

CANDIDATE BRIEFING

TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

First impressions, visitor spending and Chatham-Kent's opportunity to attract people, business and investment

Prepared for municipal candidates, members and the public | September 29, 2026

A visit can open the door. Lasting value depends on what follows.

Tourism brings customers to a community and introduces people to its businesses, places and way of life. It can support existing enterprises and create connections to future investment. The question is not simply how many visitors arrive, but what additional local value they create, what it costs to serve them and whether residents benefit.

1. Tourism is both an economic sector and a point of introduction

Visitors buy accommodation, meals, admissions, transport, recreation and retail goods. Those purchases can support suppliers and employment beyond the businesses serving visitors directly. International visitor spending is a service export; spending by visitors from elsewhere in Canada brings outside demand to CK, but is not an international export. ^{1,3}

Tourism can widen the customer base for a restaurant, farm experience, retailer, guide or cultural organization beyond local population demand. The resulting business opportunity depends on margins, capacity, seasonality and supplier purchases. Visitor sales, business profit, economic value added and municipal tax revenue are different measures. ^{1,16}

2. Is tourism the first step in economic development?

It can be the first experience of a community, but it is not a universal first step or a prerequisite for industrial growth. A tournament, festival, family visit or conference may introduce a future resident, entrepreneur, customer or investor to CK. Another investment may begin with a supplier relationship, a workforce requirement or a serviced site.

Longwoods International's destination-image research examines how advertising awareness and visitation relate to perceptions of a place for living, careers, business and education. This supports examining a tourism connection to economic development. It does not establish how many CK visitors later relocate or invest, or prove that a particular campaign causes those decisions. ²

A useful pathway to examine is: awareness, visit, experience, relationship, and possible return, relocation or investment. None of those transitions is automatic. Housing, employment, infrastructure, financing and reliable municipal processes still matter.

Connection to the series: tourism complements the earlier briefings on the entrepreneurial ecosystem, growth from within, infrastructure finance and quality of life. It does not replace those conditions or make one organization the owner of community prosperity. ¹⁵

MARKETS: NEARBY, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

3. Regional marketing and international attraction do different jobs

The choice is not simply local advertising versus overseas promotion. Nearby residents, visitors from other Canadian regions, cross-border Americans and long-haul travellers have different trip purposes, booking patterns and costs of reaching them. International does not necessarily mean far away: a Michigan visitor is international; an Ontario visitor is domestic.

Audience	Potential role in a CK strategy	Trade-off and evidence to examine
CK residents and their guests	Support repeat local use, resident awareness and referrals to visiting friends and relatives.	Local participation has value, but resident spending is not automatically new money entering CK. Track visiting guests separately.
Nearby Canadian markets	Reach day trips, weekends, teams and repeat visitors from areas such as Windsor-Essex, Sarnia-Lambton and London.	A feasible drive does not guarantee demand. Examine visitor origins, conversion, trip frequency and opportunities to add an overnight stay.
Other Canadian markets	Connect special-interest trips, family travel and regional touring with reasons to spend more time in CK.	A longer journey needs a compelling itinerary and available accommodation. Compare incremental spend with acquisition cost.
United States	Test cross-border leisure, heritage, outdoor, sport and business demand, including relevant Michigan audiences.	Consider border requirements, travel time, currency and sentiment. Assess each segment rather than treating all Americans as one market.
Overseas visitors	Connect distinctive experiences to Ontario or multi-stop Canadian itineraries through established partners.	Require bookable products, distribution partners and workable access. National trip spending is not all spent in CK.

The market applications above are assessment options, not a recommended advertising allocation. Destination Ontario works across Ontario, Canada, the United States and international markets, including joint marketing and travel-trade relationships. ⁴

Why visitor volume alone can mislead

Statistics Canada reported that, in 2024, U.S. residents made 78.7% of inbound trips to Canada and spent \$15.6 billion; overseas residents made 21.3% and spent \$12.9 billion. Canadians also spent \$74.8 billion travelling within Canada. These national, whole-trip figures illustrate different market scales and spending patterns; they are not CK results or a formula for its budget. ³

Regional partners can be a route to distant customers.

