



CITY OF VERNON

AGENDA

Tourism Commission

Wednesday, May 21, 2025, 9:00 a.m.

CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER

3400 30 Street, Vernon BC

Pages

1. CALL TO ORDER

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.

2. AGENDA

THAT the Tourism Commission Meeting Agenda of May 21, 2025 be adopted.

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

2

THAT the Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes of April 16, 2025 be adopted.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.a New Member Orientation

5

T. Silverthorn will provide an orientation for the new Tourism Commission members.

5.b Visitor Services Update

5.c Roundtable

6. INFORMATION ITEMS

6.a Letter of Support to Funtastic from the Tourism Chair

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7. NEXT MEETING

8. CLOSE OF MEETING

CITY OF VERNON
MINUTES OF THE TOURISM COMMISSION

April 16, 2025, 9:00 a.m.
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER
3400 30 Street, Vernon BC

Commission Members Mayor Cumming

Present:

- C. Larsen, Accommodation
- C. Snedden, Accommodation
- D. Proulx, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce
- G. Thorhaug, Restaurant
- C. Zerebeski, Ski
- J. Collard, Accommodation
- P. Kaz, Downtown Vernon Association
- R. Barton, Arts & Culture
- S. Patenaude, Arts & Culture
- K. Fuller, Sports & Events
- B. Suranko, Biking
- I. Jenkins, Silver Star Mountain Resort (non-voting)

Commission Members T. Isaac, Okanagan Indian Band

Absent:

Administration T. Silverthorn, Manager, Vernon Tourism

Present:

- K. Stogneff, Committee Clerk
- H. Lucich, Tourism Marketing Coordinator
- G. Patterson, Administrative Assistant
- K Poole, Director, Corporate Administration

Also Present:

- Guest: Jessica Dowswell, Evergreen Consulting
- Guest: Josh Welter, Sport and Culture Society of the North Okanagan

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 am.

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.

2. AGENDA

Moved by: B. Suranko, Biking

Seconded by: R. Barton, Arts & Culture

THAT the Tourism Commission Meeting Agenda of April 16, 2025 be adopted.

CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by: J. Collard, Accommodation

Seconded by: K. Fuller, Sports & Events

THAT the Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes of March 19, 2025 be adopted.

CARRIED

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.a Letter of Support Request: O'Keefe Ranch

Moved by: D. Proulx, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

Seconded by: R. Barton, Arts & Culture

THAT the Tourism Commission endorses the issuance of a general letter of support for O'Keefe Ranch identifying the importance of the Ranch's value as a cultural and historical destination for local, Provincial, National and International tourists.

CARRIED

5.b Letter of Support Request: Mackie Lake House

Moved by: J. Collard, Accommodation

Seconded by: C. Zerebeski, Ski

THAT the Tourism Commission endorses the issuance of a letter of support for Mackie Lake House for a grant application to the Community Foundation of the North Okanagan for program funding.

CARRIED

5.c Quarterly Marketing Update

H. Lucich and H. Irvine provided the Commission with the quarterly marketing update.

5.d Explore North Okanagan Funding Announcement

T. Silverthorn provided the Commission with an update on Destination BC's funding announcement for Explore North Okanagan tourism marketing project.

5.e Roundtable - Spring/Summer 2025 Outlook

A roundtable discussion was held on the topic of spring/summer season outlook.

6. INFORMATION ITEMS

7. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting for the Tourism Commission is scheduled for May 21, 2025.

8. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting of the Tourism Commission adjourned at 10:15 am.

Chair

Tourism Vernon Board Member Briefing

This document provides a high-level overview of Tourism Vernon's five-year strategy to support orientation and onboarding for new board members

Who's Who in Tourism: Understanding the Ecosystem

Tourism Vernon (Local DMO)

What we do:

Tourism Vernon is the **Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)** for the City of Vernon. We are responsible for:

- Attracting visitors to Vernon
 - Promoting tourism experiences and local businesses
 - Supporting festivals, events, and tourism product development
 - Providing visitor services
- We operate as a **municipal department**, but are largely funded through provincial hotel tax revenues (MRDT).
-

Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (Regional DMO)

What they do:

TOTA is one of six regional DMOs in BC. They:

- Support tourism development across the Thompson Okanagan region
 - Provide industry training and sustainability programs
 - Align and support local DMOs like Tourism Vernon
 - Connect regional efforts to provincial goals
-

Destination BC (Provincial Crown Corporation)

What they do:

Destination BC (DBC) is the **provincial marketing body**. They:

- Market BC as a whole to domestic and international travellers
 - Administer the **MRDT (hotel tax)** program
 - Provide funding, research, and marketing tools to regional and local DMOs
 - Promote responsible and sustainable tourism
-

Destination Canada (Federal Crown Corporation)

What they do:

Destination Canada is the **national tourism marketing organization**. They:

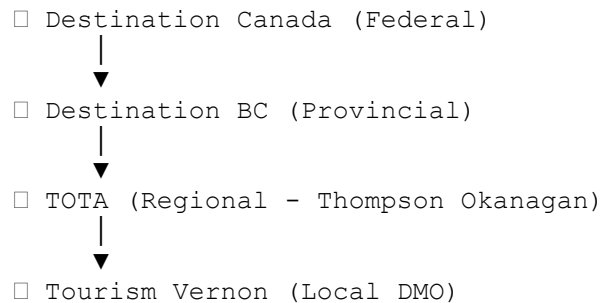
- Promote Canada as a premier global travel destination

- Lead international campaigns and partnerships
- Provide national research, insights, and data
- Support provincial and territorial marketing efforts

How It All Fits Together

SCSS

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Each level supports the one below it through funding, research, marketing, and strategy. Tourism Vernon works with TOTA, DBC, and local stakeholders to ensure Vernon benefits from broader tourism initiatives — while also delivering targeted, community-specific outcomes.

