



## **CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON**

### **TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING**

**DECEMBER 20, 2023, AT 8:00 AM**

**IN THE OKANAGAN LAKE 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 15, 2023 (attached)

**5) UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**6) NEW BUSINESS**

1. Letters of Support for PacifiCan Tourism Growth Program in BC
2. Tourism Vernon 2024 Annual Plan (*to be provided at meeting*)
3. New Website Preview

**7) NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Tourism Commission is scheduled for **January 17, 2024**.

**8) ADJOURNMENT**



**THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON**  
**MINUTES OF THE**  
**TOURISM COMMISSION MEETING**  
**HELD NOVEMBER 15, 2023 AT 8:00 AM**  
**OKANAGAN LAKE ROOM (COUNCIL CHAMBER) CITY HALL**

**PRESENT:** VOTING:

Dauna Kennedy, Arts & Culture  
Peter Kaz, Downtown Vernon Association  
Mike Van Horn, Golf  
Councillor Durning, Council Appointed  
Dan Proulx, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce  
Gale Woodhouse, Arts & Culture  
Mayor Cumming  
Kat Boloten, Accommodation Provider  
Clara Snedden, Accommodation Provider  
Kris Fuller, Sports & Events  
Claus Larsen, Accommodation Provider, Chair  
Cassandra Zerebeski, Ski  
Bradley Calihoo, Okanagan Indian Band

NON-VOTING:

Ian Jenkins, Silverstar

GUESTS:

Josh Welter, SCSNO

**ABSENT:** Bobby Bissessar, Accommodation Provider

**STAFF:** Torrie Silverthorn, Manager, Tourism  
Cocine Wattie, Administrative Assistant  
Karen Savill, Visitor Services Coordinator  
Hannah Lucich, Tourism Marketing Coordinator  
Hilary Irvine, Tourism Marketing Coordinator  
Jennifer Pounder, Records/Committee Clerk

**ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 8:01 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 M. Van Horne, seconded by P. Kaz:

THAT the agenda of the November 15, 2023 Tourism Commission meeting be adopted.

**CARRIED**

**ADOPTION OF THE  
MINUTES**

Moved by K. Fuller, seconded by K. Boloten:

THAT the minutes of the October 18, 2023 Tourism Commission meeting be adopted.

**CARRIED**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

There was no unfinished business.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**MANAGERS UPDATE**

T. Silverthorn, Manager, Tourism, provided the following update:

- Dan Proulx, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce, was welcomed to the Commission.
- The 2024 budget will be coming to the Commission at the December 20, 2023 meeting before it goes to Council in January 2024.
- Destination BC Coop Applications are due the end of November. This year we are doing a partner application with Destination Silverstar.
- 2024 Visitor Guide and ad sales will be coming soon.
- Tourism Vernon's Coop Marketing Program will be opening up for intake one in 2024. We will match your funds up to \$5,000.00 for any marketing in and around BC to attract visitors to the area and plan to invest \$100,000.00.
- Tourism Vernon is facilitating a sales-focused event in Vancouver and bringing some of our hotel and resort contacts with us and sell Vernon for 2024. Remember to please RSVP to your invitation and friends and colleagues are welcome to join.
- The Chair informed the Commission he attended the Chamber Awards and it was a very well-organized event. Well done Chamber of Commerce (?).

**SCSNO UPDATE**

Josh Welter provided the following update from the Sport & Culture Society of the North Okanagan:

- The Quidditch Western Regionals Tournament was held at Polson Park last weekend. It was a successful event. Hoping to have a Vernon team participate next year. We are hoping to host this event for five years and will be working towards that.
- We are continuing to work on hosting the Folk Festival and are currently searching for a location to host it. We were hoping to have it at Sovereign Lake during Brokanagan, however that did not work out.
- We have submitted an expression of interest to host the October 2024-25 BC Cross Country Running Championships.
- It was confirmed they have seniors and volunteer door workers in their current volunteer database; it's an evolving database. We are still waiting on receipt of the BC Winter Games volunteer database. Councillor Durning will look into it.

**ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

The following items were discussed:

- M. Van Horne - Building construction is slated to be finished in May or June, 2024. Winter is our downtime. Seasonal sales for next year are good. We have revamped our entire membership program.
- B. Suranko – We are still biking until December. We are currently restructuring our Board.
- D. Kennedy – Behind the Mask won an Honorable Mention from the Toronto Film Festival. The exhibition will be travelling to new locations. Our new facility; we are making final decisions. It is going much slower than we hoped, but it is progressing.
- C. Zerebeski - A lot of businesses are opening up in SilverStar. We are helping empower local community events. December 1 we are doing a staff ambassadorship program to get all local employees together and show some love.
- D. Proulx – In 2024 we will be concentrating on short term rentals and we have created a task force to work on potential pitfalls and solutions. Business after 5 will be at the Vernon Art Gallery next Tuesday, November 21, 2023.
- K. Fuller – Getting ready for Winter Carnival. I have secured three trail activities. November 25 at 4:00 p.m. is the VWC Countdown to Carnival light up at Spirit Square. February 2-11, 2024 is the Winter Carnival.
- K. Boloten – We are wrapping up renovations; hoping to be done by the end of November. Looking forward to 2024 and increasing events and occupancy.

