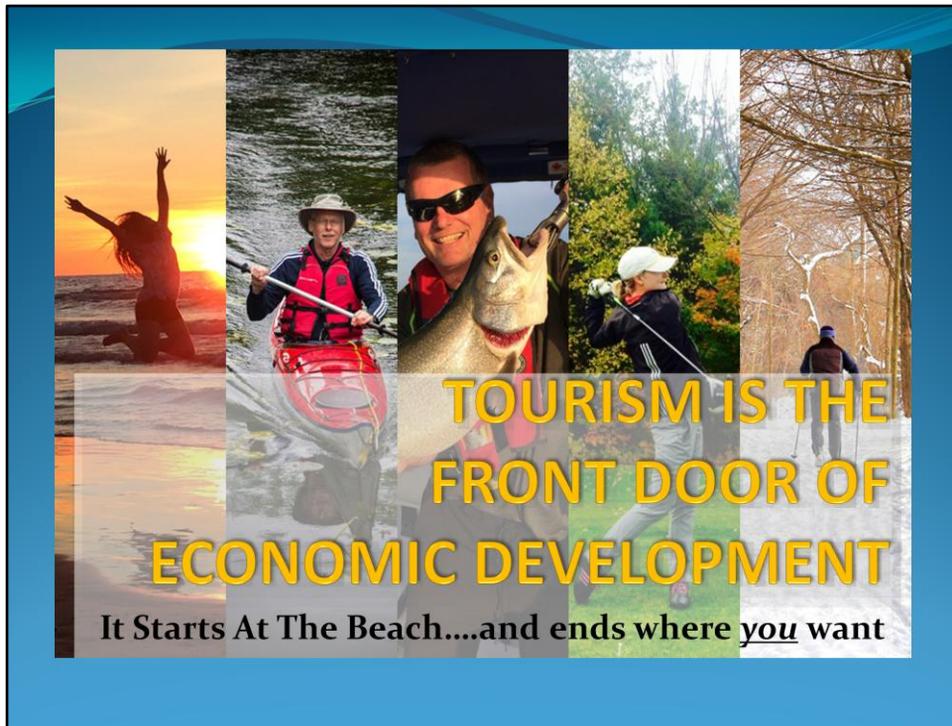


Chamber Presentation to Council - 2016



Thank you for providing us with this opportunity to appear before Council and to provide a clearer picture of tourism and visitor services in Lambton Shores. On behalf the Chamber's Board of Directors, we also thank Council for granting \$18,000 of support for tourism and visitor services in 2015.



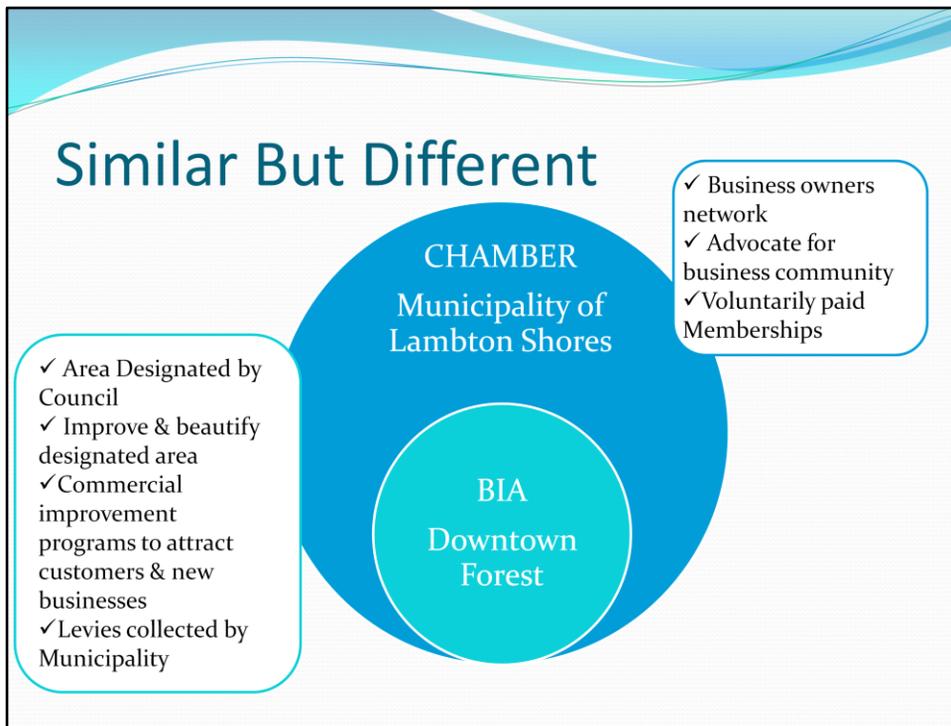
As part of our reporting to Council, we annually provide audited financial statements, which were included as part of our supporting documentation for this presentation.

