



AGENDA

In-person meeting at Hilton Home2 Suites
and online via Zoom
on **Tuesday, February 18, 2025, 2:00 p.m.**
[Click here to join via Zoom](#)



	Page #
1. Welcome and agenda approval <i>Motion: To accept the agenda as presented.</i>	1-2
2. Declaration of conflict of interest	
3. Approval of meeting minutes <i>Motion: To accept the minutes from the January 21, 2025 meeting as presented.</i>	3-5
4. Marketing presentation 4.1. Val Hamilton, Muskoka Tourism	6-7
5. Financial update – Andrew Buwalda 5.1. YTD and cash flow report 5.2. 2024 audited financials 5.3. 2025/26 draft budget – initial discussion	
6. Report from Grants and Partnerships Subcommittee – Chandler Joliffe	
7. ED report – Kelly Haywood 7.1. Marketing report review – February 7.2. Meetings and conventions update 7.3. Eclipse update (Sandhill) 7.4. Downtown light installation update 7.5. Tourism Support Alliance <i>Motion: To adopt the Tourism Support Alliance Terms of Reference as presented</i>	8 9-11
8. Next meetings and adjournment 8.1. Next meetings: Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at 2:00 p.m., Hilton Home2 Suites – regular meeting Tuesday, April 22, 2025, at 2:00 p.m., Hilton Home2 Suites – regular meeting Tuesday, May 20, 2025, at 2:00 p.m., Hilton Home2 Suites – regular meeting 8.2. Adjournment <i>Motion: To adjourn the meeting.</i>	



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IMPORTANT 2025 DATES

- **January:** Annual business & marketing planning commences
- **February 18:** Initial budget discussions
- **March 18** ED presentation of 2025/26 marketing plan
- **March 19 2pm: AGM (location TBD)**
- **March 26 9am: TBC General Committee presentation (pending scheduling by Town)**
- **April 22:** HMATA budget approval
- **May:** Town/HMATA biannual touchpoint (launch TPA preliminary discussion)
- **May 31:** Year-end
- **June:** TPA draft
- **July:** Begin strategic planning
- **September:** **TBC** General Committee presentation (pending 2024/25 audited financials)
- **September:** Final draft TPA to Town staff for General Committee
- **December:** Final TPA due
- **December:** Strategic plan expires



MINUTES

In-person meeting at Hilton Home2
and online via Zoom
January 21, 2025, 2:00 p.m.



Present: In person: Jeff Suddaby, Andrew Buwalda, Steve Carr, Chirag Patel, Chandler Joliffe, Linda Fraser; via Zoom: Scott Morrison

Regrets: none

Staff: Kelly Haywood, Dawn Huddleston, Torin Suddaby, Rhonda Christenson

Guests: Halley Clover, Chamber (Zoom); Rachel Hunt, BIA

1. Welcome and agenda approval

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

Motion: To approve the agenda as presented.

Moved by: Chandler Joliffe

Seconded by: Steve Carr

CARRIED

2. Declaration of conflict of interest – none

3. Approval of meeting minutes

Motion: To accept the minutes from the November 18, 2024 meeting as presented.

Moved by: Chirag Patel

Seconded by: Steve Carr

CARRIED

4. Partnership presentations

The Board heard presentations from HMATA's tourism partners: Halley Clover, Huntsville Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce; Rachel Hunt, Downtown Huntsville BIA; and Dan Watson, Festival of the Arts with funding requests for 2025/26.

5. Financial update

The Treasurer presented a YTD financials and cash flow update. There are still two more MAT payments to come from the Town this fiscal year, expected in February and May. 2024 audited financials are pending and should be tabled at the next regular meeting. The AGM is tentatively scheduled for March 25.

6. ED report

- The ED presented the January marketing report. \$4,000 remains in budget, to be used for spring campaign.
- Spring marketing campaign – working with Muskoka Tourism on birding/birdwatching tourism campaign. Have hired a local bird expert to create activities in April-May over five weekends. Has potential to drive room nights because the best time for birdwatching in early morning or evening. Marketing campaign will also include other things happening in Huntsville, like Maple Festival.

