

**STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Warden and Members of Shelburne Municipal Council

**FROM:** Val Kean, Director of Economic & Community Development

**APPROVED BY:** Warren MacLeod, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** February 11, 2026

**SUBJECT:** **Shelburne Visitor Information Center Support**

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**PURPOSE:**

To update Council on a letter received from the Shelburne & Area Chamber of Commerce requesting funding support for the 2026 operation of the Town of Shelburne Visitor Information Centre (VIC).

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that

The Municipality of the District of Shelburne send a response letter to the Shelburne & Area Chamber of Commerce encouraging their continued work with the Town of Shelburne to support the successful 2026 operation of the Shelburne VIC, and;

THAT the Municipality of the District of Shelburne encourages the Town of Shelburne to apply for VIC operational support to the Municipality's Grants to Organizations program.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Municipality of the District of Shelburne has historically provided annual funding support for VIC operations through the Grants to Organizations program. This support has been provided to both the Town of Shelburne and the Town of Lockeport in the amount of \$3,500 per year for each community's VIC operations. This approach has ensured equitable municipal support for visitor services across the region.

Tourism remains a significant economic driver within Shelburne County, and the VICs play an important frontline role in welcoming visitors, supporting local businesses, and encouraging longer stays in the region. This matter has been discussed by the Economic Growth Committee and it is clear that the community recognizes the value of consistent and reliable visitor services in both Towns.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Chamber's letter proposes that they assume responsibility for the day-to-day

operation of the Shelburne VIC, while municipal partners provide financial support to enable the service to operate. The proposal suggests expanded hours of operation and identifies a preliminary seasonal operating cost estimate, which would be refined once operational details are confirmed.

Staff have spoken with Town of Shelburne regarding the proposal. The Town has indicated that an operational model for the 2026 VIC has not yet been formally approved by the Town. However, they confirmed that open and ongoing discussions are taking place between the Town and the Shelburne & Area Chamber of Commerce regarding potential operational arrangements.

Based on discussions with the Chamber and the Economic Growth Committee, staff believe the Chamber's proposal aligns with the Municipality's long-standing commitment to tourism and economic development and is as a positive and practical approach to ensuring the VIC is open and well-supported for the 2026 tourism season.

In response to the Chamber's letter, staff recommend that Council acknowledge and express its continued support for the operation of the VIC. Staff further recommend that Council encourage the Town of Shelburne and the Shelburne & Area Chamber of Commerce to continue working collaboratively to finalize the operational model for the Town of Shelburne VIC and that the Town subsequently forward a funding request to the Municipality through the Grants to Organizations program, consistent with current policy.

It is also important to note that a grant provided by the Municipality to support the Shelburne VIC will have a mirror effect on the support provided to the Town of Lockport VIC. Maintaining parity between the two communities has been an established practice of the Municipality and the Grant Review Committee will consider this in future funding recommendations to Council.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:**

As in past years, staff have included \$67,500, for Grants to Organizations applications, in the 2026-2027 draft operating budget.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Letter from Shelburne & Area Chamber of Commerce



Shelburne & Area Chamber of Commerce  
PO Box 1150  
Shelburne, NS  
B0T1W0

January 29, 2026,

**Subject:** Decision Required: 2026 Visitor Information Centre Operations and Funding Partnership

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

On behalf of the Shelburne & Area Chamber of Commerce (SACC), we are writing to request Council's support for a practical, cost-effective partnership to ensure the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) is operational for the 2026 tourism season.

From discussions to date, it is clear that both the Town of Shelburne and the Municipality of Shelburne share a strong interest in seeing the Visitor Information Centre open this season. This letter is intended to move those discussions forward in a concrete way and establish an agreed path to implementation.

Tourism remains one of the region's most reliable economic drivers—second only to the fishery—and the VIC is a frontline economic development service that directly supports local businesses, employment, and municipal revenues. The VIC is often the first and most influential point of contact for visitors. When it is unavailable or under-resourced, the result is fewer overnight stays, reduced visitor spending, and missed opportunities for local businesses—particularly small and seasonal operators.

While the Chamber is prepared to step forward and assume operational management of the seasonal VIC, it does not have the fiscal capacity to fund its operation. Visitor services and tourism promotion are core municipal responsibilities, and sustained municipal investment is essential.

