



INFORMATION ONLY COUNCIL REPORT
Corporate Initiatives
For the May 12, 2020 Council Meeting

DATE: May 5, 2020
TO: Paul Gipps, CAO
FROM: John Perrott, Economic Development and Tourism Manager
RE: COVID-19 Economic Development and Tourism Response Update #1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides members of Council with an update on the City's Economic Development and Tourism response efforts to date in regards to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2020 – 2022 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF COUNCIL:

Economic Growth and Prosperity – to advance opportunities to expand our economy, increase employment, and develop a community in ways that contribute toward prosperity for all.

BACKGROUND:

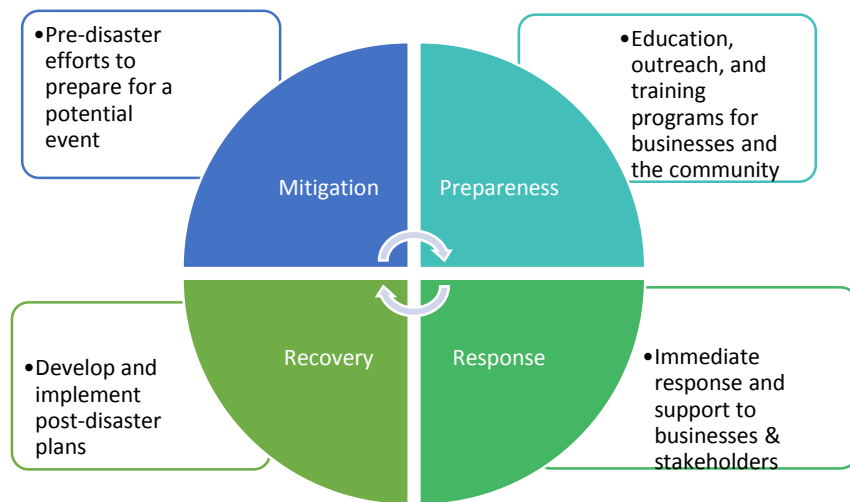
The City's Economic Development and Tourism office is part of the Corporate Initiatives Department and is responsible for being the primary point of contact for businesses to City Hall, to provide initiatives and services that benefit businesses and entrepreneurs, welcome new business and investment into the community, and manages the Visit Westside cooperative destination management program. The office is resourced by two full-time staff: the Economic Development and Tourism Manager and the Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator. Visitor Services are traditionally delivered through a seasonal contract (May to Thanksgiving) with the Westbank Museum.

On March 17, 2020, British Columbia (BC) Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry declared a public health emergency in BC that resulted in the immediate temporary closure of all restaurants, bars, nightclubs and pubs with some shifting to take out only. Other businesses also adopted new social distancing measures. Additionally, Dr. Henry encouraged individuals to cease travel and stay home unless necessary to procure household supplies and medical care. Similar directives were emulated across the country as provincial and federal governments looked to protect citizens during this pandemic.

These dramatic directives have had immediate effects on every level of the economy with varying levels of impact depending on the industry and business type. Fortunately, each level of government immediately began looking at financial supports and programs to provide relief to individuals and businesses impacted by COVID-19. Within days, many federal programs were announced to provide businesses and affected staff with financial support. At the local level,

municipalities and community groups started to look at various emergency protocols and plans to support public safety and operational continuity.

Unfortunately, in BC many communities and regions have experienced significant economic disruption over the past decade due to forest fires, floods, and industry shutdowns. As a result, the British Columbia Economic Development Association in collaboration with other economic development agencies developed “The Recovery and Resiliency Roadmap: A Toolkit for Economic Preparedness” to assist communities when faced with economic disruption. From this toolkit, an adapted version of the “life cycle emergency management model,” as shown below, identifies the various stages of a response model for communities.



Unlike the economic disruptions previously experienced in communities around the province where events resulted in limited duration response phases (e.g. days or a few weeks) and generally isolated to a specific area (i.e. community or region), this COVID-19 impact is vastly different. This event is resulting in a multi-month response period that impacts at a local, national, and international level.