- B. Calihoo – The annual OKIB Golf tournament went well - \$72,000.00 was raised. Next year the event will be at The Rise. The OKIB will be having a weekly Story telling culture exhibit at Silverstar in January, 2024. On a ranch that is owned by the OKIB, we will be working with native plants and foods on a food security program.
- K. Boloten – We have been working on a New Orleans theme new year's party. We are also working on events for next year that we have not done before. We are working with the Men Shed on events for Christmas, 2024. We will be closed January 8 to the 21, 2024 for deep clean. December will be my last meeting – I will be taking a one-year maternity leave.
- I. Jenkins – We have approximately 400 staff from all over the world. It looks like we are staying on track for opening. Looks like winter, but we need more snow. We are focusing on filling up for the March breaks. We are booked from January to the end of February.
- P. Kaz – We had great events in summer/fall 2023. Shop late until 8 on Thursdays in November – has 30 businesses participating and we are possibly extending until end of December. Free parking Saturdays in December. \$15,000 in Downtown Dollars cards were sold last month.
- J. Collard – We are still completing our refresh so there will be no Christmas party this year. December 1 will be our Winter Warm Up concert including outside food and entertainment.
- Gerran – December 10 will be our big toy drive. Giving 50% off your meal when you bring in a toy. We are sponsoring foster families this holiday season as well. Renovations are planned for the middle of February that will take around ten days.
- Mayor – Sovereign Lake trails are almost complete. They helicoptered bridges in three days ago. The Bailey Road Connection is all locked in. Machinery just finishing in the next week on the Grey Canal Trail. In 2024 there will be \$29 million dollars in infrastructure upgrades around the city. Also, a round-about will be built at the corner of 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Pleasant Valley Road.
- G. Woodhouse – Christmas is our busy season. I am the advisor for four organizations now. We have been looking at heritage properties for tourist destinations in Vernon. Our talks in January and February, 2024 will be about fire season; ie. indoor events, how do we accommodate?
- C. Larsen – We just finished expanding our trails and they will be open for use in spring 2024. We also have just opened our golf shop that has a golf simulator.
- Councillor Durning – I am happy to announce that I have been assigned for another year on the Tourism Commission.

- G. Woodhouse – Artsolutely is coming up. We are expecting 38 artists. It is occurring from December 1-23. On Friday, November 29 you are all welcome to a private viewing.

**INFORMATION ITEMS:**

**NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting for the Tourism Commission is set for December 20, 2023 at 8:00 a.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting of the Tourism Commission adjourned at 8:57a.m. by call of the Chair.

**CERTIFIED CORRECT:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair

# Tourism Vernon Annual Plan

Prepared By



# 2024



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### 01 About

### 03 Executive Summary

### 05 Overview

### 07 Audience

### 09 KPI's

- 9 2024 KPI's
- 10 2023 Insights

### 11 Partners

### 12 Sustainability & Climate Change

### 13 Tourism Vernon's New look

- 13 The Brand
- 15 Sample Brand Executions

### 17 2024 Tactics

- 18 Lead with Brand
- 19 Focus Marketing on Key Audience
- 20 Activate Local Pride
- 23 Incubate Products & Experiences
- 25 Establish Strong Partnerships
- 27 Leverage Specific Sports

### 29 Budget

- 29-33 Department Summary



## ABOUT

This plan was created with input and recommendations from the Tourism Commission.

Vernon Tourism Commission:

### ACCOMMODATION

Chair: Claus Larsen, Predator Ridge Resort  
Bobby Bissessar, Outback Lakeside Resort  
Kat Boloten, Sparkling Hill Resort  
Clara Snedden, Prestige Vernon Lodge

### ARTS & CULTURE

Vice Chair: Dauna Kennedy, Vernon Public Arts Gallery  
Gale Woodhouse, Arts Council of the North Okanagan

### ATTRACTIONS

Janine Collard, Predator Ridge Resort

### BIKING

Ben Suranko, North Okanagan Cycling Society

### GOLF

Michael Van Horne, The Rise Golf Club

### SKI

Cassandra Zerebeski, Destination SilverStar

### SPORT & EVENTS

Kris Fuller, Vernon Winter Carnival

### GREATER VERNON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Dan Proulx & Richard Rolke

### DOWNTOWN VERNON ASSOCIATION

Peter Kaz

### OKANAGAN INDIAN BAND

Bradley Calihoo

### COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE

Councillor Teresa Durning  
Alternate: Mayor Victor Cumming





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2024 marks year two of the Tourism Vernon Five Year Strategy. Tourism Vernon's strategy remains a blend of Destination Marketing and Destination Management; balancing growth with Vernon's environmental, social and economic needs. At a high level, Destination Management provides a more community-centered approach to tourism activities by allowing Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT or Hotel Tax) to programs that encourage place making, industry learning, cooperative programming, and the evolution of desirable tourism products within our community. By actively participating in the planning and development of our community, tourism can help imbed an authentic sense of place in visitors and residents alike.

Tourism is driving growth and development in Greater Vernon. Steady, year over year growth continues for hotel room revenue as Vernon continues to gain attention as a year-round tourist destination. 2022 was a banner year for Vernon's hotel room revenue at \$41.6M and is expected to surpass 2022 and settle in around \$43M. While a full recovery of the Canadian tourism industry is not expected to happen until late in 2024, Vernon continues to outperform the national average by exceeding pre-pandemic numbers.

Local industry has called for support in two sectors, citing a significant opportunity for growth and development in both sectors. The principle changes in 2024 laid out in this annual plan are:

- Shifting Tourism Vernon's part time contact with the Sport & Culture Society of the North Okanagan (SCSNO) to a full-time contract
- Creating a new full-time contract to directly support Vernon's corporate, group, meetings and events sector

The funding source for these rolls beyond 2024 would be the Tourism reserve, which currently sits around \$1M.

Tourism is pleased to support a number of Council's strategic priorities in 2024. In particular, fostering the growth of the Arts & Culture sector in Greater Vernon will play out across several tactics in this annual plan. Promoting and supporting the trail community is another priority for 2024. In particular, promoting Greater Vernon as the Trails Capital of BC and promoting Vernon as a world-class trail destination is a focus. Tourism staff also aim update the Small Accommodators program and Strategic Partnerships program. Updates will be made to encourage sustainability, collaboration and marketing efforts amongst local tourism businesses. 2024 is also an important year for sport tourism as staff aim to develop Greater Vernon's first ever Sport Tourism Strategy.

