique role in the visitor and tourism market. The Caledon Tourism Strategy (2014) also noted "tourism anchor(s)" (conservation areas, provincial parks, accommodations, scenic areas, etc.). associated with each service centre. Belfountain is the only service centre for three significant tourism anchors: the Belfountain Conservation Area, Forks of the Credit Provincial Park, and Forks of the Credit scenic road.

## **Council Direction Visitor Management Strategy**

On March 30, 2021, staff provided a Scenic Area Strategy Update memorandum to Council, outlining the short-term (2021 spring, summer, and fall) tactics that were introduced, and discussing plans to introduce additional measures. In the memorandum, the following considerations were identified as priorities, based on conversations to date:

- expanding the publicly accessible green spaces
- expanding and connecting the recreational and open space trail networks
- promoting sustainable and active transportation
- tourism and economic development
- environmental preservation and sustainability
- communication, promotion, marketing, and branding
- parking and visitor management

On April 20, 2021, Council passed the Notice of Motion – Request to Develop a Successful Destination Management Plan, which included direction to staff to:

- work toward destination management within the Town under three equal pillars; Culture, Economic Sustainability, Environmental Sustainability
- coordinate with the province, conservation authorities and Region of Peel to assess and utilize the existing strategies and plans for all green assets in Caledon to develop a successful destination management plan for the Town of Caledon
- develop a current parking asset inventory and a future parking strategy including the utilization of mobile destination management technology to assess current parking assets (or lack thereof), developing a plan to provide more, and connected to desired visitor thresholds of assets/destinations
- report back in the fall of 2021 with a strategy workplan that includes terms of reference and resource requirements to be considered in the 2022 budget
- create the terms of reference for an Advisory Committee to advise Council regarding destination management, the development of a tourism strategy and identify and share evolving priorities regarding tourism in Caledon

The Town's Officer, Tourism & Culture, and Project Manager, Community Projects were hired in July and September of 2021 respectively, and immediately began supporting the actions and deliverables of the above Notice of Motion, as well as the ad-hoc West Caledon Communities Traffic and Tourism group.

With the support of multiple departments, staff implemented roads-based measures to help manage visitors and motorists to the Town of Caledon (permanent parking prohibitions in problem areas, increased enforcement), launched a revamped tourism website, and are implementing a mobile tourism application.

From September to November 2021, staff held calls with resident and business stakeholders to discuss the challenges faced in the villages of Alton, Belfountain, Caledon Village, Cheltenham, Inglewood, and Terra Cotta (all of whom are represented in the broader West Caledon Communities Traffic and Tourism group).

Increased demand has been recognized in each service centre community, with heaviest impact reported in Belfountain. Rural area service levels for amenities such as public washrooms, parking availability, and public waste receptacles were not developed with pandemic-fueled demand in mind, and has resulted in negative experiences for residents and visitors. In response to the increase in visitors in 2020, the ad hoc West Caledon Communities Traffic and Tourism group (comprised of community members from many of Caledon's western service centre communities) delegated Council and began meeting with staff to discuss and address a wide range of challenges, concerns, issues, and solutions. Collaboratively, this group of staff and residents introduced measures to mitigate issues.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

Through conversations with residents, themes emerged including;

- visitation numbers,
- benefits to businesses,
- a need for engaging groups beyond Caledon's borders,
- Caledon's trails and rivers have now evolved into full tourism anchors since the start of the pandemic (Terra Cotta Forge Park, for example).

Businesses and tourism stakeholders identified;

- challenges related to the need for better wayfinding signage for businesses,
- themed and planned marketing campaigns,
- lack of available parking for the patrons of businesses in villages and hamlets,
- the need for enhanced communication and support (specifically, a need for the establishment of a Business Improvement Area),
- efforts to better promote shoulder season visitation to distribute demand.

In November and December 2021, staff implemented the Have Your Say: Visitor Management engagement project to reach all of Caledon's communities noted as "service centres" within the Caledon Tourism Strategy (2014). To complete this project, staff utilized the Town's online community engagement platform to solicit feedback, generate ideas, and quantify impacts of pandemic-fueled visit increases.

### **Visitor and Resident Experiences in Caledon's Communities**

Staff analyzed the engagement results from the Have Your Say: Visitor Management project to determine village-specific priorities and noted the urgency and significance of which all of Caledon's communities have identified the behaviour of motorists (speeding,

collisions) as a Town-wide concern. To identify the unique visitor management profiles of each service centre, staff considered road safety and motorist conduct as a distinct and separate Town-wide issue. Management of this priority item is addressed later in this report.

### Next Steps

- **Implementing the Visitor Management Task Force and Work Plan (Economic Development)**

To implement the actions and priorities outlined in this report, staff are recommending the implementation of a Task Force to actively work with staff, rather than a formal Committee of Council.