In discussions with other economic development professionals around the province, response activities vary in each community based on available resources, the capacities of local business support organizations, and the diversity of their community economies. Some communities have found success with their ability to collaborate with their local independent business groups (e.g. Chambers, Tourism, Community Futures, etc) to implement outreach supports to their businesses while others took the lead in their communities with programs outside of their traditional scope.

Within the Central Okanagan, local governments, business support organizations, and industry groups began to initiate response efforts almost immediately. Weekly virtual meetings were scheduled and implemented to facilitate collaboration amongst the various business support organizations to distribute information, administer aid programs, and provide individual guidance. This group has evolved to become the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission's Economic Response Team who will work to “provide support and services to help Central Okanagan businesses respond to the immediate economic impact of COVID-19” (Attachment A).

It is vital that the City's Economic Development and Tourism office work in collaboration with not only Greater Westside partners like the Westbank First Nation and the Greater Westside Board of Trade, but also with a range of service providers and organizations within the Central Okanagan and beyond to provide a wide range of support to local businesses. With so many organizations,

government initiatives, and group all working to provide support, communication and coordination is critical to reduce the number of instances of unintentional overlaps.

CITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESPONSE:

Beginning on the week of March 16, the City of West Kelowna's Economic Development and Tourism staff rapidly shifted away from planned economic development and tourism activities to conducting outreach to businesses in West Kelowna and developed response initiatives. These efforts have been based on feedback gathered from West Kelowna businesses that are within a local government's authority and resource capabilities.

As the recovery phase for this event has stretched over several months so far, activities have been separated into phases to address opportunities and challenges associated with what businesses are facing during each period. At the time of this report, Phase I and II are completed, and work has begun on Phase III for the period of May 4 to 22, 2020. There is indication from the BC Provincial Health Officer that some restrictions may be begin to be lifted during this period and if they are, activities may pivot away from response activities toward recovery activities.

Phase I Activities - March 16 to April 3, 2020

Economic Development Activity Highlights:

- Research of best practice economic response activities
- Reminder to front line staff in City Hall to refer any incoming business support inquiries to the Economic Development Office
- Outreach to business service support organizations to understand their referral processes and what types of business supports they were able to provide
- Frequent outreach with regional Economic Development partners to identify response activities, available resources, and areas for potential collaboration
- Development of a spreadsheet tracking business impacts in the community
- Links on the City's COVID-19 website to provincial and federal support programs for businesses and individuals
- Outreach to Council's Economic Development Committee outlining activities underway and encouraging referrals and feedback from members
- Collaborating with Board Members and Staff at the Greater Westside Board of Trade for COVID-19 response activities to benefit local businesses

Tourism Activities Highlights:

- Deployment of weekly newsletter to Greater Westside tourism stakeholders/businesses with information available on federal business support programs, local resources for businesses, etc.
- Development of new Industry website page with resources and a website page outlining the operating status of local restaurants and tourism attractions initially used by hoteliers to direct patrons, then promoted out to the public
- Continued work on annual tourism publications (e.g. Visitor Guide, Hiking Brochure, Farm Loop Brochure, etc) in preparation for electronic distribution and possible print distribution following easing of travel restrictions on the advice of Destination BC
- Refocusing on social media posts to align with Destination BC's recommendation to #explorebclater while still working to provide content to maintain the Westside as top of mind for future visitation:



facebook.com/visitwestside
1,347 Followers



instagram.com/visitwestside
2,182 Followers



@VisitWestside
4,744 Followers

- Outreach to tourism businesses (e.g. wineries, farms, hoteliers, etc) to identify and understand COVID-19 related impacts on businesses and to identify potential support activities

Phase II Activities – April 6 to May 1, 2020

Economic Development Highlights:

