



# Regional Review

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM DEPARTMENT

## Durham Tourism hosts successful rural tourism conference

Tourism enthusiasts from across Central Ontario didn't need to travel very far to learn about great opportunities within the province. Beyond the City Lights Rural Tourism Conference at the Wooden Sticks Golf Club in Uxbridge on April 23 drew more than 100 participants interested in exploring industry trends, hearing tourism success stories and picking up marketing ideas and strategies.

A handful of industry experts shared their knowledge, insights and inspirations with participants who also networked and shared ideas with industry peers.

Hosted by Durham Tourism in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and Getaway Country, the conference discussed some of the industry's most current issues and focused on advancing tourism in the six regions of Getaway Country, which in addition to the Durham Region includes Bancroft and District, City of Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton Highlands, Northumberland County, and Peterborough and the Kawarthas.

"Beyond the City Lights provided the opportunity for attendees to learn practical tips and ideas they can use to grow their tourism business or community festival," said Kathy Simpson, Rural Business Consultant with OMAFRA. "The speakers presented ideas on ways to highlight local food in menus, place key visitor information on websites, green your business or event and get your story into the media."

Go Green was the message delivered by Durham Sustain Ability's Shawn Williamson. In How to Green your Tourism Business, he shared highlights from Durham Tourism's



Uxbridge Mayor Bob Shepherd, Rebeca LeHeup, Chef Christian Pritchard, Lee Cunningham and Kerri King during the networking session.

Go Green workshops, which were held throughout 2008, as well as his experiences in business and home life.

Award-winning travel writer and Ontario specialist Betty Zvatkauskas educated the audience on how to generate free publicity, giving tips on working with travel media, discussing the difference between publicity and advertising, and highlighting the latest trends in travel writing.

In addition, Internet expert Richard Gauder from CMS Web Solutions shed light on Internet marketing strategies and using web pages to their full potential.

The conference also boasted a culinary tourism panel that underlined the significant role of food in bringing

communities together and stimulating economic growth. A driving force behind Ontario's local food and culinary tourism movement, Rebeca LeHeup, Director of the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance (OCTA), was joined by four panellists: Chefs Jamie Kennedy and Christian Pritchard, both champions of local foods; Lee Cunningham, entrepreneur and organizer of the Bobcaygeon Wine and Food Festival; and Dan Taylor, Economic Development Officer for Prince Edward County. The panel discussed the cultural and economic impacts of culinary tourism, as well as the various steps that can be taken to build capacity for culinary tourism in Central Ontario.

"Durham has a lot of potential to

develop culinary tourism," said Kerri King, Tourism Manager for Durham Region and Chair of the conference organizing committee. "We already have a strong network of local farms, bed and breakfasts, and restaurants. As well, we have tremendous support from many experts, including Durham's very own chef—Christian Pritchard—who is helping us increase awareness through his involvement in broadcast media."

This year's Beyond the City Lights Rural Tourism Conference was a huge success thanks to the many sponsors and organizing partners. Stay tuned for new developments as Durham Tourism works with stakeholders to build culinary tourism in the region.

### MAKING BUSINESS HAPPEN

#### Durham Region helps local businesses prepare their best bids

Local suppliers seized the chance to gain first-hand insight into the procurement process of various organizations across Durham Region at Preparing Your Best Bid, held at Durham Regional Headquarters on May 8.

The series of free workshops hosted by The Regional Municipality of Durham, Economic Development and Tourism Department—in partnership with economic development partners at local area municipalities—is one of Durham Region's many efforts to help local businesses increase competitiveness with free resources.

"Durham businesses prepare bids that are often up against global competitors, so it's important for them to have a good understanding of procurement processes," said Liisa Ikavalko, Senior Economic Development Officer for Durham Region. "The exceptional response from local businesses further demonstrated their appreciation for the chance to learn directly from company representatives."

Representatives from Durham District School Board, Gerda Ameristeel, Ministry of Government Services, Ontario Power Generation, Public Works and Government Services Canada Office of Small and Medium Enterprises, and The Regional Municipality of Durham each held two hour-long workshops providing an overview of their organizations' procurement processes, offering tips on preparing bids and discussing how to introduce new technologies to companies.

"OPG is one of our biggest customers, and this is a great opportunity to learn more about their expectations regarding bid preparation so we can tailor our bid as much as possible," said participant Gerry Waterhouse of NLI Canada.

Successful projects rely on solid supply-chain relationships. The enormous success of Preparing Your Best Bid not only provided participants with valuable insights, tips and strategies, but also a friendly environment to network.

The Economic Development and Tourism Department regularly hosts workshops and seminars for businesses. For more information, view upcoming events on [www.durhambusiness.ca](http://www.durhambusiness.ca) or check this monthly feature.

## CME introduces new consortium to Durham manufacturers

Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME) emphasized the importance and benefits of working together by recently introducing its new manufacturing consortia initiative to Durham region manufacturers.

A lean consortium, aimed at bringing relief to southeastern Ontario manufacturers, will connect 10 to 14 non-competing companies or organizations within easy driving distance. By leveraging each other's resources and ideas, companies will be better equipped to compete in the global economy by improving productivity, sharing best practices and

developing practical solutions for their operations.

At a recent introductory session at the Ajax Convention Centre, David Hogg, Director of Consortium Development with initiative partner High Performance Solutions Inc., underlined the benefits of lean and consortia to more than 50 representatives from local businesses and groups.

"Lean is the largest driver changing the face of manufacturing in the world," Hogg noted. The lean approach supports a culture of change, and a way of thinking and living to produce

greater improvement opportunities, he further explained. A member-driven lean consortium can introduce tools and techniques that help participating companies implement sustainable solutions quickly and effectively.

Dr. Jayson Myers, President of CME, was also in attendance to report on the state of manufacturing in Ontario. He asserted that although current challenges are varied, many of them are coupled with opportunities such as those to replace competition, develop new products and markets, and pursue acquisitions. With proper leadership and strategies, Myers predicted,

the sector will see a transition from high-volume production to specialized products and services delivered efficiently to meet customer demands.

There are currently 165 companies participating in 17 consortia across Canada. CME and a number of manufacturers met on May 20 to discuss next steps for establishing a new manufacturing consortium in Durham region. More updates will be provided as this initiative progresses. For more information, contact Liisa Ikavalko at 1-800-706-9857.