Deep, collaborative partnerships with a network of businesses, communities, and industry partners across the Okanagan and BC will enhance the strength of Greater

Vernon's tourism sector. Regional tourism partners play an important role in achieving this. Tourism Vernon will seek collaborative opportunities with the Regional District of the North Okanagan (RDNO), District of Coldstream, SilverStar Mountain Resort, District of Lake Country, and Kelowna International Airport. Claiming Vernon's spot at the "larger tourism table" will be an underlying theme to Tourism Vernon partnerships and programs in 2024.

Economic uncertainty will continue, and Tourism Vernon's 2024 Annual Plan has been prepared with adaptability in mind. Fires, floods and pandemics are top of mind with travelers and tourism businesses. So, scalable marketing campaigns, flexible media partnerships, and a strong industry communications plan are top of mind for tourism staff. Closely monitoring emerging, consumer trends, government regulation and potential economic impact has never been more important. Data-driven decision making and healthy relationships with regional, provincial and national tourism networks will be key to Vernon's success. The post-pandemic world is changing rapidly and Tourism Vernon will need to evolve and support industry and consumers accordingly.

2024 is set to be another year of hitting stride for Tourism Vernon, and a refresh to Tourism Vernon's brand is in step with the organization's evolution. This plan highlights the now-complete brand refresh project that took place in 2023, and Tourism Vernon's new look. 2024 is set to be another exciting year of levelling up for Tourism Vernon.

## OVERVIEW

### Tourism Vernon Five-Year Strategic Plan

#### 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.

#### 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

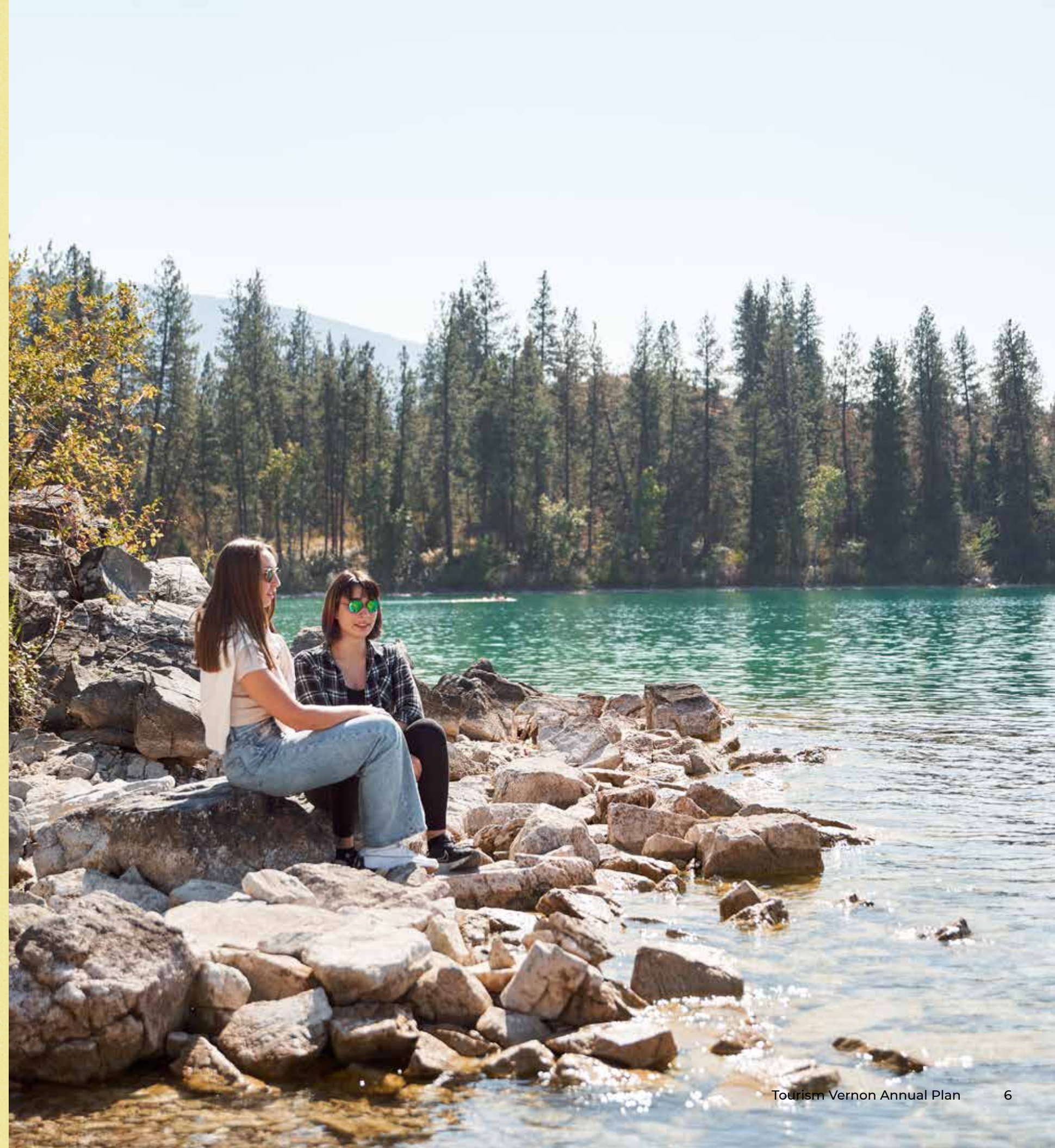
#### Strategic Goals

1. Increased year-round visitation
2. Increased visitor satisfaction
3. Increased stakeholder engagement
4. Increased Community Support for tourism

#### Strategic Framework

We have six key strategic pillars to achieve our goals:

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 experience



## AUDIENCE

AGE  
35-55

49%

**Primary:** Active Explorers  
49% of Vernon Visitors (2021)

**Travelling as:**  
A family during school breaks  
Likely to stay rooted in vernon

**Coming from:**  
Western Canada (BC + AB)

**Sustainability behaviour changes:**  
To encourage visitor dispersion,  
try a hidden gem experience.

Add an extra night onto long  
weekend stays.

