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**BC NDP**

**Kamloops-North Thompson**

## **Tourism Industry**

### **What is your knowledge of Tourism Kamloops and its role in the city?**

*Tourism Kamloops is an important organization in the city that helps promote tourism, arts, food and attractions to the region. Your organization is doing essential work in connecting local businesses and tourism operators with the support they need while also connecting tourists and companies to the unique opportunities present in and around the city like upcoming festivals and available spaces for conferences.*

### **How does your party view tourism as an industry and government priority relative to other sectors of British Columbia's economy?**

*David Eby and the BC NDP recognize that year-round tourism is an essential part of BC's diversified economy and is a priority. A strong tourism industry is a key pillar of the StrongerBC Economic Plan because whether it is wine-tasting tours, a weekend softball tournament, the community ski resort of Harper Mountain or the destination ski resort of Sun Peaks, they all add strong sustainable economic benefitting the region and our entire province. In 2022/2023, the tourism industry contributed \$18.5 billion of added value to our economy and has only grown since then. Tourism has always been a priority for the BC NDP and has always been an important factor to many decisions whether they be in issues relating from emergency management to international relations.*

### **If elected, how would you advocate for tourism in our region?**

*Kamloops is home to a burgeoning tourism industry that showcases both its natural beauty and the artistic creativity of its residents. Of particular note is the unique emphasis on indigenous heritage related tourism that provides an important degree of depth to understanding the city and region. A significant portion of Kamloops' tourism industry is also driven by folks coming into town for sports and events.*

*David Eby and the BC NDP will continue to support the heart of communities by investing in the tourism, arts and culture activities people here – and visiting here – love most, including helping local community and cultural organizations, by continuing our historic level of support to ensure organizations and associations remain able to deliver programming and events. We're cutting red tape to help small businesses focus on their operations and growth, while investing in the tourism, arts and culture amenities that are essential to so many communities.*

*John Rustad however will slash supports and services that small businesses and people rely on in order to pay for tax cuts that will only benefit the top 2%. For example, he promised small businesses a tax cut, only to change his mind and leave small businesses high and dry. He also hiked MSP and ICBC to pay for tax breaks to the wealthiest and big corporations. People couldn't afford that kind of thinking then, and they can't afford it now.*

## **Tourism Recovery and Promotion**

**How will your party help BC's tourism and hospitality industry rebuild a skilled workforce in the ongoing recovery of the industry?**

*We know not every business has fully recovered but key indicators show that we are well on our way and have even surpassed 2019 levels. That is why David Eby and the BC NDP are committed to continuing our work with the sector to build a sustainable and resilient future. We are continuing to build on our actions that help employers find and train the workers that drive our economy forward, using the success of programs like the BC Employer Training Grant, Workplace Innovation Fund, and Community Workforce Response Grant as our template.*

*We also know that one of the biggest challenges tourism operators face is the lack of affordable housing for people who work in our industry. That's why we are taking action to return short-term rental units to the long-term housing market. The new legislation will create a better balance between homes for people, including tourism workers, and visitor accommodations, while supporting municipalities to better manage short-term rentals. We are continuing to fight to create a strong visitor economy and healthy communities by allocating more than \$2.8 million to partner with go2HR to have five Regional HR specialists to help with tourism workforce challenges and by opening. We are also opening new streams of employment for folks through the Indigenous Tourism Training Initiative that will help create a new group of indigenous tourism workers and businesses.*

**What will your party do to encourage more investment in the tourism and hospitality sector to help build the visitor economy and bolster local communities?**

*David Eby and the BC NDP are continuing to build the heart of communities by supporting the tourism, arts and culture activities people here — and visiting here — love most. We're acting by expanding the Arts, Culture & Sports Infrastructure Fund that helps local community and cultural organizations bring people together, and inform, entertain and engage ever-widening audiences. We are also bringing people together to celebrate their communities, cultures and love of local arts by providing stable, year-over-year funding for fairs, festivals and events. For example, we have put \$60 million to support 1,852 fairs, festivals, and events in 184 communities with an additional \$15 million in this year alone. We have also activated \$60 million in destination Development grants in 2022-23 to support the development of tourism infrastructure, assets, and experiences. Building on that, we are working with Destination BC and tourism and hospitality partners along with community and regional tourism organizations to identify opportunities and promote the development and growth of the tourism industry through global marketing, destination development, industry learning, community-based programs, and visitor services.*

