

**TOWN OF BLACKFALDS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Civic Cultural Center – 5018 Waghorn Street
Monday, April 13, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

- 1.1 Welcome and Call to Order
 - 1.2 Receive the Agenda
-

2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- 2.1 *In the Spirit of Truth and Reconciliation, the Blackfalds Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee acknowledges that we are on Treaty 6 territory, the ancestral lands of Cree, Saulteaux (So-toe), Blackfoot, Métis, Dene (De-nay) and Nakota Sioux (Sue). We acknowledge all the many First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-status peoples whose footsteps have marked these lands since time immemorial.*

We recognize the inherent relationships Indigenous communities have with this land and its creatures and commit to supporting reconciliation and healing. We honour the resilience, culture, and contributions of Indigenous peoples, past and present.

As we gather, we pledge to listen, learn, and take meaningful action toward a future based on mutual respect and understanding as we continue on our journey of truth and healing. We recognize that reconciliation is not a single act but a lifelong journey—one that requires accountability, humility, and the centering of Indigenous voices.

3. PRESENTATIONS

None

4. BUSINESS

- 4.1 Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee Minutes from February 2, 2026
 - 4.2 Request for Direction, Annual 2026 Business Walk
 - 4.3 Request for Direction, Lacombe and District Chamber of Commerce Digital Sign
-

5. REPORT FOR COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Report for Committee, Economic Development Officer Spring Update
 - 5.2 Report for Committee, Economic Development 2026 Projects
-

6. CONFIDENTIAL

None

7. ADJOURNMENT



**TOWN OF BLACKFALDS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Civic Cultural Centre – 5018 Waghorn Street
Monday, February 2, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

- Kala Pandit, Chair
- Robert Hogan, Vice Chair
- Cory Twerdoelib, Town of Blackfalds Councillor
- Aaron Hoyte, Town of Blackfalds Councillor
- Reina LeMieux, Member at Large
- Justine Loshny, Member at Large
- Ken Hubbard, Member at Large
- Maria Anderson, Member at Large
- Joline Gurski, Member at Large

OTHERS ATTENDING

- Peter McGee, Economic Development Officer
- Lorrie Logan, Municipal Clerk II (Recording Secretary)

REGRETS

- Trent Kroetsch, Member at Large
- Denise Sumner, Member at Large
- Darlington Etaje, Member at Large

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kala Pandit welcomed all guests attending and called the Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

RECEIVE THE AGENDA

Add 5.5 Business Sign Bylaw/Policy.

MOTION:

Member Maria Anderson moved That the Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee receive the Agenda for February 2, 2026, as amended. Seconded by Chair Kala Pandit.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A Land Acknowledgement was read to recognize that the Town of Blackfalds is on Treaty 6 Territory.

PRESENTATIONS

None



**TOWN OF BLACKFALDS
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Monday, February 2, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

BUSINESS

Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

MOTION:

The Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee reappointed Kala Pandit as Chair for a second term and Member Robert Hogan was appointed as Vice Chair.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Approval of Minutes

MOTION:

Town of Blackfalds Councillor Twerdoclib moved That the Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee approve the Minutes from December 1, 2025, as amended. Seconded by Member Justine Loshny.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

REPORT FOR COMMITTEE

EDO Winter Report – December 2025 – February 2026

Economic Development Officer, McGee gave a report on Activities and Events attended from December 2025 to February 2026.

Central Alberta Tourism Alliance – Economic Impact Assessment

Economic Development Officer, McGee provided statistics related to visitor activity in Central Alberta.

Lacombe Tourism Association Campaign

Economic Development Officer McGee reported on the Lacombe Tourism Association’s marketing campaign aimed at attracting new visitors to the region, including initiatives such as the Highway 2A Corridor Project.

Let’s Go Rural! High School & Post Secondary Event

Information was shared regarding the Rural Health Professions Action Plan, an organization focused on encouraging new healthcare professionals to choose rural communities. The program provides high school and post-secondary students with opportunities to gain experience living and practicing in rural areas.

Business Sign Bylaw/Policy

Town of Blackfalds Councillor Aaron Hoyte provided an overview of the process for obtaining Business Signage within the Town.