Marketing through Ontario's Southwest is not the same as marketing only to people who already live in the region. Its cooperative channels, together with Destination Ontario and national partners where relevant, can extend reach. The test is the audience actually reached and the business converted, not the location of the organization buying the advertising. ^{4,5}

COMPETING FOR SHARE OF WALLET

4. A destination needs to win attention, a booking and local spending

Share of wallet means the portion of a visitor's discretionary travel or event budget captured in CK. The competition includes other destinations, other activities and staying home. A destination can attract attention without securing a trip, or secure a visit while much of its spending occurs elsewhere.

Three distinct opportunities

Win the trip: give a defined audience a reason to choose CK. Extend the visit: connect an event or attraction with accommodation, food and a second experience. Retain more value: make relevant local suppliers and businesses easy to find and use. These are different objectives and require different evidence.

For example, a tournament visitor might add a family meal and a heritage visit; a birder might add a guided experience and another night. These are illustrative opportunities, not measured CK outcomes. Transparent prices, suitable opening hours, accessible information and a workable booking path determine whether the offer is usable.

5. Tourism investment is more than an advertising line

Investment component	What the expenditure is intended to accomplish
Product and readiness	Develop experiences people can book; verify capacity, hours, accessibility, pricing, operator readiness and transport connections.
Demand generation	Create useful content and reach appropriate audiences through paid media, websites, search, email, earned coverage and partner channels.
Sales and conversion	Respond to group and event inquiries, develop itineraries, support booking referrals and work with travel sellers and event rights-holders.
Delivery and measurement	Provide visitor information, coordinate services, maintain accurate listings, collect evidence and assess business and resident outcomes.

Ontario's Southwest offers paid and unpaid marketing opportunities, including partner content and promotional channels. Destination Ontario also provides joint marketing and travel-trade support. Earned coverage and organic posts can complement paid reach, but are not guaranteed distribution; they still require staff time and suitable content. ^{4,5}

How much is enough to compete?

There is no defensible universal percentage for regional versus international promotion. A costed plan can start with the audience, experience, season, available capacity and intended result, then compare a limited test with a larger campaign. Spreading a small budget across many markets can leave too little reach or follow-up to evaluate any one of them.

A comparison can examine total campaign cost, partner contributions, cost per additional visitor or visitor-night, local spending, seasonality and the next-best use of the money. A larger budget is not automatically effective; an inexpensive campaign is not economical if it reaches people who would have visited anyway.

Match the promise to delivery.

Promotion cannot supply unavailable rooms, repair an inaccessible venue or create staff capacity. Equally, a usable facility or experience may remain underused without customers knowing about it. Readiness and market development are complementary investments.

SPORT, SPECIAL EVENTS AND OTHER REASONS TO TRAVEL

6. Different tourism segments produce different opportunities

VisitCK already presents sport, festivals, Black history, Indigenous experiences, outdoor activities, food, accommodation and meetings. The examples below show how those categories can connect to business activity; they are not endorsements of particular bids or predictions of demand. ⁶

Segment	Potential economic connection	Main planning question
Sport tourism	Amateur, youth, masters and parasport tournaments; spectator events; outdoor competitions. Teams, families and officials can need rooms, meals and services.	Do facilities, hotel capacity, scheduling and transport fit the event? What happens to resident access and regular bookings?
Festivals and special events	Music, arts, automotive, food, harvest and heritage events can provide a reason and date to visit and buy from local enterprises.	How many distinct visitors come because of the event? What are security, waste, traffic, weather and cancellation costs?
Nature, culinary and cultural travel	Fishing, birding, cycling, farm experiences and heritage interpretation can link guides, producers, retailers and accommodations.	Can the experience be delivered safely and respectfully, within environmental capacity and cultural authority?
Meetings and business events	Conferences, association meetings, technical tours and training can connect visitor spending with sector knowledge and business relationships.	Does the event fit venue and accommodation capacity, and is there a plan for relevant introductions and follow-up?
Family, group and occasion travel	Weddings, reunions, visiting friends and relatives, educational visits and group tours can distribute demand to several businesses.	Are group services, transport, itineraries and booking information coordinated? Not every guest uses paid accommodation.

