

## REPORT

### ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE: JUNE 18, 2018

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**FROM:** Recreation and Culture Department

**DATE:** May 15, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Events / Tourism

**LOCATION:**

**WARD:** Town wide

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#### RECOMMENDATION:

That the report from the Recreation and Culture Department entitled *Events / Tourism* dated May 15, 2018 be received.

#### KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- Council directed staff to report on opportunities for linkages and collaboration between the Events Strategy and the visitor attraction goals of Visit Oakville.
- Events Service staff and representatives of Visit Oakville collaborated to examine opportunities
- Most events that take place in Oakville are local and do not have a tourism focus
- A number of signature or mega events as well as sport and cultural events do draw significant visitors and do have tourism potential
- Opportunities that require no additional resources include:
  - Connect sport organizations with Visit Oakville
  - Re-connect with Sport Oakville
  - Develop Tourism Toolkit for event organizers
  - Event application form update
  - Examine existing events for tourism opportunities
- Opportunities that require additional resources include:
  - Creating group tours to town facilities
  - Developing event packages
  - Event grants through the Municipal Accommodation Tax
  - Event tourism marketing partnerships

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## BACKGROUND:

The town's Events Strategy and subsequent Events Strategy Implementation Update report outlined the types of events the town would support and how they would be supported from a variety of perspectives including administration, facilitation, financial etc. The vast majority of events that take place in Oakville are community-based events that are intended for a local audience. In the original Events Strategy, tourism events were not identified as a priority either by the community or the town. However, during the consultation process undertaken for the implementation report, it was clear that the community perspective on tourism events had shifted and community event organizers believed that tourism events do bring benefit to the town. While most event organizers did not see their own events as developing into tourism events, they did recognize the economic, social and recognition benefits of such events.

The Events Strategy Implementation Update was approved by Council on May 29, 2017. In addition, Council passed the following resolution:

*"That staff be directed to prepare a report for Council outlining the linkages and opportunities for collaboration between the Events Strategy and visitor attraction goals and related initiatives of Visit Oakville."*

This report reports back on that direction.

## COMMENT/OPTIONS:

While the Events Strategy and implementation process focused primarily on community / local events, streamlining administrative processes for event organizers and developing processes to mitigate risk to the town, staff reviewed both documents for opportunities to support the efforts of Visit Oakville. Opportunities lay in both drawing visitors to Oakville and / or enhancing their experience while in Oakville. In collaboration with Visit Oakville staff, a number of opportunities were explored.

Oakville has a very rich offering of events each year. The vast majority of these events are local / community events that are generally not designed to attract visitors. However larger community events and certainly mega events do cater to a much wider audience.

The table below provides a summary of the approximate number of events that take place on town outdoor properties and indicates how many of those events are likely to attract visitors.

**Table 1: Number of Events / Permits**

Type	Number	Visitor Potential
Local	150	None
Community	250	Limited, friends and family
Signature	7-10	Moderate
Mega	1-2	Significant

In addition, Oakville is home to many tournaments and gala sport expositions throughout the year that use town facilities. Tournaments are not classified as events and therefore not captured under the Events Strategy. However, tournaments are often of a regional or provincial and sometimes national or international nature, and therefore lend themselves well as tourism opportunities. The table below illustrates the number of tournaments that take place annually on average.

**Table 2: Tournaments**

Type	Number	Visitor Potential
Local	25	8,000
Regional	5	4,000
Provincial	10	30,000
International	2	14,000
Gala / expositions	1	1,000

And finally, Oakville is also home to a number of celebrated cultural events and exhibits that draw many national and international visitors. The bi-annual World of Threads exhibit held at QEPCCC is an excellent example. The Oakville Galleries is renowned internationally as a premier contemporary art gallery and brings many new people to Oakville each year.

It should be noted that while many events attract visitors, a significant number of these are day visitors and while there is some economic benefit of day visitors to Oakville, the greatest impact is from those who stay overnight. Data collected in 2017 via the Ambassador survey suggests that 71.5 % of visitors are day trippers and 28.5% are overnight visitors. This excludes the Canadian Open where overnight visitors are greater. Nevertheless, these activities do present some tourism opportunities particularly in the areas of sport tourism and cultural tourism and connecting these with the efforts of Visit Oakville could potentially bring value to the event organizers while supporting the goals of Visit Oakville such as increasing overnight stays.

Recreation and Culture staff in collaboration with Visit Oakville staff and Board Chair examined a number of opportunities for linkages between Visit Oakville and event

support. The following itemizes the opportunities and are categorized by those that require no additional resources and those that do:

### **Opportunities using existing resources**

#### **1. Connect Visit Oakville with Sport Organizations**

Virtually all tournaments that take place in town facilities are operated by the local sport organizations. The organizations plan, organize and run the tournaments and the town facilitates this through the provision of quality facilities, logistical support and staff support on site. Connecting Visit Oakville with the sport organizations prior to their planning could be of some benefit to them in their planning. This would be facilitated through annual meetings with the sport organizations and Visit Oakville, arranged through the Supervisor of Registration and Bookings. This would provide Visit Oakville with the opportunity to provide the following information / resources to the groups:

- Special rates/ packages with local accommodations
- Visitor services support (e.g. guides, registration pieces)
- Special rates/promotions at local attractions/ businesses
- Potential funding support for new or expanding events

#### **2. Re-connect with Sport Oakville**

As with the sport organizations, developing an on-going relationship with Sport Oakville could be mutually beneficial. While Sport Oakville does not run tournaments, there could be other benefits. This could be facilitated through the Supervisor or Registration and Bookings.

