



Municipality of Wawa

QUARTERLY REPORT – 2024 Q4

Economic Development Officer

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the Economic Development Officer's work completed for the final Quarter of 2024 (Q4), and activities planned for the first Quarter of 2025 (Q1).

BACKGROUND

There are 6 key areas of work identified over the contracted work period of the Economic Development Officer (Aug 2024 to July 2027), including:

1. Build a Strong and Sustainable **Tourism** Business Community
2. Develop and Implement **Downtown** Improvements
3. Increase Supply of a Range and Mix of New **Housing**
4. Grow and Build New **Business** Investment
5. Support a **Labour and Resident Attraction/Retention Program**
6. **Other/EDO Skills:** training, skill-building, travel, etc.

Key activities in 2024 Q4 included:

- Assisting with operating the Tourist Information Centre full time (Sept 2024)
- Attending at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario's Knowledge Exchange on Community and Supportive Housing in Toronto
- Initiating Wawa's participation in QUEST's project (Motivating Net-Zero Action in Rural and Remote Communities)
- Rolling out the Financial Incentives Program (Community Improvement Plan)
- Completing the Downtown Revitalization Program Coordinator training through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
- Initiating partnership with Northern Policy Institute to develop a Housing Needs Assessment for Wawa
- Building strategic alliances

- Learning about Wawa, the Municipality, our strategic plan and direction, and meeting with community members and business owners

PRIORITY #1 - TOURISM

Assisting with operating the Tourist Information Center in September provided a fundamental learning opportunity about our Tourism portfolio as well as our strengths and potential areas for growth. I have also had an opportunity to develop relationships with key individuals at Algoma Country, Superior Country, Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, our local businesses and to attend various Webinars centred around tourism.

In reviewing Wawa's current 5-Year Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, an identified objective is to present Wawa with a unified voice and consistent messaging through the development of an integrated tourism marketing and communications plan. Research has been completed as to funding opportunities for this and staff are planning a scope of work for a potential Tourism Marketing and Communications Plan for Wawa.

Overview of Work Completed in 2024 Q4:

- Assisted with operating the Tourist Information Centre full time (Sept 2024)
- Webinars:
 - Ontario Federation of Organized Snowmobile Clubs: Organized Snowmobiling Webinar
 - Federation of Canadian Municipalities Collective's Designing Destinations: Maximizing the Impact of Tourism
- Monthly staff meetings centered around tourism planning for 2025
- Assisted with monthly Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee meetings
- Researched Tourism Marketing Strategies from other Municipalities, funding opportunities, and consultants

PRIORITY #2 – DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS

Rolling out the Community Improvement Plan's Financial Incentive Program through letters, e-mailing, and door-knocking all along Broadway has yielded indications of interest by at least 6 different property owners and/or business owners. One pre-application consultation and one application-assistance meeting have been held so far for property owners with a big vision and a reasonable chance of success on their application. It is suspected that a large reason for the

time delay between launching the program and receiving completed applications is the time it takes for people to plan projects appropriately and obtain quotes.

A four-week Downtown Revitalization Program Coordinator training program through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has also been completed.

Overview of Work Completed in 2024 Q4:

- Completed Downtown Revitalization Program Coordinator training through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
- Rolled out the Community Improvement Plan's Financial Incentives Program
- Developed internal checklist of approval process for applications
- "Door knocking" at all possible properties within the Community Improvement Plan area
- Completed pre-application consultation and application assistance meeting with interested candidates

PRIORITY #3 - HOUSING

Key takeaways from AMO's knowledge exchange were to 1) start with assessing what we need and 2) be open to innovative solutions. A potential partnership with Northern Policy Institute is now being explored as an economical means to obtaining a Housing Needs Assessment in which consideration would be given to our unique needs as a small community in Northern Ontario.

A local business survey is being developed with the intention of being rolled out in Q1 of 2025 that aims to generate additional information on Wawa's labour market and housing needs.

As for finding creative solutions, a meeting with Marathon's Non-Profit Housing Corporation took place to gain insight on their recent successes in housing and other building development (for example, two new 50-unit apartment complexes, 2 new hotels, a new long-term care wing, a newly built golf course clubhouse, a newly built Municipal garage). Marathon has partnered with CGV Group out of Cochrane for all of these projects and have connected CGV Group with me for potential partnership following a housing needs assessment.

A meeting also occurred in Chapleau between Wawa, One Bowl and Northern Credit Union on ideas for future partnerships on housing initiatives in Wawa.

