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Tourism Industry

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

I'm very familiar with Tourism Kamloops and the history of how it came to be. I was on City Council when it was eventually created and also was running The Place Inn, our family hotel in Aberdeen, at the time.

The extra marketing dollars that have been created by the local hotel tax has greatly expanded the reach of marketing Kamloops as a true destination. I believe that the local control of this marketing has not only strengthened our local hotel industry but has lead to many other tourism related businesses seeing Kamloops as a viable market to operate in.

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

The BC Conservatives see tourism as a main economic driver in BC. There is no doubt that the resource and tech sectors are important but tourism has been a stabilizing factor in the overall economic well being of BC for decades now. The employment and investment tourism draws upon in all areas of BC has been, and is critical for BC, and needs to have the attention of Government to ensure that proper supports are there to continue to grow the sector.

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

I will continue to advocate for and support the local tourism sector. Perhaps the easiest example would be to support finding provincial government grants for larger, local event hosting opportunities.

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 need to ensure that while programs like trades and health are, understandably, receiving attention at our post secondary institutions, hospitality programs need to see a renewed focus as well. There also needs to be better alignment with matching a skill shortage in tourism with skill sets attached to immigration to ensure we have a well trained tourism workforce to draw upon. The tourism industry can't become a forgotten piece in the overall development of the future workforce.

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?

To help move tourism related projects forward quickly, red tape needs to be cut. The timelines for permits to build, and/or to operate in the back country, and a host of other provincial government related permits simply adds too much time and risk into the mix. Tourism investment needs to feel that the government truly welcomes their projects and investment, and can see a tax competitive BC in relation to the rest of Canada.

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

A big part of the BC Conservative plan around reconciliation is economic reconciliation. We need to improve the work we do with indigenous communities to fast track the development projects in their traditional territories that they see value in. There is a growing market for tourists to experience indigenous culture and take home with them what they've learned from their travels in BC. This area has a huge growth potential if implemented in a good way, and in unison with indigenous communities.

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?

There needs to be a revamped system of support for tourism operators that better recognizes the impact that natural, human-made, and technical disaster events are having on the long term viability of many operations.

Finding a better balance of communicating with the public the relevant public safety information they need, while ensuring to not create an unnecessary fear to the travelling public, needs to be addressed.

Travellers have become worried about issues like smoke potential, even in years when fire smoke has not been a problem, as an example. A system of support that looks at all tourism impacts, not just impacts to hotels, as an example, would better help all tourism related businesses with post event recovery.

Understanding MRDT Priorities

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

I fully understand MRDT locally, and while on City Council, successfully advocated that the board be structured the way it is to ensure tourism, not local government, control the local decisions. The local tourism sector is best equipped to be making the marketing decisions for itself.

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

Yes, the MRDT rules need to be maintained and should only be changed with discussion and agreement with local tourism boards and their members.