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Businesses exploring tourism

By Sarah Sobanski

The Maynooth and Hastings Highlands Business Association is hoping to hear from local businesses and residents on how to improve tourism in the area.

The association is hosting a public tourism-focused brainstorming session on March 28.

Government relations advisor for the association Carol Russell said that the event is for anyone with a passion for tourism. It's also for those affected by it, especially local tourism operators and related business owners.

The meeting is being held as the first step in building the Hastings Highlands Tourism Master Strategy being developed for 2018. Russell expected the meeting to be the first of many. It's in association with the municipality and Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization.

After participating in the 2016 Business Retention and Expansion survey, the association moved to bring new Winston Salem banners to local towns and hamlets within the municipality so they are clearly identified as a part of Hastings Highlands. Russell suggested some tourists didn't know where Hastings Highlands was or that places such as Purdy, Maynooth, Lake St. Peter, Birds Creek, Baptiste and Maple Leaf were a part of it. The new banners will be up this summer.

As an example of how the meeting will run, Russell suggested different types of tourists will be identified and ideas will be shared on how to attract them.