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- General discussion regarding marketing effectiveness and driving engagement — what is the ultimate goal.
 - Staff engaging short-term rental accommodators to add to website database to help market their properties and ensure ongoing communication.
 - Brief discussion re: the possibility/legality of increasing the MAT on only STRs since they have an advantage over commercial properties (less legislation, less requirement for water sampling, pay residential rather than commercial taxes)
Action item: Staff to investigate options.
 - Staff looked into whether MAT can be applied to Arrowhead Park's roofed accommodations. Provincial legislation currently prohibits collecting the MAT on Crown land.
Action item: Staff to connect with TAIO for help addressing this.
 - Explore Huntsville/HMATA has been selected as host for 2026 Ontario 55+ Winter Games, to be held February 3-5, 2026. Official announcement to happen in the coming weeks.
 - Applications for Visitor Attraction Grants are rolling in. Seven received to date, with more expected. Application deadline is January 31.
 - Reviewed Tourism Support Alliance. It is a requirement of the TPA with the Town that HMATA engage a cross-section of local tourism stakeholders to ensure they are aware of and can share their opinions on HMATA activities, in particular providing insight that may assist with strategic planning and to help ensure alignment with tourism-related marketing for a consistent community message. Structure will include a small group of stakeholders using an online resource tool, email communication, and perhaps an annual meeting to encourage collaboration between HMATA and tourism operators.
Action item: A motion to approve the alliance will be tabled at the February regular meeting.
 - Update on downtown lights and rink. Rink at the Lookout field is not yet open — encouraging Town staff to get it open so that there are several options for outdoor skating. River Mill Park rink lights require engineering adjustments due to a calculation error. The rink has been popular this year.
 - Staff presented a timeline for market research/strategic plan RFPs.
 - Update on meetings, conventions, and incentives.
ED will be attending Meet Week, a speed-meeting event in Ottawa, with a representative from Deerhurst – only DMOs are invited but can bring a guest. Meeting planners attending the event will spend 15 minutes with each DMO.
Staff working on incentives to encourage groups to come to Huntsville, including a pilot to provide transportation (a shuttle or bus) for groups that may be undecided about travelling to Huntsville, or offering each delegate a Huntsville Explorer card loaded with \$40-50 to spend at local businesses, or providing an opening or closing reception at a local business like Sandhill or Canvas.
Another FAM (familiarization) tour is in planning stages for one-on-one engagement with meeting planners – an effective way to encourage groups who may be resistant to travelling to Huntsville due to its distance from the GTA/Pearson.



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- Update on Eclipse. Legal agreement is almost complete and will be forwarded to Sandhill for review. Public announcement will follow once contract is signed. A rep from Cirque du Soleil will do a walk-through of the property at the end of the month to start the creative process for the installation.
- Staff presented revised KPIs. Goals of any funded events will be incorporated for future reference during grant intakes.
Discussion: Economic impact and occupancy should be ultimate top-line goals, with metrics in place to measure growth as closely as possible, understanding that there are variables outside HMATA's control. More granular measurements will be included to satisfy reporting requirements per TPA.

7. Next meetings and adjournment

7.1. Next meetings

Tuesday, February 11 at 1:00 p.m., Deerhurst Resort, G8 Boardroom – grant intake review

Tuesday, February 18 at 2:00 p.m., Hilton Home2 Suites – regular meeting

Tuesday, March 18 at 2:00 p.m., Hilton Home2 Suites – regular meeting

Tuesday, April 22 at 2:00 p.m., Hilton Home2 Suites – regular meeting

7.2 Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 4:50 p.m.

Moved by: Chirag Patel

Seconded by: Chandler Joliffe

CARRIED

IMPORTANT 2025 DATES

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February 2025

Muskoka Tourism is excited to present a \$50,000 - \$65,000 marketing partnership proposal to the Huntsville Municipal Accommodation Tax Board. This collaborative initiative is designed to elevate Huntsville’s visibility as a premier destination in Muskoka while contributing to the broader goal of enhancing the region’s appeal as a whole.

Collaboration is one of our most powerful opportunities as a region, enabling us to stand out and thrive in an increasingly competitive tourism market. Muskoka is one of the most established travel destinations in Canada with one of the lowest marketing budgets.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. INCREASE AWARENESS:** Showcase Huntsville’s unique attractions, events and experiences through impactful marketing campaigns.
- 2. ENHANCE SEASONAL APPEAL:** Focus on shoulder seasons to increase visitation by highlighting seasonal offerings and events.
- 3. COLLABORATIVE APPROACH:** Promote Huntsville’s distinctive attributes while aligning efforts to simplify and unify the regional marketplace.