MOTION:



**TOWN OF BLACKFALDS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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Monday, February 2, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Member Anderson moved that the Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee explore the feasibility of establishing a sub-committee to review signage for Business's withing the Town.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Round Table

Committee members engaged in a general discussion regarding strategies to increase visitation to the community.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Kala Pandit, adjourned the Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Kala Pandit, Chair

Jessica Robinson, Executive & Legislative Coordinator

MEETING DATE: April 13, 2026
PREPARED BY: Peter McGee, Economic Development Officer
SUBJECT: **Annual 2026 Business Walk**

BACKGROUND

In 2025, EDTAC conducted its inaugural Annual Business Walk, a structured engagement process involving face-to-face interactions and surveys with local businesses. This approach provides a cost-effective method for collecting real-time data to inform strategic planning. The 2025 initiative successfully identified key challenges faced by businesses, notably issues related to customer acquisition and marketing. Leveraging these insights, EDTAC launched targeted interventions in 2026, including a collaborative marketing campaign with Lacombe Tourism and a partnership with the Lacombe and District Chamber of Commerce to install a new digital sign, aimed at enhancing local business visibility.

Building on this success, the 2026 Business Walk is scheduled for July/August, continuing as a vital tool for assessing the local business climate. Managed by EDTAC members, the program plays a crucial role in evaluating the effectiveness of ongoing initiatives and guiding future strategic actions. This systematic engagement ensures that EDTAC remains responsive to the evolving needs of the business community, fostering sustainable economic development.

BUSINESS

EDTAC would like to create a sub committee to coordinate the 2nd Annual Blackfalds Business Walk. This committee, with assistance of EDO McGee, would be responsible for creating the 2026 questions, coordinating survey days and execution, plus gathering and coordinating volunteers.

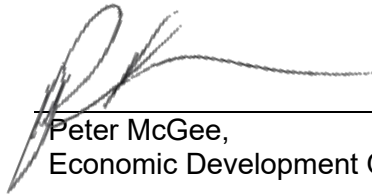
EDTAC proposes establishing a subcommittee to oversee the 2nd Annual Blackfalds Business Walk. Supported by EDO McGee, this team will develop 2026 survey questions, coordinate survey logistics, and manage volunteer efforts to ensure smooth execution and effective stakeholder engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

| |
|--|
| <p>That Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee consider the following motion:</p> <p>That the Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee members select _____ as lead of the business walk subcommittee and members _____, _____, and _____ from Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee to assist the lead.</p> |
|--|

ATTACHMENTS

- *RFC, April 2025 Business Walk*
- *RFD, June 2025 Business Walk*
- *RFD, 2025 Business Walk - Oct Meeting*



Peter McGee,
Economic Development Officer

Author

MEETING DATE: April 7, 2025
PREPARED BY: Peter McGee, Economic Development Officer
PRESENTED BY: Peter McGee, Economic Development Officer
SUBJECT: **2025 Business Walk**

BACKGROUND

Data is king to all decisions in life and in business. Community Economic Development is the same. Reliable and relevant data can be difficult and expensive to get. For a town of our size, it could be close to impossible as stats don't cover such a small market. One affordable and reliable way to gather data about our local businesses and economy is to conduct a Business Walk.

A Business Walk is a structured process where individuals engage with local businesses for face-to-face conversations and surveys. The conversations and surveys will give the committee and administration a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities that exist in Blackfalds and ultimately strengthen our relationship with the business community allowing us to better serve them and foster more economic activity.

Business Walks are a great way to access the economic environment in a community, establishing base line data which can be used to measure the success of different Economic Development Activities.

At the completion of the Business Walk EDO McGee will compile the surveys a create a report that will be shared with the EDTAC and Town of Blackfalds to guide future decisions.

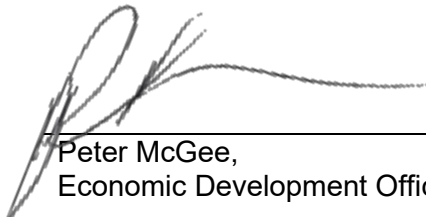
BUSINESS

The EDTAC Chair and Vice Chair would like to recommend that the EDTAC committee conduct an annual business walk in Blackfalds.