Overview of Work Completed in 2024 Q4:

- Attended at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario's Knowledge Exchange on Community and Supportive Housing in Toronto
- Formed partnership with Northern Policy Institute regarding potential of a Housing Needs Assessment for Wawa
- Built strategic alliances with:
 - Marathon Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corporation
 - Northern Policy Institute
 - CGV Group
 - One Bowl
 - QUEST
- Met with various housing organizations, including:
 - CGV Group (Cochrane) – online
 - One Bowl (Chapleau) – in Chapleau
- Attended Webinars:
 - Rural Housing Information System's "Northern Launch"
 - Rural Community Wellbeing Dashboard launch
 - Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund information session
- Met with Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing regarding possible courses of action to develop housing
- Initiated Wawa's participation in QUEST's project (Motivating Net-Zero Action in Rural and Remote Communities)
- Development of a Housing and Labour Market Survey for Wawa

PRIORITY #4 – BUSINESS

Significant time has been spent familiarizing and getting know our local business community, our local and regional service providers, and the grants, programs and funding available for business owners.

A business survey is being developed for intended roll-out in Q1 of 2025 that aims to generate additional information on Wawa's labour market and housing needs.

A Women in Business event called "She LEADS" is being planned in partnership with Superior East CFDC and Chadwic Homes Inc., set to occur in Q1 of 2025.

Overview of Work Completed in 2024 Q4:

- Development of a Housing and Labour Market Survey for Wawa
- Partnered with Superior East CFDC and Chadwic Homes Inc. to plan Women in Business event for 2025
- Built strategic alliances with:
 - Superior East CFDC
 - Regional Help Employment Centre
 - Millworks
 - Algoma Workforce Investment Corporation
 - Sault Career Centre
 - Alamos
 - Local business owners
- Researched various grants:
 - NOW Program
 - International Agri-Food Workers Grant
 - NOHFC programming
 - Superior East CFDC
- Attended Webinars:
 - Creating Meaningful Access in the Workplace
 - Millworks skill building workshop

PRIORITY #5 – LABOUR & RESIDENT ATTRACTION/RETENTION

As with Priority #4, development of relationships with business community and key organizations has been a major focus of 2024 Q4. Wawa and Dubreuilville partnered with Reseau du nord to deliver presentations on Francophone immigration and to launch a radio ad for National Week of Francophone Immigration.

A business survey is being developed for intended roll-out in Q1 of 2025 that aims to generate additional information on Wawa's labour market and housing needs.

- Continued partnership with Reseau du nord
- Partnered with Dubreuilville EDO and Reseau du nord to launch radio ad for National Week of Francophone Immigration
- Developed a Housing and Labour Market Survey for Wawa
- Met with community members to brainstorm strategies for labour and resident attraction/retention

- Built strategic alliances with:
 - Reseau du nord
 - Regional Help Employment Centre
 - Algoma Workforce Investment Corporation
 - Sault Career Centre
 - Local business owners

PRIORITY #6 – OTHER/EDO SKILLS

- Attended Regional EDO Meetings, including cultural training at Michipicoten First Nation on October 16, 2024
- Attended Wawa's 2024 Service Providers Forum
- Participated in the downtown Christmas spirit campaign (decorated front entrance to Municipal Town Hall for Christmas)
- Town Talk with JJAM FM

QUARTER AHEAD

Tourism:

- Develop scope for Tourism Marketing Strategy and secure funding (in partnership with the Director of Tourism)
- Complete several action items as outlined in 2025 Wawa Visitor Information Experience Strategy

Downtown Improvements:

- Continue to complete pre-application consultations and offer support for completing applications for financial incentive programs
- Recommend satisfactorily completed applications for approval
- Create "Downtown Improvement in Progress" municipal sign for display at successful applicant project sites

Housing:

- Partner with Northern Policy Institute on obtaining a Housing Needs Assessment for Wawa in 2025
- Explore partnership opportunities with organizations such as One Bowl and CGV Group
- Explore feasibility of starting a non-profit housing corporation in Wawa in 2025

Business:

- Roll out 2025 housing and labour market survey
- Plan and execute 2025 Women in Business event
- Develop communications plan between EDO and local business community

Labour and Resident Attraction/Retention:

- Develop Resident Information Guide
- Continue to work with Reseau du nord on French Immigration initiatives
- Explore opportunities to partner with Sault Career Centre on immigration initiatives

Other / EDO Skills

- Attend Economic Developers Council of Ontario's (EDCO) annual conference in Toronto (February 4-6)

RECOMMENDATION

That Council acknowledges receipt of the Economic Development Officer Quarterly Report EDO 2024-02 submitted by Kristy Hansen dated December 10, 2024 for information.

Respectfully submitted by:



Kristy Hansen

Economic Development Officer