- Ongoing outreach to some West Kelowna businesses to ascertain impacts COVID-19 has had on their operations and if any support is required
- Ongoing outreach to business support organizations including commercial lenders, commercial lease agents and commercial property owners, etc. to gain information on impacts and implementation of support programs
- Held meeting with the City's Economic Development Committee to discuss COVID-19 impacts on local businesses and identify potential support opportunities
- Development of a detailed one-stop resource repository of support links and learning opportunities for local businesses as part of the City's Economic Development Webpage (<https://www.westkelownacity.ca/en/building-business-and-development/covid-19-resources-for-businesses.aspx>)
- Hosted virtual roundtable with Greater Westside craft beverage manufacturers (e.g. wineries, cidery, brewery, & distillery) to discuss current business operations as well as discuss potential operation models this year once restrictions begin to rescind and how the City's Economic Development & Tourism Office can support.
- Hosted virtual roundtable with members of the Westside Farm Loop to discuss the current state of farm operations on the Greater Westside, potential operational models for the upcoming season, and what supports the City's Economic Development & Tourism Office could provide.
- Sent a letter to each West Kelowna business license holder from the Mayor's Office outlining supports Council has provided to businesses, City and community support efforts underway, and an open offer for assistance by City staff.
- Ongoing participation and support to the Greater Westside Board of Trade Board of Directors and Staff to connect to regional support efforts (e.g. launch of the regional #OkWeGotThis initiative) and emerging resources for members.

Tourism Highlights

- Initiate discussions with the Westbank Museum to defer entering in to the annual Operating Agreement for the Visitor Information Centre until the Museum reopens to the general public – a contract this year would be pro-rated based the number of weeks between when the Museum reopens and the historic end of season contract date of Thanksgiving weekend.
- Ongoing social media posts of original content to keep the Westside as a top of mind destination within the Destination BC guidelines to #explorebclater.
- Amplification of local tourism business social media posts to help share their messages about new delivery, pick-up, or hours of operation changes due to COVID-19

- Continuing updates to the VisitWestside.com website with resource links and information on available support programs for tourism businesses.
- Ongoing updates to the VisitWestside.com website calendar of events page based on notification by tourism businesses whether events are cancelled due to COVID-19.
- Continuing weekly distribution of a newsletter to tourism businesses / stakeholders with updates on new and available business support resources.
- Participation on weekly regional destination marketing organization conference call (facilitated by the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association) to share information, resources, and emerging programs to support the tourism industry.
- Outreach to tourism businesses and tourism organization (e.g. The Westside Wine Trail Association) to identify recovery activities and potential marketing support.

Phase III Activities – May 4 to 22, 2020

Economic Development Highlights:

- Continued outreach to some West Kelowna businesses to help understand COVID-19 operational impacts and identify potential supports.
- Ongoing updating of City's COVID-19 business resource webpages with information and updates on new programs, supports, and services for local businesses.
- Regular communication and collaboration with the Greater Westside Board of Trade and Westbank First Nation Economic Development & Communications Office to assist with communicating existing and emerging supports for businesses on the Greater Westside.
- Engage with the City's Economic Development Committee members regarding feedback from the community on current environment and possible city response actions.
- Weekly participation Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission's Regional Economic Response Team to identify supports and service for businesses in the Central Okanagan offered by local governments and business support organizations.

Tourism Highlights:

- Continued outreach to tourism businesses and organizations with a focus on identifying potential recovery activities.
- Ongoing social media posts of original content to keep the Westside as a top of mind destination within the Destination BC guidelines to #explorebclater.
- Finalize print ready & digital versions of the 2020 Visitor Guide, Hiking Brochure, and Westside Farm Loop brochure for digital distribution in June and potential printing depending on if travel restrictions are eased.
- Amplification of local tourism business social media posts to help share their messages about new delivery, pick-up, or hours of operation changes due to COVID-19.
- Continuing updates to the VisitWestside.com website with resource links and information on available support programs for tourism businesses.
- Ongoing updates to the VisitWestside.com website calendar of events page based on notification by tourism businesses whether events are cancelled due to COVID-19.
- Begin to plan tourism recovery activities based on consultations with Greater Westside Tourism businesses, regional tourism marketing organizations (e.g. Tourism Kelowna and Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association), and Destination BC in preparation towards a gradual reopening of businesses as defined by the BC Public Health Officer.

Recovery Phase

The BC Provincial Health Officer is anticipated to announce the easing on existing COVID-19 resident and business restrictions in the coming weeks. Through outreach efforts to local businesses and business support organizations, there has been a lot of interest by those businesses for information and guidelines on how they can responsibly reopen and re-establish regular business operations. City staff will continue to work with West Kelowna businesses to provide support and information where possible as part of the transition to recovery activities.