ATTACHMENTS

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee members support the creation and implementation of an annual Business Walk in Blackfalds.


Peter McGee,
Economic Development Officer

Author

MEETING DATE: June 2, 2025

PREPARED BY: Peter McGee, Economic Development Officer

SUBJECT: **2025 Business Walk**

BACKGROUND

During the April EDTAC meeting, EDO McGee proposed that the committee undertake a Business Walk in the Blackfalds businesses to collect reliable data in a cost-effective manner. This proposal was approved, and the committee asked EDO McGee to present options for how EDTAC can effectively conduct a Business Walk. This report outlines two options for achieving this.

To clarify and stay consistent, a Business Walk is a structured process in which individuals engage with local businesses through face-to-face conversations and surveys.

BUSINESS

Option 1

EDTAC will establish a subcommittee tasked with the comprehensive planning, programming, and implementation of the business walk. This subcommittee will oversee all facets of the program, including but not limited to:

- Selecting the dates and times for the walk and subcommittee meetings.
- Define the goals and objectives for the Business Walk.
- Curating and selecting survey questions, as well as determining how they will be collected, evaluated, and presented.
- Prepare reports for the September 2025 EDTAC meeting.

Option 2

EDTAC will establish a subcommittee tasked with planning and organizing the business walk, as well as advising other EDTAC members on their roles in completing the project. The subcommittee will be accountable for the following responsibilities:

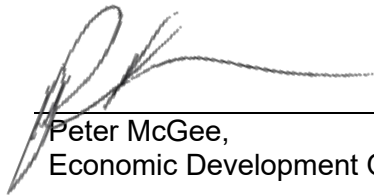
- Determine the dates and times for the business walk and subcommittee meetings.
- Set clear goals and objectives for the Business Walk.
- Curate and select survey questions, along with the methods for gathering, evaluating, and presenting the data.
- Plan the rollout of the business walk, whether it will occur in a single day or a month, and whether it will be organized by industry or area.
- Select, delegate, and coordinate EDTAC members to conduct the business walk, including who will conduct interviews, whom they will speak to, deadlines for completion, and who will create the questions and compile the results.
- Prepare a report for the September 2025 EDTAC meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

- [RFC, 2025 Business Walk](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee members support the creation and implementation of an annual Business Walk in Blackfalds using option _____.
2. That the Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee members select _____ as lead of the business walk subcommittee from Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee.



Peter McGee,
Economic Development Officer

Author

MEETING DATE: October 6, 2025

PREPARED BY: Peter McGee, Economic Development Officer

SUBJECT: **Completed 2025 Business Walk**

BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2025 EDO McGee proposed that EDTAC undertake a Business Walk in Blackfalds to collect reliable data in a cost-effective manner. This proposal was approved. EDO McGee then presented 2 options in June 2025 to effectively coordinate and conduct the 1st Annual Business Walk. The committee selected option 2 (see attached report from June 2025) and a sub committee was struck to complete the 2025 Business Walk. This report includes the findings from the 2025 Annual Business Walk and a request for direction of next steps.

To clarify and stay consistent, a Business Walk is a structured process in which individuals engage with local businesses through face-to-face conversations and surveys.

BUSINESS

Survey Parameters

- The survey was conducted in person by physically stopping in each business without an appointment.
- Survey was collected through paper surveys and compiled in a spreadsheet for review.
- 78 out of 179 businesses were surveyed during 3 days over a week. 43% completed.
- 7 questions were asked to each business
 - When did you open?
 - Did you open in this location?
 - How many employees do you have?
 - Do you anticipate hiring more people in the next 12 months?
 - Are you aware of EDTAC?
 - In your opinion, what is the biggest opportunity in Blackfalds?
 - What is the biggest challenge in business for you right now?
- Surveys were conducted on a Monday, Thursday and Friday afternoon with 2 2-hour shifts per day (1:00 – 3:00 & 3:00 – 5:00)
- Community was broken up in 5 areas to conduct surveys
- Surveys were completed by 7 members of EDTAC

Results/Assessment

Question 1 14% of surveyed (11) businesses opened this year which tells me that we have a strong and attractive market for new businesses.
31% of businesses opened between 2016 – 2021. What was driving growth at that time?

