



CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING

DECEMBER 21, 2022, AT 8:00 AM

OKANAGAN ROOM (COUNCIL CHAMBER) CITY HALL

A G E N D A

1) CALL TO ORDER

2) LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As chair of the City of Vernon's Tourism Commission, and in the spirit of this gathering, I recognize the City of Vernon is located in the traditional territory of the Syilx people of the Okanagan nation.

3) ADOPTION OF AGENDA

4) ADOPTION OF MINUTES

a) November 16, 2022 (attached)

5) UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. 2023 Marketing Plan Presentation

6) NEW BUSINESS

1. Round Table

7) NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Tourism Commission is scheduled for **January 18, 2023**, in the **Okanagan Room (Council Chambers) City Hall**.

8) ADJOURNMENT



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON

MINUTES OF THE TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2022 OKANAGAN ROOM (COUNCIL CHAMBER) CITY HALL

PRESENT: Bobby Bissessar, Accommodation Provider
Clara Snedden, Accommodation Provider
Claus Larsen, Accommodation Provider (Acting Chair)
Clinton Bialas, Restaurants
Councillor Durning (Appointed Member)
Dauna Kennedy, Arts & Culture
Gale Woodhouse, Arts & Culture
Janine Collard, Attractions
Mayor Cumming
Michael Van Horne, Golf
Peter Kaz, Marketing & Events, Downtown Vernon Association
Richard Rolke, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce
Troy Hudson, Ski
Vicki Proulx, Sports & Events

GUESTS:

Bradley Callihoo, Okanagan Indian Band
Josh Welter, Executive Director, SCSNO

ABSENT: Brett Woods, Biking
Ian Jenkins, Silverstar Mountain Resort
Kat Boloten, Accommodation Provider

STAFF: Erin Gorman, Administrative Assistant
Hanna Lucich, Tourism Coordinator
Jennifer Pounder, Committee Clerk
Karen Savill, Visitor Services Coordinator
Roy Nuriel, Planner, Economic Development
Torrie Silverthorn, Manager, Tourism

ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:02 a.m.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As Chair of the City of Vernon's Tourism Commission, and in the spirit of this gathering, I recognize the City of Vernon is located in the traditional territory of the Syilx people of the Okanagan Nation.

**ADOPTION OF THE
AGENDA**

Moved by **R. Rolke**, seconded by **Councillor Durning**:

THAT the agenda of the November 16, 2022 meeting for the Tourism Commission be adopted:

CARRIED

**ADOPTION OF THE
MINUTES**

Moved by **Councillor Durning**, seconded by **V. Proulx**:

THAT the minutes for the October 19, 2022 meeting of the Tourism Commission be adopted.

CARRIED

MANAGER UPDATE

- Marketing Plan update will be at December, 2022 meeting.
- Congratulations to T. Hudson and Sovereign Lake Nordic Centre for winning the Tourism Excellence award at the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards.

Tourism Data, Trends and Insights:

- Marketing Plan will be discussed at the December, 2022 Tourism Commission meeting.
- 2021 MRDT Net Collection: \$918,000.00
Est. Hotel Revenue: \$3,290,000.00
- 2022 MRDT Net Collection: \$692,000.00 (Jan-July)
Projected total: \$1,100,000.00 Approximately
Est. Hotel Revenue: \$22,800,000.00 (Jan-July)
Projected total: \$39,000,000.00 Approximately

Best years to date:

MRDT Net: \$1,1022,956.79 (2019)

Est. Hotel Revenues: \$36,898,688.50 (2017)

- **Staycays are here to stay:** Around 90% of consumers say they plan to take a domestic vacation in the next 12 months.
- **Millennials are driving demand for pet-friendly vacations:** 1 in 10 millennials say they plan to travel with their pets.

- **Gen Zs are going it alone**: After 2 years of restrictions, over one third of Gen Z say they plan to travel by themselves.
- **Millennials are splashing the cash**: 17% say they look for options toward the top range, or reach for the top-range option, which is the highest of all generations. They are also the most likely to say they're taking a domestic vacation as a luxury/treat for themselves or others. Millennials are a key segment to win over.
- **Wellness travel is levelling up**: Booking.com notes that 31% of Canadians are interested in incorporating plant-based psychedelics like ayahuasca, or mushrooms into their travel experience.
- **Covid fears are waning**: Confidence in travel is slowly building with Covid concerns no longer a top priority. When asked which factors were most important when choosing a destination, Covid-19 status/restrictions were outranked across all generations by factors such as fun/excitement, sights/attractions and cost/value for money.
- **Gen Zs are being seriously #influenced**: 60% of Gen z say social media influences their decision about where to go on vacation. This is a clear indication to brands that ads and influencers are a particularly effective way to engage with Gen Zs and promote their travel offering.
- **Baby boomers are craving familiarity**: Unlike Gen Z, baby boomers are less concerned with finding trendy or insta-worthy hotspots, and more about visiting destinations they know and trust. This group is much more likely than other generations to rely on their own past experiences.
- **Sustainability is high on the agenda for millennials**: Of all groups, millennials care most about the carbon footprint of their travel, with 37% saying they're very/extremely concerned. Gen Zs aren't far behind, but only 18% of baby boomers say the same.
- **Prioritizing travel spend**: 63% of people will keep a close eye on deal and hacks, 53% are happy to travel off-season or via longer routes and 61% of people intend on planning their vacations further in advance, so expect to see fewer last-minute travellers in 2023.

- **Booking flexibility is non-negotiable**: 38% of consumers agree that free cancellation/rebooking is the most important factor of booking a trip.

