

Kawartha Lakes tourism receives \$1.4 million boost from province

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The province's tourism ministry is giving a boost to the Kawartha Lakes through a \$1.4 million investment.

Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MPP Laurie Scott joined Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Minister Lisa MacLeod at Bobcaygeon's Kawartha Coffee Co. Thursday (July 9) morning for the announcement that will see \$907,000 used by Regional Tourism Organization 8 (RTO8) for area initiatives and \$350,000 invested into hyper-local marketing campaigns.

As well, the province is investing \$150,000 into Kawartha KidsFest, the Lindsay Exhibition and the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo.

"This funding is part of an effort to encourage homegrown tourism and talent," stated MacLeod. "As our government moves forward with reopening the province, we are proud to invest over \$1.4 million to support initiatives in the Kawartha Lakes region that promote our communities and put our tourism industry on a path to recovery."

MacLeod was especially pleased to make the announcement in Bobcaygeon, a community made famous by The Tragically Hip and COVID-19; but for very different reasons.

The provincial funding will help Kawartha businesses and residents who work in the tourism industry as everyone recovers from the public health, economic and social impacts of COVID-19.

"As one of the most beautiful parts of Ontario, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock is usually a magnet for visitors from other parts of our province and beyond," stated Scott. "We have had such a change in our world. . . but we are encouraging people to enjoy what we have."

The province has already been working with groups and municipalities to promote and support digital platforms during the pandemic shut down. This will continue said MacLeod as digital marketing options expand.

"Digital is definitely on our radar," said RTO8 executive director Brenda Wood.

The efforts dovetail with another announcement made by Scott earlier the same day regarding the province's plan to expand access to reliable broadband and cellular service in underserved and unserved parts of the province.

The application intake for the \$150 million Improving Connectivity for Ontario (ICON) program is now open and will help drive economic investment and job creation.

"By making these investments we will help to ensure every region in the province can

participate in the modern digital economy, and contribute to Ontario's economic recovery," stated Scott.

The preliminary application deadline for the first intake of the ICON program is Aug. 21.