

Response to Mr. Litkowski

Economic Development, Tourism and senior statistics

During a presentation to Mayor and Council on September 14th Mr. Litkowski stated that the Town of Pincher Creek has “no economic or tourism development planned.”

Let’s start by addressing the economic development planning:

The Town is currently 75% of the way through a community economic development strategy. A provincial grant called CARES or the Community and Regional Economic Support program is being used to help fund the project and strategy.

The project objective is: To develop strategies and action plans that best utilize community assets and advantages to support the existing business community and encourage new business investment.

This staged project has included a business retention and expansion survey, community consultation and collaborative strategy creation.

Some of the key accomplishments so far include:

- Completion of a Tourism Inventory of Town and MD tourism operations. The inventory categories are: accommodations; attractions; facilities; tourism operators; and events.
- Additions made to the Pincher Creek baseline business database (2020): All of Pincher Creek’s businesses have now been assigned NAICS (North America Industry Classification System) codes.
- Creation of a Pincher Creek Demographic Snapshot: a 20-page summary of Pincher Creek’s population demographics including, but not limited to, household population; age; income; levels of education; labour force; labour force participation rate; and employment based on occupation.
- Presentation of a ‘What we Heard’ summary: based on the engagement of over 100 community organizations and businesses –a summary of key opportunities and challenges.

The strategy was initially planned to be presented in March 2020, when COVID-19 arrived in Alberta a decision was made to press pause on a plan that may not be applicable in a pandemic. The strategy was paused but the work was not. We quickly moved into a business recovery support program. We know that 80 to 90% of new business investment comes from within our existing business community. Our small businesses are the backbone of our community and supporting them is vital for the resiliency of our entire community. The business recovery support program is still open and available to Pincher Creek businesses and has a dedicated local support person, Bob. This is a unique program to Pincher Creek and the feedback from businesses partaking has been very positive.

Covid-19 provided the opportunity for us to effectively implement some of the actions that would have been on the to do list, we are already showcasing that this strategy will be an action strategy and will not sit on a shelf.

This strategy and the economic development plan is just one cog in a large wheel of economic development. Some of the other cogs currently being addressed are; child care, transportation and housing.

Mr. Litkowski also referenced the lack of tourism planning in his presentation to Council on September 14th.

In January 2019 the Government of Alberta released the Castle Region Tourism Strategy. The Town of Pincher Creek council, administration and community members were actively engaged in the creation of this strategy. Strategic Priority number 1 from this report is to Strengthen Community and Industry Capacity. To work with tourism organizations and municipalities to assess destination management approaches and the creation of an overarching tourism leadership and management organization to ensure that all stakeholders are working towards the same tourism goals and priorities.

Team members from the Town of Pincher Creek and Community Futures Crowsnest Pass took the lead on this priority. With support from Town council, the MD of Pincher Creek Council, the Crowsnest Pass Council, Community Futures Crowsnest Pass, Crowsnest Pass Chamber of Commerce, Castle Mountain Resort and Alberta Southwest a matching grant was applied for. Funding for an analysis and strategy creation for a regional destination management organization was received.

The draft strategy was presented to all three Councils in late 2019. A regional destination management organization continues to be explored. Regional applications to Travel Alberta for funding tourism were submitted for the summer and winter intakes. The winter application was approved, and the Town of Pincher Creek is partnered with Waterton Chamber of Commerce for this project.

Tourism continues to be an important part of our economy and is clearly defined on the Town 2018-2022 Strategic plan. During this time, the Town has offered scholarships to local operators to attend the Growing Rural Tourism conference, co-hosted multiple tourism specific workshops including a Alberta's tourism entrepreneur workshop and partnered to create local marketable content. Many tourism operators have been involved in video and photography projects through the last few years that are used to market our region as an impressive tourism location.

We continue to engage and support our tourism operators through our Economic Development Officer, our regional supports and with partner funding opportunities through Travel Alberta.

Town of Pincher Creek business statistics, from 2020.

Licenses businesses 406

New businesses 50, only 20% of the new businesses are home businesses.

From 2016 through to 2020 twenty-eight spaces have been filled on Main Street and nineteen spaces in the downtown core. These numbers are pulled from our business license statistics and DO NOT include home businesses. Out of the forty-seven spaces filled 76 percentage are still operating today, that means that only 11 are no longer operating in our community. An interesting note is that 66 percentage of these business owners are women. This may be why we have a vibrant Women in Business group hosted by our local Chamber of Commerce.

In the presentation to Council Mr. Litkowski advised council that 47% of the Town of Pincher Creek are seniors. We are unsure of how you have calculated this information, here are the statistics Canada

facts:

Average Age: 44.3 years

Median Age: 45.4 years

In the town of Pincher Creek there are 890 seniors, aged 65 years and older out of a population of 3642 or 24%.

Should Mr. Litkowski or other residents of the Town of Pincher Creek have further questions regarding The Town's economic development strategy and statistics, please contact the Town Office.

The following motion was made at the February 3, 2021 Committee of the Whole Meeting

KORBETT:

That Committee of the Whole for the Town of Pincher Creek approve the attached report to be provided to Mr. Jim Litkowski and the community of Pincher Creek in response to concerns raised on September 14, 2020 by Mr. Litkowski regarding the Town Council's economic development and tourism strategy and direct Mayor Anderberg to prepare a video presentation to the community.

CARRIED COTW 2020-013