



MEMO

To: Economic Development Standing Committee

From: The Manager of Economic Development

Date: August 28, 2024

Subject: February 2025 monthly department report

The following is an update of department activities from September 2024 to January 2025:

Events:

Town Halls – Staff held Town Halls in October 2024 and January 2025. Both events had great engagement with those who attended. The October event offered a refresher on what is economic development and shared videos from Dirt Trax and shelovestofish.com. The January session served as a bit of a year in review and a brief overview of work to come in 2025.

Snowmobile Information Session – Staff held an information night on November 14th to share information on rules of the trail and the value of getting a trail permit. The presentation also highlighted on the importance of Snowmobiling as a tourism draw.

Shop Local – On November 28th, the City presented the Shop the Season Shop Local event. This event saw the most business participation to date with 42 businesses taking part. The City prepared a guide that was sent to all homes in the community and a collection of social media posts leading up to and on the day of the event. The Jewels and Gents once again donated their time to go from store to store downtown and sing carols to get folks in the festive mood. There were 2 draws held for prizes generously donated by participating businesses. This draw saw 992 people enter which is a great indication that people were out visiting our merchants.

EDCO 2025 – Staff will be attending the Economic Developers Council Of Ontario Conference February 4-6. This event offers a collection of sessions focused on Economic Development and offers a great way for staff to network and learn from their peers.

Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction

Staff have facilitated the sale or purchase of multiple properties through 2024 including 255 Highway 108 and locations on Forest Place & Oakland Blvd. Staff continue to promote high value properties in Elliot Lake including 151 Ontario Ave and the large lot on Esten Drive South. These sales and acquisitions help to increase our tax base through the development of the lands and spin off benefits including job creation. Staff are very conscious of the shortage of multi-unit

residential properties and are making every effort to work with interested investors to add stock to help ease this shortfall. Additionally, staff have undertaken a project to identify a new commercial area in the community and will be working to bring a report to Council with costs to establish such an area.

The updated Community Improvement Plan that was launched this year has seen several successful applications. This has included not only the tax increment incentive but also grants toward signs and application fees.

The department has supported the grand openings of several business in the community in the later part of the year including Vyybe, Smiles by Kelli, Uniting Movement and Yoga, Foisy Welding & Fabrication, Mulligans and Chuck's Roadhouse

Staff are involved in talent attraction for Physicians and Healthcare workers and are proud to have added another ER Physician in 2024. Staff will be working with YOLO Nomads in 2025 to put together an attraction program that will include the creation of an Elliot Lake attraction guide that will be coupled with strategic social media posts.

Tourism

It was a very exciting year for tourism in the City. Staff are in the midst of the tourism strategy that has been named the explore Elliot Lake tourism initiative. An advisory/working group has been formed comprising of several community stakeholders. A survey and community input sessions are in the works and are planned for mid to late March.

It was another successful year with Ashley Rae from shelovestofish.com. 2024 saw her promote the Hampton and Laurentian lodge which adds to her previous visits to Dunlop Lake Lodge, Ten Mile Lake Lodge and Mississagi Park. This year the staff engaged her services for 2 visits, 3 Facebook posts, 3 Instagram posts, a vertical video set and a YouTube video. Ashley provided statistics for the year relating to her social media posts. Some highlights include:

YouTube – 15k impressions and 876 views

Facebook reach of 219,332

Facebook reel view of 10,300

Instagram views of 9,212

Ashley has also promoted Elliot Lake outside of contractual obligations including through her partnership with Yamaha, Salmon Spectacular magazine and Major League Fishing presented by Toyota USA. The latter is where Ashley won the L. Wood Sportsmanship and Community Leadership Award which resulted in a video montage including her experiences in Elliot Lake. Plans are in the works for 2 more visits in Elliot Lake including an ice fishing video, a late fall video and a fishing in Elliot Lake brochure.

2024 was a breakout year for Driftscape as a powerful tourism tool. With a new push to have visitors at the welcome centre scan the code and see the tour of Elliot Lake, the number of users increased to 6,433 from December 4th 2023 to November 7th 2024. More communities are

coming online in 2025 which will only help increase the visibility of Elliot Lake's tourism assets. Staff have renewed for 2025.

With the anticipation of a snowy winter, the City of Elliot Lake once again is being promoted in Michigan Snowmobiler and ORV Magazine. There is a valuable snowmobiler market in Northern Michigan and in working with the team at the publication, there are 2 full page ads, 2 half page ads and 2 feature stories about the trails in the city. With border crossing numbers in Sault Ste Marie climbing, this is a positive step forward to drawing US Tourism dollars to the City.

Lastly, the City is proud to be part of the Discover Huron North Regional Geotour. This partnership with the Township of Johnson, Township of Plummer Additional, Thessalon, Eco Bay, Bruce Mines and Huron Shores is a great way to cross promote communities and tap into a passionate group of Geocachers. This geotour has its own section in the Geocaching App where users can find special geocaches in each community. Staff want to thank Mr. John Matthews and geodog Bindi for their assistance in getting the Elliot Lake caches set up for this tour. A special kickoff event is being planned for the spring at the trailhead.

Other Activities

This year saw several initiatives to assist with fundraising for the Rogers Arena. This included the Jamie and Jo-Ann Armstrong fundraising challenge, the work with Mr. & Mrs. Rogers and many other great community partners. Staff were happy to help with the facilitation of the donations and to help celebrate and recognize all generous donors.

Elliot Lake Economic Development also has a large Community focus. This involves work with many Community Partners to ensure that the City is a great place to call home. Work continues with a collection of social groups to ensure that they receive proper supports to succeed.

The department also works closely with other community partners. This includes contributing to the SRFN Taskforce and a continued partnership with ELNOS and the East Algoma Community Futures Development Corporation.

Social Media

Social Media remains a duty of the Economic Development Department. Mr. Heard has done a fantastic job of managing several channels as well as the development of the monthly Notes from City Hall newsletter. The City's social media pages serve as a powerful customer service tool and staff strive to provide a professional image.

Respectfully submitted,