AGE  
55+

33%

**Secondary:** Near Retirement  
33% of Vernon Visitors (2021)

**Travelling as:**  
Couples and multi-generations.  
Likely to include Vernon as part  
of larger OKGN itinerary

**Coming from:**  
AB + Lower Mainland

**Sustainability behaviour changes:**  
Leave the car parked and book  
a wine tour, rail trail shuttle, or  
use bike routes to tour  
town-adjacent attractions.

AGE  
16-45

18%

**Secondary:** Specific Sports 18%  
of Vernon Visitors

**Travelling as:**  
A family unit or small groups

**Coming from:**  
Western Canada (BC + AB) +  
strong int'l appeal

**Sustainability behaviour changes:**  
Introduce the lesser known  
options for specific sports.  
Carpooling to specific attrac-  
tions and events



## KPI'S

### 2024 Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for Tourism Vernon's Strategic Goals

1. Increased year-round visitation
  - MRDT Revenue
  - Telus Insights Data
  - STR Data\*
2. Increased visitor satisfaction
  - Tourism Sentiment Index software
  - Net promoter score\*
3. Increased stakeholder engagement
  - Annual Stakeholder Survey
  - Engagement with Tourism Vernon's programs and partnerships
4. Increased community support for tourism
  - Number of tourism-centered events happening in Greater Vernon\*
  - Business Community Surveys
  - Successful activations of local pride

\*first full year of data collection will be 2024



### 2023 Insights

#### YEAR OVER YEAR KPI'S

- Tourism Vernon's is on track to invest ~\$850,000 in marketing and promotional efforts in 2023.
- Tourism Vernon Stakeholders Survey reported % of tourism revenue across all 4 seasons
  - » Summer 49%
  - » Winter 24%
  - » Fall 18%
  - » Spring 17%
- 62% of stakeholders are familiar with Tourism Vernon's new 5 year strategic plan. Engaging with the brand will further increase awareness
- Staff hosted 10 media and influencer visits in 2023. Up 100% over the previous year.
- Stakeholder participation in Tourism Vernon's Co-Op Marketing program is up %150
- In-Person Visitor Services Interactions hit 5200 in 2023. Up from 3041 in 2023.
- 68% of stakeholders are aware of the City of Vernon Tourism Commission and what they do. Up 11% over previous year.
- Tourism Vernon strategic partnerships, sponsorships and Co-op marketing programs invested \$250,000 directly into Vernon's local business economy in 2023.
- 97 % of businesses are optimistic that tourism will grow next year
- 84 % are optimistic their business revenues will grow next year



## PARTNERS

### Tourism Vernon's Partnership Snapshot

Data-driven decision making and access to the expertise of regional, provincial and national tourism networks will be key to Vernon's long-term success. These partnerships represent a regular, two-way exchange of information, funding and collaborative opportunities.

#### Regional



#### Provincial



#### Federal



## SUSTAINABILITY

### Sustainability & Climate Action

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.

The City of Vernon's Climate Action Plan integrates sustainability and community across all initiatives. As a community, Vernon's 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.

There is immense opportunity for tourism to effect social and environmental change as a community engagement arm and business implementation bridge where Tourism Vernon and tourism partner strategic goals meet Vernon Climate Action Plan goals. Tourism Vernon marketing in our 2024 plan is designed to achieve the following sustainable outcomes for visitors:

1. Encourage Visitors to Stay longer
2. Encourage Visitors to Stay in Shoulder Seasons and Midweek
3. Increase Visitor use of Public and Fuel-Free Transportation
4. Promote Activities with a Smaller Carbon Footprint in all Four Seasons
5. Identify and Share Programs that Help Tourism Businesses Shrink their Carbon Footprint
6. Support Tourism Businesses in Promoting Sustainable Attractions and Activities
7. Generating Visitor Awareness of Actions and Their Impact to Land and People
8. Establish Clear, Tourism-Specific KPI's for Climate Action



## TOURISM VERNON'S NEW LOOK

### The Brand

Our brand is the ultimate expression of who we are and who we aspire to be as a destination. It communicates the unique aspects of our offering, our character, and the values and beliefs that act as a roadmap to our vision.

### Brand Characteristics

**Outdoorsy and sporty**  
In a laid-back, easy-going kind of way.

**Humble and unpretentious**  
In a “we’re not into the see and be seen” kind of way.

**Friendly and approachable**  
except when you’re not respecting our place kind of way.

**Generous and collaborative**  
In a “let’s come together for our community” kind of way.

**Mindful and thoughtful**  
In a “we only want to make good decisions for our future” kind of way.

**Chilled out and stress-free**  
In a “you be you and go at your own pace” kind of way.

### Brand Values and Beliefs



#### Tourism should support our values.

We don’t build tourist traps, but instead we offer up real experiences in a real community to people who want to get to know what we’re all about. And we’re proud to share it.



#### Adventure doesn’t need to be hardcore to be awesome.

We don’t buy into the action sport one-upmanship. This is a place where you can be laid back and up-for-anything at the same time. We think of it as “chilled out for anything”.



#### Nature needs us to nurture it.

Vernon is surrounded by a spectacular but sensitive environment. We understand that if we’re going to invite people to play in this place we have a duty to protect it from the kind of activities that will make it unplayable in the future.



#### Wellness is a mindset not a mud bath.

We believe that nature is our spa, plain and simple. We use it to rejuvenate, inspire and keep ourselves youthful. Ask anyone, even our world-class spas and resorts will agree.

**TOURISM VERNON'S NEW LOOK**

**SAMPLE BRAND EXECUTIONS:**



**DISPLAY BANNERS**



**PRINT ADS**



**DIGITAL ADS/WEBSITE BANNER**



## 2024 TACTICS

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

### Lead with the Brand

#### Key messaging, content strategies and brand assets

Staff and contractors will utilize video and photo asset libraries which have been diversified to effectively reflect and capture each target audience, adding new experiences to the mix.

Staff will leverage Destination BC's Asset Management and user generated software, CrowdRiff, to repurpose user-generated photo and video content from multiple social media channels collected in one easy-to-access hub for DMOs to gain rights to use in Tourism Vernon marketing campaigns. Staff can save time and resources by easily searching photo and video content by location, hashtag and activity.

#### Develop messaging for major attractions

Partnerships for content creation with both contractors and staff at top 10 Vernon attractions will be an important focus to build fresh content that highlights desired responsible tourism outcomes and adds new experiences, encouraging visitor dispersion.

#### New brand rollout and a living the brand workshop

75% of Tourism Vernon stakeholders named "destination and brand management" as a top priority. Tourism Vernon's priority initiative in 2024 is the community rollout of Tourism Vernon's new brand identity. The brand rollout will result in clarity, understanding and alignment on a distinct place brand identity, what makes Vernon's offering to visitors unique, and Vernon's long-term vision for responsible tourism.

Tourism Vernon's Annual Industry Conference in April will provide the stage for a workshop to engage stakeholders and community with the new brand, providing tools and an understanding of how stakeholders can align their business and their marketing with the Vernon brand. The new brand initiative speaks to residents as much as to visitors. It is therefore, important to achieve community buy-in with the rollout.



## 2024 TACTICS

### Focus Marketing on Key Audiences

#### Experience itineraries

Designing and developing multi-day experience bundles that showcase related products will create richer experiences for each key audience. Examples may include food and wine bundle, golf bundle, ski bundle, arts and culture bundle, bike bundle. Key iconic experiences will be selected for each bundle. The new website will provide a digital platform for easy access for consumers.

#### Building awareness and use of redesigned website

Tourism Vernon's freshly redesigned website is a key asset which will take a high profile in 2024. Providing a more relevant visitor-friendly user experience will feature top-searched items like trails and hiking information. This will be the go-to resource to open up access to Vernon's recreation, parks and natural areas, a strategic priority shared with the City of Vernon. The integrated business directory streamlines conversions to stakeholder and accommodation providers' websites and booking platforms - a key measure of success.



#### Hyper targeting via social media and digital marketing

Organic and paid social media, specifically Facebook, Instagram and YouTube continue as adaptable and versatile platforms for marketing to key audiences. Content will continue to be tailored to resonate with the primary and secondary target markets.

Digital advertising and sponsored content offers effective targeting of primary and secondary audiences with reliable metrics on local/regional platforms such as Castanet, Vancouver is Awesome and national platforms such as Global News, NHL.com and Narcity. All ads will marry seamlessly with content highlighting key messaging and key stakeholders tailored to match the target audience

#### Continue investments in traditional marketing outlets

E-newsletters will continue with to the consumer, golf, local industry and travel media audiences. Maximizing recent gains in subscriber acquisition, staff will prioritize increasing click-through rates to Tourism Vernon and Stakeholder websites.

Television and radio campaigns effectively reach our target 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 will be selected for strategic placements in high quality print publications matching target audiences' interests. Ie: Kootenay Mountain Culture, WestJet Magazine and Avenue Calgary.

Vernon's Official Visitor Guide received a strong refresh taking direction of the new five-year strategic plan. The overhaul has been very well received by visitors and the local community. This is a vital piece of the visitor experience, providing valuable guidance and inspiring visuals to promote stakeholder offerings.

## 2024 TACTICS

### Activate Local Pride

#### Leveraging locals as ambassadors

Locals are important ambassadors for visitors with the ability to share their inside knowledge for an authentic visitor experience. They are the key to our visiting friends and family market and a powerful tool for supporting word-of-mouth marketing.

Familiarization tours for industry and frontline hotel staff returned in 2023. The program has been embraced by stakeholders and requests to expand the program are being met in 2024. Led by our Visitor Services team, this program activates local pride in our front line staff and enables them to speak first hand about Vernon's best tourism experiences.

Staff will 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 new website and social channels.

Staff are also exploring a partnership with School District 22; providing local tourism information and learning kits to classrooms to help encourage our youngest (and most adorable) citizens to explore their own backyard!

#### Leveraging locals as ambassadors

Locals are important ambassadors for visitors with the ability to share their inside knowledge for an authentic visitor experience. They are the key to our visiting friends and family market and a powerful tool for supporting word-of-mouth marketing.

Familiarization tours for industry and frontline hotel staff returned in 2023. The program has been embraced by stakeholders and requests to expand the program are being met in 2024. Led by our Visitor Services team, this program activates local pride in our front line staff and enables them to speak first hand about Vernon's best tourism experiences.



Allan Brooks Nature Centre and Tourism Vernon guiding front line staff through the property.





## 2024 TACTICS

### Incubate Products & Experiences

#### Elevating Vernon arts and culture and supporting festivals with brand alignment

Tourism Vernon will continue to work with RDNO, OKIB, Arts Council of the North Okanagan (ACNO) to implement events that promote overnight stays and bring more visitors to the area in shoulder seasons. An example of this tactic in action is Tourism Vernon's support and involvement with the SUND OG Festival. Supporting the Arts Council of the North Okanagan to deliver the Sundog Festival, elevate awareness and funding opportunities for such events is a priority for Tourism Vernon.

#### Enhance in and out of town business connections

Elevating quality of experiences and product offerings in Vernon by spotting natural synergies between in-town smaller businesses and larger tourism operators outside the city centre. A new retail focused partnership between Predator Ridge Resort and the Downtown Vernon Association is an example of collaboration Tourism Vernon intends to support and prioritize in 2024.

#### Support for Trails and Active Transportation

Trail-friendly messaging across all platforms will be a focus for staff in 2024. Promoting Greater Vernon's designation as the Trails Capital of BC will be providing up-to-date information on trails and greenways will be key to increasing visitor use of active transportation while visiting Vernon.

In addition, staff will collaborate with the City of Vernon's Transportation department to increase active transport for the tourism workforce by supporting programs like Go By Bike week to tourism businesses and employees. Staff plan to continue to their work with community groups like the North Okanagan Cycling Society and Ribbons of Green Trail Society to support trail system growth and maintenance in the Greater Vernon area.

#### Destination BC Sector Projects

Destination BC's Cooperative Marketing Partnerships Program leverages the power of sector specific collaboration across the province to stretch marketing dollars further for applicable stakeholders.

Tourism Vernon will participate in the following cooperative projects:

- Mountain Biking BC
- Okanagan Rail Trail
- BC's Golf Alliance
- BC Interior Ale Trail



## 2024 TACTICS

### Build Strong Partnerships

#### Work with Downtown Vernon Association and City of Vernon to improve visitor access to the downtown core

Continue existing work to showcase downtown via the visitor guide, website and marketing channels. Partnership initiatives to drive public art participations opportunities and the continuing Support Local Campaign initiative in partnership with Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Vernon Association we will encourage residents and visitors to shop local which plays a key role in supporting tourism businesses and the local economy.

#### Continue building relationships with Okanagan Indian Band

Indigenous Tourism is an impactful cultural pillar for attracting visitors to Canada and British Columbia. The City of Vernon has monthly meetings with the Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) where joint economic development and tourism initiatives are discussed. An OKIB representative sits on the Vernon Tourism Commission to build this relationship and collaboration. Tourism Vernon will continue building relationships with OKIB and staff are here to support their tourism journey and promote product development opportunities.

#### Hotelier collaboration and increasing the role of travel trade in sales efforts

Via the Hotelier Engagement Program, staff will continue to engage local hoteliers building relationships in the sector and facilitating partnerships. Improving the ability to forecast and report hotel occupancy levels in a timely manner is a priority. Staff will continue promote the Small Accommodators Fund and educate those on the program to better utilise funds.

Staff will further existing work with accommodation providers and resorts to identify how Tourism Vernon can support their travel trade marketing and sales efforts. Staff will develop campaigns to support corporate groups, meetings and business travel as this industry fully recovers. Specific focus will be given to aligning with active explorer and sport-specific industry and interest markets.

#### Support Vernon economic development in climate action

Collaborating with city departments, stakeholder initiatives will be geared to supporting Vernon tourism businesses in combatting climate change, reducing business emissions, leveraging incentives and subsidies to switch to cleaner energy and retrofits, and e-vehicle infrastructure.

Tourism destinations are successful when the local community is supportive and there is buy-in, but destinations really thrive when the local community is actively engaged and has a sense of ownership in tourism development. The local passion and pride among Vernonites is palpable, and Tourism Vernon is in a unique position to leverage residents as an essential asset in promoting and shaping the Vernon visitor experience.



### 2023 Highlight

#### ANNUAL INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

Building on the success started in 2022, this annual event has gained status as the flagship community event for the local tourism industry. **Tourism Vernon's Industry Conference** brings industry leaders together to network, establish partnerships while educating stakeholders about industry trends.





## 2024 TACTICS

### Leverage Specific Sports

#### Sport tourism strategy

Staff will prepare the foundation for a sport strategy aligned with the Tourism Vernon Five-Year Strategic Plan. This strategic direction will align initiatives to increase shoulder season, mid-week, and repeat business. Collaborative partnerships will attract target markets with a view to increasing length of stay and generating visitation in off-peak seasons.

#### Partnerships and programs for targeted sport tourism growth

Staff will work with partners in this sector, like Destination Silver Star and Vernon's golf destinations, to support capturing Vernon's sport-specific audience to drive local and regional participation. Creation of an annual calendar of sport events will be leveraged to drive longer stays and increase community participation numbers for large sporting events.

Sporting event support and sponsorship will bolster the strong return of events seen over the past year. Tourism Vernon will continue to support events that promote overnight stays and bring more visitors.

Some examples include: Vernon Winter Carnival, Sovereign2SilverStar, Crankworx and Kalamalka Classic. Sponsorship opportunities for the North Okanagan Cycling Society (NOCS) to promote sustainable trail use in the mountain biking sector will continue to build on gains achieved in 2023.

Work will continue with the Ribbons of Green Trail Society to promote Vernon as the official Trails Capital of BC. Marketing messages will highlight the variety of accessible year-round ways to explore the trails from hiking, biking, and walking to horseback riding and snowshoeing. Trail etiquette and visitor dispersion across lesser known trails will increase awareness around responsible tourism trail practices while Ribbon's of Green will offer an interactive Vernon trail map on their website alongside resources to improve local trail knowledge.

Tourism Vernon will leverage a contract with the Sport and Culture Society of the North Okanagan to drive a shared objective to bring together partners of all sports and culture organizations, including tourism, stakeholders, levels of government,

community and volunteers to enhance sport, culture and recreation in the North Okanagan. The partnership will assist in attracting events that will benefit tourism stakeholders and will promote Vernon as a desirable destination for sporting events.

#### Promote Vernon as a golf destination

Destination BC has identified the golf sector as an opportunity for targeting visitors with a high ROI. The major economic contribution of golf is promising. Tourism Vernon will specifically leverage BC's Golf Alliance partners to target the golf sector and work together with Destination BC and BC Golf marketing alliance to leverage Vernon's excellent golf experiences and lifestyle.

**BUDGET**

**Department Summary**

**Department Summary:** TOURISM (216)  
**Budget Year:** 2024  
**Division:** Planning & Community Services - General  
**Budget Year:** Proposed  
**Manager:** Torrie Silverthorn  
**Accounting Reference:** 216  
**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. 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 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.

**Outlook for Upcoming Budget:**

With cautious optimism, 2024 MRDT revenues are budgeted just above the five-year average with additional funding being requested from program savings held in the Hotel Tax reserve. Hotel Tax reserves currently sits at ~\$996,000. Staff propose a \$405,000 draw from reserve in 2024. Reserve funds would be put towards marketing, promotional assets, community partnerships and an electric vehicle for the mobile visitor services program captured under Fleet Projects (964).

2023 MRDT revenue to date has been back to or above pre-pandemic levels and currently sits above Tourism Vernon’s five-year rolling average. MRDT revenue is set for another year of steady growth. The corporate meetings and events sector has been slow to recover. Knowing this sector’s ability to create immediate economic impact, staff are exploring contracting options to support the immediate recovery of this sector in Vernon. This is reflected in the 2024 contracting expenses.

**Highlights of Current Year:**

Vernon stands out in BC’s tourism sector with several record-breaking months of MRDT revenue in 2023. Tourism Vernon’s business model continues to evolve in step with tourism trends at the provincial and national level. Backed by research and consumer demand, the Tourism Commission continues to embrace a digital-forward approach to destination marketing and operations. Marketing, sponsorships and promotions remain a pillar to Tourism Vernon’s programming. Partnership marketing with various tourism businesses continue to offer affordable, impactful campaigns aligned with Tourism Vernon’s strategy.

Destination Management is also a growing area of focus for Tourism Vernon. Staff saw great success in bringing various sectors and stakeholders together in 2023. Tourism Vernon’s Industry Conference, Hotelier events, and round table discussions are well-attended and generated partnerships, collaboration and economic impacts for various tourism businesses.

Vernon’s Mobile Visitor Services also continues to evolve. Tourism Vernon maintained maximum funding from Destination BC’s Visitor Services branch at \$25,000 (an amount typically provided only to bricks and mortar locations). A new hotelier outreach program and concierge training program is underway and has been well-received by all involved. The Tourism Commission remains pleased with the progress of this program.

**Change Request for 2024:**

No change requests at this time.

BUDGET SUMMARY	
2024 Proposed Net Budget	0
Prior Year Approved Net Budget	0
Budget Change	0
Budget Change by %	0.00%
024 FTE	5.1
2023 FTE	5.1
FTE Change	0.0
FTE Change by %	0.00%

## BUDGET

### Department Summary:

DEPARTMENT SUMMARY: TOURISM (216)

### Changes to Department:

GL Account	GL Account Description	2022 Actuals	2023 Actuals	2023 Budget	2024 Budget	2023-2024 Budget Change	
						\$	%
<b>Revenues</b>							
1-232	MARKETING REVENUE	78,789	71,461	20,000	60,000	40,000	200.00%
1-360	SALES OF GOODS & SERVICES	0	0	25,000	0	(25,000)	(100.00%)
1-523	HOTEL TAX (MRDT)	1,330,363	1,006,917	1,150,000	1,295,750	145,750	12.67%
1-526	TOURISM BC GRANT	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	0	0.00%
1-792	INTERNAL REVENUE	124,780	127,276	127,276	132,367	5,091	4.00%
1-875	FROM HOTEL TAX RESERVE	0	0	350,000	312,455	(37,545)	(10.73%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,558,932</b>	<b>1,230,654</b>	<b>1,697,276</b>	<b>1,825,572</b>	<b>128,296</b>	<b>7.56%</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>							
2-100	LABOUR CUPE B	129	1,054	0	0	0	0.00%
2-120	LABOUR CUPE A	26,587	25,420	26,217	26,746	529	2.02%
2-140	LABOUR NON-UNION	277,651	364,038	438,705	482,191	43,486	9.91%
2-200	GENERAL SUPPLIES	851	4,634	4,000	5,895	1,895	47.38%
2-204	OFFICE SUPPLIES	5,558	5,953	9,000	4,280	(4,720)	(52.44%)
2-224	MAILING COSTS	1,064	380	5,250	4,880	(370)	(7.05%)
2-231	FOOD & BEVERAGES	17,320	13,665	17,500	23,000	5,500	31.43%
2-272	EQUIPMENT PURCHASES	71	0	0	0	0	0.00%
2-277	NETWORK HARDWARE - NEW	2,678	0	0	0	0	0.00%
2-283	VEHICLE RENTALS	0	0	4,500	4,500	0	0.00%
2-320	MEMBERSHIPS/DUES	3,060	3,948	5,000	6,500	1,500	30.00%
2-322	CAR ALLOWANCE	3,600	3,042	3,600	3,600	0	0.00%
2-326	UNIFORMS & CLOTHING	2,018	762	3,500	2,500	(1,000)	(28.57%)
2-329	TRANSPORTATION	3,939	9,826	16,000	14,500	(1,500)	(9.38%)
2-332	CONFERENCE & COURSE FEES	2,735	13,348	18,335	18,500	165	0.90%
2-333	ACCOMMODATION	6,135	7,493	18,000	24,500	6,500	36.11%
2-334	MEAL PER DIEMS	130	2,392	8,550	9,800	1,250	14.62%
2-450	ADVERTISING/PROMOTION CON	1,001,770	1,013,327	853,865	887,000	33,135	3.88%
2-499	GENERAL CONTRACTS	78,562	58,780	227,004	270,000	42,996	18.94%
2-610	CELLS/MOBILITY	2,121	2,219	4,125	2,180	(1,945)	(47.15%)
2-875	TO HOTEL TAX RESERVE	114,217	0	25,000	25,000	0	0.00%
2-920	FLEET CHARGE	8,735	6,545	9,125	10,000	875	9.59%
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,558,932</b>	<b>1,536,827</b>	<b>1,697,276</b>	<b>1,825,572</b>	<b>128,296</b>	<b>7.56%</b>
<b>Net</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>306,173</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>

### Department Summary:

DEPARTMENT SUMMARY: TOURISM (216)

#### GOVERNMENT TRANSFERS

Increase anticipated in MRDT (Hotel & Online Accommodation Properties) collection to the City and a \$440,000 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 actuals marketing revenue as a result of Visitor Guide ad sales for 2024.