B. Bissessar, Accommodation Provider, shared with the Commission that he is working with the Central Okanagan Hospice Association on a project called “Swinging with the Stars”. There are approximately eight teams that will be performing and fundraising. He has a goal in place to raise \$100,000.00 by February, 2023. The launch event will be at Summerhill Winery in Kelowna, BC on November 26, 2022, and the big event will be at the Delta Grand Hotel in Kelowna, BC on February 25, 2023.

R. Nuriel, Planner, Economic Development, was in attendance and gave an overview of the Waterfront Neighborhood Centre Plan and the Port Okanagan Project. He also provided an overview of the Short-Term Rental process and the proposed amendments to C10A zoning district.

Mayor Cumming left the meeting at 8:30 a.m.

The following comments / questions were posed by members of the Commission:

- The Commission asked if there is anything in the housing plan that would assist employers with providing employees with housing. Staff confirmed that employee housing is an action item included in the Housing Action Plan (HAP) endorsed by Council on September 26, 2022. .

Mayor Cumming joined the meeting at 8:42 a.m.

- Staff further confirmed that it is included in the Housing Action Plan to provide homeowners with free plans for carriage houses.
- The Commission inquired about public transportation and if it will be adequate for the Port Okanagan Project. Staff confirmed that they work with BC Transit to ensure sufficient service to the new area. Staff also noted that the Transportation department reviews all new projects to ensure needs are met.

NEW BUSINESS**ROUND TABLE
UPDATES**

Commission members provided a brief update regarding their current programming, challenges, and promotions as follows:

- M. Van Horne – Slow season. Nothing to report.
- G. Woodhouse – Vernon Community Arts Centre is having its event 'Artsolutely' from December 1 to 24, 2022. 38 Artists will have products on display. The Tourism Commission is invited to a preview on November 30, 2022 from 6-8:30 p.m.
- C. Snedden – Everything is going well and renovations are continuing at the Vernon Lodge. The ballroom is projected to be ready next summer.
- B. Bissessar – Right now is our slow season. We have had a record-breaking year.
- D. Kennedy – Good things are happening in the cultural world. Working on finalizing branding. In terms of the cultural project, designs are complete and we are close to having an architect in place.
- T. Hudson – We opened with a bang. Over one meter of snow in two days. We are hosting four provincial camps, one national team camp and three courses this weekend. We are always looking for volunteers. We had an awards ceremony at The Vernon Lodge this past Saturday. Really fantastic. A lot of amazing momentum. All of the US teams are arriving this week. A lot of early people this year.
- J. Collard – Sales-wise we already have 80 groups and 17 weddings booked for next summer. For events, we are doing a Winter Market next Friday (November 25, 2022) and have already sold 300 tickets. January 22, 2023 we are having a wine pairing event.
- P. Kaz. – We have had four new business open in just over a month and a half in downtown Vernon. The Downtown Treat trail brought in 4,000 people in the first two hours. The Kal participated in the NOLCS Golden Burger Challenge and placed in the top. The Towne Theatre had its best grossing weekend in October with a local film. Excited about Christmas coming to downtown Vernon. Free parking downtown on Saturdays starts November 26, 2022. Working on the Winter Carnival.

- V. Proulx – Things are really busy right now. All of our events are finalized for the Winter Carnival. Over 130 events happening over 10 days in February. We are working on our Carnival of Lights event, which is a new version of the light up. The light up will occur on November 26, 2022. Over 30 vendors are registered for 5-8:00 p.m. Concert with the Recklaws at the Winter Carnival and tickets go on sale Friday.
- C. Bialas – We have been sold out for Christmas parties since the end of September. It has been an amazing year. Returning to normal.
- Councillor Durning – This past Monday all Councillors were assigned to their Committee's or Commission's, and I was assigned to the Tourism Commission, Transportation Advisory Committee, Arts Council of North Okanagan, Vernon Winter Carnival Society, Historical O'Keefe Ranch and the Greater Vernon BC Games Liaison. I look forward to transitioning into these roles.
- Mayor Cumming – Great to see everyone. Regarding the Cultural Centre, we are going through the stages internally. There are currently eight architect firms that want to design the building. We have already narrowed it down to two and we are in contract negotiations with one of them. We are excited as this is an amazing project.
- J. Welter – My focus has switched to next summer already. Tae Kwon Do Nationals are coming to Vernon in May, 2023. We are currently looking for hotels for over 500 people. The same with the Pickleball group as these we will be on back-to-back weekends. May is going to be an extremely busy time for us. I spent last week at the Sport Tourism Conference in Edmonton. It was -18c and a blizzard. 3500 registered guests went down to 1500. Two key-note speakers and a lot of eastern Canada could not make it.

Before his update, Richard was thanked by the Tourism Commission for his efforts in putting on the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards.

- R. Rolke – It was a great Awards event. We had 300 plus registrations. Given what we have been through for the last couple of years, that is a fairly large crowd. Last month 12 or 13 new members signed up at GVCOC.

- C. Larsen – I have been out of commission for a few weeks. I would like to thank everybody for the support. The Marketing sub-Committee will be meeting on November 29 at 8:30 a.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting for the Tourism Commission is set for December 21, 2022 at 8:00 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting of the Tourism Commission adjourned at 9:11 a.m. by call of the Chair.

