
HALDIMAND COUNTY

EDT-M02-2024 Invest Ontario Partner Portal

For Consideration by Council in Committee on October 29, 2024



To: Mayor Bentley and Members of Council

From: Jessica Easson, Senior Economic Development Officer, Economic Development and Tourism Division

RECOMMENDATIONS:

THAT Memorandum EDT-M02-2024 Invest Ontario Partner Portal, be received.

This memorandum is intended to advise Council on the new Partner Portal platform recently launched by Invest Ontario at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference in August 2024.

Invest Ontario describes Partner Portal as “an innovative online platform designed to enhance collaboration between the province, municipalities, and economic development agencies. The portal centralizes resources, data, and communication tools, enabling partners to more effectively attract and retain investment. It was developed to streamline the investment attraction process, improve data accessibility, and foster a unified ‘Team Ontario’ approach to economic development.” This tool specific for the promotion of employment lands (industrial/manufacturing development) is intended to support data driven, investment decision making as well as unifying and streamlining investment attraction efforts with consistent and coordinated supports across partners. Please see Attachment 1, providing a link to a demo by Premier Ford.

The goal of this platform is to improve information sharing and gathering, providing a “home base” for municipal partners to share and access information in a sustainable and equitable way. The Partner Portal is free to use for our municipality, where staff can access community data and add available properties for site selection using a GIS platform. Each organization can have one administrator who can invite others in the organization to join the team and access information. In utilizing the platform, partners are expected to engage in responsible business practices, be willing to collaborate and embrace innovation (see Attachment 2: Partner Pledge).

Sites – Property Search

The “Site” portion of the portal is intended to support Invest Ontario site selection through the identification of sites readily available for investment opportunities. Qualifying criteria includes sites that are: greater than 10 acres, zoned appropriately (i.e., industrial zones), have access to water, sewer, natural gas, electricity, etc. Eligible sites that are ready for construction within a year can be uploaded by the organization’s administrator. It is the responsibility of the organization/municipality to add property listings and ensure the information is kept up to date. The site information is anticipated to support investment opportunities and requests for information (RFIs). The information included within the Partner Portal platform is only viewable to Invest Ontario and Partner Organizations. The tool includes mapping which allows users to view and visualize additional information such as servicing, utilities, rail, natural features, etc. When viewing an individual site there are also features to visualize the placement of a basic 3D rendering and approximate building size on the parcel. This allows staff to share information on potential investment sites in Haldimand and prepare visual materials to aid in attraction efforts.

Community Information

The community information provides a snapshot of information about municipalities to help understand demographic trends and market analyses. Examples for community data include population, age distribution, educational attainment, labour force, jobs by occupation, household expenditures, etc. This information—which is readily available to staff and used regularly to support RFIs—can help staff in preparing for investments as information on the local population and workforce is often of interest to potential employers to understand local trends and skills available. Users can search for a City/Municipality to view data specific to that area. The community overview contains some additional visualization tools to provide a quick snapshot of the data. Most the data is in tabular form and can be downloaded as a report or in Excel format. Some data can also be added as a layer to visualize concentrations in comparison to other municipalities/cities. Additional features allow users to modify the data area via a radius or walk/drive time to understand the regional assets such as labour availability or similar occupational data (i.e., users could search for the total employees by occupation within a 30 min drive in Haldimand or within a 60km radius). This information allows staff to paint a picture of the local economic landscape and showcase the local business opportunities. Key data sources utilized by Partner Portal include Stats Canada, Environics and Lightcast.

Additional Resources

Additional features include a resource library and events calendar to view case studies, infographics, videos, and reports designed to showcase Ontario's strengths to potential investors as well as information on investment attraction events, with tags indicating where Invest Ontario and its partners will be present. Resources can be downloaded and shared in a package of information to highlight the benefits of doing business in Ontario.

The Partner Portal is an additional tool in the Economic Development and Tourism site selection toolkit and will require minimal effort for staff to update/provide information than what staff already undertake for site inquiries. The portal provides staff with access to key data that was previously not available and the ability to complete some limited comparison data as well. Based on current the definition of the property types that would qualify for inclusion, staff believe there will be minimal properties that currently meet the requirements as outlined.

In summary, this tool will provide an opportunity for Haldimand County to share key property availability and information with Invest Ontario on future investment ready sites. The portal also presents an opportunity for staff to access information and resources to build business cases for investments and keep up to date with Invest Ontario activities.

REFERENCES:

None.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Invest Ontario Partnership Pledge.
2. Premier Ford Demo | We're helping municipalities across the province attract new investment and jobs with the launch of the Invest Ontario Partner Portal!