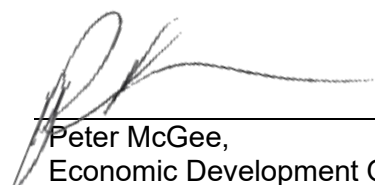
- Question 2 Over ¾ of surveyed businesses are in the same location they opened in. Our turnover rate is low and/or our retention level is high.
- Question 3 Approximately 75% of our businesses have under 10 employees. Or more than 90% of businesses have less than 20 employees. Any programs we implement should be geared towards businesses with 20 or less employees.
- Question 4 Very close to half of the surveyed businesses are looking to hire in the next 12 months, this is a good indication that business is going well and the local economy is thriving.
- Question 5 Well over half of the businesses surveyed have not heard of EDTAC. We should focus on sharing our message of who we are and what we do.
- Question 6 Our location in the province and proximity to Red Deer in the opinion of our businesses are the most impactful opportunity for our community. Our population and demographics are also major benefits to doing business in Blackfalds. The combo of population/demographics and the comments lead me to believe that the major benefit is our quality of life. How do we leverage this?
- Question 7 These results show that the number 1 & 2 challenge our businesses are facing is inflation and proximity of competitors, both of which we have little to no control over. The 3rd challenge is lack of customers, which is something we are currently working on and based on this survey we should continue to work on.

ATTACHMENTS

- [RFC, April 2025 Business Walk](#)
- [RFD, June 2025 Business Walk](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee members accept the results of the 1st Annual Blackfalds Business Walk.
2. That the Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee members advise next steps to EDO McGee.



Peter McGee,
Economic Development Officer

Author

MEETING DATE: April 13, 2026
PREPARED BY: Peter McGee, Economic Development Officer
SUBJECT: **Lacombe and District Chamber of Commerce Digital Sign**

BACKGROUND

In 2025, EDTAC conducted a Business Walk which brought attention to a communal challenge that our businesses were facing, lack of marketing opportunities. To help Blackfalds business with this challenge the Lacombe and District Chamber of Commerce has proposed installing a digital sign at the south end of town.

This proposal goes against Blackfalds Land Use Bylaw that restricts digital signs in town. To allow this sign a one-time amendment needs to be made by council.

BUSINESS

Provided that EDTAC is in favour of pursuing this digital sign a presentation needs to be to council requesting this amendment and more work needs to be done with The Lacombe and District Chamber to navigate the process.

ATTACHMENTS


None

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee consider the following motion:

THAT the Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee endorse the proposal that Economic Development Officer McGee, work with the Lacombe and District Chamber of Commerce to install a digital sign at the south end of town; and

Further be it resolved that the Economic Development & Tourism Advisory Committee refer the proposal to Blackfalds Council recommending that the Land Use Bylaw be amended to allow for the digital sign.



Peter McGee,
Economic Development Officer

Author

MEETING DATE: April 13, 2026
PREPARED BY: Peter McGee, Economic Development Officer
SUBJECT: **Economic Development Officer Spring Update**

BACKGROUND

Comprehensive report detailing the initiatives undertaken by the Economic Development Officer during the period from Feb. 2026 to April 2026.

- Events
 - Tourism Advocacy Summit – (Feb 8 – 10) – (see report attached)
 - Central Alberta Emergency Relief Taskforce (CARET x3)
 - Regional EDO Meeting – (Feb 12)
 - Western Edge Manufacturing Summit – (March 11)
 - EDA Courses – (x2)
 - EDA Experience – (April 14 – 17) – (see conference plan attached)
- Chairs For Chairty – 26 Chairs and 26 Businesses
- Commercial Development Meetings (x3)
- Rural Entrepreneur Stream Meetings (x6)

ATTACHMENTS

- *Tourism Advocacy Summit Conference Report 2026*
- *EDA Conference Plan 2026*

APPROVALS



Peter McGee,
Economic Development Officer

Author

Tourism Advocacy Summit Conference Report

Basic Information

Website - <https://ttaa.silkstart.com/events/2026-alberta-tourism-advocacy-summit>

