

WINDSOR ESSEX

YQG

STANDS STRONG

#YQGSTANDSSTRONG

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**RESPOND, RESTART & RECOVER PLAN**

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[visitwindsorsex.com](http://visitwindsorsex.com)

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WINDSOR • AMHERSTBURG • ESSEX • KINGSVILLE • LAKESHORE • LASALLE • LEAMINGTON • PELEE ISLAND • TECUMSEH

REV3 05.15.2020

## VISION & MISSION

### VISION

Windsor Essex Pelee Island will be a top of mind regional tourism destination in Ontario offering authentic and diverse visitor experiences.



### MISSION

We are the leading tourism industry collaborative committed to enhancing the region's economy and quality of life through:

- Supporting destination development and industry operators
- Actively facilitating partner engagement
- Effectively marketing our destination

### CORE FUNCTIONS:

The core functions in building a united tourism industry are:

1. Product, Program & Destination Development
2. Industry Partnership & Engagement
3. Marketing & Communications

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Chair

**Mayor Nelson Santos**  
Town of Kingsville

### Interim Vice-Chair

**Danielle Stuebing**  
Director of Community Outreach Services,  
Essex Region Conservation Authority

### Secretary-Treasurer\*

**Gordon Orr**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island

*\*non-voting member*



### MEMBERS

**Mayor Drew Dilkens** | City of Windsor

**Warden Gary McNamara** | County of Essex

**Mayor Ray Durocher** | Township of Pelee

**Deputy Mayor Crystal Meloche** | Town of LaSalle

**Councillor Jo-Anne Gignac** | City of Windsor

**Natalie Lepine** | Director, Resort and Hotel Sales,  
Caesars Windsor

**Tom O'Brien** | Owner, Cooper's Hawk Vineyards

**Chris Savard** | General Manager, Devonshire Mall



For more information please contact our leadership team:

### Gordon Orr

Chief Executive Officer  
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### Lynnette Bain

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### Jason Toner

Director of Marketing  
& Communications  
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## MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

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Tourism Partner,

On March 16th we tossed our Board approved Destination Development Strategy and Marketing Plan into the garbage and soon recognized we had to come up with a new playbook.

The challenge, of course, was then and is now that we don't know what the other side of this pandemic will look like and we don't know when to implement a new plan, as it depends on the public health crisis measures being implemented and new protocols going forward.

The tourism landscape will be different post COVID-19. The financial hardships the industry has endured is real and many businesses have pivoted to different business models to survive and reinvent themselves as this global pandemic continues. The losses and sacrifices are many. A recent TIAO survey suggests that 8% of tourism and hospitality businesses might close permanently.

Even though there is a lot we don't know, what we do know is that we will be ready when our industry opens. We know this based on the recovery plan outlined in this document. I know we will be ready as this plan was a collaborative effort vetted by a total of 75 people from a number of our stakeholder groups: Tourism Marketing Advisory Committee; Leamington Chamber of Commerce; Barrels Bottles and Brews Trail partners; Golf Course partners; Attractions Working Group; EPIC Wine Growers Association; Hotelier stakeholders and our Regional Tourism Committee and approved by our Board of Directors. It is a living and fluid recovery plan based on three stages - **RESPOND, RESTART** and **RECOVER**.

At the time of this writing, (May 15th), we are still very much in the respond stage and we will pivot the plan as needed and as where the industry takes us, but we have developed a solid framework to carry us through until the end of this year.

If there is one thing I know, it is the resolve of this industry. The passion and commitment of the industry from small business to big signature attractions and everything in between is nothing short of inspirational and gives my team of tourism professionals, that I have the privilege to work with everyday, the focus to work within a united tourism industry determined to help market and develop the Windsor Essex region as a top of mind destination.

The resolve I speak of is proven as I have seen it before - whether it was **9-11** in 2001, **SARS** in 2003 or the **Great Recession** in 2008/09, I have had a front row seat to witness the industry I have the honour and privilege to serve and lead, bounce back despite various challenges each crisis has brought.

The collaboration and resilience amongst our partners and stakeholders is truly impressive.

That is why I know **#YQGStandsStrong** when we stand together.

Stay well. Stay strong.



**Gordon Orr**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island

## HOW WE RESPONDED

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### COVID-19 HUB

On Sunday March 15th Tourism Windsor Essex launched our information hub for COVID-19 at [visitwindsoressex.com/covid19](https://www.visitwindsoressex.com/covid19) and promoted on social media as a one-stop destination for visitors, locals and stakeholders for information relating to COVID-19 including:

#### LOCALS AND VISITORS

- Closures and cancellations
- Local health measures put in place
- Small business partner campaigns

#### STAKEHOLDERS

- Industry relevant links
- Webinars and education opportunities
- Business resources for adapting and rebounding from COVID-19

The website is updated daily with new information and stakeholder education pieces and reference data as it is received or sourced by our staff.

