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Business Resource

Rural Economic Development (RED) Program Accepting New Applications

Since 2003, Ontario has been providing rural communities, businesses and organizations, with funding to help attract investment, create jobs, and boost tourism, through a renewed Rural Economic Development (RED) program. During this time, the Province has invested more than \$185 million in approximately 600 RED program projects, generating \$1.2 billion in local economic activity, and retaining and creating more than 37,000 jobs.

The RED program has two streams for applications: a Community Development Stream and a Business Development Stream. Municipalities and not-for-profits can apply under the Community Development Stream and business applicants can apply under the Business Development Stream.

To be eligible for RED funding under either stream, projects must benefit rural Ontario. For the RED program, rural Ontario is comprised of lower-tier and single-tier municipalities that have a population of less than 100,000, or a population density of 100 people per square kilometre or less.

The RED program is accepting applications during the following intake periods in 2016/17:

January 16, 2016 to April 15, 2016

April 16, 2016 to July 15, 2016

July 16, 2016 to October 15, 2016

October 16, 2016 to January 15, 2017



For more information or to download an application visit the RED Program [website](#).

Business Profile

Local Business Helps Residents Make Healthy Lifestyle Choices this Winter



The weather outside may be dreary and unpredictable this time of year but inside the green house at Family Flowers a tropical paradise is waiting.

For the last four years this family run business has been helping people to achieve their fitness goals by offering up its temperature controlled green house as an indoor walking track during the months of January and February.

People are welcome to walk wherever they choose in the green house; however, staff have marked out a specified walking track. Five times around this track is equal to ½ a kilometre. The track is free to use and is open to the public Tuesdays to Fridays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Strollers, walkers, and wheelchairs are welcome. Children are also welcome and visitors are encouraged to stop at the mini farm to see the goats and donkey during their trip to the green house.

For the past three years, Family Flowers has partnered with Elgin St. Thomas Public Health to provide complimentary kits for Walking Club members that include hiking and cycling maps, a white board to track exercise, and more. Family Flowers even provides a sign-in sheet where visitors can keep track of their progress. Some people come everyday and over time they are able to increase the distances that they walk.

According to Retail Manager Jacklyn Versnick, the program originated as a way to more fully utilize the green house space during the quieter winter months. Most garden centres close down in January and February but because Family Flowers grows all its own products, it remains open while staff are busy tending to Hydrangeas and Easter Lilies during this time.

“The feedback from walkers has been great,” said Jacklyn. “People really enjoy that the track is dry, sheltered from the elements, has lots of natural light, is temperature-controlled, and allows them see flowers and greenery during this bleak time of year.”

For more information about the Winter Walking Club at Family Flowers visit

www.familyflowers.ca or like Family Flowers on [Facebook](#).



Business Resource

Survey Gives Employers a Voice

A community-driven business survey will help employers plan their future workforce.

EmployerOne will also help the community address any skills, training, education and labour gaps identified by employers.

The survey runs until the end of January in Elgin, Middlesex, and Oxford. All employers will be encouraged to fill out the annual survey, which focuses on their workforce and human resource issues, needs, and challenges.

“We all want to ensure employers have access to a strong labour supply so they can continue to grow and prosper,” said Debra Mountenay, executive director of the EMO Workforce Planning and Development Board.

“EmployerOne gives employers a voice to tell the community about the issues they’re facing and their hiring needs.”

Mountenay added that the survey is a key tool to identify workforce issues that the community can try to respond to. “Hearing directly from employers gives us a chance to address issues before they become big problems.”

EmployerOne is supported by 40 partners including business, employment, education, workforce and economic development organizations. The EMO Workforce Planning

and Development Board is the lead organization.

“Employers told us they’re tired of receiving similar surveys from different organizations,” Mountenay said. “As a community, we’ve listened and have developed a collaborative survey that employers will only be asked to do each January.”

The survey is open to all employers, from small to large in employee size, and across all sectors of the local economy, including non-profit and community organizations with paid staff.

The time needed to complete the survey will depend on the size of the business but typically takes around 15 minutes for most employers. Employers can save answers as they go along, returning later to complete the survey.

Businesses that fill out the survey will be entered into a random draw to win one of 4, \$50 Visa gift cards.