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

_____ Chair

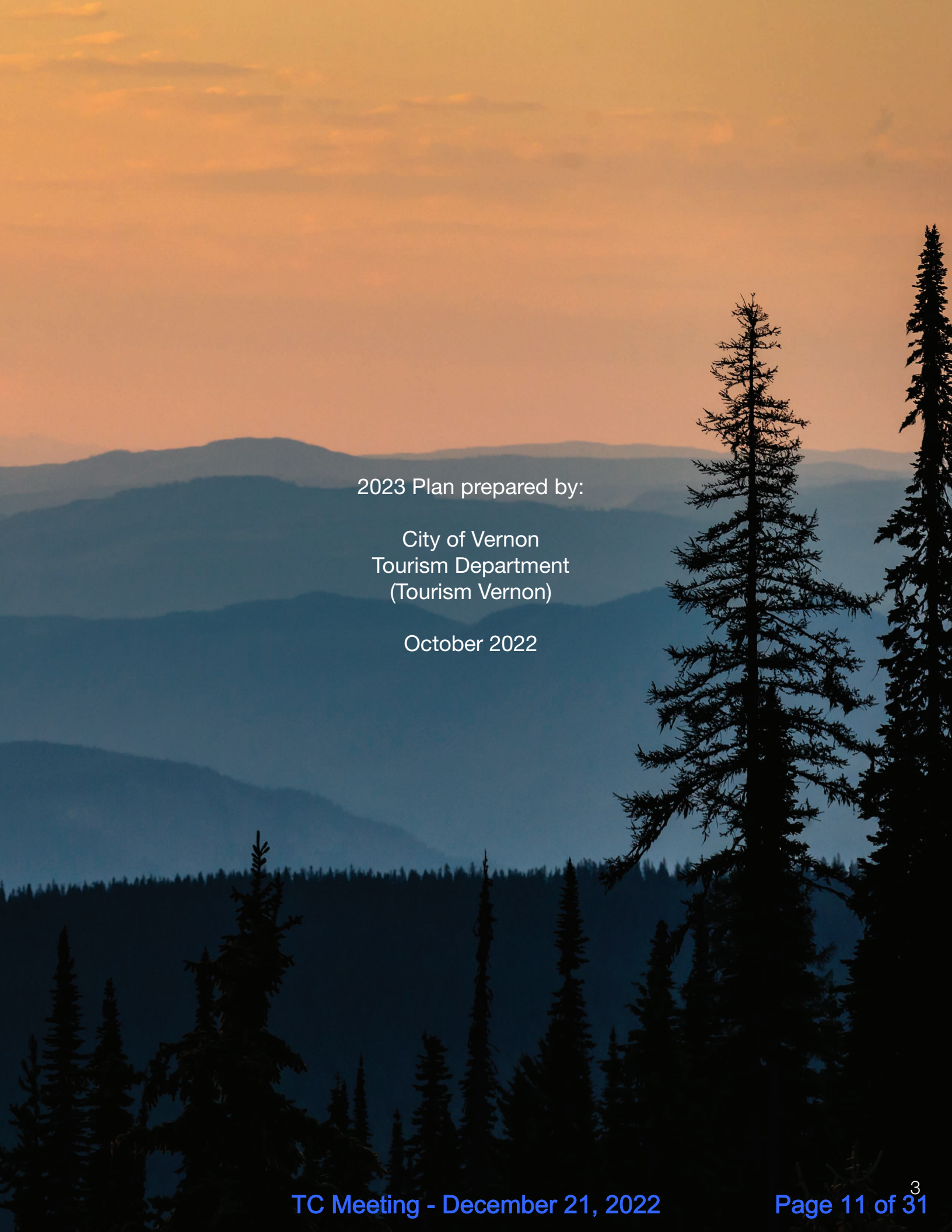
DRAFT TOURISM VERNON 2023 MARKETING PLAN



TOURISM
Vernon

CITY OF VERNON
TOURISM DEPARTMENT





2023 Plan prepared by:

City of Vernon
Tourism Department
(Tourism Vernon)

October 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tourism remains a significant driver of economic growth to Vernon. 2021 Hotel Room Revenue for the community reached \$32,955,585. 2022 Hotel Room Revenues are on track to hit ~\$38M; a banner year for Vernon. 2023 marks year one of Tourism Vernon's new Five-Year Strategic Plan that plants sustainability at its core. Sustainability plays out in the 2023 Marketing Plan as Destination Management; an exciting tool for balancing economic growth with Vernon's environmental, social and economic needs. This balance plays out in the 2023 Marketing Plan as a sophisticated, thoughtful approach to marketing campaigns, marketing content and industry engagement tools.

Tourism Vernon will also welcome the return of robust, nation-wide marketing campaigns, regular media and influencer visits, and full-

scale industry engagement sessions in 2023. While traditional marketing and media tactics can be found throughout this plan, an emphasis on digital tactics is here to stay. Digital marketing addresses consumers' growing demand for online information, provides detailed data and insights and allow staff to make quick, micro adjustments to how and who a campaign is targeting. Data-driven marketing will be a key area of investment for Tourism Vernon's 2023 marketing tactics. Staff plan to continue collecting Telus insights data and prioritizing analytic reporting on an increasing scale. Summer and winter remain Vernon's top tourism seasons. In order to extend economic impacts throughout the shoulder seasons, Tourism Vernon plans to increase all marketing and media activity headed into spring and fall.

In partnership with Vernon hoteliers and resorts, Tourism Vernon staff plan to actively target travel trade and tour groups throughout 2023 to increase room revenue and economic impact to the broader community. While group travel has been slower to recover compared to other markets, now is the time to nurture relationships in this sector. As a primarily short-haul destination, capturing the Free Independent Traveler (FIT) and Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) markets also remains a priority for Tourism Vernon. There are many economic factors at play as we head into 2023, and a slowing of the current travel boom is anticipated. Travel has long been considered to be a discretionary spend for most households. However, current consumer behavior is defying this notion. Data has shown that while recessions can slow tourism growth, travelers

will opt for a domestic destination as opposed to an international vacation. Vernon is an established domestic destination and, as evidenced through the pandemic, Canadians are still very likely to visit the Okanagan Valley during economic uncertainty. It's likely that momentum from the current travel boom will carry revenues for months into an economic downturn, though forward bookings may slow. With cautious optimism, 2023 MRDT revenues are budgeted slightly above the five-year average. Additional funding is being requested from the 2020/2021 program savings held in the Hotel Tax reserve. As Tourism Vernon launches year one of a new strategic direction, marketing efforts remain supportive of Council's Strategic Plan and Vernon's environmental, social and economic needs as a community.



