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## Report 2025-103

**Report Title:** Planning, Economic Development & Strategic Initiatives  
Quarter 1, 2025 Update

**Committee Name:** Economic Development, Tourism and Planning

**Committee Meeting Date:** May 7, 2025

**Prepared by:** Dwayne Campbell,  
Director  
Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Initiatives

**Approved by:** Jennifer Moore, CAO

**Council Meeting Date:** May 21, 2025

**Strategic Plan Priorities:** ☒ Innovate for Service Excellence  
☒ Ignite Economic Opportunity  
☐ Foster a Thriving Community  
☐ Propel Sustainable Growth  
☐ Champion a Vibrant Future

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### Information Report

"That the Economic Development, Tourism and Land Use Planning Committee receive Report 2025-103 'Planning, Economic Development & Strategic Initiatives Department Quarter 1, 2025 Update' for information; and

**Further That** the Committee recommend that County Council receive this report for information."

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### Purpose

This report summarizes activities in the Planning, Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives Department in the first quarter of 2025.

### Background

The Planning, Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives Department is comprised of 8 service areas as follows:

- Business and Entrepreneurship Centre Northumberland (BECN)
- Economic Development
- Government Relations
- Inspection Services
- Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre (OAFVC)
- Land Use Planning
- Settlement Services
- Tourism

A summary of the recent activities for each service area is provided in the discussion section below.

### **Consultations**

Various consultations occur on a regular basis with member municipalities in each service area and other joint departmental groups to ensure any opportunities for efficiencies and collaboration are explored and pursued.

### **Legislative Authority / Risk Considerations**

Department activities are conducted in compliance with all relative legislation and agreements.

### **Discussion / Options**

#### **Business and Entrepreneurship Centre Northumberland (BECN)**

##### *She Owns It Women's Entrepreneurship Workshop:*

The She Owns It Workshop, was held on March 25 at Lakehurst Estate in Cobourg and welcomed 40 registered participants for a dynamic half-day event. The smaller event focused on practical educational learning, peer connection and continues the momentum building up to the November conference. The workshop featured two breakout sessions, one focusing on financial operations management and the second delivered strategies for effective social media marketing.

Survey feedback reflects a highly positive experience among attendees:

- 100% of respondents rated the workshop as 'Excellent' or 'Very Good'
- 100% said the pace of the workshop was 'just right'
- 87% felt the length was 'just right', with a few requesting more time
- 100% said they would attend another She Owns It event in the future

Plans are underway for the She Owns It Conference, scheduled for November 6, 2025.

##### *Workshop Event Series:*

A new 4-part Business Workshop Series has been launched and designed to support entrepreneurs and small business owners in Port Hope and Northumberland County. This free, interactive workshop is a partnership between the Business & Entrepreneurship Centre Northumberland (BECN), the Municipality of Port Hope, and the Port Hope Chamber of Commerce. It reflects our shared commitment to equipping local businesses with the tools, knowledge, and connections needed to thrive. Sessions will take place in-person in Port Hope,

once per month from March to June. With over 70 participants already registered and registration still open, this series is demonstrating strong interest and engagement from the business community.

### Economic / Community Development

- We have shovels in the ground for the Broadband project. The communications team is working closely with our department and our private sector communications team to ensure the public is properly informed and all front-line workers at both the county and lower tiers have information packages on hand to allow them to answer questions from the public.
- The construction process is moving smoothly in large part due to the efforts of the County Works Department to coordinate with the local Works Departments. Recent weather issues delayed construction; however, we are still on target for a December 2025 completion date.
- Met with MEDJCT to discuss the employment lands at Hwy 28 and Hwy 401. They have offered to reach out to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to speed up the land use approval. They are anxious for the land package to be assembled and serviced – a project that should be a coordinated effort between Port Hope and the County.
- We are assisting Brighton Economic Development and QEDC with a major opportunity in its early stages. The client is asking for consideration regarding County development fees.
- Work has begun with Cobourg Economic Development to identify potential tenants for the Post plant in Northam Industrial Park. We have reached out to our contacts at MEDJCT, Invest Ontario and Ontario East to assist in this effort.

