

Destination Strategy 2025–2030: A Community Conversation Still Waiting to Happen

Paul Reale | June 2, 2025



Where We're Coming From

First, a thank you.

This is a comprehensive strategy, and we want to acknowledge the time, work, and coordination it took to put it together. Staff deserve real credit for that.

We support tourism. We know its value.

It drives local business, supports jobs, and helps share the beauty of this region.

But good strategies require good governance.

And right now, this plan raises important questions and leaves residents out of key conversations.

Who's at the Table?



- Destination Advisory Committee is made up of **large-scale tourism operators only**.
- **No formal representation** from residents, agricultural community, First Nations, conservation authorities, or environmental groups.
- **Governance still undefined** – no public terms of reference, meeting minutes, or reporting schedule available.
- **Question:** *Who speaks for the rest of us?*

Who Carries the Burden?



- **Tourism puts pressure on public infrastructure:**
 - Road safety, bylaw enforcement, emergency services
 - Waterfront crowding, parking conflicts, recreational access
- Fire, police, and hospital services are strained by surges in peak season demand.
- **Question:** *Will MAT revenues cover these rising costs? Or will residents be left footing the bill?*

When Is It Too Much?



- **No clear metrics for success** – Visitor numbers? Ecological health? Community satisfaction?
- **Carrying-capacity study delayed until 2030** – after projects begin to break ground. If we don't know our limits, how can we manage them?
- Environmental pressure points already visible – trails, water access, shoreline ecosystems.
- **Question:** *What hard limits will trigger a slowdown in growth and promotion? And who decides when we've hit this limit?*

Whose Story Are We Telling?



- **Strategy calls for a single unified brand** and centralized information platform.
- **Risk of erasing local identity** – distinct villages and rural hamlets reduced to “Blue Mountains Experience”.
- **One-size-fits-all messaging doesn’t fit our community of communities** – farms, families, forests, and full-time residents.
- **Question:** *Who gets to decide what branding image represents all of us?*

Tourism Pays for Tourism...But Who Protects the Rest of Us?

- MAT revenues alone won't cover the full cost, especially if resident impacts and infrastructure pressures are left out.
- Without clear limits, defined metrics, and public oversight, this strategy risks over-promising and under-delivering.
- If this is a strategy for the whole Town, it needs governance that reflects the whole Town, not just the tourism sector.

The Big Question: How do all stakeholders get a seat at the table?

A good strategy starts with a good conversation