2023-2027 STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The *2023-27 Tourism Vernon Five Year Strategic Plan* sets the goals and vision for Tourism Vernon through to December 31, 2027. The strategy was developed with significant input from the public and stakeholders, and has been endorsed by the Tourism Commission and City Council. The 2023 Tactical Marketing Plan has been developed to achieve these goals and objectives identified within the strategic plan.

The information below is a high-level summary of the strategic framework as outlined in the *2023-27 Tourism Vernon Five Year Strategic Plan*. A full copy of the plan is available [*online here*](#).

MISSION

To refresh the mind, body, and soul of the active explorer in the Okanagan

VISION

Vernon is the 365-day adventure capital of the Okanagan

OUR ROLE

To promote, protect and enhance Vernon's position as one of North America's premier holiday and lifestyle destinations through leading the execution of targeted marketing programs, supporting destination development programs and advocating for the sustainable growth of tourism in Vernon. We will be the most innovative and effective Destination Management Organization in the Thompson Okanagan in inspiring our target markets to experience our destination.



A person wearing a red cap and a light-colored t-shirt stands on a grassy hill, looking out over a valley. The sun is setting in the background, creating a warm, golden glow over the landscape. The valley below is filled with green fields, trees, and small houses. In the distance, there are rolling hills and mountains under a cloudy sky.

GOALS

- ↑ Increased year-round visitation
- ↑ Increased visitor satisfaction
- ↑ Increased stakeholder engagement
- ↑ Increased community support for tourism

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

To effectively capture our target markets and drive sustainable visitation, these six key strategy pillars have been identified:

1. Lead with the brand
2. Focus marketing on key audiences
3. Leverage specific sports
4. Establish strong partnerships
5. Activate local pride
6. Incubate products and experiences



TARGET MARKETS

The primary target markets have been derived and adapted from those found in the *2023-27 Tourism Vernon Five Year Strategic Plan*. The sectors of focus have been identified for each target market.

PRIMARY

Active Explorers

- 35-55 years of age
- Travelling as a family during school breaks
- Coming from Western Canada (BC and Alberta)

SECONDARY

Near Retirement

- 55+ years of age
- Travelling as couples and multi-generations
- Coming mostly from Alberta and Lower Mainland

Specific Sports

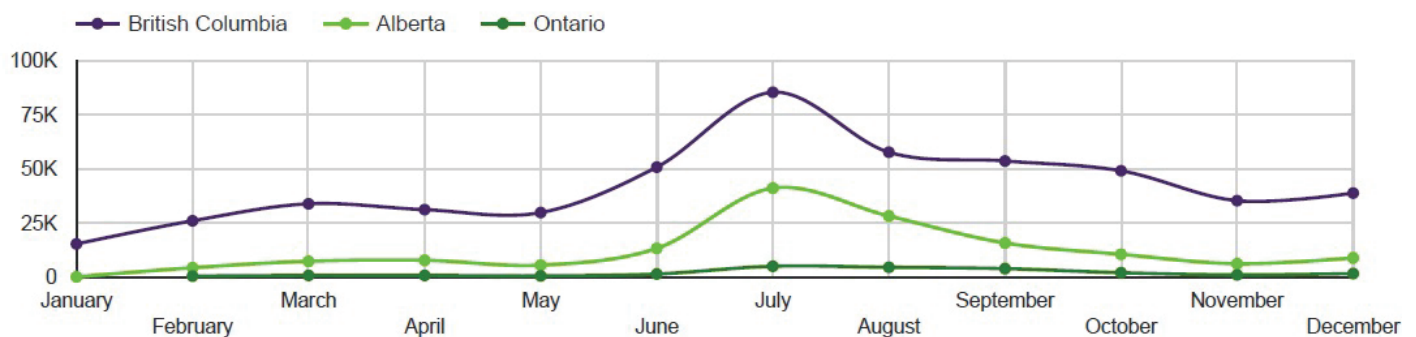
- 16-45 years of age; including families with older children
- Travelling in a family unit or small groups
- Coming from Western Canada (BC and Alberta)
- Strong international appeal

GEOGRAPHY AND SEGMENTS

- **Calgary** makes up 21% of visitors
- **Greater Vancouver** makes up 18% of visitors
- **Edmonton** makes up 12% of visitors
- Long haul markets, particularly Ontario, have shown recent strength and will be monitored closely.
- International visitors from the USA travel as couples and many fitting the near retirement segments with peak visitation in the fall months according to Telus Insights data.
- Travel trade and business travel groups are making a comeback and will be monitored closely.



Monthly total trips by province





SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE ACTION

‘Sustainability’ has repeatedly been identified by stakeholders across Vernon as critical for the survival and optimization of tourism businesses, to mitigate negative impacts, enhance the quality of life of residents and improve visitor experiences. As such, Tourism Vernon will start the evolution from Destination Marketing to Destination Management to ensure we are active stewards in our community, prioritizing long-term sustainability and community well-being in every aspect of our work.

Sustainable tourism experiences are important as travelers look towards lessening the environmental impact when they take a vacation. It will be the quality, rather than quantity, of experiences in Vernon that will demonstrate our commitments

to sustainability and set us apart as a destination. Tourism Vernon is committed to educating the local tourism industry on sustainable business practices and promoting sustainable tourism experiences to travelers. Staff will continue to attend conferences, courses and educational seminars to maintain expert working knowledge of sustainable tourism practices.

