



REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION 7

# 2024/25 Sustainability Report

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7) is committed to improving the economic, social and environmental sustainability of BruceGreySimcoe's tourism industry by 2030. We proudly signed the Sustainable Tourism 2030 Pledge with a goal to lead and inspire stakeholder efforts that balance the needs of businesses, tourists, the environment, and our host communities. Together, we can work towards creating sustainable, and ultimately regenerative, tourism.



## It Started with a Pledge...

In 2023, RTO7 committed to a better future—where tourism fuels the economy, supports communities, and respects the environment. Our pledge to the GreenStep Sustainable Tourism 2030 framework marked a promise to lead with purpose and drive meaningful change. Guided by the 3 pillars of sustainability - economic, social/cultural and environmental, our diverse Sustainable Tourism Working Group provides the RTO7 Board and staff with guidance on our sustainability journey.

## Driven by Community

Change begins at the grassroots level. Business owners, educators, and local leaders stepped up:

- Stakeholders are coming forward to tell us about their sustainable actions and many have already committed to improving their sustainability.
- 91% of 2025/26 applicants want to do more.
- 14 organizations started or completed sustainability certifications.

This isn't a trend—it's a movement, and it's gaining ground.

## Real Impact, Real Infrastructure

Sustainability showed up in real ways:

- Over \$2 million in MAT-generated tourism investment from 5 municipalities.
- Another 10 municipalities exploring MAT adoption.
- Nearly 200 EV chargers in progress.
- Smarter campaigns using geofencing and analytics.

“With geofence data from RTO7, Kincardine has turned insights into action.”

— Lorie Fioze, Manager, Strategic Initiatives

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT'D

## Commitment in Action

RTO7 achieved Silver Certified Destination status through GreenStep. Partnering with Ontario Snow Resorts Association, we then helped 6 resorts start their own certification journeys—a sector-based model for rolling out future sustainability certifications of all kinds.

## Inspiring Visitors

Sustainability isn't just about what we do as the industry—it's also about how we inspire tourists to travel better. We're encouraging locals and guests to "Visit Responsibly", and we're making it easier for stakeholders to integrate sustainability into their own visitor communications.

## Changing the Narrative

Our "Careers in Tourism" video series challenged perceptions—with over 1.2 million views—and spotlighted tourism as a purpose-driven career. We trained workers, partnered with educators, and empowered students.

## Meeting People Where They Are

Equity in sustainability means helping every stakeholder move forward. That's why we:

- Advocate for MATs to fund infrastructure
- Offer tools, training, and support
- Introduced Sustainability Coaches to our T3 Program

Our message is simple: no matter where you are, we'll help you get further.

## The Road Ahead

As 2024/25 ends, our commitment is stronger than ever. Every charger installed, every pledge signed, every thoughtful traveler moves us closer to a future where tourism is a catalyst for positive change.

**Together, we're writing a new story for BruceGreySimcoe. And this is just the beginning...**

# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM WORKING GROUP GOALS



1. By 2030, RTO7 will lead on improving the region's GreenStep Certification Score
2. By 2030, 25% of engaged stakeholders have signalled a commitment to improve their sustainability (our "committed stakeholders")
3. By 2030, 10% of engaged stakeholders have indicated intent to further pursue sustainability by having GSTC or other third-party sustainability certification (our "certified stakeholders")
4. By June 2025, 20% of RTO7 engaged stakeholders will promote Visit Responsibly messaging





# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ACTION PLAN GOALS



1. Continue to promote the benefits of a career in tourism
2. Develop an inventory of operators and organizations involved in sustainability efforts
3. Support businesses to adopt holistic and integrated sustainability practices
4. Engage and educate City Council, Economic Development & Government staff regarding sustainable tourism
5. Continue to advocate for capital investments in infrastructure projects, such as EV charging stations, refillable water stations, active transportation networks, garbage and recycling bins, accessibility, etc.
6. Promote development of charging infrastructure for Electric Vehicles (EVs)
7. Support municipalities interested in pursuing a Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT)
8. Share information with visitors about the positive impact they can have on the region when travelling
- 9a. Continue to ensure partnerships with, and explore equitable opportunities with all stakeholders
- 9b. Add a Sustainability Coach to the T3 Program to advise/support operators with their efforts