Dates – Feb 8 - 10

Location – Edmonton, ICE District

Priority Sessions

February 8th

- Reception – 3rd Floor Foyer JW – 7:30 – 9:30pm

February 9th

- Breakfast – 8:00 am
- Tourism Advocacy Leadership Report – 8:15 am
- **Tourism is Alberta's 4th largest export**
 - Bigger than beef
 - Least reliant sector on US trade
- Panel – Tourism on the World Stage – 8:30 – 9:30 am
- **Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada – [Original Original Accreditation](#)**
- **Tourism has a higher and faster ROI than many other industries and economic investments**
- **[Local Impact](#) from Tourism Industry Association of Canada**
- **Alberta is leading the country in Tourism growth.**
- **Quote “There is no ‘I’ in Team but there is in ‘get your things together’**
- **What Tourism Leaders are Doing with AI – 10:00 – 11:00 am**
- **3 ‘H’s of AI – AI will be made to be Helpful, Honest, and Harmless.**
- **With AI prompts – if the bot is asking you questions – you are upskilling – if you constantly are asking the bot – you are down skilling**
- **AI models are currently scoring 30% higher than PHD’s in their chosen field.**
- **Can we use AI better to help the public understand our bylaws, etc. i.e. Sign Bylaw in LUB?**
- **We could use AI to build blogs/articles to post on free review sites i.e. Redit**
- **Can I put the EIA report into an AI bot to create customer portfolio?**
- **Use AI to build itinerary and post on sites (Youtube) and share with groups i.e. visiting sports teams.**
- **[Google Search Console](#) – an AI tool**
- **Use Press Releases to assist AI searches.**
 - Focus on the words we want to highlight, this is what the AI bots will pick up.
 - This is what AI will use to form its thoughts on Blackfalds.
- **Ask ourselves “What are people asking about Blackfalds?”**
- **Can I ask AI to evaluate our website, add target audience, key info, etc.**
 - Include in questions – purpose, people, process and platform.
- **Alberta Economic Outlook – 11:00 – 12:00 –**
- **Uncertainty is the only certainty.**
- **Sponsor content – 12:00 – 12:15**
- **Learning from Culture Research Project - 12:15 – 1:15pm**
- **Tourism is a sovereign asset – like oil, lumber, coal, etc.**
- **[All Season Resort Act](#) – this could be a game changer to allow us to compete with BC**
 - Next phase of projects has identified David Thompson as area of interest
- **Dubi – look at Dubi as a best practice for developing Tourism Revenue**
- **Ask Kate – Virtual HR tool for tourism businesses - <https://www.tiaalberta.ca/ask-kate>**

- Travel Alberta & Tourism & Sport Presentation – Shaping Tourism Landscape– 1:15 – 2:30 pm
 - Ministry of Tourism and Sport are targeting specific, high spending, target audience (quality of quantity)
- Break out – Meeting, Convention and Sport Tourism potential – 3:00 – 4:00pm
 - Calgary Tourism – bid on 500 events and meetings in 2025, received 200 – approx. 40% success rate
 - “ROI on Tourism Spending - \$1 invested returns \$37” – Arlindo Gomes – Explore Edmonton
 - “The fight for tomorrows traveler starts today!”
 - 80% of travelers are from Alberta
- Innovators Panel – Building the Local Tourism Economy
- Cocktail Hour – 5:15 – 6:00 pm
- Dine Around - 6:00 – 8:30 – Tourism Partner Dinners
- Tourism After Hours – 8:30 – 11:30 pm