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TOURISM  
WINDSOR  
ESSEX  
PELEE ISLAND

### COVID-19 UPDATES

Coronavirus Updates & Local Information

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### CUSTOM CONTENT

**Custom Content** was created to create engagement with our stakeholders and shared across our social media platforms, including:

- 'DYK About These DIY's' highlighting door-to-door delivery of craft & food kits that people can be entertained with at home, all supporting local small businesses
  - Downloadable YQG Bingo cards for use in your home online, when walking your neighbourhood, or when driving across Windsor Essex
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### EMAIL MARKETING

Tourism Windsor Essex has been remained in contact with our engaged stakeholders by providing weekly updates via email including messages from our CEO, or marketing opportunity updates, to our stakeholder database of 1,600+ members.

We are currently seeing an average open rate of 34% for these emails, compared to our yearly average of 28%.

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## HOW WE RESPONDED

# #YQGSTANDSSTRONG



### #YQGSTANDSSTRONG CAMPAIGN

- On March 24th we launched **#YQGStandsStrong** as a community collaborative to share good news stories and photos on social media using **#YQGStandsStrong**
- A logo was designed and launched across all digital platforms
- Campaign was launched in conjunction with the following community partners:

### OUR PROUD PARTNERS



### SMALL BUSINESS PARTNER CAMPAIGNS

[View the campaign](#)



#### **Take Out Tuesday**

Launched on March 24th **#TakeOutTuesday** - promoting take out and delivery food orders every Tuesday, linking to our dining guide created for COVID-19.



#### **Wine Order Wednesday**

Launched on March 30th **#WineOrderWednesday** - in conjunction with the EPIC Winegrowers Association promoting local winery purchases, linking to our winery guide created for COVID-19.



#### **Fill Up Friday**

Launched on April 6th **#FillUpFriday** - in conjunction with our Barrels Bottles & Brews producers promoting brewery and distillery deliveries, linking to our brewery and distillery guide created for COVID-19.

# INDUSTRY IMPACT

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Between April 22nd and April 27th the Tourism Industry Association conducted a survey. In RTO 1, which Tourism Windsor Essex is part of, the following data was captured:

## AS OF APRIL 27TH, 2020

- 60% of businesses have temporarily closed
- 43% have laid off staff
- 45% have reduced their services
- Many businesses have applied for funding, including
  - 48% have applied for CERB
  - 32% have applied for the 75% wage subsidy
  - 37% have applied for the \$40k government loan
- 6% will not be able to open for the summer tourism season

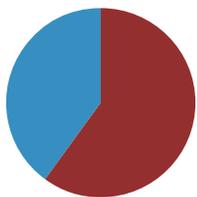
## LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT THREE MONTHS, MAY THROUGH JULY

- 27% may not be able to pay their rent or mortgage
- 51% would continue to stay closed temporarily until social distancing is lifted
- 43% would lay off staff or keep staff in a lay off position
- 38% are worried they will be unable to open for the summer season
- 28% are worried they may not be able to pay staff wages
- 8% may have to close their business permanently

## WHEN SOCIAL DISTANCING IS LIFTED

- 57% of businesses will be able to open immediately once barriers are lifted, with 86% of the industry ready within 3 weeks

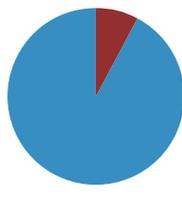
Source: TIAO (as of April 27th, 2020)



**Businesses That Have Remained Open**

40% Currently Open

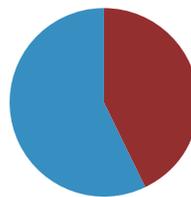
60% Closed Temporarily



**Businesses That May Close Permanently**

92% Stay Open

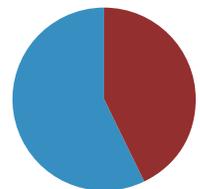
8% May Close Permanently



**Businesses That Have Laid Off Staff**

57% No Staff Laid Off

43% Laid Off Staff



**Will Be Able To Reopen Their Business Immediately Once Distancing Measures are Lifted**

57% Will Open Immediately

43% Will Take 3+ Weeks To Be Open

# INDUSTRY IMPACT

## HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATES

- Occupancy rate down 27.23% vs March 2019
- Occupancy rate down 42.57% vs. April 2019
- Revenue Per Room down \$33.39 vs. March 2019
- Revenue Per Room down \$57.47 vs. April 2019
- 7 hotels in Windsor Essex have closed temporarily