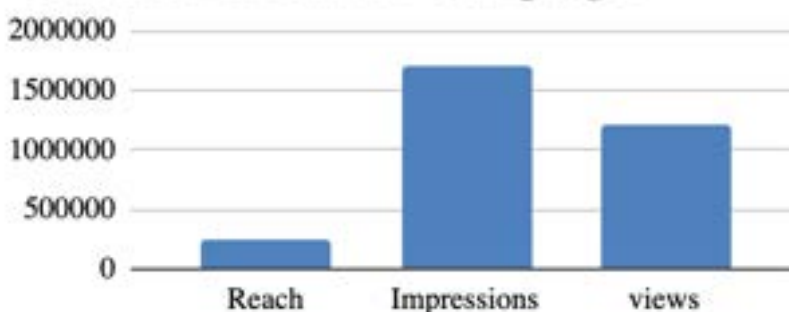
# CAREERS IN TOURISM

Encouraging people to look at Tourism as career path is fundamental to the future of the industry

- Delivered Careers in Tourism Video Campaign
  - 13 videos with over 1.2M views. These evergreen videos each address a different stereotype in the industry such as no opportunity for growth or full-time, year-round employment.
- Delivered High School Hospitality Challenges
  - 275 students from 12 schools participated; 10 businesses supported
- Engaged with the educational sector at both the secondary and post secondary levels, strengthening relationships and advocacy for tourism as a viable, valuable career path
- Provided access to Typsy, growing hospitality skills for people interested in or working in the industry.



Careers in Tourism Campaign



Careers in Tourism

## Lesson

Build great relationships with colleagues

Course: Becoming a star employee

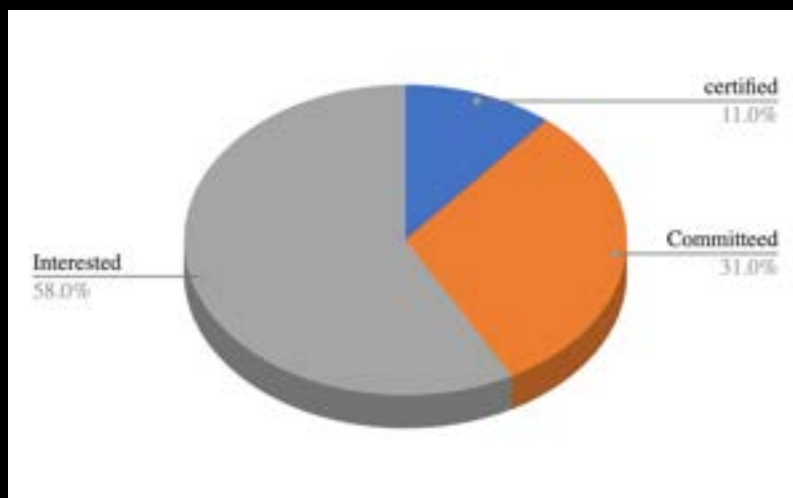
Watch lesson

History



# UNDERSTANDING STAKEHOLDERS SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

Gaining insight into where Region 7 stakeholders are on their sustainable tourism journey is key to tracking regional progress. RTO7 is committed to supporting all stakeholders, **no matter their starting point**. In 2025/26, data was gathered through surveys, research, and the partnering application process, which included a dedicated Sustainable Tourism section to build awareness, highlight RTO7's commitment, and invite deeper stakeholder engagement.



