Dear Tourism Partners,

Tourism Sarnia-Lambton had another amazing year. Most significantly, we hired our new Executive Director, Mark Perrin. Mark was born and raised in Sarnia-Lambton and was a small business owner before joining TSL. We are proud to have Mark at the helm. With our new Strategic Plan in place, we look forward to a bright future supporting tourism in Lambton County.

In 2018, 1,000 riders, from Canada, USA and Europe, participated in the Bluewater International GranFondo which raised over $60,000 for St. Joseph’s Hospice and Palliative Care at Bluewater Health. The Tall Ships Celebration will take place from Aug 9 to 11, 2019. Six ships are scheduled; this event will operate in tandem with Bluewater BorderFest and Artzscape. It’s shaping up to be quite a weekend.

Thank-you to our dedicated team, Leona Allen, Shelley Ambroise, Beverley Horodyski and Vicky Praill. Kyle Morrison landed his dream job; we thank him and wish him well in his future endeavours.

Finally, thank-you to our funding partner, the County of Lambton. We are grateful for your continued support as we raise the profile of Sarnia-Lambton throughout Canada and beyond.

Sincerely, Mary Jean O’Donnell
Chair, TSL Board of Directors
Visitor’s Centre
Ontario Travel Centre statistics confirm that 80,000 visitors came through the Centre in 2018. Tourism Sarnia-Lambton’s Visitor’s Centre Retail Store has continued to grow since opening in the spring of 2017, with April to December 2018 total sales of $14,700, surpassing our goal of $10,000. Product research is ongoing, which includes attending the Toronto Gift Show.

Marketing in 2018 included “shop local” radio commercials with Blackburn Radio promoting the retail store and the first annual Christmas Open House. Retail store information and photos are included in Tourism Sarnia-Lambton’s Consumer and Partner Newsletters distributed every two months.

Assembly Room Rentals
The Assembly Room was rented during the 2018’s nine month period by a number of organizations/businesses. Overall it generated $1,460.

Summer Student Programs
Tourism Sarnia-Lambton received three summer student positions as part of the Canada Summer Jobs Program. From May through August the positions included: Tourism Marketing & Social Media, Visitor Services and Special Event Assistants. We also received an Ontario Summer Experience Program grant which allowed us to hire a Product Development Assistant during the summer of 2018.

Welcome Packages
Tourism Sarnia-Lambton distributed 4,200 Welcome Packages to regional and provincial tourism events, conventions, sports tournaments, meetings and newcomers in 2018.

Motor Coach
Tourism Sarnia Lambton works directly with Tour Operators and Group Travel Influencers to market and promote Sarnia-Lambton as a travel destination. As a result of our motor coach program, we hosted nine companies, 21 coaches, and 940 visitors from the following areas:

- Rybicki Tours - Novi, MI
- Spectrum Tours - Grand Rapids, MI
- Custom Holidays - Allen Park, MI
- Ilderton Tours – Ilderton, ON
- Robin Hood Tours – Goderich, ON
- Ann’s Adventures – Clio, MI
- St. Paul’s Church Group – Trenton, MI
- Mitchell Bus Group – Bay City, MI
- Moostash Joe Tours – Freemont, Nebraska
**Travel Guides/Maps**

Tourism Sarnia-Lambton printed 55,000 Experience Guides and 35,000 Sarnia-Lambton Maps in 2018. Bulk distribution of 35,600 guides and 18,500 maps distributed to Ontario Travel Information Centres, Hwy 401 Enroute Centres and Information Centres throughout Southwestern Ontario and Sarnia-Lambton. A new distribution method by Travel Ad Services delivered 10,000 guides throughout the state of Michigan.

Tourism Sarnia Lambton responded to over 550 inquiries from Canada, USA and international, interested visitors, whom reach out to receive Sarnia-Lambton Visitor information.

**Social Media**

Tourism Sarnia Lambton’s collective social media database has 12,200 followers. Through postings and promotional advertising, Tourism Sarnia-Lambton achieved over 2.1 million impressions from user reach and user views.

**Facebook – Instagram – Twitter - Hashtags**

All of Tourism Sarnia Lambton’s social media channels experienced growth in 2018. Facebook is the primary target audience for the 30+ demographic, while Instagram captures the 16-30 demographic. Twitter falls in the middle ranging from 18-65. On all platforms we are able to post and share content for all our Tourism Partners and engage audiences that are specifically targeted, while generating exact results per campaign. Our Top campaign was our Cheers to the Coast “Video Campaign” which received 73,264 views and had direct engagement with 13,940 people.

**Website**

Tourism Sarnia Lambton continues to generate maximum visitation to our website. With over 2,000 pages of partner listings, information on regional and core attractions, and access to our printed publications, our dynamic website received over 250,000 page views and was visited by over 90,000 new users. We continue to drive traffic to our partners by offering free, linked listings to their websites, a ticket sales website, and social media channels. Listing data collected from this database is used externally with our Regional Tourism Office and other Regional Partners for publications, editorial, and newsletters which we send on our partners’ behalf.
Consumer and Partner Newsletter

**Consumer** - Email marketing continued to be a large focus for 2018, with the organization sending monthly consumer e-blasts to its growing consumer database of more than 2,900 subscribers. The average monthly open rate for 2018 was 23.2%, while the average monthly click rate was 6.8%.

**Partner** - Over 700 tourism partners receive important industry news and partnership opportunities through ongoing strategic partner communications.