Source: STR

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

- 52% of respondents (206 festivals and events) indicate having already made the decision to postpone or cancel their 2020 festival or event
  - 107 have cancelled
  - 99 have postponed
  - 53 have modified to be a virtual or digital event

Source: FEO

## HOSPITALITY

- Sales down 30-90% in March for restaurants, hotels and motels
- Sales down 70-100% in April for restaurants, hotels and motels

Source: ORHMA

## BEVERAGE PRODUCERS

- 62% of wineries face losses due to bad debt from licensee closures or inability to pay
- 85% of our wineries have laid off staff
- 92% of our wineries have required financial assistance from the government to keep their winery business viable
- In March 2020 Barrels Bottles & Brews producers saw a 70-75% decrease in sales
- In April 2020 many wineries and Barrels Bottles & Brews producers increased online sales, and started at-home deliveries to supplement absence in licensee sales

## CONFERENCES & MEETINGS

- 49% of associations are somewhat or very concerned about the financial viability of their association
- 58% cancelled or delayed their conferences
- 34% cancelled or delayed their AGM
- 21% cancelled or delayed their tradeshow

Source: CSAE

## TOURS & GROUPS

- 53% of tour bus operators have lost more than 75% of their business to date
- 42% of attraction operators have lost more than 75% of their business to date
- 60% of attraction operators feel their business will drop over 75% in the next two months

Source: Ontario OMCA

## SPORTS

- 12 large-scale tournaments canceled
- Anticipated volume of 7,500+ participants

## DATA SOURCES



# DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

## RESPOND

- Industry **research** and impact assessment of COVID-19 on the overall landscape of Windsor Essex
- Halt of in person **visitor services** in market; research new strategies for digital and kiosk visitor services
- Reassess plans for **fundamental product** development for remainder of 2020
- Develop **stakeholder** outreach plan; utilize CRM iDSS for maintaining any new contacts and data
- Assist stakeholders in pivoting business models for operations during COVID-19
- Plan for new **operational protocols** to assist stakeholders in becoming market-ready for when distancing restrictions are lifted
- Participate in **consumer insight** research with Provincial RTO's
- Facilitate **stakeholder outreach** virtual meetings to gather industry data and feedback on recovery plan

## RESTART

- Communicate and work with key stakeholders to implement **new operating protocols** and ensure market readiness
- Armed with new knowledge of post COVID-19 operating protocols and traveler insights, resume **experience development**, including the Italian Heritage Experience
- Continue planning for enhanced Culinary strategy workshop in partnership with the **Tourism Industry Association of Canada** and **Culinary Tourism Alliance**
- **BIA and Chamber of Commerce consultation** to advance the engagement of more main street hubs and districts
- Develop protocols to re-open visitor services; implement safety protocols, introduce chat bots for website online chat capabilities; grow inventory of **Tourism Information Points** across stakeholder locations for distribution of publications
- Bring together tourism attraction partners to develop working group for development of a **Windsor Essex attractions pass**
- Identify FeastON ready restaurant operators to collaborate in new free membership with the **Culinary Tourism Alliance** to strengthen the local food movement which has grown during the COVID-19 pandemic

## RECOVER

- **Windsor Pizza Club** launch
- "Elevating Canadian Experiences" workshop execution
- Execute long term **visitor services** strategy
- **Workshops and educational webinars** relevant to the current business climate
- Development of new experiences for our programs
- Launch of new Windsor Essex **attractions pass** for sale as a digital passport
- Develop Local Food route of market ready local food experiences (curated menus) at **FeastON** partners with an emphasis on local beverage producers, artisans and small scale farmers to connect consumers with our local terroir and flavours



## MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

### RESPOND

- Pause all paid marketing
- Engage in support of **promoting essential services**, education opportunities, small businesses, public services, and stakeholder offerings currently available for public consumption
- Pivot social media to keep locals engaged
- Engage in a regional message with **Ontario Southwest** and their '**See You Down The Road**' social media campaign to engage with travel dreamers