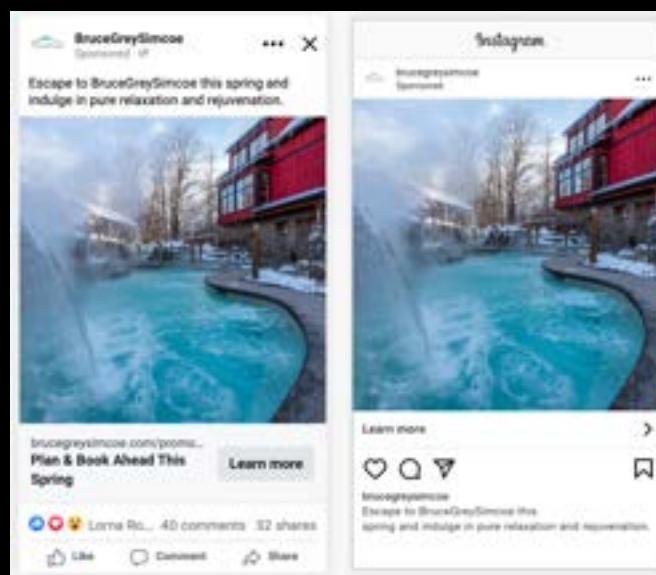
## From RTO7's 2025/26 applications:

- 50% of applicants are ready to sign the GreenStep Pledge
- 75% are willing to report on turnover rates
- 95% are committed to completing our first Tourism Stakeholder Business Performance & Sustainability Survey
- 85% are already sharing or willing to share Visit Responsibly messaging

# UNDERSTANDING & SUPPORTING STAKEHOLDERS SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

- Expanded inventory of stakeholders' sustainability initiatives
- Delivered sustainability-focused workshops/training with GreenStep and Dr. Rachel Dodds
- Hosted a Sustainable Tourism Focus Group to inform future efforts and foster a network of sustainably-minded operators
- Identified an efficient certification rollout model through the OSRA collaboration, with potential for broader application across sectors
- Partnered with businesses on audits and advertising campaigns to support and amplify their efforts
- Connected operators to Georgian College students to develop snapshots of current sustainability efforts
- Added 3 sustainability (environmental) coaches to the T3 Accelerator program to complement the financial and HR coaches already in place
- Positioned RTO7 as a regional sustainability leader, offering both incentive funding and hands-on guidance

**“THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT PROVIDED BY GREENSTEP WAS INCREDIBLY HELPFUL - WE’LL GO WITH THE HEAT PUMP AS IT IS A 3.5 YEAR PAYBACK, SLIGHTLY CHEAPER TO OPERATE, LESS HASSLE AND A MUCH BETTER SUSTAINABILITY OPTION. PLUS I CAN NOW MORE ACCURATELY PROJECT FINANCIALS AND MOVE US TOWARDS OUR SUSTAINABILITY GOALS”**  
**- MARTIN RYDLO, DUNTROON HIGHLANDS GOLF**







Working Group Goals 2 and 3 address stakeholder commitment, including sustainability certification. Acknowledging that not all certification programs are suitable for all stakeholders, the Working Group recognizes a variety of credible certification options including umbrella programs supporting all 3 pillars (e.g. GreenStep, GreenKey, etc.) as well as those that support just one pillar (e.g. Rainbow Registered, LEEDS, etc.)

## COMMITMENT

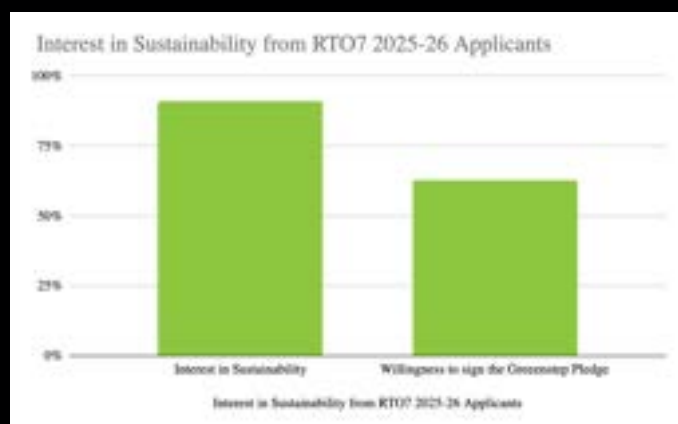
**By 2030, 25% of engaged stakeholders have signalled a commitment to improve their sustainability**