How Tourism Vernon Is Funded

What is a DMO?

Tourism Vernon is a **Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)** — our job is to attract visitors to Vernon, support local tourism businesses, and promote the area as a year-round destination. We do this through marketing, events, partnerships, and visitor services.

Where does the money come from?

1. Municipal & Regional District Tax (MRDT)

- Also known as the **"hotel tax"**, this is a **3% tax** added to short-term stays at hotels, motels, and other accommodations in Vernon.
- Visitors pay this tax, not residents.
- The funds are collected by the Province of BC, then **sent back to Tourism Vernon** to support tourism marketing, development, and operations.
- This is our **main source of funding** and reflects how active and strong the tourism sector is.

2. City of Vernon Contribution

- The **City also provides a small annual contribution** (about \$130,000) to help cover core operating costs.

- While this is a small portion of our overall budget, it ensures we align with City priorities and function as a department within the municipality.

Why this matters:

Tourism Vernon manages a **\$2 million+ budget** with a strong focus on delivering value for both the tourism industry and local residents. Because most of our funding comes from visitor spending (not local taxes), we are **accountable to both the City and the tourism industry**.

Page One: Strategic Overview

Mission

To increase tourism revenues in Vernon by developing compelling experiences and effectively marketing them to attract visitors year-round.

Vision

To be a four-season destination that is recognized and valued by residents, stakeholders, and visitors for its vibrancy, authenticity, and quality of experience.

Our Goals

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

Target Markets

- Primary: Active Explorers – Families from Western Canada aged 35–55, budget-conscious, adventure-seeking, highly influenced by word-of-mouth and social media.
- Secondary: Near Retirees – Couples aged 55+, flexible off-season travelers from Alberta and beyond, with time and money to spend.
- Secondary: Specific Sports – Visitors drawn by activities like skiing, biking, golf, and tournaments; often include Vernon as part of a broader activity-focused trip.

The strategy also considers medium and long-haul Canadian visitors, primarily from BC, Alberta, and Ontario.

Page Two: Strategy at a Glance

Tourism Vernon's strategic actions support four key goals:

- ✓ Year-round visitation
- ✓ Visitor satisfaction
- ✓ Stakeholder engagement
- ✓ Community support for tourism

1. Lead with the Brand

- • Refine Vernon's tourism identity through brand assessments and workshops.
- • Develop clear, compelling messaging for key attractions and experiences.
- • Create and share branded assets that reflect Vernon's values and appeal.

2. Focus Marketing on Key Audiences

- • Align marketing efforts with primary and secondary visitor segments.
- • Develop themed experience itineraries and trip bundles.
- • Improve digital engagement via website upgrades and targeted advertising.
- • Promote responsible travel messaging with partners.

3. Incubate Products and Experiences

- • Support new and emerging tourism products (e.g., wellness, arts, wineries).
- • Strengthen festival offerings and out-of-town business connections.
- • Advance trail and bike-friendly tourism and pilot unique experiences.

4. Activate Local Pride

- • Train and empower locals as tourism ambassadors (concierge program).
- • Encourage resident engagement via social media and family-friendly events.
- • Highlight local knowledge and elevate community hospitality.

5. Leverage Specific Sports

- • Build Vernon's reputation as a sport tourism hub.
- • Partner with SilverStar and others to attract ski, golf, and tournament visitors.
- • Promote Vernon's strengths in outdoor, experience-based sports travel.

6. Establish Strong Partnerships

- • Collaborate with the DVA, Okanagan Indian Band, Chamber, and others.
- • Audit and enhance tourism support services.
- • Align with provincial/national tourism associations and economic strategies.
- • Support climate-conscious tourism and new travel trade initiatives.

April 17th, 2025

Subject: Letter of Support – Funtastic Sports Society

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of Tourism Vernon, I am pleased to offer our strong support for the Funtastic Sports Society's application to the Destination Events Program for the annual Funtastic Slo-Pitch & Music Festival.

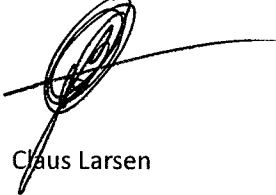
Now entering its 40th year, Funtastic is one of Vernon's most well-established and impactful events. It brings thousands of visitors to our community each summer, filling local hotels, supporting restaurants and retailers, and contributing significantly to Vernon's tourism economy.

The event directly aligns with the goals of Tourism Vernon's Five-Year Strategic Plan, particularly our commitment to growing and supporting high-impact festivals and events that drive overnight visitation, create a vibrant community atmosphere, and strengthen Vernon's reputation as a year-round destination for sport and culture.

We are proud to support Funtastic's continued success and evolution, and we look forward to the exciting milestone of its 40th anniversary in 2026.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Claus Larsen

Chair, Tourism Commission
Tourism Vernon