#### **3. Develop Tourism Toolkit for Event Organizers**

The Recreation and Culture Department in its Events Services has established a network for event organizers that meets annually. This network is intended to allow organizers to share knowledge and ideas and is a forum for ongoing learning and municipal support.

There is an opportunity for Visit Oakville to develop a Tourism Toolkit for event organizers that can be made available via email to the town's database of event organizers, and the content of which can be presented to network attendees annually. These opportunities will connect Visit Oakville directly with event organizers and allow relationships to develop that can foster event tourism.

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This tool kit can also be hosted electronically on the Planning Toolkit page of the town's centralized Events website.

#### 4. Event Application Form

In 2016 the Events Service created a centralized online application process for all community events. This online application features a tickbox asking applicants *"Yes, I would like to be connected with Visit Oakville to find out about other events, experiences, and things to do in Oakville."*

These requests are channeled to Visit Oakville by the Events Service staff, to allow tourism information to be provided directly to the event organizer. Through these connections Visit Oakville can also provide additional value through assisting with applications for tourism grants for qualifying events. Future upgrades to the application form would consider enhancements.

#### 5. Existing Events

Visit Oakville is interested in examining existing events to see if there are opportunities for overnight stays. This could be easily facilitated through some of the above options such as the event organizer network and establishing relationships with sport organizations

### Opportunities requiring resources

In addition to the above, a number of program ideas were discussed that could potentially benefit Visit Oakville's objectives while meeting the mandate of the town and specifically, cultural services. One example includes the development of group tours that would bring visitors to town amenities such as the Oakville Museum, QEPCCC exhibits and the Oakville Galleries. As new programs require additional resources, these opportunities would be brought forward as part of the annual budget process should Council wish to consider implementation.

Other options include:

#### Event packages

The opportunity exists for the Events Service and Visit Oakville to work together with event organizers to develop 'Experience Oakville' event packages. These packages would develop experience-based partnerships between community events that occur during the same period of time (i.e. over a weekend) to attract tourism visitors to Oakville for the purpose of attending more than one event. Packages could include hotel stays and restaurant experiences through Visit Oakville's members.

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This opportunity would be subject to the availability of staff resources in the Events Service and would require Council direction as currently, the promotion of tourism is not within the mandate of Events Services

#### Event grant funding

The opportunity exists to develop an event grant fund through the allocation of dollars obtained through the Municipal Accommodation Tax which is the subject of a separate report on this agenda. This fund could provide financial support to signature and mega events for the purpose of enhancing event programming and tourism marketing initiatives. Finances obtained by events from the fund could be used to bring in new and enticing event programming and entertainment elements. These elements could be marketed to potential overnight visitors attracting new audience demographics and resulting in event package opportunities outlined above.

Should Council wish to consider this option a more detailed examination will need to be undertaken in the context of other potential municipal uses of the MAT funds.

#### Event tourism marketing partnerships

The opportunity exists to provide administrative and marketing support to events that apply for external tourism grant dollars from tourism stimulation programs including Celebrate Ontario. Celebrate Ontario provides funding to event applicants that undertake promotional efforts outside of a 40 kilometer radius of their event location for the express purpose of attracting tourism visitors and overnight stays. Undertaking such grant applications can be daunting and requires extensive research into far-reaching marketing opportunities and costs. Visit Oakville may be able to provide connections to tourism-focused media outlets; the fostering of which may decrease the administrative undertaking of completing grant applications. Visit Oakville may also be able to lead collaborative tourism-marketing spends between events and Visit Oakville members, that could decrease the cost of individual buys and enhance the reach of joint marketing campaigns.

### **CONSIDERATIONS:**

#### **(A) PUBLIC**

There is a wealth of municipal and academic literature about the value of community events to the public including neighbourhood cohesion, resident inclusion, community health and wellbeing

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**(B) FINANCIAL**

There are no immediate financial implications of this report. Should Council wish to pursue other opportunities such as event packages and allocation of the MAT, further examination will be required

**(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS**

Visit Oakville and the Economic Development were consulted in the development of this report.

**(D) CORPORATE AND/OR DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC GOALS**

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal to:

- enhance our economic environment
- enhance our cultural environment
- enhance our social environment

**(E) COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY**

Events support the social economic and cultural pillars of sustainability through providing opportunities for residents and visitors to socialize, and engage in cultural activities.

Prepared by:

Sarah Douglas-Murray  
Sr. Manager Recreation and Culture

Submitted by:

Nina de Vaal  
Director Recreation and Culture