### RESTART

- Release the 5th Annual **Best of Windsor Essex Awards** winners
- Significant local marketing campaign (and 3 hour drive market)
- Campaign in coordination with **Destinations Ontario**
- Focus on **STAYcation** through hyper-local campaigns, with integration of MyTrip digital itineraries with a heightened profile on outdoor adventure activities (golf, boating, on the water adventures, cycling)
- Release the 2020/2021 **Official Visitor Guide**
- Video campaigns utilizing **new videos** for Wineries, Barrels Bottles & Brews Trail, Outdoor Adventure and WE Heart Local
- **Complimentary marketing opportunities** through:
  - *Influencer campaigns and inclusion in upcoming itineraries*
  - *Social media branding*
  - *Local media in-kind co-op marketing campaigns*
  - *Online contests*

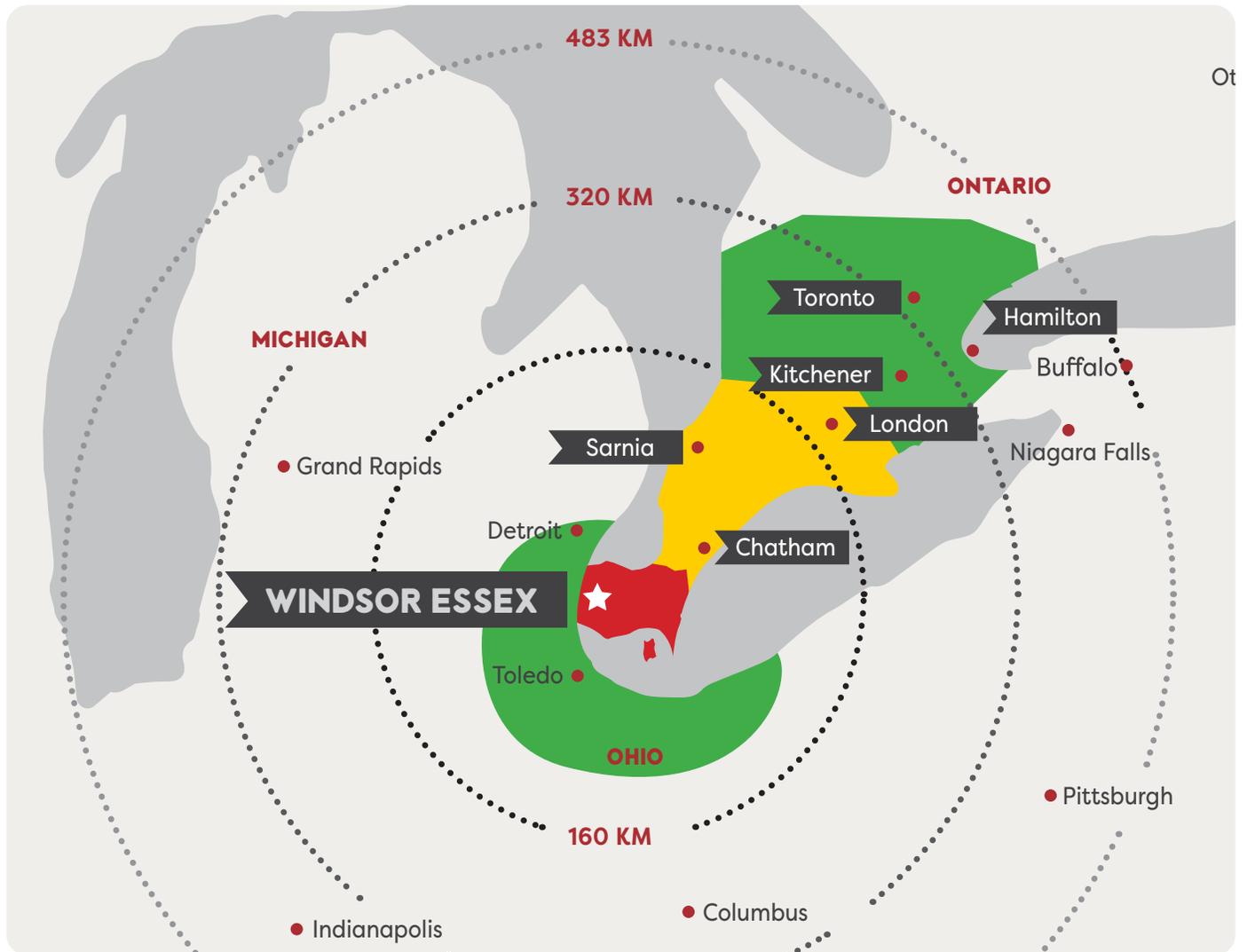


### RECOVER

- Resume **Influencer/Travel Writer campaigns** in partnership with Ontario Southwest
- Focus on **Road Trip** aspects through campaigns, with integration of MyTrip digital itineraries
- Tie in campaign with the Culinary Tourism Alliance **#TasteOfOntarioRoadTrip** campaign
- **Complimentary marketing opportunities** through:
  - *Local media co-op campaigns*
  - *Email marketing database*
  - *visitwindsoressex.com digital ads*