### Government Relations

Advocacy efforts around the impacts of U.S. tariffs and Premier Ford's Fortress AM-CAN initiative led to a scheduled meeting between Warden Ostrander and Deputy Warden Hankivsky and their counterparts in Albany County, New York. Continuing to monitor outcomes of outreach to other U.S. border communities.

Successfully coordinated annual Northumberland County 'Roadshow'. CAO and Finance Director to tour each lower-tier municipality and Alderville First Nation to deliver an update on Northumberland County budget and projects – roadshow to take place over Q2.

Ongoing work with Paramedic Chief Brown and the Eastern Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs on the creation of a report for the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development on WSIB return-to-work restrictions. This is in follow-up to our ROMA delegation in January of this year. This report will consolidate WSIB data from eastern Ontario paramedic services and highlight their respective impacts on budget and service delivery.

Planning for AMO delegations is underway – a list of possible delegation topics will be presented in a report to committee.

### Inspection Services

In accordance with long-standing agreements, County Inspection Services administers and enforces the sewage and plumbing system components of the Building Code on behalf of member municipalities. In the first quarter of 2025, Inspection Services issued 26 septic permits

and received 131 plumbing permits. Additionally, significant changes to the Building Code came into effect in Q1, and inspection permit fees were updated.

Table: Number of Sewage Permits

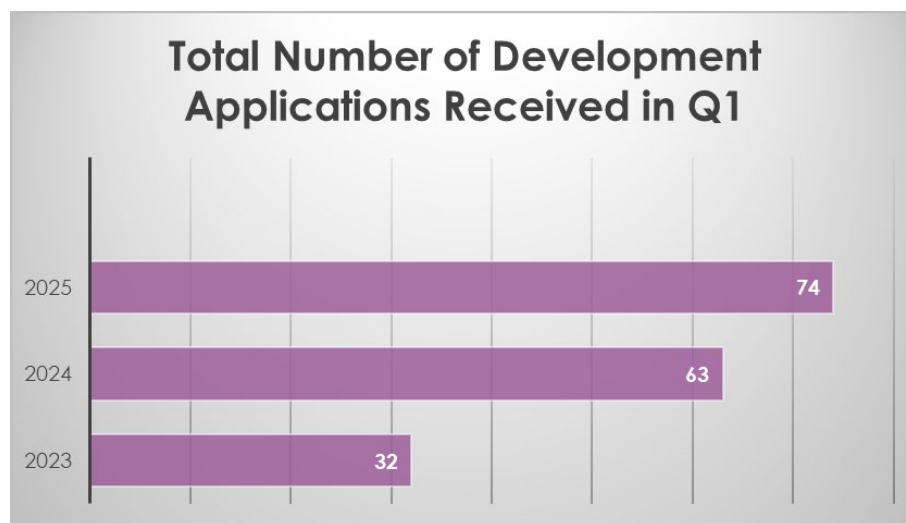
<b>2025</b>	<b>AH</b>	<b>BR</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>HA</b>	<b>PH</b>	<b>TH</b>	<b>Total</b>
Q1	5	6	0	4	6	5	-	<b>26</b>
Q2								
Q3								
Q4								
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>26</b>

Table: Number of Plumbing Permits

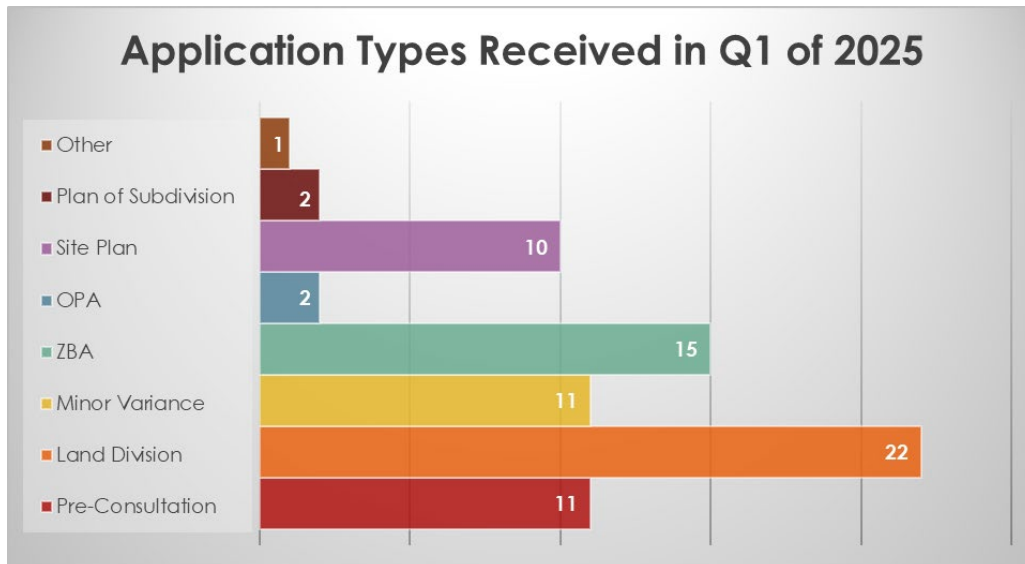
<b>2025</b>	<b>AH</b>	<b>BR</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>HA</b>	<b>PH</b>	<b>TH</b>	<b>Total</b>
Q1	4	38	26	28	5	13	17	<b>131</b>
Q2								
Q3								
Q4								
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>131</b>

