



**ECONOMIC AND CREATIVE
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
MEMORANDUM**

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Pending #:

TO: MAYOR A. NUTTALL AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

FROM: K. EATCH, TOURISM COORDINATOR, EXT. 4813

WARD: 2 AND 8

NOTED: S. SCHLICHTER, DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

B. FORSYTH, DIRECTOR OF TRANSIT AND PARKING STRATEGY

B. ARANIYASUNDARAN, GENERAL MANAGER OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

R. JAMES-REID, GENERAL MANAGER OF ACCESS BARRIE

M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RE: TOURISM GROWTH PROGRAM

DATE: FEBRUARY 7, 2024

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide members of Council with information concerning the Downtown Barrie Business Improvement Association (BIA) request included in the Circulation list for February 7, 2024 for City support for an application to the Tourism Growth Program. The request includes no financial commitments from the City, but would require staff support.

BACKGROUND

Through the Federal Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Canada), the Tourism Growth Program provides \$108 million over three years to support communities, small- and medium-sized businesses and not-for-profit organizations in developing local tourism products and experiences.

The deadline to submit applications to the Tourism Growth Program is February 29, 2024.

TOURISM GROWTH PROGRAM APPLICATION

The the Downtown Barrie BIA is seeking to make an application to the Tourism Growth Program requesting financial support for costs associated with a one-year pilot of a free shuttle service along the waterfront and into the downtown. Staff from the Economic and Creative Development Department and Transit and Parking Strategy Department have been consulted by the BIA regarding the concept.

Aligned with the City's Parking Strategy, a one-year pilot shuttle service will allow City staff and the BIA to gather data on ridership, usage and value of service. This information will help determine whether there would be a business case for the pilot to extend beyond the timeframe supported by the Tourism Growth Fund.

The BIA is proposing to launch the pilot shuttle service in September, 2024 which would support City and BIA programming including but not limited to the *Seeds to Sow* exhibition, Culture Days, and Open Air Meridian.



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Preliminary discussions between City staff and the BIA have involved operating the shuttle service in alignment with City-led and BIA-led programming and events during the tourism shoulder season. Service would adjust to operate each weekend during the peak tourism season, supporting the movement of visitors into the downtown.

Should Council support the BIA's application, City staff would continue to work with the Downtown Barrie BIA on crafting the application as well as offering operational support should their application be successful.

The Downtown Barrie BIA is seeking Council support for their application to the Tourism Growth Program to allow for continued engagement with City staff as well as to strengthen their application by demonstrating municipal support.