**Influencer Press Trips / FAMS / Blogger Visits**
Tourism Sarnia-Lambton continues partner with Ontario’s Southwest Tourism Corporation to bring qualified travel writers to our region to share what we have to offer with their audiences. In 2018, TSL brought social media influencers from across Canada with a combined following of more than half a million social media followers. Check out some of the blog posts below:

Leigh McAdam - June 2018 - “Hike Bike Travel” – Travel Blogger
Influencer Press Trip - July 2018 - Marissa Anwar – Beach Wine Hop *Partnership: SWOTC
Lauren Yakiwchuk – Girls Getaway - July 2018 - FAM Tour – 5 Bloggers *Partnership: SWOTC
Christopher Mitchell - August 2018 - “Travelling Mitch” – Blogger *Partnership: SWOTC
Destination Ontario FAM - September 2018 - 4 Bloggers – Social Media Promotion *Partnership: MTCS & SWOTC

**Meetings and Conventions**
Some of the highlighted Meetings and Conference’s that were hosted in Sarnia-Lambton in 2018 were:

- Kinsmen National Convention
- St Vincent De Paul – Ontario Rev Conference
- Ontario Assoc. of Food Banks Conference
- Sarnia Technical Conference
- Weavers & Spinners Conference
- Ladies Auxiliary Conference
- Native ECE Conference
- Brigden Blue Grass & County Campout
- Palliative Care Retreat
- Sarnia Quilter’s Guild
- Air Force Ontario
- Girl Guides of Canada
Sports & Events Tourism

Sports & Event is one of the largest economic drivers of Tourism Sarnia-Lambton. Sports Tourism contributes significantly to the economic impact of Tourism and raises the community’s profile, while heightening community spirit, and increasing the usage of community infrastructure. Here are some of the events:

2018 Sports Tourism Highlights

- Bluewater International Granfondo & First Responder Championship
- Canadian Superbike Championship
- Canadian Superbike Super Showdown
- CCM World Invite
- Firefit Championships
- Nations Cup Hockey
- Ontario Provincial Lawn Bowling Games
- Ontario Cup Girls Soccer
- Provincial Fast Ball Tournament
- Rockstar Energy Triple Crown
- Sailfest
- Simon Wardy ProAm Squash Tournament
- St. Clair River Run
- Waters Edge Soccer Tournament

Festival and Event Highlights

- 40th Anniversary Via Rail Celebration
- Alvinston Pro Rodeo
- Antique and Classic Boat Show
- Bluewater Borderfest Music Festival
- Bridge Bash
- Bright’s Grove Music Fest
- Celebration of Lights
- Forest Fall Fair
- GreekFest
- Lambton Film and Food Festival Forest
- Paint Ontario
- Performance Boat Club of Canada, Sarnia Bay Summer Splash
- Poutine Fest
- Sarnia RibFest
- SWIFF – Southwestern International Film Festival
- Tatts at the Bridge
- Wednesday Favourites Concert on the Beach
- Western Ontario Steam Threshers
Product Development
Tourism Sarnia-Lambton actively creates alignment with our tourism partners, through strong creative platforms and coordinated efforts to target Product Development. Acting as a facilitator in partnership with local municipalities, businesses and tourism organizations, Tourism Sarnia-Lambton supported the coordination of several campaigns, initiatives and workshops including:

- “Is your Business Motorcoach Friendly?” workshop held in Grand Bend. The workshop featured a 4-member tourism industry panel of speakers including Sandra Rice from MCTS, Jim Diebel, Hanover Holidays, Margo Middlekemp of Robin Hood Tours, Christina Biggs with Custom Holidays.
- TSL supported along with RTO #1 and RTO #4 the Grand Bend Destination Development initiative to extend the season at Huron Country Playhouse/Drayton Entertainment.
- SWOTC invited TSL to make a presentation to the CEO and staff of Destination Ontario (marketing arm of MCTS.) The Lambton County team included Andrew Meyer, Joy Sim-Robbins and Bev Horodyski. The presentation was conducted in a Smackwater Tours van at the SWOTC office Woodstock.
- TSL created a new event “Unlock Lambton” self-driving tour on June 9th. The tour invited the public to visit 19 different sites across Lambton County free of charge. The event attracted over 500 visitors in one day. Several new community partnerships were created through this project.
- TSL supported the Sarnia Heritage Committee with its new Downtown Heritage Walking Tours program during the summer of 2018. A summer student conducted (3) walking tours in August with 200 people participating on the very last tour.
- TSL was nominated for an Outstanding Business Achievement Award in the category of Outstanding Customer Service from the Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce.
- TSL created and launched the new Cheers to the Coast drink trail map showcasing 8 Lambton County producers of craft beer, wine, mead and hard ciders. The map is in its 2nd print run and distribution.
- 2nd annual outreach to our tourism partners by providing complimentary registration at the SWOTC annual conference in Leamington.
- Participated in the 3-day training with SWOTC Unlocked & Inspired - Crafting Meaningful Experiences for travelers in Oxford County.
- Attended the TIAO Tourism Industry Association of Ontario annual 2-day Summit in Windsor.

“Our Hotels are Smokin’ Hot”
Last year, the ‘Trends’ report from CBRE Hotels painted another very positive picture for Lambton County hoteliers. Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) for Southwestern Ontario was up a spectacular 17.3%. This compares very favourably with a 9.2% increase for Ontario overall and a 5.9% increase for all of Canada.

Sarnia led the way with a whopping 36.5% increase!