## Land Use Planning

During the first quarter of 2025, Land Use Planning received 74 development applications for review and comment. By comparison, 63 applications were reviewed during the same quarter in 2024, and 32 in 2023.

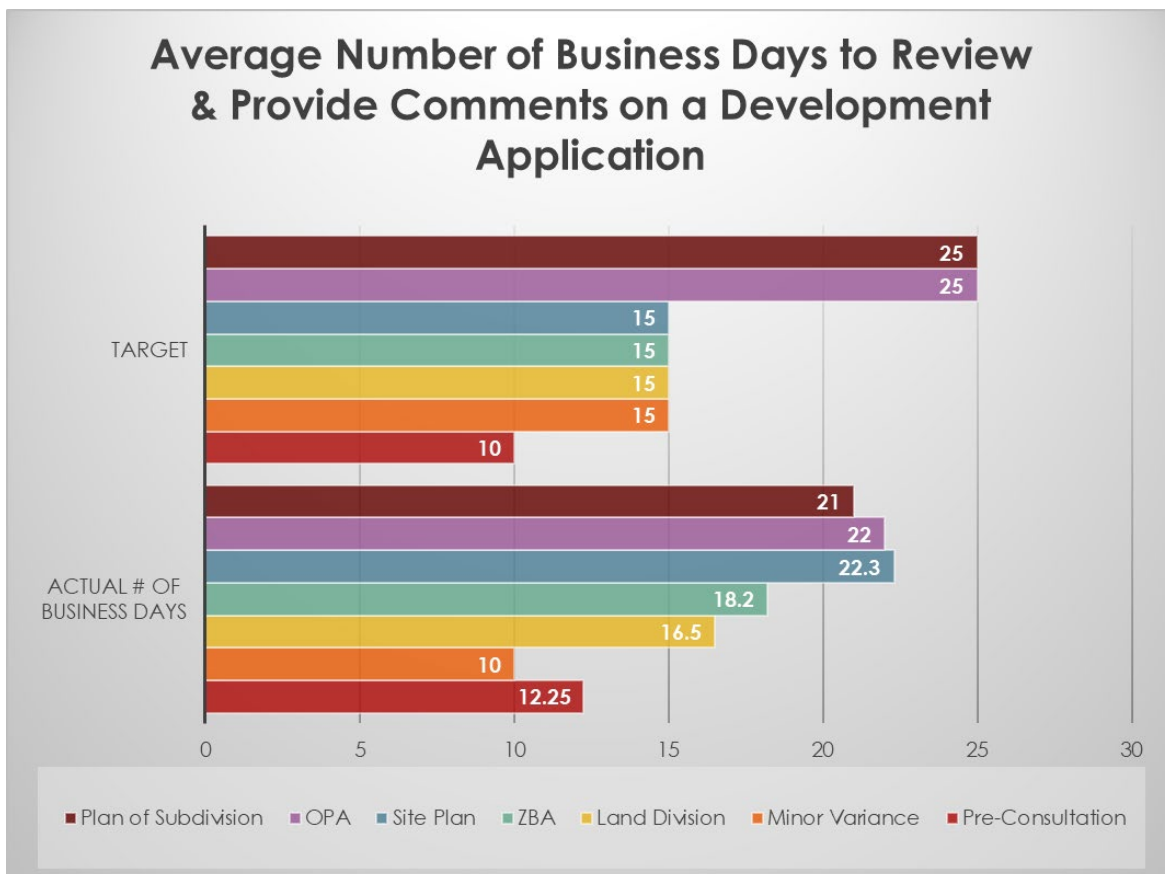


Of the 74 development applications received, land division applications accounted for the highest number of applications (22) reviewed, followed by zoning by-law amendment (rezoning) applications (15), and tied for third were minor variance applications and pre-consultation requests, each with 11 applications. Land Use Planning has also received one Environmental Compliance Approval request from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, which is identified as "Other."



