

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### STRATFORD TOURISM ALLIANCE PILOTS NEW BUSINESS MODEL

*Significant pivot to focus on local tourism economy recovery*

**Stratford, Ontario, October 1, 2020** – With the arrival of the pandemic earlier this year, the effect on Stratford’s tourism businesses was swift and devastating. Stratford’s road to recovery is not straightforward and requires innovation, determination and more than ever for the community to collectively pull together to rebuild a viable and robust year-round tourism economy.

Stratford Tourism Alliance (STA) has made significant efforts this summer to attract local and regional visitors in an effective but safe and prudent way and has worked strategically with the Stratford Economic Response and Recovery Task Force partners to create additional tourism opportunities for local businesses.

In response to the urgent economic challenges caused by COVID-19, STA applied for and was the recipient of a Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF) Grant. These monies allowed STA to allocate the return of all 2020 tourism operator partnership fees. In addition to returning partnership fees, STA will also refund all 2020 Culinary Guide ad deposits to local tourism businesses.

“Stratford has really risen to the challenge with its collective response, including destination-wide recovery initiatives like Stratford Al Fresco and the upcoming 3-month Lights On Stratford winter festival of lights,” said Zac Gribble, STA’s Interim Executive Director. “The government recovery funding has enabled STA to maximize its destination marketing and development efforts for the betterment of our tourism industry and community.”

In order to focus on helping the entire destination towards recovery, STA is also proceeding with piloting a new business model.

As Carrie Wreford, Board Chair of Stratford Tourism Alliance, explains, “STA has been exploring a move toward a non-partner model of marketing Stratford for some time, and has decided that the current needs of our community warrant accelerating this initiative. The past few months have shown that we have had great success promoting businesses in our community whether they’re STA partners or not. This is the way we need to move forward in order to assist our community recover from the severe impacts related to lack of tourism as a result of COVID-19.”

With its increased focus on destination management and development and resolve to represent all local tourism-related businesses, STA is changing its operating name from Stratford Tourism Alliance to Destination Stratford.

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