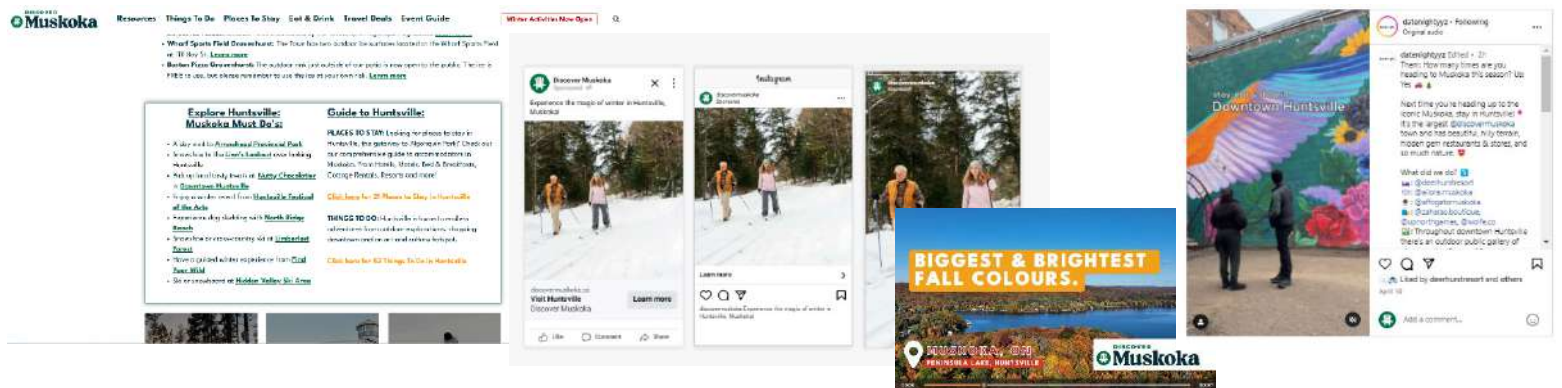
PROPOSED MARKETING INITIATIVES

- SOCIAL MEDIA:** Targeted Facebook and Instagram ads featuring Huntsville’s attractions, events and natural beauty. Carousel-style ads with five plus experiences or operators per season and a long-form content piece for deeper engagement.
- MASTER CAMPAIGN:** Incorporate Huntsville into Muskoka Tourism’s billboard and transit advertising campaigns with clear location identifiers.

BUDGET ALLOCATION

Initiative	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook/Instagram Google Demand Gen Ads Ad Inclusion in Destination Ontario Fall Campaign 	30,000 – 35,000
Influencer Partnerships (up to four influencers focused on Huntsville)	10,000 – 15,000
Master Muskoka Campaign – With Clear Location Identifiers	10,000 – 15,000
TOTAL	\$50,000 – \$65,000

AD EXAMPLES



\\SCOPE

Muskoka Tourism will manage:

- Media buying
- Creative development
- Media placement
- Detailed seasonal campaign reporting to the Huntsville MAT Board
- Anticipating over 6,000,000 impressions. Represents the number of times an advertisement is viewed.

\\TIMELINE

Huntsville's investment can be strategically allocated to any time throughout the year. Our initial recommendation includes:

- **Spring: 30%**
- **Fall: 30%**
- **Winter: 40%**

Flexibility to scale up or add resources during other periods to further enhance tourism marketing.

\\MUSKOKA TOURISM 2025 INITIATIVES

Muskoka Tourism's 2025 plan aims to elevate all six Muskoka communities, including Huntsville.

[Click here](#) to access 2025 Annual Plan.

SOME NOTABLE ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

- \$552,000 in-market activity spanning digital, audio, out-of-home, activations, influencers, partnerships, broadcast, and print.
- Enhanced international media presence through participation in three large-scale travel writer and travel trade events with Destination Ontario and Destination Canada.
- Seasonal marketing campaigns with overarching awareness videos and tactical conversion ads highlighting specific operators, events, and experiences.
 - **Winter (25%) | Spring (20%) | Summer (20%) | Fall (35%)**
- Projected outcomes: 1.3M website visits, 355,000 operator referrals, 113,000 social media followers, and 105M impressions.
- Spring distribution of 25,000 foldable guides with maps, complemented by 25 weekly radio spots and evening TV segments featuring must-do activities.
- Collaborative Muskoka-wide initiatives, including *Birding in Muskoka: Nature Takes Flight* and *Muskoka: Home of the Stars*.

\\CONCLUSION

This partnership represents a strategic investment in promoting the experiences, events and operators that are tourism drivers in Huntsville. By leveraging Muskoka Tourism's expertise and resources, the Town of Huntsville can achieve measurable results that benefit the community, businesses and visitors alike.

Please reach out if you have any questions!

Val Hamilton
Executive Director
Muskoka Tourism

February 2025 Marketing & Product Development Report

Product Development:

1. Birdwatching Guided Tours – “Birding in Muskoka – Nature Takes Flight” (similar to astronomy tours “Muskoka: Home of the Stars” hosted October - November 2024)
 - Full details upcoming – tours launching April 12, 2025

Website:

1. Redesigned website has launched - <https://explorehuntsville.ca/>

Blogs:

1. A Winter Full of Events
<https://explorehuntsville.ca/winter-events/>
2. Outdoor Winter Adventure
<https://explorehuntsville.ca/outdoor-winter-adventure/>

Photo & Video Development

1. Shot 360 immersive winter videos (Nordic skiing, skating and snowshoeing) at Arrowhead Provincial Park on February 4
 - Videos to primarily be used with VR headset at the Explore Huntsville booth at conferences and tradeshows
 - Will share videos once complete

Ads:

In-market:

1. Muskoka Tourism Huntsville Specific Winter Campaign
2. Winter in Huntsville (META & Google)
3. SnowFest (META)
4. Winter Events (META)

Upcoming:

1. March Break
2. Birdwatching
3. Dining (Focusing on Maple Syrup Season)
4. Outdoor Spring Activities
5. Spring Events



Tourism Support Alliance Terms of Reference



January 2025

1. Introduction

The Tourism Support Alliance (TSA) is established to provide guidance and strategic advice to enhance and promote tourism in Huntsville. This document outlines the purpose, objectives, structure, roles, and responsibilities of the TSA & HMATA.

