

News Release

For Immediate Release

Government of Canada supports Whistling Gardens through the Tourism Relief Fund



Whistling Gardens receives \$100,000 from Ontario's Southwest Regional Tourism Organization through FedDev Ontario to support several projects that improved visitor accessibility, infrastructure, establish multi language tools to better serve guests, and for the development of new tourism services and innovative experiences which introduced their Festival of Fountains – The Night Garden

April 24, 2023 Wilsonville, Ontario

The tourism sector is vital to the economy and jobs in Ontario's southwest. Each year Whistling Gardens attracts thousands of nature enthusiasts travelling from surrounding

Ontario regions, provinces, the United States and around the world. Visitors are encouraged to stay, play, shop and dine to strengthen Norfolk County's local rural economic tourism sector.

Today, Whistling Gardens received a non-repayable contribution of \$100,000 from Ontario's Southwest Regional Tourism Organization (RTO1) to complete the resurfacing of accessible botanical gardens walking paths and parking lot, infrastructure restoration of the conifer garden bridge and French Garden Arbor, expand existing health and safety amenities with the addition of handwash stations and a washroom trailer, establish multi-language signage on site and website enhancements to better serve garden guests and for the development of new tourism communications and guest referrals services along with the introduction of innovative experiences to introduce its Festival of Fountains – The Night Garden.

[This funding is part of the Government of Canada's Tourism Relief Fund, delivered by the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario \(FedDev Ontario\). RTO1 received almost \\$11 million from FedDev Ontario to](#) help local tourism organizations and businesses safely welcome back visitors, recover from the impacts of the pandemic and prepare for future growth.

This investment will help Whistling Gardens adapt and recover to attract new visitors and drive economic growth in the municipality of Norfolk County.

Quotes

Tourism is a cornerstone of economies across southern Ontario. Our Government is helping tourism businesses meet their potential with an investment of \$78 million, which will be delivered through southern Ontario's Regional Tourism Organizations and Indigenous Tourism Ontario. Supporting tourism businesses will grow our communities and attract more and more visitors for years to come."

- *The Honourable Filomena Tassi, Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario*

"With support from the Tourism Relief Fund, we are now better equipped to move forward to address our pandemic recovery, elevate our customer service to ensure maximum guest accessibility and comfort, while expanding our experience offerings to attract new visitors resulting in the creation of local employment. Now over 95 percent (an increase from 78 percent) of our guests travel from other

municipalities or beyond to visit and, as an economic driver, our team encourages guests to stay and play in Norfolk County.”

- *Darren Heimbecker, Owner Whistling Gardens*

“Tourism innovators from across the region have demonstrated the abundance of creativity and opportunity for continued tourism growth within Ontario’s Southwest. Through the Tourism Relief Fund, we’re seeing infrastructure improvements, new experience development and destination management projects. These projects will extend more travel into the shoulder seasons, prioritize environmental sustainability and inclusivity, and are innovative and bold. We’re pleased to be working with FedDev Ontario to administer the Tourism Relief Fund in Ontario’s Southwest.”

- *Joanne Wolnik, Executive Director, Ontario’s Southwest Regional Tourism Organization*

Quick facts

- Whistling Gardens attracts thousands of nature enthusiasts each season to witness North America’s largest public peony collection in bloom featuring over 1,300 varieties, rare plant specimens, a conifer collection and a musical fountain show recently featured in [Healing Gardens](#), which is a documentary series broadcast by Vision Television reaching over 10 million homes across Canada in 2022.
- Three years in the making, the Festival of Fountains - The Night Garden introduces guests to a highly visual, immersive experience. It is an interpretive storytelling experience told through original Canadian-composed, new world, symphonic music, water, and lighting representing the largest choreographed musical fountain and light show in Canada.
- Ontario’s Southwest Regional Tourism Organization works with 10 Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and tourism industry stakeholders across the region to develop and promote the region of Ontario’s Southwest as a vibrant and prosperous tourism region.
- The Government of Canada’s [\\$500-million Tourism Relief Fund](#) is helping tourism-oriented businesses and organizations recover from the pandemic and prepare for future growth. FedDev Ontario is delivering nearly \$120 million of the [Tourism Relief Fund](#) across southern Ontario

Associated Links

[Whistling Gardens](#)

[Ontario’s Southwest](#)

[FedDev Ontario](#)

[Tourism Relief Fund \(TRF\)](#)

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About Whistling Gardens

It's been 50 years since a botanical garden was established in Canada. From corn field to botanical garden, Whistling Gardens is a privately operated 22-acre botanical garden established in 2012, featuring a specialty/ornamental retail/wholesale garden centre and gift boutique attracting globetrotting and southern Ontario nature guests. The gardens are home to North America's largest public peony and conifer collections. Since our opening, profits have been reinvested each year to build this agri-tourism destination attraction, establishing annual diversified garden experiences and partnership entertainment events that remain a core of our business model. Establishing over 50 business partnerships to refer visitors to neighbouring attractions, restaurants and accommodations have recognized our goodwill philosophy efforts through numerous municipal, regional, provincial, national and international awards for our economic innovation and merit of plant collections. Learn about [Mission Statement](#)

About Ontario's Southwest Regional Tourism Organization

Ontario's Southwest (OSW) is a [Regional Tourism Organization](#), funded primarily through the provincial Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport, and is governed by an independent Board of Directors. OSW works collaboratively with tourism stakeholders to create a vibrant and inclusive tourism sector, balancing the needs of visitors, tourism partners, communities, and the environment.

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Federal Economic Development
Agency for Southern Ontario

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About FedDev Ontario

For 13 years, the Government of Canada, through [FedDev Ontario](#), has worked to advance and diversify the southern Ontario economy through funding opportunities and business services that support innovation, growth and job creation in Canada's most populous region. The Agency has delivered impressive results, which can be seen in southern Ontario businesses that are creating innovative technologies, improving productivity, growing revenues, creating jobs, and in the economic advancement of communities across the region. Learn more about the impacts the Agency is having in southern Ontario by exploring our [pivotal projects](#), our [Southern Ontario Spotlight](#), and FedDev Ontario's [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).