The City of Vernon's Climate Action Plan integrates sustainability and community across all initiatives. As a community, our key objectives are to mitigate negative environmental impacts, adapt behaviors to align with community values and climate change, enhance community and business resiliency, and support regenerative opportunities to ensure we make positive environmental contributions to Vernon. Tourism Vernon staff are committed to supporting and implementing the City of Vernon's Climate Action Plan and integrating sustainability in our community. Supporting our industry in adapting to climate change and the transition to a clean energy economy is vital.



2023 MARKETING GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Capitalize on the existing demand for outdoor leisure travel by promoting Vernon's exceptional outdoor experiences and complimenting activities to high-volume and high value target markets
- Promote Vernon's diverse experiences to high-value segments with high impact promotions with a focus on target market segments
- Encourage longer stays and repeat visitors to come back to recreate memories made from culturally rich experiences
- Activate local pride to share our active healthy lifestyle and convert visitors to the Okanagan way of life
- Align destination stewardship efforts with government, industry and community organizations to support sustainable development
- Continue to build visitation to Vernon in the shoulder seasons and winter
- Improve and grow engagement across all Tourism Vernon's owned marketing channels

2023 STRATEGIES

- Develop marketing content with a focus on responsible tourism hyper targeted to the key audiences to increase length of stay and visitor yield with a focus on shoulder and off-season
- Invest in brand storytelling to show the sense of place in the community of vibrant locals eager to share their laid-back lifestyle and lived experiences with visitors
- Enhance audience engagement with Tourism Vernon's channels by promoting content, events and attractions that appeal specifically to target markets
- Enhance mobile and digital visitor services program: assisting potential visitors and existing visitors that we may not have reached otherwise and providing them with timely, helpful information in new, innovative ways



- Embed sustainability in the core of all marketing initiatives, itinerary content and digital assets
- Continue to build our owned video and photo asset library to focus on identified target audiences that can be used as multi-purpose promotional tools, allowing staff to easily and quickly create or adjust content for marketing campaigns, and repurpose existing assets for new campaigns
- Incubate products and experiences to encourage repeat visitors through sport tourism, festivals and events and making memories
- Continue to leverage strategic partnerships with local, regional and provincial partners to pool marketing funds and extend the reach of promotional efforts
- Focus on strengths of what makes Vernon distinct in marketing and key messaging
- Continue to focus on gathering Vernon-specific data to better understand micro and macro tourism trends specific to our community



TACTICS

Measurable promotional initiatives that increase awareness of responsible travel, length of stay, visitor yield and return visitation, with a focus on shoulder and off-season tourism.

DIGITAL MARKETING

New Website Development

- Mobile focused design compatibility for enhanced on-the-go user experience
- Better user experience with rich imagery and video content along with easy to navigate menus with shortest number of clicks to reach the information visitors need
- Better mapping functionality for visitors to navigate their way around roads and trails
- Easy to navigate CMS for staff to regularly update content and imagery to keep it fresh and relevant and add to the events calendar on a daily basis
- Transfer top performing positions for keywords and SEO from previous site to new site while consolidating page count
- Continue to update and consolidate current content as transferred to the new site
- Integrated business directory to allow for streamlined conversions to stakeholder and accommodation providers' websites and booking platforms

Brand Assessment

As identified in the 2023-27 Strategic Plan, Tourism Vernon will work with a third-party agency to conduct a branding and visual identity assessment. This will help shape the voice, tone and messaging for the new website, marketing campaigns and content development.

Social Media: Paid and Organic

Facebook, Instagram and YouTube have proven to be adaptable and versatile platforms for marketing to target audiences. Content will continue to be tailored to resonate with the primary and secondary target markets.

Digital Advertising and Sponsored Content

Digital advertising offers reliable metrics and reporting which gives Tourism Vernon the ability to narrow target markets. Continue to emphasize digital ads and sponsored content on local/regional platforms such as Castanet, Vancouver is Awesome and national platforms such as Global News, NHL.com and Narcity. Sponsored content will continue to highlight key stakeholders and sectors of focus.

E-newsletters

Tourism Vernon will continue to produce e-newsletters for consumer, golf and local industry, and travel media. With an increase in subscribers throughout 2022, staff will work on increasing click-through-rates to Tourism Vernon and stakeholders' websites.

Content Development: photo, video and copywriting

Video and photo asset libraries will be diversified to effectively reflect and capture each target audience with a specific focus on increasing content for retirees and their interests. With the new website planned for 2023 updating the photo, video and copywriting will be an important focus. Staff will continue to work with contractors and in-house to utilize existing content while adding new experiences to the mix.

Asset Management & User Generated Content Software

CrowdRiff is a digital platform that pulls user generated photos from multiple social media channels and collects them all in one easy-to-access hub for DMOs to use in countless ways. Introduced by Destination BC, CrowdRiff allows DMOs to search photo and video content by location, hashtag and activity and gain rights to use in our own marketing campaigns.

TRADITIONAL MARKETING

Television and Radio Campaigns

Traditional media is effective for advertising to particular market segments. Staff will continue to work with organizations like Rogers Media, Corus Entertainment, Bell Media, NG Media and others to promote Vernon. Many companies also offer digital video and out-of-home packages for a healthy mix of traditional and new media advertising options.

Print Advertising

Tourism Vernon will continue to choose strategic placements in high quality print publications to match our target audiences' interests. Some examples are advertising in Kootenay Mountain Culture, WestJet Magazine and Avenue Calgary.