A Visitor Management Task Force is critical to the success of improving the interaction between visitors, residents, and Caledon's communities. The proposed Task Force is composed of the following:

- CAO or designate
- Two (2) Councillors
- Five (5) Community Representatives
- Three (3) Members at Large
- One (1) Central Counties Tourism representative
- One (1) Region of Peel representative
- One (1) Ontario Parks representative
- One (1) Credit Valley Conservation Authority representative
- One (1) Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) representative

The Visitor Management Task Force will meet on a monthly basis throughout 2022 and will adjust the meeting schedule if required throughout the term of the Task Force. A report will be produced with recommendations for the 2023 budget, and a final report will be provided to Town Council in Q4 of 2022 on the results of pilot programs.

The Task Force will work with municipal staff and actively collaborate with other stakeholders as deemed appropriate to complete the action items below.

- Develop and implement a "Parking at Public Schools" program to experiment with overflow parking solutions.
- Develop and implement an "Activations" program to launch in under-marketed service centres to offset visits in busier centres.
- Develop and implement a "Public Washrooms" program to better-utilize existing permanent and seasonal washroom facilities.

- assist with the development and implementation content for the Town's Tourism website, and mobile "Tourism Application" program to address visitor education and conduct,
- participation in Master Plan exercises in 2022 to support Town departments in addressing the need for additional parks, trails, and associated amenities (such as public washrooms),
- identify and research funding opportunities (external grant funding) to support Visitor Management,
- propose partnerships or usage agreements to creatively facilitate parking and public washroom demand, including suggested locations and venues,
- review of existing plans and strategies with connections to visitor management and tourism.

Some priorities identified in the engagement exercise have had early momentum (such as the development of the tourism application), however, others are more complex and will require other tactics to address, such as the development of new parks and trails, and addressing motorist conduct and road safety around town. The remaining visitor management priorities would fall under the scope of the Visitor Management Task Force that is proposed in this report.

- **Development of Tourism Anchors and Green Assets (Community Services)**

Development of new tourism anchors around service centres will continue. Staff will be working closely with the owners and operators of new tourism anchors (such as former aggregate pits that will be rehabilitated) to ensure that each tourism anchor is developed in recognition of the capacities of service centres. For example, the Community Services Department is an existing stakeholder in conversation with Credit Valley Conservation Authority, presently advocating for appropriate management plans for new capital projects (including ensuring ample parking for visitors to trails and scenic areas).

Efforts within the service centres will also be considered in the Town's upcoming Master Planning exercises. The Community Services Department will conduct a Parks and Recreation Master Plan throughout 2022. Through this Plan, staff will assess current services, and define future needs. Town infrastructure associated with green assets will also be assessed, creating opportunity to address the priority of washroom access in public spaces, as identified through the Have Your Say: Visitor Management engagement project.

- **Addressing Town-Wide Road Safety and Management (Transportation)**

It is evident through engagement responses that road safety and enforcement are Town-wide priorities, impacted by commuters and users of arterial roadways who are travelling to or from communities beyond Caledon's borders, not just local destinations within.

The scope of managing motorists, while connected to local tourism, requires a more substantial scope and level of attention given the concerns around public safety and should be considered a distinct and critical priority that is not bound solely to the scope of tourism.

The Engineering Department is currently undertaking a number of transportation related initiatives that will address both the planned growth in the Town and some of the current traffic concerns including:

- Town-wide Multi-Modal Transportation Plan in support of the new Official Plan
- Active Transportation Master Plan (to commence in Q2-2022)
- Automated Speed Enforcement camera program (ASE)
- Red light Camera program
- Traffic By-law comprehensive update
- Operational reviews and traffic calming program

Going forward, it is recognized that local tourism and growth will contribute to an increase in traffic on Town roads. The transportation framework and programs that are necessary to effectively manage this traffic is being established through the various master plans and programs noted above. Local traffic issues will continue to be addressed by way of individual study through regular business processes in the Engineering Department.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Funding of the Visitor Management Task Force and work plan will generally be absorbed into existing operating budgets of Town departments for the continuation of existing measures.

The Task Force and staff may report back to Council with business cases for additional funding to support Task Force programs. The Task Force will also seek out external funding opportunities and will provide a set of recommendations for consideration in the 2023 Budget development process.

### **COUNCIL WORK PLAN**

#### **Connected Community**

Actively promote tourism including our cultural and village main street assets.  
Seek opportunities to connect Caledon villages to help bridge the rural/urban divide.  
Understand community needs and provide services based on urban/rural differences.  
Preserve heritage and natural areas.

**Improved Service Delivery**

Develop a new brand for the Town of Caledon and enhance wayfinding.

**Good Governance**

Manage reasonable community expectations.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Schedule A: Proposed Visitor Management Task Force Terms of Reference

Schedule B: Visitor Management Engagement Summary