*The Rustad Conservatives will only put these programs and services in jeopardy with all the massive slashes they have in store which will only help their wealthy friends at the expense of average folks and small businesses.*

**How will your party help build Indigenous tourism to develop and promote market-ready Indigenous experiences?**

*Tourism highlighting the rich connections and knowledge of First Nations with their respective territories has become one of the fastest growing sectors of the industry as a whole. That is why David Eby and the BC NDP are supporting this sector of the tourism industry with more than \$13 million for Indigenous Tourism BC. We launched and invested*

*\$6 million towards the Indigenous Tourism Training Initiative. This innovative program is empowering the next generation of indigenous tourism workers and employers by providing Indigenous-led and culturally focused training and educational opportunities that help attract and retain Indigenous tourism talent. Indigenous communities, businesses, employees and entrepreneurs will be able to enhance their education and skills in Indigenous storytelling, marketing, social media, workplace safety, and earn certification required to work in the hospitality and tourism industry, such as FoodSafe and Serving It Right. By working together, we're building strong partnerships with Indigenous peoples, and a strong, sustainable, and brighter future for everyone.*

*As the BC Conservative's leader, John Rustad demonstrated he does not take working and creating meaningful relationships with First Nations' seriously from his public statements to repeal the BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, an Act that he supported as a BC Liberal MLA.*

**What will your party do to help struggling tourism businesses that have been directly impacted by one or more emergency situations like wildfires, drought, floods, or other crises to remain solvent?**

*The past three years have been incredibly challenging for people in the tourism industry. From pandemic related uncertainty to severe weather events like floods, drought, and wildfires, David Eby and the BC NDP are committed to continue to work alongside tourism partners on charting the path toward a more sustainable, prosperous, and resilient sector. To that effect, we launched a new strategic plan, the Strategic Framework for Tourism 2022 – 2024: A Plan for Recovery and Resiliency which outlines key actions to ensure a sustained recovery of the tourism sector. We are committing more than a quarter of a billion dollars in support to the tourism sector through programs, including:*

- \$154M in community-based tourism infrastructure for recovery, to create jobs and spur economic development;*
- More than \$13M for Indigenous Tourism BC, one of the fastest growing sectors of the industry;*
- \$36.8M to over 80 major anchor attractions and tour bus operators,*
- Nearly \$30 million to support 681 fairs, festivals, and events in 134 communities throughout B.C. alongside \$30 million in February 2023 to support 1,172 events in 184 communities;*
- \$4.7 million for fixed costs to help large accommodation providers, and tenure and park permit holders;*
- \$8 million to support the restart of business events and conferences.*

*To support sustainability and climate resilience, we launched the BC Tourism Climate Resiliency Initiative to help B.C.'s tourism industry better prepare for the impacts of climate Change.*

*John Rustad denies the science of climate change and has promised to completely abandon BC's climate action plan. Not only will BC get left behind, but he will put our entire tourism sector at further risk of extreme flooding and forest fires. He will undo the progress and security we have made for people.*

### **Understanding MRDT Priorities**

#### **How would you describe your current understanding of the MRDT (Municipal and Regional District Tax) in Kamloops?**

*The MRDT (Municipal and Regional District Tax) is a tool that B.C.'s local governments can use to support local tourism programs, marketing and projects. The MRDT helps keep BC's tourism sector strong by supporting tourism jobs and growing visitation. In 2018, the MRDT was expanded to collect revenue from short term accommodation providers like AirBnB. Some communities use the portion of MRDT collected from AirBnB for affordable housing for tourism workers, especially in communities facing a shortage of hospitality and tourism workers due to a shortage of affordable housing. Given that Kamloops is a tourist destination with large numbers of visitors staying in the town, the 3% rate on short term accommodation is an asset to the community to help fund the programs it needs that also strengthen the local economy.*

#### **Will your party retain the Municipal & Regional District Tax (MRDT) for its original intended purposes – tourism marketing, projects, programs?**

*The BC NDP supports the MRDT as a key tool for local governments and accommodation providers to support tourism marketing, projects and programs in local communities.*