Visitor Guide

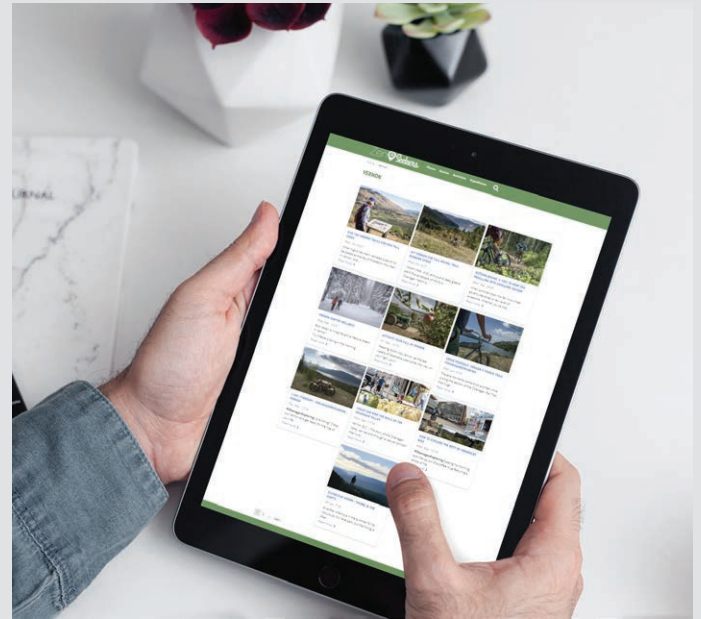
With the Visitor Centre closed permanently, the official Visitor Guide is a vital piece of the visitor experience. The Visitor Guide provides valuable visuals and details regarding Vernon's tourism and stakeholder offerings. In 2023 the Visitor Guide will see a refresh highlighting some key pillars from the new strategic plan.



Market Research

Tourism Vernon will continue to invest in Telus Insights Data to provide information on the demographics of visitors to Vernon. The Telus data helps staff to make strategic marketing decisions to create successful campaigns. The Tourism Sentiment Index is used to measure visitor satisfaction by analyzing online conversations about our destination. Staff will utilize this software to further understand topics driving positive and negative conversations and to help adjust content and marketing campaigns as necessary.

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT



Writers, Bloggers & Influencers

Working closely with Destination Canada, Destination BC, Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association and existing media contacts, Tourism Vernon will arrange hosted media and influencer visits. Traditional travel media writers and influencer/bloggers can be a significant influence over where people choose to vacation. A focus in 2023 will be aligning the audiences of the travel media with the target audiences and specific sports groups to reach those segments with highly engaging content.

Influencer Event/Familiarization Tours

Create an iconic weekend getaway in Vernon, inviting and hosting multiple regionally based influencers to showcase what Vernon has to offer. After a couple year hiatus, staff will bring back familiarization tours for industry stakeholders and frontline staff to educate and activate local pride.

Activate Local Pride

Continue to work with local experts from various sectors like biking, culinary and indigenous culture to create written, video and photo content for Tourism Vernon's website and social channels. Locals are an important ambassador for visitors with the ability to share their inside knowledge for an authentic visitor experience.

INDUSTRY & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

Vernon's Tourism Industry Conference

After a successful in-person conference in 2022, Tourism Vernon will host the annual event in spring of 2023. The goal is to bring industry leaders together to network, establish strong partnerships and grow relationships while educating stakeholders about industry trends, and the strategic direction of Tourism Vernon.

Indigenous Tourism

Indigenous Tourism is a key cultural pillar for attracting visitors to Canada and BC. The City of Vernon has monthly meetings with Okanagan Indian Band where joint economic development and tourism initiatives are discussed. Tourism Vernon will continue building relationships with OKIB and staff are here to support their tourism journey and promote product development opportunities. In addition, we look forward to having an OKIB representative at the Tourism Commission to build on this priority sector and relationship.



Travel Trade

Work with key accommodation providers and resorts to identify how Tourism Vernon can support their travel trade marketing and sales efforts. Develop campaigns to support corporate groups, meetings and business travel as that industry fully recovers.

Strategic Partnerships

Strategic marketing partnerships entail leveraging tourism partners to extend marketing reach and effectiveness. Priority will be given to projects aligned with Tourism Vernon's new strategic direction, target audiences and projects with the most reach per dollars contributed. BC's tourism industry functions best through collaboration and partnering, so continuing to partner with leading organizations and key stakeholders will remain a priority along Tourism Vernon's path to success. Examples of strategic partnership opportunities arise with:

- Resorts (Predator Ridge Resort, Sparkling Hill Resort, SilverStar Mountain Resort)
- Local businesses or organizations seeking to feature Vernon in their marketing efforts
- Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA)
- Destination BC partner programs
- Destination Silver Star
- Nearby communities for Okanagan-wide campaigns



Sponsorships

With the return of events in 2022, Tourism Vernon will continue to support events that promote overnight stays and bring more visitors to the area. Some examples include Vernon Winter Carnival, Sovereign2SilverStar, Crankworx and Kalamalka Classic. Sponsorship opportunities within the sectors of focus continue to be a priority for 2023. Examples include sponsorships for the North Okanagan Cycling Society (NOCS) to promote sustainable trail use in the mountain biking sector and supporting the Arts Council of the North Okanagan (ACNO) to bring events like BC Culture Days to the community to grow the arts and culture sector.

Hotelier Engagement Program

Tourism Vernon staff plan to host a networking event for local hoteliers to provide an opportunity to engage and build relationships and partnerships.

Small Accommodators Fund

Staff will formalize the application and details and promote the program in 2023. Small accommodation businesses will need to be educated on the program to better utilize the funds.

Cooperative Partnerships

Destination BC's (DBC) Cooperative Marketing Partnerships Program is an application-based program that provides funding to Regional Destination Marketing Organizations, community consortiums, sector organizations or approved community partnerships in British Columbia. Tourism Vernon plans to participate in the following cooperative projects:

- Mountain Biking BC (influencer visits, partnerships with nearby biking communities)
- Golf Sector with BC's Golf Alliance Partners
- Okanagan Rail Trail with Tourism Kelowna and the District of Lake Country
- BC Interior Ale Trail with Tourism Kamloops and Shuswap Tourism



Tourism Vernon's Co-Op Marketing Program

In 2022 staff received the most applications for this program and will continue to support tourism stakeholders in their marketing initiatives. Businesses and organizations can apply for up to \$10,000 in this 50/50 marketing program. Tourism Vernon will set aside up to \$100,000 split over two intake periods to distribute the funds for marketing campaigns that align with the five-year strategic plan.

