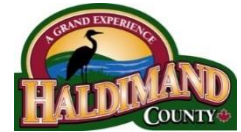


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# HALDIMAND COUNTY

## Report PED-EDT-08-2018 Rural Economic Development Program – Branding Strategy Funding



For Consideration by Council in Committee on May 15, 2018

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### OBJECTIVE:

To provide Council with an overview of the Contribution Agreement for the Rural Economic Development (RED) program and to authorize the Mayor and Clerk to execute the Agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report PED-EDT-08-2018 Rural Economic Development Program – Branding Strategy Funding be received;
2. AND THAT funds received from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for the Rural Economic Development program in the amount of \$20,000.00 be allocated to the Haldimand County Economic Development and Tourism Branding Strategy;
3. AND THAT a By-law be presented for enactment, authorizing the Mayor and Clerk to execute the Contribution Agreement for the transfer of the Rural Economic Development program funding.

**Prepared by:** Jaymie Nelson, BComm, Senior Economic Development Officer

**Reviewed by:** Lidy Romanuk, B.A., EcD, CEcD, Manager, Economic Development and Tourism

**Respectfully submitted:** Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, General Manager of Planning and Economic Development

**Approved:** Donald G. Boyle, Chief Administrative Officer

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Staff are recommending that the Rural Economic Development (RED) program funding in the amount of \$20,000 be received and allocated to the Haldimand County Economic Development and Tourism Branding Strategy. A By-law (Attachment 1) must be passed by Council to execute the Contribution Agreement (Attachment 2) between Haldimand County and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for the transfer of the RED program funding.

### BACKGROUND:

In 2017, Council approved an Economic Development and Tourism strategy. During the development of the strategy, consultations revealed that stakeholders cannot easily identify or describe Haldimand's unique identity, brand, strengths, location or the economic development opportunities that exist. For the County to be able to attract investment and grow its economy, it will need to be able to describe its economic development identity and value proposition through a strong brand that can anchor its marketing efforts. A branding strategy will support the goals of the economic development and tourism strategy, identifying short and long-term tactics to maximize the brand's value to the community.

The branding strategy was approved as a one-time \$40,000 initiative in the 2018 Tax Supported Operating Budget. In an effort to offset associated expenses, a project proposal was submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) requesting project funding for an Economic Development and Tourism Branding Strategy under the Rural Economic Development (RED) program.

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, Haldimand County Economic Development and Tourism received notification of the approved RED application in the amount of \$20,000 via correspondence from OMAFRA. This will reduce the cost of the initiative to \$20,000. The project start date for the branding strategy is effective as of April 6, 2018 and the monies must be fully spent by June 30, 2019. The province has requested that the by-law and agreement be approved and executed as expeditiously as possible.

## **ANALYSIS:**

### **Rural Economic Development Funding Overview**

The Rural Economic Development (RED) program, administered by Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) offers government grants for municipalities and non-profits to eliminate barriers to rural economic development. The RED Program supports the province's plan to create jobs, grow the economy and help people in their everyday lives by:

- Helping remove barriers to economic development for rural communities.
- Help rural communities identify their economic strengths and develop strategies to attract business and investment to help retain and create jobs.
- Help rural communities be in a more competitive economic position so they can diversify and grow their local economies.

The funding supports various projects including economic planning (research, planning, and strategy development) and implementation (sector development, marketing and promotion, and workforce attraction/retention) activities.

In late fall 2017, the Economic Development and Tourism Division (EDT) submitted a RED application for funding to retain a consultant to assist the Division in the development of a brand strategy. The County has not received any previous funding through the RED program.

**Approved project:** The objective of the Haldimand County Economic Development and Tourism Branding Strategy is to develop a clear strong and resilient brand identity and value proposition that represents the various attributes of the many communities that make-up Haldimand County.

The Strategy will inform EDT's investment attraction efforts and create greater awareness of existing assets in Haldimand County and rural Ontario that will lead to new business development and increased employment. From a tourism perspective, being able to effectively communicate the numerous tourism experiences within the County will lead to increased revenue generation for local tourism operators and related businesses. One of the first steps of the branding strategy, will be to identify Haldimand County's economic development and tourism unique value proposition. Doing so will better define why businesses would want to invest here, as well as why people would choose to live here and visit. The branding strategy will lead to the development of specific marketing strategies and initiatives to target key economic sectors using the unique value proposition and branding strategy to tell our story.

The resulting brand messaging should support all goals of the Economic Development and Tourism strategy with particular emphasis on:

- a) Attracting, retaining and growing business;
- b) Building vibrant communities;
- c) Maintaining and enhancing Haldimand County's high quality of life;

- d) Becoming investment ready; and
- e) Creating a unique Haldimand County identity for residential, business and tourist attraction.

## **FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The 2018 Tax Supported Operating Budget includes a one-time approved initiative for the Economic Development and Tourism Branding Strategy in the amount of \$40,000 and is currently funded from the Contingency Reserve. The successful Rural Economic Development application in the amount of \$20,000 will offset the total eligible project expenditures by fifty percent (50%), resulting in a corresponding reduction of the same amount in the Contingency Reserve funding.

Section 3.03 of the Procurement Policy grants authority to Managers to accept grants or donations under \$75,000 where there is a \$0 impact on the net levy. Receipt of this funding is subject to the execution of a Contribution Agreement between Haldimand County and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, which requires Council approval of a By-law in order to execute the agreement.

Staff will ensure that the extension of this ongoing project is included in the 2019 operating budget as a Council Approved Initiative.

## **STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:**

The Economic Development and Tourism Branding Strategy will require input from various stakeholder groups during the consultation phase of the branding strategy including the County's Business Development and Planning Advisory Committee.

Through the development of a recognizable brand, Haldimand County's stakeholders will benefit from this raised profile. Leading by example, the development of a concise and defined Haldimand County Economic Development and Tourism brand will help key partners including; Chambers, Business Improvement Area's, and businesses to refine their own key branding and marketing messages further amplifying the impact of the overall brand strategy.

There are requirements within the conditional approval letter outlining that; conditionally approved funding must be kept confidential until an announcement is scheduled by the Ministry.

## **REPORT IMPACTS:**

Agreement: Yes

By-law: Yes

Budget Amendment: Yes

Policy: No

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Rural Economic Development Funding Agreement Authorizing By-law.
2. Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Contribution Agreement.