Sport tourism requires hosting capacity, not just promotion

A sport-event assessment can compare recurring events using existing assets with larger bids requiring new capital. Rights fees, facility specifications, room blocks, volunteer capacity, accessibility, medical support and displacement all affect the case. Sport Tourism Canada provides pre-event modelling and post-event measurement using visitor and organizer spending; estimates are not guarantees. ⁷

Timing is part of the business case. An event on quieter dates may use spare capacity; one on an already-full weekend can displace other visits. Compare recurring off-peak bookings with a one-time surge, and check accommodation and resident-program impacts before committing.

Business events can connect tourism to other sectors

Destination Canada's Legacy & Impact Study examined 15 international events and identifies outcomes beyond visitor expenditure, including knowledge, relationships and sector development. These findings concern deliberately managed events, not automatic benefits from every meeting. CK's John D. Bradley Convention Centre is an existing venue to assess against an event's actual requirements. ^{8,19}

Cultural authority matters: Black heritage organizations and Indigenous hosts determine how their stories and experiences are presented. VisitCK identifies both as part of the visitor offer. Partnership arrangements can clarify interpretation, consent, compensation, community benefit and visitor conduct; cultural value is not dependent on sales. ^{17,18}

FINANCING AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SPENDING AND RETURN

7. Match the funding source to the cost and the beneficiary

A tourism budget has recurring costs as well as capital needs. Marketing, staffing, events and visitor services require operating funds. Facilities, waterfront access and other assets require lifecycle maintenance and renewal. CK asset-management guidance connects service levels, growth and long-term financial planning. ¹³

Funding approach	Opportunity and financial constraint
Municipal operating funds and earned revenue	Fund defined public services or programs; fees and rentals recover some costs. Examine affordability, service levels, who benefits and the ongoing tax requirement.
Industry, sponsorship and cooperative funding	Share selected costs with operators, sponsors or regional partners. Agreements clarify cash versus in-kind contributions, deliverables, rights and what happens if support ends.
Grants and event support	Can support eligible projects but bring deadlines, matching costs and reporting. Experience Ontario 2026 supports tourism festivals and events; its intake is closed. Future funding is not assured.
Reserves and capital borrowing	Can finance planned renewal or long-lived assets, subject to authority and affordability. A reserve draw needs a replenishment plan; debt needs repayment and does not eliminate operating costs.

Funding examples and constraints draw on CK financial planning, regional partnership opportunities and the provincial festival program. ^{5,10,13}

Accommodation tax is a tool, not a free source of money

Where adopted, Municipal Accommodation Tax adds to the accommodation price and can help fund tourism. Ontario Regulation 435/17 sets revenue-sharing rules. Where no destination marketing program existed when the tax began, at least 50% of revenue net of reasonable collection and administration costs goes to eligible tourism entities. Different rules apply to pre-existing programs. Tourism promotion includes product development. Any CK proposal would need its own legal, governance, price and revenue assessment. ¹¹

8. Visitor spending is not the same as a municipal financial return

Ontario's Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM) estimates impacts from visitor spending, operations and investment. Input quality and geographic boundaries matter. Its visitor definition includes out-of-town overnight travel and same-day trips of at least 40 kilometres, with specified exclusions. A locally chosen "nonresident" measure is not automatically the same definition. ¹⁶

Illustration only: a spending ratio is not a profit calculation.