Support Local Campaign

In partnership with local organizations like the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Vernon Association, Tourism Vernon will continue to encourage locals and visitors to shop local which plays a key role in supporting tourism businesses and the local economy.



Stakeholder Survey

A requirement as a 3% MRDT collector, this annual survey provides Tourism Vernon stakeholders an opportunity to relay valuable feedback to Tourism Vernon in a documented way. Survey questions are approved ahead of time by DBC and, once the survey is complete, results are also sent along for DBC's review.



VISITOR SERVICES

2022 saw an increase in visitor engagement as the industry continued to make a full recovery. A new staff member dedicated to visitor services has increased capacity to build out a better, year-round mobile and digital visitor services program.

A new website, a QR code program, increased presence on digital chats, and revisiting the content within our Visitor Guide will assist in diversifying Tourism Vernon's ability to meet visitors exactly where they are with exactly the information they need. Summer students will be hired once again for the summer months to help with the high volume of visitor inquiries and on-location mobile visitor services program.



COLLABORATION & ALIGNMENT

Local

Tourism Vernon works locally with the Regional District of North Okanagan, Downtown Vernon Association, the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce, Destination Silver Star and the Okanagan Indian Band as key partners for common goals and positive community profile and event support. Regular consultation with these (and other) local agencies allows for proactive planning and promotion of new attractions, events and tourism products.

Regional

Tourism Vernon works with the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association on media hosting and marketing projects multiple times each year. Staff also partner with tourism destination marketing agencies (DMOs) throughout the Okanagan and the interior. Tourism Vernon participates in a number of regional sector projects with organizations like Tourism Kamloops, Visit Penticton and Tourism Kelowna to promote regional attractions like the Okanagan Rail Trail, BC Ale Trail and the Okanagan Singletrack with Mountain Biking BC.

Provincial & National

Tourism Vernon belongs to and engages with a number of provincial and national tourism organizations like the Tourism Industry Association of BC, BC Hotel Association, Canada Sport Tourism Alliance and the BC DMO Association.

Tourism Vernon also works with Destination BC to ensure alignment with their programs, brand and opportunities including media familiarization tours, co-op marketing programs and BC's visitor services network.



2023 BUDGET

Department Summary

Department Summary: TOURISM (216)

Budget Year: 2023

Manager: Torrie Silverthorn

Division: Community Infrastructure &
Development - General

Accounting Reference: 216

Stage: Proposed

Approved: No

Purpose:

The Tourism Department (Tourism Vernon) is responsible for the external promotion of the community, driving visitor traffic to tourism stakeholders and creating awareness of Vernon as a four-season destination. Tourism Vernon falls within the Community Infrastructure and Development Division. The majority of the revenue for Tourism Vernon is derived from accommodation providers in the city through the 3% Municipal Regional District Tax (MRDT), otherwise known as the Hotel Tax. As such, one of the primary goals for the function is to increase overnight stays in the Vernon by promoting activities, attractions and events in the Vernon area. Formed in 2018, the Tourism Commission plays an active role in ensuring the success of the function with the ability to approve marketing campaigns and initiatives that are within the Council approved annual marketing plan and budget.

Budget Summary

2023 Proposed Net Budget	0
Prior Year Approved Net Budget	0
Budget Change	0
Budget Change by %	0.00%
2023 FTE	5.1
2022 FTE	5.1
FTE Change	0.0
FTE Change by %	0.00%

Outlook for Upcoming Budget:

2022 MRDT revenue to date has been back to or above pre-pandemic levels and currently sits above Tourism Vernon's five-year rolling average. Not surprisingly, we are currently experiencing a travel boom. While a potential economic downturn may impact tourism, Vernon will likely be resilient. Travel has long been considered to be a discretionary spend for most households, but current consumer behavior is defying this notion. Data has shown that while recessions can slow tourism growth, travelers will opt for a domestic destination as opposed to an international vacation. Vernon is a domestic destination and, as evidenced through the pandemic, Canadians are still very likely to visit the Okanagan Valley during economic uncertainty. It's likely that momentum from the current travel boom will carry revenues for months into an economic downturn, though forward bookings will likely slow.

With cautious optimism, 2023 MRDT revenues are budgeted just above the five-year average with additional funding being requested to come from 2020/2021 program savings held in the Hotel Tax reserve. Hotel Tax reserves currently sit at \$996,000. Staff are proposing a \$750,000 draw from reserve over two years: \$350,000 in 2023 and \$400,000 in 2024. In 2023, these additional funds would be put directly towards marketing, promotional assets and community partnerships. As COVID-19 restrictions have continued to ease, a return to typical marketing activities is happening, including working with travel media, attending trade shows, welcoming group travel, and supporting the return of events to Vernon. Budget has increased in these categories accordingly. 2023 also marks the beginning of a new Five-Year Tourism Strategy for The City of Vernon. Several special projects are recommended as part of the new strategy and staff anticipate support for these projects through contracts with various agencies.

Highlights of Current Year:

Vernon stands out in BC's tourism sector with several record-breaking months of MRDT collection, placing Vernon back into a pre-pandemic financial position. Tourism Vernon's strategy, business model and approach continue to evolve in step with tourism trends. In 2022, staff secured Vernon hoteliers' support for another five-year term of 3% MRDT collection. As part of the MRDT renewal process, staff also developed and brought forward a new Five-Year Tourism Strategy that was endorsed and received positive feedback from residents, business owners, the Tourism Commission and Council.