Land Use Planning has been tracking the average time it takes to review a development application and provide comments to the local municipalities. Planning has established targets to review and provide comments on Pre-Consultation requests within 10 business days, while applications for Site Plan, Minor Variance, Land Division, and Zoning By-Law Amendments (ZBA) are reviewed within 15 business days, and larger applications, such as Plans of Subdivision and Official Plan Amendments (OPA), require 25 business days for review.

In Q1, Land Use Planning met its review time targets for Plans of Subdivision, OPAs, and Minor Variances.



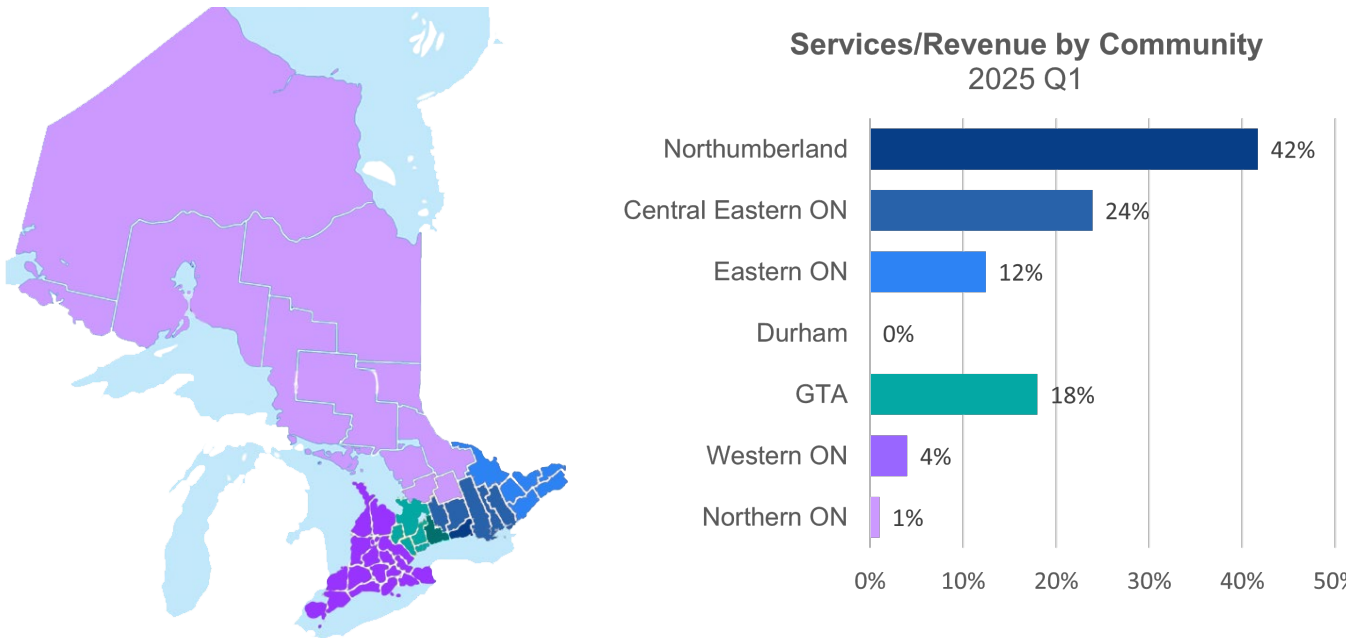
Review times for other application types fell outside the targeted range. This was largely due to staff shortages during this quarter and current staff being reassigned to complete various time-sensitive planning tasks.