City Staff expect that tourism businesses on the Greater Westside will look for support to help recover some of revenues lost due to COVID-19 through the Visit Westside destination management and marketing program managed by the City. Savings from deferred or reduced programs budgeted for in the 2020 tourism operational budget will be used for recovery initiatives. Before initiating any recovery efforts, the City would look for cues from the BC Provincial Health Officer, Destination British Columbia, and regional destination marketing organizations like Tourism Kelowna and TOTA for timing to initiate these efforts.

Staff are also anticipating opportunities for marketing partnerships with Tourism Kelowna and the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association to help stimulate leisure visitation to the region in 2020 and 2021.

Finally, on April 15, 2020 Mayor Milsom was named to the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission's Regional Economic Recovery Task Force (Attachment A) – a collaborative effort comprising of Central Okanagan Mayors of the Chief of Westbank First Nation. This task force group will focus on “developing a long-term economic recovery plan to reenergize the Central Okanagan Economy, retain business base and support employers/workers in getting people back to work as soon as possible”. This task force is scheduled to convene in July and last between 4 to 18 months.

NEXT STEPS:

- Continued participation on the Central Okanagan Development Commission's Regional Economic Response Team to coordinate response activities and minimize service overlap
- Provide a COVID-19 Economic Development and Tourism Response Update #2 to Council in late June / early July
- Begin identifying recovery activities to assist West Kelowna businesses based on direction and timing set forth by the Provincial Health Officer

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

To date, the 2020 Economic Development and Tourism budget has covered costs associated with the various phases of the response plan through examining and reallocating existing project budgets. Funding required to facilitate recovery activities this year will utilize the current Economic Development and Tourism budget while any resources required for recovery activities in 2021 will be considered as part of the 2021 budgeting process.

REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY:

Sandy Webster, Director of Corporate Initiatives
Tracey Batten, Deputy CAO/Corporate Officer
Paul Gipps, CAO

PowerPoint: Yes ☒ No ☐

COVID-19

REGIONAL ECONOMIC RESPONSE & RECOVERY STRATEGY



RESPONSE

Regional Economic Response Team

"Weather the Storm"

RECOVERY

Regional Economic Recovery Task Force

"Emerge Stronger"

Objective

Provide support and services to help Central Okanagan businesses respond to the immediate economic impact of COVID-19.

Develop a long-term economic recovery plan to reenergize the Central Okanagan economy, retain business base and support employers/workers in getting people back to work as soon as possible.

Estimated Timing*

1 – 3 Months

4 – 18+ Months, Commence July 2020

Partners

Led by the COEDC and comprised of:

- Support staff from the District of Lake Country, City of Kelowna, Westbank First Nation, City of West Kelowna and District of Peachland
- Representatives from Chambers of Commerce/Boards of Trade of Lake Country, Kelowna, Greater Westside and Peachland
- Tourism Kelowna
- Central Okanagan Business Service Providers
- COEDC staff who act as a conduit for the COEDC Advisory Council

Co-chaired by Chair Given and Mayor Basran and comprised of:

- Chief Christopher R. Derickson, Westbank First Nation
- Regional Board Chair Gail Given, Regional District of Central Okanagan
- Mayor Colin Basran, City of Kelowna
- Mayor Gord Milsom, City of West Kelowna
- Mayor James Baker, District of Lake Country
- Mayor Cindy Fortin, District of Peachland

Key Actions**

- Act as concierge service, providing one on one expertise to businesses
- Collect and share local data from existing survey mechanisms
- Facilitate industry sector roundtables for Aerospace, Manufacturing, Agriculture and other sectors
- Communicate business needs to Provincial/Federal government with One Voice
- Promote 'support local' initiatives
- Share all available business support and funding programs in centralized location (investkelowna.com/covid19)

- Provide Central Okanagan Communities a forum for identifying economic recovery needs.
- Position and advocate for anticipated stimulus program funding for Central Okanagan businesses and their employees.
- At a political level communicate Central Okanagan needs with One Voice.
- Identify available areas for collaborative projects to support economic recovery.

COEDC will work with partners to implement strategies identified by the Response Action Team and Recovery Task Force and communicate Central Okanagan business needs with One Voice.

www.investkelowna.com

*All timelines established are subject to change following guidelines and recommendations from Public Health authorities.
** All key actions are subject to change in response to evolving public health and economic conditions.