Out of the \$74K spent on providing Tourism & Visitor Services in 2015, \$45k was spent on the Welcome Centre’s operations – covering utilities, maintenance, staffing – students & 50% of manager’s hours, property insurance, office supplies and mileage related to tourism; \$26k on producing and distributing the visitor guide and \$3k on advertising including the websites.

You’ll note from the Financial Statements, providing Tourism & Visitor Services to Lambton Shores runs an annual shortfall – which in 2015 was \$13,000 – despite the Municipal contribution of \$18,000 of support. The Chamber covered this shortfall from its fundraising and ticket sales efforts such as Breakfast with the Mayor, Golf Tournament, Silent Auction and Celebrate the Season business awards. Overall, this \$13,000 shortfall caused the Chamber to complete its fiscal year with a deficit of \$4,000.

The shortfall is directly related to the \$2,663 paid to summer students not covered by federal or provincial grants and cost of ink to print flyers and promotional items in support of local events organized by volunteers, such as Buskerfest, Summer Sunset Sounds, Canada Day Celebrations, Thanksgiving Market & Sidewalk Sale, Christmas Comes Early and the various event flyers we print out and post on the outdoor bulletin board .

We received \$7,975 in summer wage grants, but paid out \$10,638 plus another \$1,000 in mandatory employer contributions in order to keep the Welcome Centre open 6-days a week in June and 7-days a week in July and August. It cost about \$1,000 to print promotional flyers for local events.



In past years, when we have appeared before Council, one of Council’s questions has been to ask how much money is provided to the Forest BIA. While a BIA and a Chamber both have the interests of local business at heart, we have different functions, a different scope of activity and different geographic service areas.

Whereas a BIA is focused on a defined downtown retail core and its money is raised through levies imposed by the Municipality, a Chamber of Commerce has a much broader geographic area to serve – such as an entire municipal or regional area - and seeks to strengthen the business community as a whole. As well, its money is raised through voluntarily paid membership fees, ticketing and fundraising activities, there is no compulsory payment.

Currently, the Forest BIA does not provide tourism and visitor services, but the Chamber does as part of its partnership with the Municipality established in 2001, which itself was based on a much earlier partnership with the Village of Grand Bend in 1996. The partnership included a very low land-lease amount on a small, surplus lot unsuitable for business development and shared responsibility for the Welcome Centre. In the interest of time, we encourage you to review the document entitled *“Tourist Booth to Welcome Centre – 20 years of Partnership”* included in the supporting documentation for this presentation.



In 2001, the Municipality of Lambton Shores and the Chamber of Commerce partnered on a project to invest in and extend tourism and visitor services. The Municipality confirmed the earlier provision of the small lot of land and the Chamber launched a community-wide fundraising campaign to pay for the construction of a Welcome Centre. Over \$100,000 was raised from 178 local businesses and residents from towns, villages and hamlets throughout the area.

Originally, the destination marketing and visitor services function was thought of as a Victoria Day to Labour Day activity and did not include a website or social media or even email in its marketing toolbox. Since 2001, much has changed in marketing and specifically tourism marketing and in providing tourism services and visitor services.

Since 2008, the Welcome Centre has operated year-round and the tourism marketing toolbox now includes a tourist-focused website, a facebook page, a twitter presence, a print and online digital visitor guide, emailed newsletter, attendance at tourism trade shows to promote the area, and director positions on the boards of Tourism Sarnia Lambton and Huron Tourism Association to represent Lambton Shores and connect tourism activities along the Highway 21 corridor.

The Chamber's directors are volunteers not only for the Chamber itself, but also for Lambton Shores. It's been through the directors' volunteerism that Lambton Shores has been represented at trade shows and these same directors have been instrumental in initiating, contributing and supporting visitor-attracting events. Our office volunteers and single staff member have responded to thousands of visitor inquiries and our manager annually hires and trains the summer students to be effective ambassadors for this area.