Looking ahead, during the second quarter, Land Use Planning plans to hire a Planner to fill a current vacancy, which is expected to strengthen capacity and support meeting review targets moving forward.

Ontario Agri Food Venture Centre (OAFVC)

OAFVC acts as a steppingstone for clients, supporting production scale-up while they find and contract with a co-packer, or build their own facility. Depending on complexity, client production shifts can produce 100 to 2,000 units, or more. With a 4 week booking cycle and onsite food safe storage, OAFVC is uniquely positioned in Ontario to help launch new Made-in-Ontario products and facilitate the growth and sustainability of new and emerging agri-food businesses.

In the first quarter of 2025, OAFVC assisted over 35 food businesses. In the first quarter 42% of services and revenue were generated by businesses owned and operated by Northumberland residents. When aggregated with businesses based in communities between Kawartha Lakes and Ottawa, Eastern Ontario-based businesses account for 78% of Q1 activity.



The Centre attracted nine new Consumer Packaged Goods (C.P.G.) clients, and the OAFVC team helped launch 12 new Made-in-Ontario products. Even with an uncertain economy, Q1 presented a record increase (74%) in food processing shifts booked January through March when compared with the previous 3-year average. In Q1 clients made upwards of \$850,000 worth of Made-in-Ontario products at OAFVC.

In Q1 OAFVC supported clients through, and participated in, 4 Food Safety Audits, matching the total number of independent audits in 2024. Independent Food Safety Audits are more often being requested by clients as they seek to meet rigorous qualifications for placement in major retailers like Farm Boy and Whole Foods. OAFVC is the only federally licensed, independently audited, shared-use CPG production facility in the province.

## Settlement Services

Settlement Services play a crucial role in supporting newcomers to the County. By providing a wide range of services, including language training, employment assistance, and community integration programs, they help individuals and families join the community.

- 65 clients served during Q1
- Of the 23 clients registered in the OAFVC / IRCC Newcomers Food Entrepreneur Program in October 2024, 12 successfully completed the training, and 6 have developed unique products through a trial phase and are now ready to be introduced to the market.
- Offered a job fair in partnership with Watton Employment Agency:
  - 27 local employers attended
  - A record number of 281 employment seekers attended and of those, 42 were newcomers.
- “Artificial Intelligence 101: Understanding the Future of AI” workshop for Newcomers was offered on Thursday February 20 with 25 participants.

## Tourism

### *Owned Media – Newsletters*

- 27,261 Visitor Newsletters sent with an average open rate of 43% and a click rate of 3.4% and promoted a total of 215 events in Q1.
- 2,767 Tourism Industry Newsletters sent with an average open rate of 53.8% and a click rate of 3.3%.

The average tourism industry email rates currently show an open rate of 33.97% and a click rate of 0.85%. (per latest available data from Constant Contact)

### *Owned Media – Social Media Highlights Q1 2025*

- Organically increased social media audience across all platforms by 1.2% to 28,852 followers
- 20,495 video views
- 20% increase in published posts vs. Q1 2024
- 16.8% increase in engagement rate vs. Q1 2024
- Over 525 promotional mentions of Northumberland-based businesses representing a 60% increase vs. Q1 2024

### *Paid Media & Partnerships – Where you Land Campaign*

- Northumberland Tourism created [a series of six 30-second curling themed videos](#) based on the premise of "Where you land... makes all the difference" to run during broadcasts of the 2025 Ontario Curling Championships
- Live TV Viewership was 50,209 viewers across yourTV markets. in yourTV's 16 markets (Brockville/Prescott, Burlington/Oakville, Chatham, Cobourg/Port Hope, Cornwall, Kingston, Milton/Halton Hills, Muskoka, Niagara, North Bay, Ottawa Valley, Peterborough/Lindsay, Quinte, Sarnia, Smiths Falls/Perth & North Grenville and Windsor/Leamington)
- Post-event YouTube views are currently at 102,983 and those games are still available to watch online.