- While the majority of 2025/26 partnership applicants indicated an interest in improving their sustainability efforts, roughly 30% of engaged stakeholders have signalled a commitment to improve their sustainability
  - While we're very encouraged by the commitments made, we understand that turning commitment into implementation is a process — and not everyone may be able to take that next step right away
- 63% of 2025/26 applicants have indicated they are willing to sign the GreenStep 2030 Pledge (to date, there are 9 Region 7 GreenStep Sustainable Tourism 2030 Pledge Signatories)

## CERTIFICATION

**By 2030, 10% of engaged stakeholders have indicated intent to further pursue sustainability by having started or been awarded GSTC or other third party sustainability certification**

- 14 stakeholders have started or completed certification (4% of engaged stakeholders)
- RTO7 financially supports the pursuit of certification through the Experience Development stream of the Partnership Program





## OSRA GREENSTEP COHORT

RTO7 collaborated with the Ontario Snow Resort Association (OSRA) to work with 10 resort properties in Ontario to improve their sustainability. The participating resorts completed the 6-week Road to Certification training program facilitated by GreenStep. This was a collaboration supported by RTO's 7, 1 and 4.

Each participant has/will:

- Sign the GreenStep 2030 Pledge
- Complete the GreenStep Self-Assessment
- Work to achieve certification

## PARTICIPATING PROPERTIES IN REGION 7

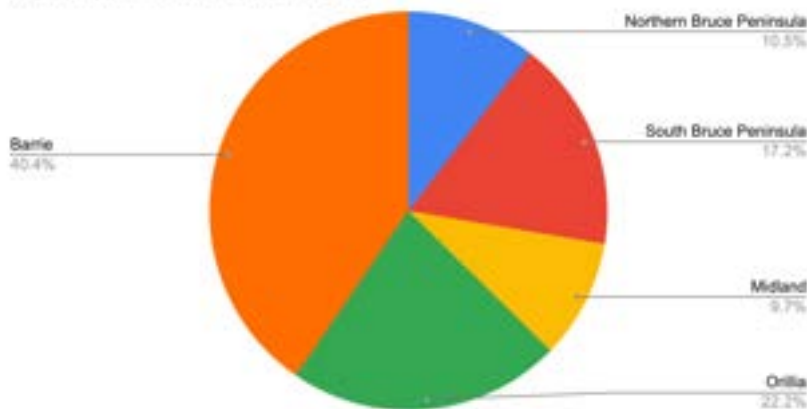
- Alpine
- Beaver Valley
- Blue Mountain Resort
- Horseshoe Valley
- Mount St. Louis Moonstone
- Ontario Ski Resort Association



**"ALPINE SKI CLUB HAS SIGNED THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM 2030 PLEDGE, TO DEMONSTRATE OUR COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING THE SUSTAINABILITY PERFORMANCE OF OUR BUSINESS BETWEEN NOW AND 2030. THE UN WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION DEFINES SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AS "TOURISM THAT TAKES FULL ACCOUNT OF ITS CURRENT AND FUTURE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS, ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF VISITORS, THE INDUSTRY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOST COMMUNITIES."**

<https://alpineskiclub.com/the-club/about-us/>

MAT Funds Generated in 2024



## ENGAGE, ADVOCATE & BUILD SUPPORT AMONG GOVERNMENTS

- 5 of 34 Region 7 municipalities have a focus on tourism and have implemented MAT bylaws that generated over \$2M in 2024 for investment into marketing and product development project to keep Region 7 competitive
  - RTO7 supported these municipalities and their Eligible Tourism Entities (ETEs) to build capacity and ensure strategic and sustainable use of these funds
- RTO7 worked with 10 additional municipalities investigating or implementation short-term accommodation bylaws and/or MATs
  - In 2025/26, 3 of these will bring their bylaws online
- RTO7 has established an internal MAT Task Force to provide guidance internally and encourage regional alignment
- RTO7 supported tourism strategies will help align investment and ensure efficient use of these funds
- More municipalities are choosing to invest the municipal portion of the MAT into tourism infrastructure and social programs benefitting residents and tourists

