



# ELGIN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

## INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE: DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Elgin County's Economic Development and Tourism department continues to deliver initiatives that support business growth, strengthen local economies, and attract new investment and visitors across all seven Municipalities. With new tools, refreshed resources, and targeted campaigns underway, we're focused on creating meaningful opportunities that benefit communities across the County.

This update highlights recent initiatives and upcoming projects that reflect our commitment to driving economic development across Elgin County. We look forward to continuing to work together to grow our local economy and support a vibrant, resilient future for all.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM STRATEGY



The County is developing a new five-year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and Action Plan to guide the next phase of regional growth. The strategy will support key goals such as business retention and expansion, investment attraction, workforce development, and tourism sector advancement.

It will be shaped through data analysis, consultations with Local Municipal Partners (LMPs), and engagement with stakeholders and industry experts. The County will be launching engagement activities this summer to ensure the strategy reflects shared regional priorities and builds on local strengths. Members of Elgin County Council and our LMPs will be invited to provide input during this process.



## ELGINCENTIVES - COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP) REVIEW

A comprehensive review of the Elgincentives CIP was completed earlier this year and presented to County Council. This program has been a cornerstone of the County's economic development efforts since 2015, encouraging private investment and supporting business revitalization, particularly in tourism, downtown areas, and the agri-business sector.

To date, over **\$1.5 million in grants** have been awarded, helping to leverage more than **\$9 million in private investment**. Based on feedback from businesses, Municipal staff, and community partners, a refreshed CIP is now in development.

Updates will focus on:

- Improving efficiency
- Enhancing program visibility
- Supporting affordable housing
- Providing greater flexibility for impactful projects like brownfield redevelopment and major building upgrades.



These improvements will ensure the program continues to reflect local priorities and drive long-term business growth.

## BUSINESS GUIDE DEVELOPMENT

A new Business Guide is in development to assist startups and growing businesses in Elgin County. The guide will include general startup steps, planning and licensing checklists, an overview of the planning and permit process, key contacts, and links to funding and training opportunities.

Available both online and in print, the guide will be launched in the beginning of 2026 alongside workshops and outreach activities to help ensure broad awareness and uptake.

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND PERMIT PROCESS MAPPING



To simplify and clarify development and permit processes, County staff hosted a workshop with Municipal planners and building officials in January 2025. This collaboration focused on mapping the permit process from a business user's perspective.

The resulting tools including visual process maps, FAQs, and timelines will be included in the Business Guide and shared online. An awareness campaign will help businesses access this information early and avoid common delays during the application process.

## RURAL NETWORKING EVENT - CULTIVATING SUCCESS

Elgin County's Cultivating Success series continues to foster collaboration within the rural business community. The first event in September 2024 welcomed over 100 participants from across the region. The next event is set for June 18, 2025, at Prim Peony Event Co. in Dutton Dunwich and is officially sold out.

These events bring together business owners, support organizations, and industry leaders to network, exchange ideas, and strengthen rural entrepreneurship. They also highlight local businesses and foster cross-municipal collaboration. The initiative is a partnership with local Economic Development Committees and the Elgin Business Resource Centre.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WEBSITE REFRESH

Work is underway to refresh Elgin County's Economic Development website, with a focus on making resources more accessible and user-friendly. The refreshed site will feature improved navigation, updated business tools, new downloadable guides, and a more intuitive layout for both current business owners and prospective investors. The updates are expected to go live in fall 2025.



## SUPPORT LOCAL CAMPAIGN

Elgin County recently concluded its 8-week Support Local campaign, which featured Council members visiting businesses, sharing local success stories, and promoting the value of supporting small businesses. The campaign included social media content, video, and photography that was shared widely across the region.

This initiative celebrated community spirit, boosted online engagement, and offered promotional tools for participating businesses and Municipalities.

## CONNECTING BUSINESSES TO FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Elgin County continues to support local businesses by offering one-on-one guidance and helping connect them to funding, training, and advisory services. One key tool is Fundica, a searchable platform that matches businesses with eligible government programs and incentives.