2. Purpose

The Tourism Support Alliance (TSA) serves as a collaborative resource group of tourism stakeholders who can be called upon to provide insights, feedback, and expertise on tourism matters as needed.

The TSA will support, strengthen and advance the tourism sector by fostering collaboration, sharing knowledge, and providing strategic guidance to tourism stakeholders. The Alliance serves as a hub for supportive exchange, industry advocacy, and sector development initiatives.

The TSA will:

- Advise the HMATA Board and staff on tourism policies and initiatives.
- Foster collaboration among stakeholders in the tourism sector.
- Identify opportunities for sustainable tourism development.
- Enhance the community's tourism offerings to benefit the local economy and residents.

3. Objectives

- Foster strategic guidance, sustainable growth and resilience for tourism development
- Facilitate knowledge sharing and best practices among industry stakeholders
- Identify and address emerging challenges and opportunities
- Support capacity building and professional development
- Advocate for the tourism sector's interests with relevant authorities
- Promote sustainable tourism practices that respect local culture and the environment.
- Facilitate communication and partnerships among diverse sectors, including hospitality, transportation, attractions, and local businesses.
- Support marketing efforts that promote Huntsville as a tourism destination.

4. Composition

The TSA will consist of representatives from various sectors, including but not limited to:

- Tourism marketing professionals
- Tourism operators and businesses
- Cultural and heritage organizations
- Environmental groups
- Event organizers
- Transportation providers
- Operators with expertise in tourism and retail and hospitality

The board will aim for a diverse representation to ensure varied perspectives and expertise.

5. Structure

5.1. Members

- Agree to join an online resource pool
- No formal meetings required
- Communication primarily via email
- Members respond based on their availability and expertise
- Opt-in participation for specific topics or projects
- Serve as a liaison between the TSA and their respective sectors.

5.2. Engagement Process

- Coordinator sends email requests for input as needed
- Clear context and questions provided in each request
- Realistic response timeframes specified
- Members reply directly via email
- Coordinator synthesizes feedback when needed

5.3. Member Expectations

- No mandatory participation requirements
- Respond to requests when available and relevant to their expertise
- Share insights and recommendations freely
- Maintain professional courtesy in all communications

5.4. Coordinator Role

- Maintain member contact list
- Identify appropriate members for specific queries
- Draft and send requests for input
- Collate responses when needed
- Share relevant outcomes with the network

6. Communication Guidelines

- Clear subject lines indicating topic and action needed
- Reasonable response timeframes (minimum 3 business days)
- Use of group email only when relevant to all
- Respect for member privacy and confidentiality

January 2025

7. Meetings

- The TSA will not require formal meetings
- The TSA will be invited to attend HMATA's annual AGM
- Special meetings may be called as necessary.

8. Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually to ensure they remain relevant and effective in meeting the needs of the HMATA board and the tourism sector.

10. Adoption

These Terms of Reference were adopted by the HMATA Board of Directors on [date].

This document serves as a foundational guideline for the functioning of the Tourism Support Alliance and is designed to foster collaboration and enhance tourism in Huntsville.

Proposed Alliance Members:

Sectors/Organizations:

- Local Business Organizations (Chamber, BIA)
- Arts/Culture & Heritage
- Sport & Recreation
- Local Service Clubs (Rotary, Kiwanis etc.)
- Industry Marketing Professional
- Attractions
- Short-Term Rental

Proposed Alliance:

- Jacqueline Surette (*Arts, Culture and Heritage TOH*)
- Dan Watson (*Live Music, Arts, Culture, Performing Arts, Events*)
- John Cowan (*Sport, Recreation, Youth engagement*)
- Rob Saunders (*Rotary, Arts/Culture*)
- Marcie Juliao (*Industry Marketing Professional–Deerhurst Resort & Chamber*)
- Brent Ellerson (*Industry Marketing Professional–Algonquin Outfitters and BIA*)
- Lindsay Buttus (*Local Restaurant & BIA*)
- Noreen Mitchell (*Huntsville Art Society*)
- Denise Powers (*Industry Marketing Professional, Arts, Culture – Retired*)
- Val Hamilton (*MTMA & Industry Marketing Professional*)