**“WITH GEOFENCE DATA FROM RTO7, THE MUNICIPALITY OF KINCARDINE HAS TRANSFORMED THIS INFORMATION INTO ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS FOR OUR MARKETING STRATEGIES. THIS DATA ENABLES US TO CRAFT TARGETED CAMPAIGNS THAT ATTRACT VISITORS TO OUR VIBRANT COMMUNITY WHILE ENSURING WE USE THE MOST EFFECTIVE CHANNELS TO REACH OUR AUDIENCES. BY SELECTING AND LEVERAGING THE MOST RELEVANT CHANNELS, WE MAXIMIZE THE IMPACT OF OUR MESSAGES, ENSURING THEY REACH THEIR INTENDED AUDIENCES. WE CALL THIS ‘DATA WITH A PURPOSE AND OUTCOME.’”**

**- LORIE FIOZE, MANAGER STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, MUNICIPALITY OF KINCARDINE**

## **ENGAGE, ADVOCATE & BUILD SUPPORT AMONGST GOVERNMENTS CONT'D**

Other support provided to governments includes:

- RTO7 secured \$2M to support installation of over 200 EV charging stations across the region
  - Encourages high-value visitors by providing peace of mind to stay and spend in region
- Leveraged roughly another \$200,000 investment from local governments into the industry through the 2024/25 Partnership Program
- Provided tourism data, analytics and insights to councils, staff and others to inform planning and decision making
  - Strengthened municipal (and other) networks will enable us to improve on our destination sustainability score in future
- Convened and manage an RTO Sustainable Tourism Group to collaborate and work towards consistency amongst Ontario's RTOs (e.g. in surveying and data collection)







## VISITOR COMMUNICATION

Increasing visibility of sustainability efforts across the region, supporting visitors understanding of how they can make a positive impact is critical.

- RTO7 newsletters and social posts highlighted examples of how operators could make a difference by reinforcing the 7 Visit Responsibly Key Principles.
- 2025/26 Partner Applications encouraged stakeholders to integrate more of the principles into their own communications strategies, and a toolkit is being developed to support stakeholders to do this.
- Piloted a paid sustainable tourism campaign, with calls to action to support local and engage respectfully with communities and nature.
- Gathered sustainable tourism imagery that can be used by stakeholders.

**By June 2025, 20% of RTO7 engaged stakeholders will be promoting visit responsibly messaging.**

Following RTO7's 2025/26 Conditional Partnership approvals, 93% of engaged stakeholders are already communicating Visit Responsibly messaging to consumers or have agreed to adopt the RTO7 model of 'Visit Responsibly' (downloading and sharing relevant key principles on their websites or other platforms.



# NEXT STEPS - THOUGHTS FOR 2025/26...

## 1. Grow Careers in Tourism

- Launch a Career Attraction Campaign and continue delivering training.
- Assess current shifts and continue to strengthen ties with colleges and universities to address evolving workforce needs.

## 2. Support Businesses with Tools & Training

- Offer weekly “pulse check” meetings with stakeholders.
- Help partners follow through on sustainability commitments.
- Deliver targeted training, workshops, and a sustainability-focused Experience Development Series.
- Match a T3 client with sustainability coaching support.

## 3. Advance Regional Collaboration & Advocacy

- Partner with municipalities on sustainable tourism strategies and effective use of MAT funds.
- Explore certification with another sectoral partner.
- Collaborate with other RTOs on shared data and training initiatives.
- Explore a small-scale climate-smart pilot project.

## 4. Strengthen Visitor-Facing Responsible Tourism Messaging

- Equip stakeholders and staff as sustainability ambassadors.
- Refresh BruceGreySimcoe.com’s Visit Responsibly content to reflect evolving priorities and sustainable travel tips.
- Explore a collaborative paid campaign promoting responsible travel.

## 5. Stay Focused on Measurable Impact

- Continue providing data insights to guide stakeholder decisions.
- Assess the feasibility of the GreenStep dashboard.
- Reassess GreenStep Certification and track progress toward 2030 goals.

**Thanks for joining us on the journey—we look forward to continuing our work together in 2025/26 as we build a more sustainable, resilient, and vibrant tourism region!**