The County also works closely with partners including the Elgin Business Resource Centre (EBRC), the Small Business Enterprise Centre (SBEC), and local Chambers of Commerce. Together, these partners offer wraparound support for new and existing businesses in our region.



## BUSINESS DIRECTORY UPDATE

The County is currently refreshing its online business directory to ensure accurate, up-to-date listings. Ella Broadhead, the summer Administrative Assistant, is leading this project and contacting local businesses to confirm their information.

The updated directory will support promotional efforts, enhance business visibility, and provide insight into the regional business landscape. The new directory will be launched later this year on the County website.

## PEOPLE OF ELGIN SERIES

In partnership with Establish Media, the County launched the People of Elgin storytelling series. This campaign showcases the inspiring stories behind local businesses, highlighting their resilience, creativity, and community contributions. Distributed through social media and online platforms, the series helps build Elgin's identity as a dynamic place to live, work, and invest. Visit [Elgin County's YouTube Page](#) to view all featured businesses.



## STAY CONNECTED

The Elgin County Economic Development newsletter provides updates on business activity, funding opportunities, tourism initiatives, and more. Issued quarterly, it is a helpful resource for Council members, Municipal staff, and community leaders looking to stay informed about growth across the region.

[Sign up for the quarterly newsletter here](#), and [read the Summer 2025 Edition here](#).

## MEET THE TEAM - CONTACT US FOR SUPPORT



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**SUMMER 2025**



# ELGIN COUNTY TOURISM UPDATE

## WELCOME SUMMER WITH US

It's shaping up to be a busy and exciting season in Elgin County. From welcoming new team members to launching a major website and marketing campaign, there's a lot happening and a lot of ways for our local tourism operators to get involved and benefit. Have a read below to see what we've been up to, where we are headed, and how our tourism operators can get involved.

## MEET OUR SUMMER STUDENTS

We are delighted to introduce you to three enthusiastic students who have joined our Economic Development and Tourism team this summer. Their contributions will enhance our visitor services, business support, and public outreach efforts. If you happen to see them in your community, please extend a warm Elgin County welcome!



### **ARDEN DOUPE, MARKETING ASSISTANT**

Arden helps with social media, website updates, and staffing the Visitor Centre. She also visits local businesses and events to share real-time content and updates.

### **ALLIE PIMLATT, TOURISM ASSISTANT**

Based at the Port Stanley Visitor Centre, Allie welcomes visitors and provides recommendations on activities, dining, and events.

### **ELLA BROADHEAD, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**

Ella supports administrative tasks, helps at the Visitor Centre, and is updating the County's online business directory.

# WHAT'S NEW:



## ELGINTOURISM.CA

We've launched a brand-new tourism website that presents Elgin County in a fresh and accessible way. With a mobile-friendly design, high-quality imagery, and dynamic event listings, the site helps visitors discover our local attractions, plan their trips, and explore everything our region has to offer. Each listing is designed to support our tourism operators by increasing visibility and encouraging engagement.

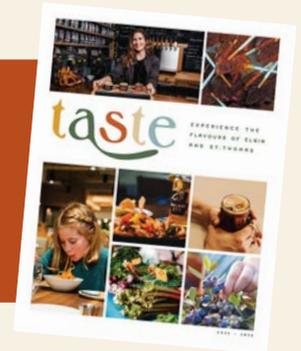


## 2025 ELGIN COUNTY VISITOR'S GUIDE

The new format of the Visitor Guide features carefully curated content that highlights the local experiences and all the wonderful tourism-based businesses our region has to offer. We removed ads and eliminated membership fees in order to showcase all of our offerings. Guides are distributed across Ontario and locally.

## 2025 SAVOUR ELGIN CULINARY GUIDE

In partnership with Railway City Tourism, the Taste Guide is a carefully curated magazine that highlights our region's culinary experiences. The businesses featured rotate with each issue, making it a highly sought-after exposure opportunity.



## FAM TOUR SUCCESS

Elgin Tourism recently partnered with Railway City Tourism and Ontario's Southwest to host a FAM (familiarization) tour for 28 tourism professionals. This interactive event replaced our annual networking session and gave participants the chance to explore key destinations, network with fellow operators, and build connections. We received great feedback and look forward to more events like this in the future. We will be sure to reach out prior to next FAM Tour opportunity.



## VISITOR DATA: INSIGHTS FOR LOCAL BUSINESS

We recently completed a geofencing study of visitor traffic to Port Stanley from January 2024 to March 2025. The study tracked over 107,000 unique visitors and 1.2 million visits.

### Key takeaways:

- **70% of visitors** are from nearby communities within 39 km, while **30% travel from farther away** and are more likely to stay overnight.
- The **busiest time of day is midday**, aligning with beach activity and dining hours.
- High-value visitor segments include **families, mature travelers, and younger adults**. **Students and non-affluent visitors** also visit regularly, though with different spending habits.



These findings are shaping how we market the region and plan for future tourism growth. Local tourism attractions can gather similar insights by collecting visitor postal codes and working with Ontario's Southwest to profile their audience. Interested businesses can contact Elgin County Tourism if they are interested in learning more or applying this to their business.



## CONNECTING WITH VISITORS AT TRADE SHOWS

Each year, we promote Elgin County tourism at events like the London Lifestyle Show, St. Thomas Home Show, and Toronto International Women's Show. These events help us connect directly with thousands of potential visitors and invite them to explore Elgin.

## SPOTLIGHT ON OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH ONTARIO'S SOUTHWEST

We're proud to be a part of Ontario's Southwest, which offers programs, training, and marketing tools for tourism operators:

- Unlocked & Inspired and Signature Experience programs provide coaching and promotion
- Paid marketing options, like collaborative social media and photo packages
- Webinars and workforce development tools
- Access to visitor trend data and market insights



Visit [www.swotc.ca](http://www.swotc.ca) to explore the full list of opportunities available to local tourism businesses.

## SUMMER MARKETING CAMPAIGN

To support the launch of Elgin County's new tourism website and encourage both local and regional travel, we've rolled out a targeted summer marketing campaign that builds on recent data and audience insights. Our campaign uses a combination of platforms to reach day-trippers, overnight visitors, and local residents:



- **CTV London** digital and on-air ads
- **Google Ads** target users within a 200 km radius of Elgin County
- **Billboards** in St. Thomas and West London
- **MyFM St. Thomas** radio and digital across the region

This campaign is informed by a recent geofencing study, which revealed that 70% of visitors to Port Stanley live within 39 km, while 30% travel from farther away and are more likely to stay overnight. These insights are shaping how and where we market Elgin County this summer.

All marketing efforts are designed to drive visitors to the new tourism website, where they can explore local businesses, find events, and plan their visit.

## NEW DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES

Elgin County is now working with the Tourism-Oriented Directional Signing (TODS) program to offer improved highway and roadside signage. This program replaces the County's old signage system and meets provincial standards.

- Hwy 401 signs: \$750 per direction
- Hwy 3/County road signs: \$400 per direction

We're also installing new cluster signs in Port Glasgow, Port Stanley, Port Bruce, Sparta, John E Pearce Provincial Park, Port Burwell, and Aylmer. These signs will guide visitors to local tourism hotspots using clear symbols.

To apply for TODS signage or to check eligibility, businesses can contact:

Sandra Peters – TODS Field Rep  
1-888-263-9333 ext. 201 or 519-914-1132  
speters@interstatelogos.com





## SOCIAL MEDIA GROWTH

Our reach continues to grow on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. In 2024, we reached over 400,000 people - double the previous year. As of May 29, we've already reached over 314,000 people in 2025.

Tag us and send us updates from your community. We want to help share your story.

  @elgincountytourism #elgincounty

## TELL US WHAT'S NEW

Do you know a local tourism business celebrating a milestone or launching a new experience? Let us know so we can help spread the word. Contact the Elgin County Economic Development and Tourism team to feature tourism businesses in your community in future updates.

Let's keep working together to showcase the best of Elgin County!

Thank you for all you do to make our region a destination worth exploring.



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