

New signage rules boost tourism

By Mark Pavilons

To boost the visibility of local businesses and improve tourism, King Township has adopted a new policy for wayfinding and tourism signage.

Council okayed the draft program policy, which is intended to bring agri-tourism into the fold and expand the wayfinding signage guidelines.

Efforts began a year ago to expand the broader tourism wayfinding signage program to include agricultural businesses. A sign by a local honey producer helped bring the matter to the forefront.

Money was set aside in this year's budget for streetscaping, beautification and signage. A staff working group brought together these three areas. The program will be administered by King's Economic Development department, with all applications reviewed by a joint team of staffers.

The program is intended to operate with a subsidized cost-sharing component between King and the participating businesses. Participants will be permitted a maximum of four directional road signs to maximize exposure. The cost is pegged at \$500 per sign, with the applicants paying \$200 of the cost.

Applicants must meet certain criteria and eligible businesses include bed and breakfasts, heritage sites, recreational facilities, wineries and breweries, tree farms, nurseries and more.

King staff have discussed the matter with York Regional staff regarding placing signs on regional road allowances.

The cost of the program will vary depending on the number of interested local businesses.

?Municipalities regulate signage to achieve an appropriate balance between the need of businesses and individuals to advertise, their right to freedom of expression, and the importance of promoting safe and attractive communities,? according to the report prepared by Clerk Kathryn Smyth, parks and recreation director Chris Fasciano, and economic development officer Jamie Smyth.

?The Wayfinding and Tourism Destination Signage Program seeks to achieve this balance by providing rural businesses and tourism destinations in King with an effective means of advertising within a consistent aesthetic style, without detrimentally affecting the visual appeal of King's rural areas.?