Assume a campaign and its associated public services cost \$30,000 and produce 1,000 additional visitor-nights in CK, each with \$180 in local spending. That is \$180,000 in direct spending, \$30 in public cost per additional visitor-night and a 6:1 spending-to-cost ratio. It is not \$180,000 in profit or municipal revenue. The assumptions require evidence; visitor-nights are not hotel room-nights.

Assessment also needs the spending that would have happened anyway, displaced visits, purchases supplied from outside CK, and public service and lifecycle costs. Local attendance can have community value without being incremental tourism demand. Do not add visitor receipts and the same receipts spent by organizers or vendors a second time.

LINKING TOURISM TO BUSINESS GROWTH AND ACCOUNTABILITY

9. Turn visitor demand into business and workforce opportunity

Tourism connects to growth from within when existing operators can serve new customers, invest in their offer, find staff and purchase suitable local inputs. Agriculture guidance connects producers, processors, hospitality, distribution and experiences along a value chain. The opportunity includes food, trades, equipment, transport, design and event services, not only hotels. ^{9,15}

The workforce connection works in both directions: tourism needs capable workers and managers, while its experiences introduce people to community life. Training and career progression require employers, educators and service partners. Seasonal work, housing, transport and scheduling remain constraints; a pleasant visit alone does not establish a relocation or investment case. ¹⁵

Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) offers a way to ask operators about these constraints and coordinate follow-through. Tourism questions could examine seasonality, group bookings, supplier gaps, labour, succession and expansion plans. These would be proposed research questions, not existing CK findings. Protect business-specific records and report public themes in aggregate. ²⁰

10. Distinct roles within a shared visitor economy

Council and the Mayor: address public priorities, authorized funding, service levels, partnerships and accountability through their respective legal roles. Staff and VisitCK: assess markets, coordinate delivery and report results. Businesses, event organizers and cultural hosts: develop and deliver their offers. The Chamber: connect firms, suppliers and partners and bring business experience into discussion. Regional and provincial tourism bodies: contribute market access and expertise. None owns the whole system. ^{4,5,14,15}

CK Plan 2035 connects infrastructure, agri-industries, business growth and skills with quality of life, culture and natural resources. Tourism proposals can be assessed against those connected objectives, including benefits and burdens across urban, rural and waterfront communities. ¹²

11. What candidates and the public can ask to see

Decision question	Evidence that makes the discussion useful
Who are we trying to attract, and why?	Origin and purpose, demand by season, capacity, and a comparison of market and channel costs.
What changed because of the activity?	Additional unique visitors and nights, booking conversion, business feedback and an explicit method for estimating incrementality.
Who benefited and who paid?	Local purchasing and business results, public cost, resident access, environmental effects and a separate municipal revenue assessment.
What happens after the visit?	Repeat visitation, operator reinvestment, workforce or business referrals and follow-up, without attributing every outcome to tourism.

A practical reporting framework distinguishes activity, such as campaign reach and event attendance, from additional spending and longer-term outcomes. Before-and-after changes alone do not prove causation. Results need comparable periods, clear definitions and protection of personal and commercial information. ^{7,8,16}

The economic-development connection

Tourism can be a first invitation to Chatham-Kent, a new customer for an existing business and a starting point for a lasting relationship. Its contribution depends on matching markets with a credible experience, connecting visitors to local enterprise, and accounting for costs and community effects. The enduring question is: what additional value remains in CK after the visitor leaves?

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

Sources supporting the briefing

Superscript numbers in the briefing refer to the entries below. Linked titles open public sources. Web materials were reviewed September 29, 2026; historical figures retain their stated year and geographic scope.