## 2020 MARKETING FOCUS



RESPOND



RESTART



RECOVER

### 2020 PUBLICATIONS

- The 2020-2021 **Official Visitor Guide** has been printed and will be released during the market Restart period, featuring a media and PR push including enhanced promotion of the digital edition available at [visitwindsor-essex.com](http://visitwindsor-essex.com)
- We will utilize the remaining inventory of the 2019/2020 **Wine Route Map** for summer and fall 2020. A reenvisioned Visitor Services map including the Wine Route and Barrels Bottles and Brews Route will be released in early 2021
- The **Birding Guide** has been reimagined as a year long publication that will encompass both birding seasons, the Festival of the Birds and the Festival of Hawks, and be of interest to birders still planning to explore the region safely



# CAMPAIGN CONCEPTS

RESTART

## SHOP YQG

### SHOP YQG

- In partnership with Windsor–Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Awareness and traffic driver for retail businesses and shopping districts



### STAYCATION

- Targeting locals and London South
- Focus on in-your-own backyard experiences available through day and weekend itineraries
- Itinerary creation using MyTrip software
- Package sales opportunities
- Targeting Up & Coming Explorers, Youthful Socializers & Nature Lovers



### #ONTARIOSPIRIT

- In partnership with Destination Ontario
- Targeting Ontario
- Content driven campaign based on iconic and high profile attractions

RECOVER



### ROAD TRIPS

- Targeting Toronto South (3-4 hour drive)
- Focus on day and overnight road trip itineraries featuring unique attractions and buyable experiences
- Itinerary creation using MyTrip software
- Package sales opportunities
- Targeting Mellow Vacationers, Connected Explorers and Family Memory Builders
- Align with Culinary Tourism Alliance #TasteOfOntarioRoadTrip campaign



### WINDSOR PIZZA CLUB

- Targeting locals
- Focus on food and drink
- Partnership with 8 local pizzerias
- Profiling world famous Windsor-style pizza



### HOLIDAY GUIDE

- Targeting locals and Kitchener Waterloo South
- Relaunch of [yqgfortheholidays.ca](http://yqgfortheholidays.ca) event guide promoting events, attractions and holiday markets
- Relaunch of W.E. Made It Gift Guide profiling locally owned businesses and gift ideas
- Hotel campaign featuring [yqgholidays.ca](http://yqgholidays.ca) microsite focusing on hotel packages encouraging overnight visitation for friends and family



## PARTNERSHIPS

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### CONSUMER SHOWS

Tourism Windsor Essex plans to exhibit at the following events to engage with both in-market and out-of-town visitors:

- Staycation Expo - date TBD
- ETSY Made In Windsor Event - Saturday September 26th
- Windsor-Essex Small Business Centre Shop Local Show - October 2020
- Sarnia Fusion - November 13th and 14th
- W.E. Made It Holiday Market Series - November 2020 - January 2021

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### NETWORKING EVENTS

- The **Staycation Expo** originally scheduled for April 24th at Devonshire Mall has been postponed. Complimentary opportunity for exhibiting will be extended to new partners at that time.
- The 2020 Premier Tourism Golf Tournament has been cancelled.
- The **Holiday Social** is scheduled for December 8th at Willistead Manor.

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### CONVENTIONS, MEETINGS & GROUPS

We will continue to work with our stakeholder partners to target key clients at industry events, including:

- The **Canadian Meeting and Event Expo** August 17th & 18th in Toronto – featuring up to 5,000 event planning professionals. In partnership with Caesars Windsor and Farhi Holdings Corporation.
- **MPI The Event** (date TBD) in Toronto – featuring 300 clientele from Meetings Planners International (MPI). In partnership with Caesars Windsor.
- **OMCA Marketplace** November 7th – 11th in Niagara Falls – featuring 1-on-1 meetings up with to 65 tour bus operators planning to visit the region. In partnership with Caesars Windsor.



# PARTNERSHIPS

#YQGStandsStrong and we have, and look forward to continuing to, engage with International, National, Provincial and Local groups as we **RESPOND, RESTART** and **RECOVER**. Their participation and engagement with the development and marketing of our destination will be paramount in the success of our industry moving forward:

## INTERNATIONAL & NATIONAL



## PROVINCIAL



## REGIONAL



## MUNICIPAL





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**ESSEX**  
PELEE ISLAND

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