### *Paid Media & Partnerships – Global Heroes Advertising*

Full page ad in the following Global Heroes Magazine editions:



- Toronto Star [Print & e-Paper] - February 6, 2025
- Globe & Mail [Print] ON - February 7, 2025
- National Post [Print] GTA - February 7, 2025
- Global Heroes [Digital] - February 6, 2025

In addition, the campaign included digital promotion via a variety of platforms below:

Platform	Views	Reach	Engagements	Likes
<a href="#">Facebook</a>	402,654	256,585	4,192	4,189
<a href="#">Instagram</a>	43,921	39,469	7,666	7,666
<a href="#">Twitter</a>	48	40	0	2
Newsletter	8,117	7,954	898	0
<a href="#">Website</a>	441	275	0	0
<a href="#">Digital</a>	851	851	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>456,032</b>	<b>305,174</b>	<b>12,756</b>	<b>11,857</b>

#### *Paid Media & Partnerships – Digital Billboard Advertising*

50,000 impressions of a 10-sec static commercial on the Exhibition Place screen on the Gardiner Expressway eastbound during March Break (March 10th - 16th, 2025).



#### *Industry Engagement*

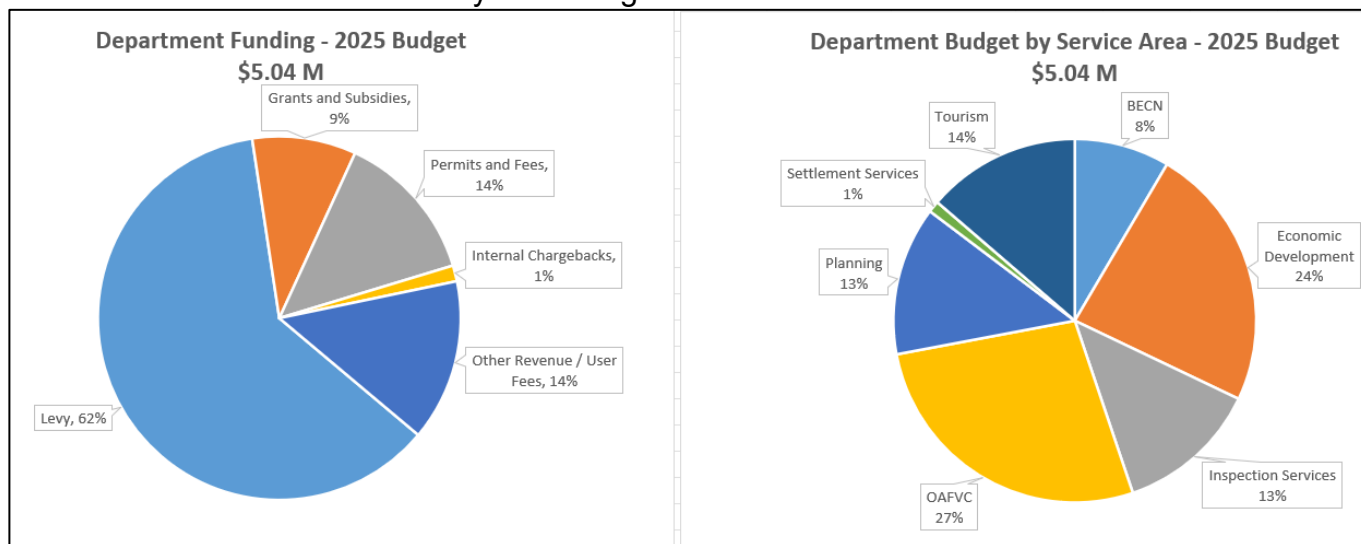
Joined the [Tourism Industry Association of Ontario \(TIAO\)](#) Insights Community with a network of professionals and partners from across the tourism value chain committed to shaping the future of Ontario's tourism sector. The community is supported and hosted by Context Research Group (CRG), a leader in travel and tourism insights. Members of the Insights Community have the opportunity to:



- share perspectives and expertise on key tourism industry topics
- participate in surveys and research initiatives that guide evidence-based policy recommendations
- access exclusive updates on findings and strategies impacting Ontario's tourism industry

## Financial Impact

The operating budgets in the Department total \$5,035,371 funded from various sources. Refer to the charts below for a summary of funding sources and service area allocations.



## Member Municipality Impacts

N/A

## Conclusion / Outcomes

To maintain trust, confidence and transparency in the stewardship of public funds, this report provides a summary of the Planning, Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives Department's activity for the first quarter of 2025.

## Attachments

N/A