1. [Destination Canada. Value of Tourism](#). Updated August 2026. Tourism as a service export and links to businesses, employment and the wider economy. National promotional-return estimates are not applied to CK.
2. [Longwoods International. "Halo Effect" Research](#). Measures destination-image perceptions associated with advertising recall and recent visitation; not a CK relocation or investment conversion estimate.
3. [Statistics Canada. Tourism activity, 2024](#). Released September 26, 2025. National Travel Survey and Visitor Travel Survey: domestic expenditure and U.S./overseas inbound trips and spending. All amounts are Canadian dollars.
4. [Destination Ontario. Corporate home and Who we are](#). Domestic and international marketing, joint initiatives, travel trade and market-ready products; corporate page updated July 9, 2026.
5. [Ontario's Southwest. Marketing Opportunities](#). Regional paid and unpaid channels, cooperative content and operator participation. Individual offers and availability can change.
6. [Municipality of Chatham-Kent. VisitCK](#). Local visitor-offer categories, including sport, events, food, heritage, Indigenous tourism, outdoor activities and accommodation.
7. [Sport Tourism Canada. Economic Impact](#). Pre-event forecasts and post-event assessments; visitor, organizer and event-related capital expenditure categories. Modelled impact is not municipal cash return.
8. [Destination Canada. Business Events Legacy & Impact Study](#). Final study of 15 international events; relationships, knowledge and other longer-term outcomes depend on intentional design and follow-through.
9. **Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Agriculture Economic Development: A Resource Guide for Communities. 2017**. Supplied guide, printed pages 38-40 and 46: agriculture-system partnerships, local food opportunities, asset mapping and value-chain analysis. Historical guidance, not current procurement authority.
10. [Government of Ontario. Experience Ontario 2026](#). Festival and event support, eligibility, competitive assessment and closed-intake status as reviewed September 29, 2026. No future award or intake is assumed.

SOURCES AND REFERENCES | CONTINUED

Local application, governance and measurement

11. [Ontario Regulation 435/17. Transient Accommodation Tax, under the Municipal Act, 2001.](#) Sections 1 and 4-6: eligible entities, tourism-product development, different revenue-sharing arrangements and financial-accountability agreements.
12. [Municipality of Chatham-Kent. CK Plan 2035.](#) Supplied one-page framework, approved January 23, 2017: Economic Prosperity, Healthy & Safe Community, People & Culture and Environmental Sustainability.
13. [Municipality of Chatham-Kent. Asset Management Plan.](#) Service levels, anticipated growth, asset lifecycle and long-term financial planning.
14. [Government of Ontario. The Ontario municipal councillor's guide: Role of council, councillor and staff.](#) Council, head-of-council and staff responsibilities. Particular decisions remain subject to legislation, applicable mayoral powers, delegations and local procedures.
15. **Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce. Economic Development Series. September 2026.** Earlier supplied briefings: Growth from Within; Quality of Life, Workforce and Investment; Infrastructure Financing; and Municipal Leadership in the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem. Used for continuity of the CK discussion, not as proof of measured tourism effects.
16. [Government of Ontario. Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model. Updated August 28, 2026.](#) Simulation scope, geography, visitor definition, expenditure modules and the importance of accurate inputs.
17. [Municipality of Chatham-Kent. VisitCK: Black History.](#) Local Black-history interpretation and visitor information. Cultural-partnership considerations in the briefing are applications, not a claim of a new agreement.
18. [Municipality of Chatham-Kent. VisitCK: Indigenous Tourism.](#) Indigenous experiences, host protocols and partner information. Promotion does not transfer cultural authority to the municipality.
19. [Municipality of Chatham-Kent. VisitCK: Conferences and Meetings.](#) John D. Bradley Convention Centre and local meeting information. Availability and event-specific requirements require confirmation.
20. **Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Business Retention + Expansion Coordinator's Manual, version 3. August 2020.** Supplied manual, pages 6-14, 22, 39-40 and 56-58: structured business engagement, confidentiality, referrals, implementation and monitoring. No historical employment percentage is treated as a current CK estimate.

Use and interpretation: The market comparisons and numerical example are analytical illustrations, not forecasts, funding approvals or a prescribed spending allocation. Actual tax, financing, procurement and partnership arrangements require the applicable legal and financial review.