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MEDIA RELEASE

CITY OF STRATFORD, PERTH COUNTY AND ST. MARYS APPEAL TO PROVINCE ON BEHALF OF SMALL ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS

Bed & Breakfasts, Inns and Hotels/Motels Currently Ineligible for Provincial COVID-19 Relief Fund

Stratford, ON – March 4, 2021... Today, Stratford's Mayor Dan Mathieson, St. Marys Mayor Al Strathdee and Perth County Warden Jim Aitcheson formally appealed to the Provincial government on behalf of dozens of accommodators and small businesses in their Region who haven't qualified for financial supports under the provincial criteria for COVID-19 relief funding.

The Province of Ontario's Small Business Support Grant has been a necessary lifeline for many of the tourism-related small businesses within the region but due to the grant eligibility criteria, area Bed & Breakfasts, Inns and Hotels/Motels are deemed ineligible. Provincial pandemic health and safety policies have prevented these small but essential businesses from operating during the Province-wide shutdowns. In addition, the seasonal nature of tourism within Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County of using year-over-year April sales as the criteria month for eligibility also precludes many small tourism businesses from this essential support.

The Regional tourism sector has been devastated by COVID and many of accommodation providers require support to survive until the tourism economy recovers to pre-pandemic levels. The Ontario Small Business Support Grant application deadline is March 31, 2021 and the adjustment of the eligibility criteria would provide an essential and deserving lifeline to regional accommodation businesses.

QUOTES:

"Our accommodation providers are critical to our local tourism industry. We need to help support these small businesses through the current COVID-19 pandemic so that they remain open and available to receive visitors back to our region once we emerge on the other side." **Jim Aitcheson, Warden, County of Perth**

"Together with the Stratford Festival, we regularly attract over 1 million visitors annually. Our accommodation providers have been essential to that, providing reasons to stay and return, adding millions to the economic impact of their visit. They are in desperate need for financial assistance and I appeal to the Province to adjust the grant criteria so they are able to access support for their businesses. They are essential to our tourism industry and economic recovery." **Dan Mathieson, Mayor, City of Stratford**

"The Town is committed to supporting our small businesses through the pandemic and ensuring they have the resources to continue operating. Our accommodations sector has certainly taken a hit during the two lockdown orders and the stay-at-home order issued by the Government. Access to funding is critical to their re-opening." **Al Strathdee, Mayor, Town of St. Marys**

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