

Report to Council

Report Title:	Greenock Swamp/Historic Cargill Promotional Committee Initiatives - Update		
Prepared By:	Paulette Peirol, Community Development Coordinator		
Department:	Economic Development		
Date:	October 15, 2019		
Report Number:	ED2019-10	File Number:	C11ED
Attachments:	Cargill Social Media Campaign Results Media Coverage		

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby approves Report Number ED2019-10 – Greenock Swamp/Historic Cargill Promotional Committee Initiatives - Update, prepared by Paulette Peirol, Community Development Coordinator and in doing so supports the recommendation to apply for an Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant to assist with operations in 2020-2021.

Report:

Background:

The Greenock Swamp Promotional Committee and Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority organized another successful tourism season in 2019 with seven swamp tours, the operation of a summer visitor centre, and the opening of a new artisan's co-op, Margaret's Mercantile, which captured over \$12,000 in sales in less than three months.

A paid social media campaign in August with tourism partner RTO7 (BruceGreySimcoe.com) helped boost interest in both Cargill and Margaret's Mercantile among people from Southwestern Ontario, with the Brockton.ca web site seeing a ten-fold increase in visits to the Cargill and Margaret's Mercantile pages. Unique views, measured by Google analytics, rose from about 360 in 2018 to over 3,600 during the campaign.

Over 250 people registered for the "Legends of the Great Swamp" and "Bootlegging Lore of the Great Swamp" tours this year, led by Shannon Wood, Manager of Communications for Saugeen Valley Conservation. The tours cost \$80 per person (\$150 for two) and included transportation, wine or beer tasting, a full church dinner, snacks, and guided tours of the Village of Cargill, Greenock Swamp and Chepstow Inn. Feedback following each tour has remained positive. Private group tours are also offered in addition to the publicly advertised ones. Close to 180 people received free guided tours this year. Shannon is a key component of the success of these tours with her enthusiasm about Brockton's assets and the history of Cargill and area.

The Cargill Visitor Centre was staffed by two students over the summer, and open five days a week. The students' wages were offset by a Canada Summer Jobs grant of \$8,350, and the Municipality covered Internet service, garbage and recycling collection and plant watering. The building housing both the Visitor Centre and Margaret's Mercantile was rented to the Cargill group and SVCA free of charge by the owner, in exchange for volunteer labour to renovate and clean up each property. The Municipality helped pay for new signage for both the Visitor Centre and Margaret's Mercantile through EDC approval, and also waived the regular dumping fees for two truckloads of garbage pulled from the site. The Municipality also covered half the rental fee of the ATV that pulls the "dinky train" through Cargill, offering a guided tour of the historic village. It's very popular among visitors, especially families, and the group hopes to purchase its own ATV next year.

The Visitor Centre guest book shows that travellers came from all over Ontario, including Toronto, Kingston, Ajax, Blythe, Orangeville, Atikokan, Collingwood, Cambridge, Peterborough and Port Dover. Some were from other provinces and even overseas.

"Great to see my Grandpa's store transformed!" wrote Kara Trushinski of Kitchener, ON.

The SVCA and the Cargill-Greenock Swamp Promotional Committee (a citizen's group) oversee all aspects of the tourism operations, including the new Margaret's Mercantile store. Brockton staff attend committee meetings and assist in an advisory capacity. I have worked closely with Shannon and the committee and have helped with securing funding and media coverage, promoting the Cargill attractions through the Municipal website and social media, and with various needs over the summer months.

Margaret's Mercantile is staffed entirely by volunteers, including members of the Paisley Christmas Market. It is open seven days a week during the summer and features the work of over 30 local vendors from across the region. Articles are sold on consignment, with vendors keeping between 80% and 90% of the proceeds, depending on how many hours they are able to volunteer at the store. Sales exceeded everyone's expectations this year, totalling over \$12,000. All proceeds remain within the community.

The volunteer labour and in-kind donations toward the Cargill efforts cannot be overstated. Several individuals have put in over 100 hours of work. A recent tally showed 1,844 hours of volunteer labour by 17 people, plus the Margaret's Mercantile vendors. That's more than a year's worth of labour, at 35 hours per week! SVCA staff alone logged over 260 hours of volunteer time.

Sources of funding and revenue for Cargill's 2019 summer operations included the following. The group does not have any committed, ongoing funding at this time.

Source of Funding	Revenue
OPG Donation for mural	\$1,000
Visitor Centre Donations	\$423
Canada Summer Jobs Grant	\$8,500 (Visitor Centre Staffing)
Walkerton Legion Donation	\$2,000
Community Yard Sale	\$452
Private Donation	\$100
RTO7 Grant	\$2,500 (Matching funding, digital promotion)
Municipality of Brockton	\$868 (Internet, ATV rental, Signage)

Source of Funding	Revenue
Swamp Tour Revenue	\$18,900 (mostly cost recovery)
Margaret's Mercantile Net Revenue	\$2,000 (approximate)

In-kind contributions and donations for 2019 totalled over \$12,000, not including the dinky train.

Analysis:

This year marked another strong season for the Cargill-Greenock Swamp tourism initiatives, with continued growth and public interest, a successful new pilot project, sustained commitment from the Cargill community and potential for further development.

Growth plans include small café or food options, public workshops, and interpretive trails to the “island” near the community centre, demonstrations of traditional crafts and skills, and big axe sculpture. More oversight of students and reporting on the data for visitors will also be a priority going forward. Training for all staff and volunteers in the Spring is recommended. The Municipality intends to apply for Bruce County funding for an arts trail brochure connected to Margaret's Mercantile.

Specific plans for 2020 include:

- Craft workshops, to be hosted by artisans featured in Margaret's Mercantile.
- A small café, food truck, vendor or other source of nourishment for hungry visitors. (A kitchen is available on site).
- Purchase of an ATV to pull the dinky train
- Development of gardens and kid-friendly interpretive trails behind the Visitor Centre and Margaret's Mercantile that lead down to a small island and lookout point at the edge of the Greenock Swamp. This would provide more activities for families, improved access to the swamp and enhanced interpretive information about the surrounding area.
- An Arts Trail brochure that ties together the local crafters and artisans included in Margaret's Mercantile.
- Improved training for Visitor Centre staff and store volunteers.
- Regularly scheduled public demonstrations of blacksmithing, sawing, and other traditional skills to enhance the historic nature of the village.
- Creation of a giant axe sculpture that would be the biggest in Ontario. (This group thinks big!)

The Cargill-Greenock Swamp Promotional Committee met October 1, 2019 and one of its key objectives going forward is to make the operation sustainable, as current funding and staff resources for this successful social enterprise are limited and only available on a year-to-year basis.

Staff recommend that the Municipality apply to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for a Growth Grant to cover the cost of a co-ordinator that would create a long-term sustainability plan for the project. The SVCA cannot apply as it is already funded by the Provincial government.

The deadline for Trillium grant applications for 2020 is November 27, 2019. We anticipate asking for \$30,000 to \$50,000, which would require Council's approval and the use of Fairtax Grants and Incentives Ltd.

Sustainability Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Sustainable Strategic Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- Do the recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Cultural Vibrancy? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Prosperity? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to Environmental Integrity? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to the Social Equity? N/A

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

The Ontario Trillium Foundation program does not require a funding investment from the partner, although having funding available may help with the success of the grant application. Staff recommend continuing, or possibly increasing, the 2020 funding granted to the Cargill initiative from the Municipal budget. This project is in infancy but drawing plenty of attention locally and from across Ontario and if managed appropriately could be an economic driver for the area.

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Paulette Peirol, Community Development Coordinator

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer