



Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Activate Visitor Services! Tourism Vernon goes mobile for 2021

Tourism Vernon is excited to announce a new approach to help visitors and area residents activate their adventures in 2021, and explore the North Okanagan virtually and in person.

Visitor services will be going mobile with an enhanced digital presence and a traveling promotion team to meet visitors where they are, with the information they need.

“We have learned a lot of valuable lessons over the last several months,” said Mayor Victor Cumming, “including how resilient we are as a community, and how we need to – and can – adapt to frequently changing circumstances. Tourism and hospitality has been the most impacted sector in the North Okanagan from the COVID-19 pandemic. The changes we are making for the coming year are aimed at supporting the efforts of local tourism providers, with a focus on modern, agile marketing and promotion that can be adapted as necessary to meet the rapidly changing conditions.”

On April 3, the Vernon Visitor Information Centre was closed to the public, following recommendations from Provincial health officials to cancel non-essential travel. Since that time, revenue sources that Tourism Vernon relies upon for operational purposes have declined significantly and the anticipated 2021 budget could be 40% lower than previous years.

“Promoting Vernon and its tourism and hospitality businesses must be one of the top priorities as the sector moves towards recovery,” said Mayor Cumming. “With fewer resources, the Tourism Commission and City Council have carefully considered how our investments will be most effective next year, and how we can reimagine our visitor servicing to showcase Vernon, meaningfully connect with visitors and residents, and continue offering exceptional customer service.”

Council has approved the continued closure of the Visitor Information Centre throughout 2021, and the reallocation of \$65,000 to go towards digital and mobile visitor servicing activities to offer more accessible information online, and more personal interactions within the community.

The funds will be used to enhance the Tourism Vernon website and launch a new mobile app and virtual map. A new on-location visitor servicing team will also be activated, traveling to a variety of popular Vernon locations throughout the spring and summer, to provide effective and timely support for visitors and residents looking for information.

The Tourism Vernon social media channels continue to be a hub of activity and inspiration for world class four-season recreation, relaxation, reenergizing, and wellness opportunities across the Vernon area. Tourism Vernon uses these channels to showcase outstanding accommodations, food and beverage, attractions, and unique experiences in our great area!

“The tourism research in British Columbia and across Canada has been clear,” said Claus Larsen, Tourism Commission Chair and Director of Accommodation, Predator Ridge Resort. “Travelers are searching more, booking more and buying more on mobile devices. They’re operating in a digital space already, so we are pivoting our efforts to offer a practical approach that helps connect visitors with local attractions and activities, and introduces area residents to new opportunities which match changes in the market.”

“Several other communities across BC are using this same mobile approach,” said Kevin Poole, Manager, Economic Development and Tourism. “Not only have those communities seen positive results in connecting visitors to local attractions, but they’ve also seen an increased number of local residents beginning to explore their own communities and discovering businesses or attractions they didn’t know existed. This in turn has helped residents increase their at-home enjoyment, and become ambassadors for their communities, spreading the good word of what’s available in their own backyard.”

Following the 2021 summer season, Tourism Vernon will seek feedback from the Tourism Commission and local tourism providers about how to proceed with visitor servicing opportunities in 2022.

“The next 12 months will be a period of recovery,” said Mayor Cumming. “By refocusing our efforts on digital and mobile visitor servicing, and maximizing the resources we have available, we can adjust our activities quickly and efficiently to match an evolving situation to best support the local tourism and hospitality sector and our local economy. In 2021, we invite you to *activate your adventure!*”