Lambton Shores Business Plan states that a “thriving tourism industry”, “an active creative and cultural sector”, “a prosperous business base” and a “visible Lambton Shores brand” are key priorities of its Economic Development. At the recent Southwestern Ontario Tourism Corporation’s tourism summit, it was stated that *“tourism is the front door of economic development”*. In fact, Oxford Economics, an economic forecasting venture of Oxford University, calls tourism marketing the “catalyst of economic development in a broad sense” and that the “visitor economy draws dollars into local economies and has outperformed many of the sectors frequently targeted by economic development agencies” (Source: Destination Promotion: An Engine of Economic Development).



In a report covering the Wolfville and Kentville Regions, a destination marketing agency working for Nova Scotia provided clarity around how this “front door of economic development” works. They describe how a community has “five opportunities to close the sale: personal contact at visitor centres and trade shows, websites, brochures and printed materials, travel articles or public relations and word-of-mouth”.

Tourism in Canada is worth \$75-billion and supports millions of jobs. Ninety percent of tourism industry businesses are small businesses, of which 90% have less than 15 employees. Tourism provides the opportunity for entrepreneurs to get started, for small family-run businesses to thrive, for artisans and craftspeople to find a market and creates a basis for a unique, niche-retail environment including wineries, artist galleries and studios. A tourism-friendly town will attract non-tourism industries faster than others.”

We have inches of paper from various reports emphasizing the importance of tourism as a fundamental driver of economic development, which we can share with you, but let’s jump to IMPLEMENTATION.



How do we get all this great economic development work done? Under the **label of Visitor Services**, the Chamber annually responds to 2,980 phone calls, 7,165 emails, 2,878 in-person inquiries, mails out 100 information packages, and provides information and photographs to travel writers for publication. Summer students are hired and trained to staff the Welcome Centre 7-days a week and during 2015 staffed a mobile tourism information kiosk at the Forest and Grand Bend farmers' markets at the invitation of Chris Williamson of Williamson Farms Country Store in Forest.



Under the **label of Tourism Services**, the Chamber researches, writes, provides design direction, produces and distributes a visitor guide focused on local tourism assets. The advertising sold not only fully supports the production of this guide, but also helps offset the full cost of Tourism & Visitor Services. The guide is also posted online as an electronic flipbook version. We produce a monthly e-newsletter distributed to 977 subscribers, promoting local events and attractions.

We maintain GrandBendTourism.com and ItStartsAtTheBeach.com websites which contain information on what to do, where to go, where to stay, where to eat, where to shop and get services as well as a Facebook page and Twitter account.

We attend industry and consumer trade shows, such as the Great Waterfront Trail Adventure cycling tour conference, Ontario Outdoor Travel show, Southwestern Ontario Tourism Corporation's Tourism Conference, Tourism Sarnia Lambton's Tourism Summit and Huron Tourism Association's Tourism & Brochure Swap events to represent the tourism assets of this area.

For more than 8 years, staff and volunteers have represented Lambton Shores on the boards of Tourism Sarnia Lambton and Huron Tourism Association, as a way of linking and dovetailing tourism promotional activities affecting this area.

And finally, through our tourism partnerships with Tourism Sarnia Lambton, Huron Tourism Association and our business partnerships with Drayton Entertainment and Bayshore Broadcasting, we are able to place cost-effective advertising.



All of our activity is done with linkages and where possible partnered initiatives with destination marketing organizations higher up the food chain, such as county-level organizations like Tourism Sarnia Lambton and Huron Tourism Association and regional-level organizations like Southwestern Ontario Tourism Corporation and Regional Tourism Organization 4.



In February, we submitted a letter to Council outlining the cost of tourism and visitor services for Lambton Shores. The dollar amounts we're presenting now are slightly different than those stated in the letter, as we're now post-audit and have more accurate figures to share.

The last slide shows the budget for Tourism & Visitor Services as \$74k, which can be reduced by visitor guide ad sales revenue and wage grant amounts of \$13k. The result of \$61k – split 50-/50 with our partner the Municipality – means we each take on \$30k of the cost. The underlying assumption of that dollar figure is that the Chamber agrees to limit the manager's time charged back to Tourism & Visitor Services for Lambton Shores to 50% of hours worked as part of our partnership goodwill and willingness to continue in this role. In reality, the amount of time spent on Tourism & Visitor Services is closer to 70% of overall hours worked, or 1,456 hours.

Are there any questions?