For more information about EmployerOne, contact Martin Withenshaw at the EMO Workforce Planning and Development Board, 519-672-3499 or martin@workforcedevelopment.ca or [click here](#) to take the survey today!



Your Workforce. Our Future.

Local Event

Frosty Family Fun at the World Tubing Championships and Winter Carnival



It has probably been awhile since you felt the exhilaration of sliding swiftly down a frozen hill, the wind whipping past your face, and your cheeks rosy from the cold. You can bring back those happy memories this February by participating in the World Tubing Championships and Winter Carnival to be held for the very first time in St. Thomas, ON.

The event is a fundraiser organized by the St. Thomas – Elgin General Hospital Foundation to raise money for the hospital's special care nursery. It coincides with Family Day weekend and is a great way for families to spend time together outdoors while supporting a good cause.

Over the course of February 12 and 13, teams of four will be pitted against one another in timed downhill tubing trials in order to win prizes. All teams must raise a minimum of \$1,000 to participate and all participants must be over the

age of ten. To-date nearly 50 teams have already signed up to compete.

The event will begin on Friday February 12 at 2:00 p.m. when the competition hill will open for 'practice runs' followed by opening ceremonies at 7:00 p.m. The competition will run from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Saturday February 13. The finals will be held at 6:00 p.m. when the title of 2016 World Tubing Champions will be awarded!

For those who might be a little intimidated by this fierce competition, a free Winter Carnival will be held on-site for spectators and participants alike. Bring out the family to enjoy exciting activities, hot chocolate, and s'mores. There is limited parking on-site, so shuttle buses have been arranged to take people from the Elgin Mall to the competition hill location.

Although the forecast has been short on snow this winter, organizers have been busy researching snow-making equipment just in case Mother Nature doesn't cooperate.

Impressions Printing is the presenting sponsor of the event with Coad, Koolen Electric, Streib Trucking, and Steelway Building Systems playing significant roles. Organizers have even been able to attract the attention of NHL Great and St. Thomas native Joe Thornton who has thrown his support behind the event as well.

To sign your team up or to learn more about the World Tubing Championships and Winter Carnival visit www.theworlds.ca or find the event on [Facebook](#).

Tourism Profile

2016 London Wine & Food Show

The annual [London Wine & Food Show](#) will run from January 14 -16 at the Western Fair District Agriplex. The show will feature local restaurants, wineries, craft breweries, and spirits paired with tasting seminars, stage presentations, and entertainment. As a result of its popularity in previous years, the show has added more vendors, more seminars, and has extended the show hours on Friday, January 15 from noon until 10:30 p.m. Savour Elgin will be at the show to promote Elgin County's finest restaurants, wineries, farmers' markets, and agritourism attractions to over 10,000 attendees as part of the Ontario's Southwest Pavilion. Both Elgin

County wineries, [Rush Creek Wines](#) and [Quai Du Vin Estate Winery](#), will be sampling their products at the show.



Tourism Profile

2016 Boat, Fishing and Outdoors Show

From February 19 – 21, 2016 thousands of visitors will attend southwestern Ontario's largest, most comprehensive boat, fishing, and outdoor show at London's Western Fair District. The show features three acres of boats, boating equipment, recreation power products, and fishing gear from the top dealers in the province. Elgin County Economic Development and Tourism will be exhibiting at the show to promote the Ports of Elgin. Visit the booth for giveaways, draws, and information about activities and events along Elgin's 120 kilometres of pristine lakeshore.

With a target audience of 20,000 consumers the show is a perfect opportunity to promote Elgin's four portside villages to the London market. Each of these villages offers visitors a unique and rewarding experience. Port Glasgow in the

western portion of the County is home to the Port Glasgow Yacht Club and Marina, the perfect spot to launch or charter a boat or relax on the beach. Port Stanley offers some of the finest beaches on the north shore of Lake Erie and visitors are delighted by the quaint boutiques and fine dining establishments that dot the downtown core. Port Bruce boasts some of the best Lake Erie Yellow Perch and Walleye fishing along Ontario's southern coastline and Port Burwell is home to a provincial park, a historic lighthouse, and some of the best sunsets along Lake Erie's north shore.

For more information on the Ports of Elgin or the Elgin County booth at the [London Boat, Fishing and Leisure Show](#) visit www.elgintourist.com/ports.