

# Tourism Vernon Board Member Briefing

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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).
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### 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
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### 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
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### Destination Canada (Federal Crown Corporation)

#### What they do:

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

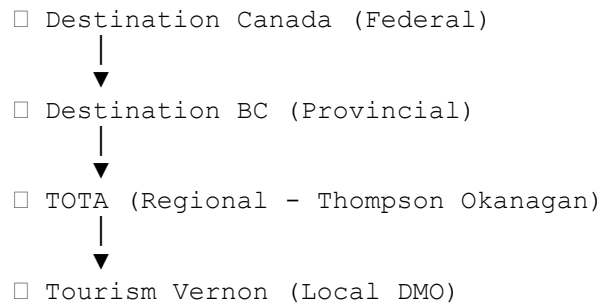
- Promote Canada as a premier global travel destination

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

## How It All Fits Together

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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.