#### TRANSFERS FROM RESERVES

Funds requested to be transferred from the Hotel Tax reserve to support the development of marketing, promotional assets, sponsorships 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, content development, new imagery etc.); contractors to assist with these deliverables.

#### GOODS, MATERIALS & SUPPLIES

Travel-related expenses (e.g. media, travel trade, events, sports, and staff development) as staff return to tradeshows and media-pitching events to attract visitation.

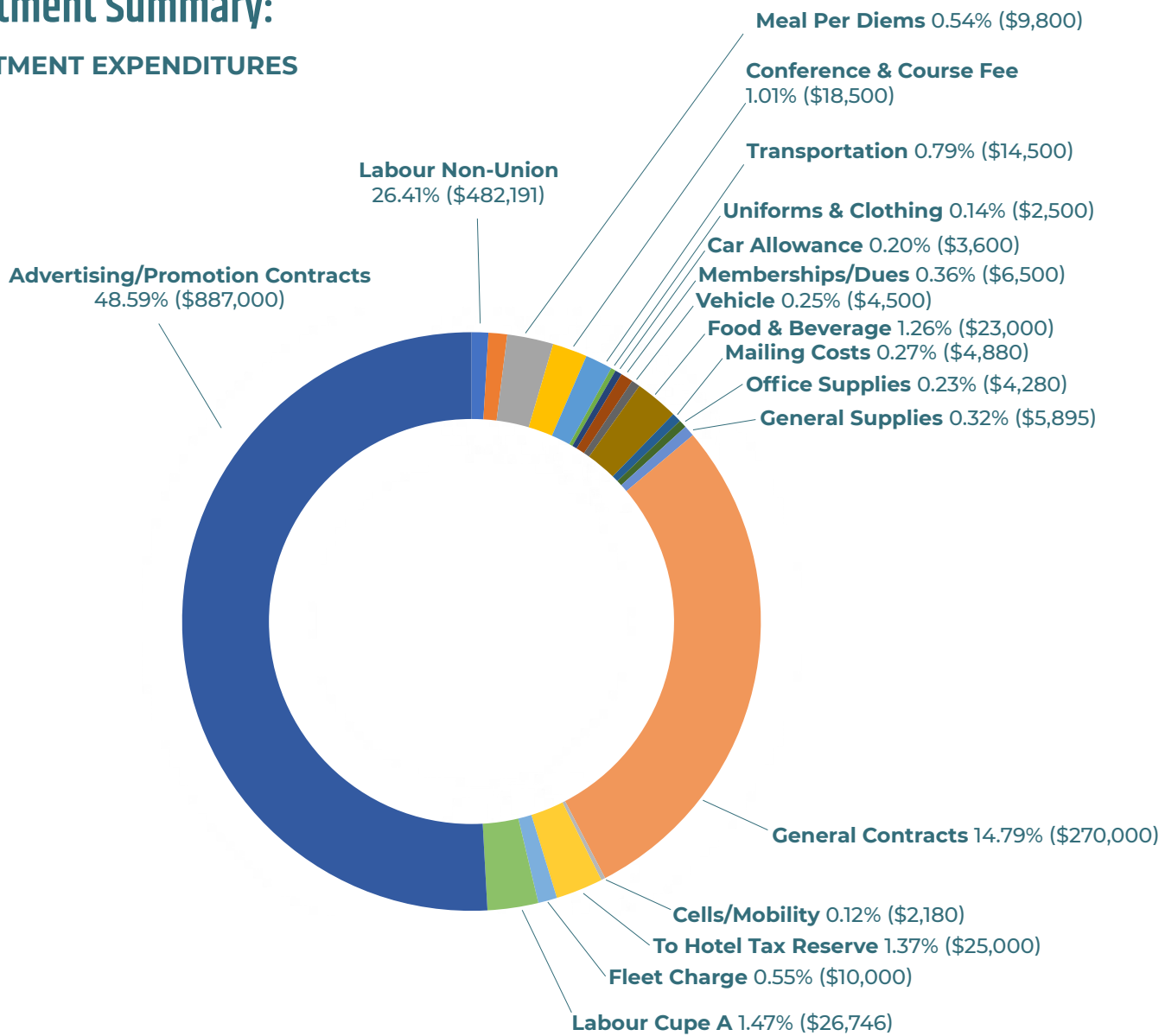
#### SALARIES, WAGES & BENEFITS

Increases for cost of living, service time and benefits costs.

# BUDGET

## Department Summary:

### DEPARTMENT EXPENDITURES



- ADVERTISING/PROMOTION CONTRACTS
- MEAL PER DIEMS
- ACCOMMODATION
- CONFERENCE & COURSE FEE
- TRANSPORTATION
- UNIFORMS & CLOTHING
- CAR ALLOWANCE
- MEMBERSHIPS/DUES
- VEHICLE RENTALS
- FOOD & BEVERAGES
- MAILING COSTS
- OFFICE SUPPLIES
- GENERAL SUPPLIES
- GENERAL CONTRACTS
- CELLS/MOBILITY
- TO HOTEL TAX RESERVE
- FLEET CHARGE
- LABOUR CUPE A
- LABOUR NON-UNION