Vernon's Mobile Visitor Services also continues to evolve. In 2022 staff welcomed the addition of a full time Visitor Services Coordinator to liaise directly with Destination BC's Visitor Services department and manage Tourism Vernon's year-round mobile visitor services program. As such, Tourism Vernon has maintained maximum visitor services funding from Destination BC at \$25,000 (an amount that historically was given only to bricks and mortar locations). A new hotelier outreach program is underway and establishing a community-wide visitor information racking program will be a priority in 2023 for the Visitor Services team. The Tourism Commission remains pleased with the progress of this program.

Backed by research and consumer demand, the Tourism Commission continues to embrace a digital-forward approach to Tourism marketing and operations. As such, with the support of Mayor and Council, a second Tourism Coordinator Position was approved in 2022 and will start work with Tourism Vernon staff in 2023. This position will be focused on Tourism Vernon's digital landscape. While a new staff member will alleviate some current contracting needs, other costs associated with a new staff member have increased, including equipment, travel and wages.

Change Request for 2023:

No change requests at this time.

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Changes to Department:

2022-2023 Budget Change

GL Account	GL Account Description	2021 Actuals	2022 Actuals	2022 Budget	2023 Budget	\$	%
Revenues							
1-232	MARKETING REVENUE	57,477	66,289	10,000	20,000	10,000	100.00%
1-360	SALES OF GOODS & SERVICES	0	0	0	25,000	25,000	100.00%
1-523	HOTEL TAX (MRDT)	1,016,614	915,498	885,000	1,150,000	265,000	29.94%
1-526	TOURISM BC GRANT	121,000	25,000	10,000	25,000	15,000	150.00%
1-792	INTERNAL REVENUE	122,574	124,780	124,780	127,276	2,496	2.00%
1-875	FROM HOTEL TAX RESERVE	0	0	164,000	350,000	186,000	113.41%
Total		1,317,665	1,131,567	1,193,780	1,697,276	503,496	42.18%
Expenditures							
2-100	LABOUR CUPE B	0	108	0	0	0	0.00%
2-120	LABOUR CUPE A	18,252	26,587	25,499	26,217	718	2.82%
2-140	LABOUR NON-UNION	157,820	240,662	417,239	438,705	21,466	5.14%
2-200	GENERAL SUPPLIES	127	374	2,800	4,000	1,200	42.86%
2-204	OFFICE SUPPLIES	526	5,343	4,000	9,000	5,000	125.00%
2-224	MAILING COSTS	241	850	5,000	5,250	250	5.00%
2-231	FOOD & BEVERAGES	978	6,751	12,500	17,500	5,000	40.00%
2-272	EQUIPMENT PURCHASES	0	71	0	0	0	0.00%
2-273	FURNITURE PURCHASES	1,252	0	0	0	0	0.00%
2-277	NETWORK HARDWARE - NEW	0	2,678	0	0	0	0.00%
2-283	VEHICLE RENTALS	0	0	4,000	4,500	500	12.50%
2-320	MEMBERSHIPS/DUES	2,660	2,960	5,000	5,000	0	0.00%
2-322	CAR ALLOWANCE	2,400	3,300	7,200	3,600	(3,600)	(50.00%)
2-326	UNIFORMS & CLOTHING	762	1,041	1,500	3,500	2,000	133.33%
2-329	TRANSPORTATION	268	2,513	12,200	16,000	3,800	31.15%
2-332	CONFERENCE & COURSE FEES	1,450	1,677	18,150	18,335	185	1.02%
2-333	ACCOMMODATION	1,729	6,135	15,700	18,000	2,300	14.65%
2-334	MEAL PER DIEMS	0	130	6,300	8,550	2,250	35.71%
2-450	ADVERTISING/PROMOTION CONT	523,308	844,070	549,690	853,865	304,175	55.34%
2-499	GENERAL CONTRACTS	19,524	62,522	95,000	227,004	132,004	138.95%
2-512	MONERIS SERVICE FEES	292	0	0	0	0	0.00%
2-610	CELLS/MOBILITY	1,751	1,949	3,228	4,125	897	27.79%
2-875	TO HOTEL TAX RESERVE	576,629	0	0	25,000	25,000	100.00%
2-920	FLEET CHARGE	7,699	5,823	8,774	9,125	351	4.00%
Total		1,317,665	1,215,546	1,193,780	1,697,276	503,496	42.18%
Net		0	83,978	0	0	0	0.00%

Department Summary

2022 - 2023 Budget Changes:

GOVERNMENT TRANSFERS

- Increase anticipated in MRDT (Hotel & Online Accommodation Properties) collection to the City and a \$350,000 draw from tourism reserves

SALE OF GOODS

- Change from the traditional bricks and mortar visitor services model have initially impacted sales; options are being explored for mobile sales as part of the mobile visitor services team

SALE OF SERVICES

- Increase in marketing revenue for 2023

TRANSFERS FROM RESERVES

- Funds requested to be transferred from the Hotel Tax reserve to support the development of a new website, marketing, promotional assets and community partnerships

CONTRACTS FOR SERVICES

- Portion of the transfer from reserves to be put towards special projects associated with new Five-Year Strategy (branding refresh, new website, new imagery etc.); contractors to assist with these deliverables

GOODS, MATERIALS & SUPPLIES

- Increase in travel-related expenses (e.g. media travel trade, events, sports, and staff development) as staff return to tradeshow and media-pitching events to attract visitors and journalists to Vernon

SALARIES, WAGES & BENEFITS

- The approved second Tourism Coordinator position is expected to be filled in 2023

TRANSFERS TO RESERVES

- Partial funding for new Recreation Events position starting in 2023

Department Expenditures