Based on preliminary information available to us, our **best current estimate** is that total seasonal operating costs will be approximately **\$30,000**. We propose that a **detailed operating budget** be finalized once:

- The property has been viewed to assess start-up requirements (painting, cleaning, set-up, minor repairs);

- Operating costs are confirmed by the Town (insurance, utilities, internet, janitorial, etc.);
- Staffing approach is agreed upon by the Town and Municipality (experienced/mature staff supported by students and volunteers);
- Final dates of operation are confirmed.

To move forward efficiently, the SACC proposes the following partnership model:

- The **Shelburne & Area Chamber of Commerce** will manage and operate the seasonal VIC, including staffing, volunteer coordination, training, programming, daily operations, and reporting.
- The **Town of Shelburne and the Municipality of Shelburne** will provide the financial support required to operate the VIC, recognizing it as a foundational economic development service.

**Preliminary 2026 Operating Estimate: \$30,000 (to be confirmed through detailed budget)**

- Town of Shelburne: Facilities, services, maintenance, and wage contributions (value to be confirmed)
- Municipality of Shelburne: Financial contribution toward operations (amount to be confirmed)

When the VIC was last fully operational and collecting visitor data it welcomed approximately **6,500 visitors** during the season. Even modest spending by these visitors—on meals, accommodations, retail purchases, museums, and attractions—represents a substantial economic return for both the Town and the Municipality. Encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend locally multiplies this impact across the business community.

We are operating within a very tight timeline in order to open the centre this season. To that end, we respectfully request:

- A site visit to the VIC as soon as possible;
- Confirmation of Town operating cost figures;
- A first joint meeting within the next **10 days** to finalize scope, budget, and responsibilities.

Simply put, Shelburne and Area — and the Chamber on behalf of its business members — cannot afford to forgo this service. We respectfully request Council’s support to proceed with this partnership model so that staffing and preparation can begin immediately.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with both Councils and continue working collaboratively to strengthen Shelburne's tourism economy.

Respectfully submitted,

**Shelburne & Area Chamber of Commerce**

CC: Warden and Councillors, Municipality of Shelburne

## **Briefing Note**

### **Visitor Information Centre (VIC) – 2026 Operations and Funding**

#### **Purpose**

To seek municipal support in principle for reopening the Visitor Information Centre for the 2026 season and to confirm a partnership model and process for finalizing a detailed operating budget.

#### **Background**

- Tourism is one of the region's strongest economic sectors and a key pillar of municipal economic development.
- The VIC serves as the primary point of contact for visitors, promoting accommodations, dining, attractions, events, and local businesses.
- When the VIC last operated at full capacity, it served approximately **6,500 visitors** during the season.

#### **Economic Impact**

Even conservative visitor spending assumptions (meals, retail purchases, attraction admissions, and overnight stays) demonstrate that encouraging 6,500 visitors to remain and spend locally generates significant economic benefit for the Town and the Municipality. This supports:

- Local employment
- Commercial tax base
- Business sustainability
- Community reputation as a welcoming destination

#### **Issue**

- The Shelburne & Area Chamber of Commerce does not have the fiscal capacity to fully fund the VIC.
- Without municipal participation, the VIC will not be able to operate, resulting in lost visitor spending and reputational harm.

#### **Proposed Solution**

A collaborative partnership model:

#### **SACC Responsibilities**

- Day-to-day management and operation of the seasonal VIC
- Staffing and volunteer coordination
- Training and programming

- Insurance compliance and reporting
- Monthly operational reporting and end-of-season review

### **Municipal Responsibilities**

- Financial support for VIC operations
- Confirmation of operating costs (insurance, utilities, internet, janitorial)
- Participation in staffing model decisions

### **Operating Season (to be confirmed)**

- Target: Late May to mid-October 2026
- 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., seven days per week

### **Financial Overview (Preliminary)**

- **Estimated Total Cost:** Approximately **\$30,000**
- A detailed operating budget will be prepared once:
  - Site condition is assessed (painting, cleaning, repairs, set-up)
  - Town operating costs are confirmed
  - Staffing model and dates of operation are agreed upon

### **Next Steps (Time Sensitive)**

- Arrange site visit to VIC
- Receive Town cost estimates
- Hold joint meeting within **10 days**
- Establish a small **working committee** with representation from the Town, the Municipality, the Chamber, and the business community to streamline decisions and implementation
- Finalize detailed budget and operational plan

### **Requested Direction**

- Support the partnership model in principle
- Direct staff to meet with SACC to finalize scope, costs, and implementation timeline