

HH gets grant to enhance downtown Maynooth

BY MICHAEL RILEY Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Municipality of Hastings Highlands sent out a media release on Nov. 3 about a grant they'd procured to enhance downtown Maynooth. This funding is from the Ontario Highlands Tourism Organization, which gives over \$40,000 to HH to add cosmetic and functional elements and increase accessibility in Maynooth. CAO David Stewart comments on this new funding. Stewart sent out this media release on Nov. 3 about this non-repayable OHTO funding that HH procured in the amount of \$42,000. This money will go toward enhancing, beautifying and increasing accessibility in downtown Maynooth, with the addition of bike racks, accessible seating, planters and additional signage. With Maynooth being a prime tourism area within the municipality, HH applied to the OHTO as a follow up to the downtown revitalization that occurred in 2020. Delivered through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, or FedDev Ontario, this project is funded partly by the Government of Canada's Tourism Relief Fund. OHTO got \$3.67 million from FedDev Ontario to help local tourism organizations and businesses welcome back visitors safely, recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and help prepare them for future growth. As one of 13 Regional Tourism Organizations in Ontario, the not-for-profit OHTO was created in 2010 by the provincial government to increase tourism and coordinate tourism development efforts across the province. The Ontario Highlands region covers a large part of eastern Ontario, including Haliburton, Lanark and Renfrew, and portions of Frontenac, Hastings, and Lennox and Addington. The OHTO is partnered with established and recognized tourism organizations, municipalities and entities within the region to cooperate and collaborate to spur tourism growth within the Ontario Highlands area through marketing and product development. In the HH media release, the Honourable Filomena Tassi, the Minister responsible for Federal Economic Development is quoted as saying that the Government of Canada's investment of \$78 million through the Tourism Relief Fund is helping communities across southern Ontario. "With this funding, southern Ontario's Regional Tourism Organizations and Indigenous Tourism Ontario are providing hundreds of local businesses and organizations with the support they need to create jobs, attract more visitors and grow local economies, now and into the future," she says. OHTO's executive director Nicole Whiting is quoted in the release as saying they're extremely grateful to be working alongside FedDev Ontario to deliver this much needed funding to the provincial tourism industry. "We are a region full of resilient and innovative operators and organizations who care deeply about their communities. This funding support enables them to provide elevated experiences to visitors and re-ignite the spirit of our region," she says. Mayor Tracy Hagar says in the release that council is thrilled at the project approval and is excited to announce the funding provided by the OHTO. "The Municipality of Hastings Highlands is proud to receive support from the Government of Canada's Tourism Relief Fund and we are grateful for the support to our growing tourism community," she says. According to the media release, the new items have been purchased with the OHTO funding and have been installed, and the municipality is confident that this OHTO investment will drive economic growth in HH and help downtown Maynooth adapt and recover to attract new visitors following the last two plus years of COVID-19 restrictions. Stewart told Bancroft This Week on Nov. 8 that the bike racks, accessible seating, planters and additional signage had all been procured through various vendors that specialize in outdoor equipment and accessories. "Most items were installed by the operations team in late spring/early summer and used throughout the summer and fall months," he says. "Some items are already tucked away for winter storage."