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**Subject:** Five Scenic Trails Mapping Request

**Report to:** Planning and Economic Development Committee

**Report date:** Wednesday, September 11, 2019

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## Recommendations

That Report ED 10-2019 respecting the presentation by the Niagara West Tourism Association to PEDC on August 7, 2019 on the 5 scenic trails mapping development and implementation **BE RECEIVED** for information.

That the funding request of \$50,000 for the design and implementation of the 5 scenic trails mapping **BE REFERRED** for consideration as part of the 2020 budget process.

## Key Facts

- The Economic Development department plays an active role in tourism by advancing investment attraction, transportation initiatives to support the tourism sector, producing tourism research to support the sector's activities and planning efforts, as well as supporting sport tourism bids and efforts where directed.
- Economic Development does not have a separate line item in the budget specifically for tourism projects/initiatives.
- Economic Development invests \$15,000 annually for cost of the lease of the Niagara Gateway Information Centre, which is in the second year of a 5 year contract. This arrangement is in partnership with the Tourism Partnership of Niagara and the Niagara West Tourism Association.
- In the past, Economic Development did have a formal role in Tourism marketing and product development when the department was external under Niagara Economic Development Corporation through Tourism Niagara. Tourism Niagara ceased to exist after March 2012.
- The Tourism Partnership of Niagara (TPN) was established in 2010 as one of Ontario's 13 Regional Tourism Offices (RTOs). Representing all of the municipalities within the Regional Municipality of Niagara, the TPN is an independent, industry-led, not-for-profit organization responsible for working with tourism partners to enhance and grow Niagara's tourism products and marketing activities.

## Financial Considerations

The Niagara West Tourism Association has requested one-time funding of \$50,000 for Economic Development staff to facilitate the development of the 5 scenic trails mapping.

Budget pressures have been outlined by staff in the following table as presented to Budget Review Committee to illustrate the potential levy impact estimated for the 2020 budget. Any items being referred to the 2020 budget process should be considered along with the following items:

	Council Report	Levy Amount (M\$)	Levy Increase %
Previously identified reports			
Suicide Prevention Initiative	PHD 8-2019	0.200	0.05%
Niagara Airports	CAO 04-2019	2.240	0.61%
Waterfront Investment Program – Base funding	CSD 40-2019	1.000	0.27%
Smarter Niagara Incentive Program – Base funding	CSD 40-2019	0.600	0.16%
Brock LINC request for funding	ED 9-2019	1.500	0.41%
Niagara Regional Transit - phase in cost	CSD 40-2019	6.213	1.70%
NRPS 2019 position hiring deferral	BRC-C 7-2019	0.706	0.19%
Long-Term Care Home Redevelopment capital funding	COM 32-2019	5.899	1.62%
GO Project - Station Operations	CSD 17-2019	1.410	0.39%
EMS Central Hub capital funding	CSD 40-2019	0.390	0.11%
<b>Total of previously identified reports</b>		<b>20.158</b>	<b>5.51%</b>
Five Scenic Trails Mapping	ED 10-2019	0.050	0.01%
<b>Potential request to-date</b>		<b>\$20.208</b>	<b>5.52%</b>

## Analysis

From an Economic Development perspective, the Region’s role in Tourism was crafted at the 2016 Tourism Summit and adopted by council resolution as follows: “to ensure tourism is part of the Region’s Economic Development Strategy by facilitating discussions on transportation access initiatives, developing a Regional Wayfinding plan, promoting five scenic routes and supporting event bids; to advocate on behalf of industry stakeholders; and to undertake investment attraction initiatives which contribute to tourism outcomes for Niagara.”

Through the Economic Development Officer’s role, the department supports the Tourism sector through the following efforts:

- Marketing and development support at the Niagara District Airport;
- Assisting with the 2020 Bid for the Brier (Men’s Curling Championship) preparation;

- Promoting Niagara 2021 Canada Summer Games business development opportunities;
- Facilitating Metrolinx GO promotion and partnership advancements;
- Managing the lease negotiations and annual business planning of the Niagara Gateway Information Centre;
- Participating as a member of the Tourism Partnership of Niagara's Sub Regional Partners committee;
- Engaging in investment attraction initiatives that would benefit the tourism sector;
- Preparing the Niagara Tourism Profile 2019 research paper and promoting it through outreach to tourism stakeholders.

Economic Development does not have a line item in their budget specifically dedicated to tourism activities. The annual committed funds in this department's budget for tourism activity is \$15,000 for the lease of the Niagara Gateway Information Centre.

Activities funded by Economic Development above the Gateway lease are evaluated based on decisions around the potential economic impact of the project.

Examples of previously funded projects include expenses for the bid preparation of the 2020 Brier bid, a Future Business Modelling and Feasibility study for the Niagara airports, expenses to host the Southern Ontario Airport Network meeting in partnership with Toronto Pearson and Niagara District Airport, etc.

Each year Economic Development receives requests to fund additional tourism-related activities and they are not always able to be accommodated within the base budget. These requests would therefore come as a request to Council for additional funding. This has been the case in most financial requests for sport tourism bids as well as activities like the 5 scenic trails mapping.

#### Corporate Implications

The 5 scenic trails mapping, if implemented as requested, has an impact on Public Works and the Transportation Master Plan for several elements of tourism transportation, wayfinding signage and on the inclusion of the five scenic trails.

#### Governmental Partners

The 5 scenic trails mapping, if implemented as proposed within this report, has impact on the local municipal members of the Team Niagara Economic Development group, the Tourism Partnership of Niagara, and the 5 Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) across the Region.

The 5 scenic trails project would benefit from additional information and analysis from other Departments within the Region, local municipalities and their tourism strategy, and DMOs regarding future benefits/costs, and potential interest in advancement.

## **Alternatives Reviewed**

The alternative reviewed is for Niagara Region not to take an active role in developing and implementing the 5 scenic drives. In this instance, the initiative could be advanced by the Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) or a private sector tourism group.

## **Other Pertinent Reports**

- ED-1-2015 - Grimsby Gateway Centre and Future Tourism Opportunities
- ED-4-2015 - Tourism Industry Analysis and Options Study – Summary
- ED 5-2016 - Tourism Strategy Business Case and Budget Initiation
- ED 4-2017 – Niagara Tourism Strategy – Tourism Summit Follow Up Report

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*This report was prepared in consultation with Kelly Provost, EDO and reviewed by Valerie Kuhns, Acting Director.*

## **Appendices**

None