February 10th

- Breakfast – 7:30 – 8:30
- Future of Tourism – The Aurora AI Advantage – 8:30 – 9:30
 - Tourism is Alberta 3rd largest export – more than beef.
 - Tourism is leading in ROI from investment into industry/sector
- Breakout – Redefining Paths to Growth in Tourism Careers - 9:30 – 10:30
- Panel Discussion – Future Proofing the Canadian Economy – 11:00 – 12:00
 - Last year tourism spending in Canada hit \$59B – mostly interprovincial travel
 - Estimated 3% growth in sector in 2026.
 - Destination Canada - Believes that tourism can be 10% of Canadas diversification export.
 - Growth, reach and acceptance of new ideas and products continue to speed up – ChatGPT – 3 days to reach 1 million users.
 - [Bot to Bot video!](#)
 - [Aurora AI](#) - By combining trusted research and data with the speed of generative AI, Aurora AI transforms complex intelligence into actionable insights, empowering faster, data-driven decision making for Canada’s hosting economy
- Sponsor Content – 12:00 – 12:15
- Building Destinations That Matter – 12:30 – 1:30
 - Arts celebrate culture and culture celebrates place
 - <https://werklundcentre.ca/> - presenter was DEO of this venue
 - “Who are we when no one is visiting?”
 - Plan buildings/experiences with multiple visits in mind.
- Panel Discussion – Building Destinations that Matter – 1:30 – 2:45 pm
- Wrap Up – 2:45 – 3:00 pm
- [Photos of slides below](#)

Purpose

Gain insight on best practices to use to leverage Tourism opportunities, like sport tourism, meeting and conferences attraction, and destination development in Blackfalds and region.

Goals/Objectives/Tactics

1. Gather information on best practices to increase tourism's economic impact on Blackfalds.
 - a. Find and connect with other successful tourism corridor projects.

- i. Attend networking events and find new contacts and colleagues from similar communities. – attended events and made connections with many individuals (list below).
 - ii. Attend sessions based on building tourism products – sessions were more aspirational than implementable – one key message about “Arts celebrate culture and culture celebrates place”
 - iii. Find best KPIs and how to measure them in Blackfalds, specifically around events. – sessions were more about attraction than evaluation. The AI content had some applicable themes.
 - b. Find resources (grants and programs) through the province and federal governments that can be beneficial to Blackfalds. – too close to provincial budget release to have any announcements, plus knowledge of tighter budget coming.
 - i. Attend sessions and gather material on grants offered to municipalities and tourism businesses. – n/a
 - ii. Gather information regarding training programs to share via newsletter to Blackfalds business community. – AI programs (Ask Kate and Auroa AI) could be useful tool for our business community.
 - iii. Collect data to assist with identifying existing and potential tourism target markets. – many stats were recorded (see above) largest take home was we are still marketing to an Albertan/Western Canada market.
 - c. Find best practices using marketing and AI that may be implemented in Blackfalds. – lots on this (see above),
 - i. Discover how municipalities and not-for-profit associations are using AI. – not as much specific municipalities applications but certainly transferable info.
 - ii. Learn how tourism businesses are using AI effectively and share with business community. - completed
- 2. Gain better understanding of provincial goals and ensure they align with Blackfalds plans and goals. – gained a bit of more understanding on this goal, but there is still a lot of questions. The Year-Round Resorts will have a lot of focus in the future and there is opportunity for us when they expand to RMH/Nordegg area.
 - a. Get a better understanding of the new TDZ and the provincial goals to help align Blackfalds correctly to leverage these zones. - unsuccessful
 - i. Connect with Travel Alberta staff to find out 2026 plans for TDZs and share Mural Corridor plans. – connected briefly with our new rep, contact info exchanged waiting for contact.
 - b. Understand the future plans in Alberta to meet 2030 goals and where Blackfalds can fit in these plans. – GOA seems to be very focused on Year-Round Resorts. We could look at small towns like Blackfalds in BC that are close to these resorts for ideas on impact and opportunities.
- 3. Look for educational and professional development opportunities. – not correct venue

Deliverables

1. SWOT Analysis on Event Tourism

Strengths

- Our location, central in Alberta both north and south as well as east and west.
- Our location, easy to get to via Highway 2a
- Our facilities compared to our size (i.e. Ball Diamonds, Abbey Center, etc.)

Weakness

- Lack of accommodation
- Lack of signature business (i.e. Brewery, restaurant, etc.)

Opportunities

- Huge exposure opportunities with larger events – televised, streamed, etc.
- Can be catalyst to a community identity
- Extending attendees visit for more positive impact.

Threats

- Event tourism is becoming highly competitive and expensive
- Events should be targeted for their impact – i.e. a regional sporting event will not have the same impact as a provincial, national or international event – know where the money is going and why.
- Boom and bust/feast and famine cycles with events, are hard for business to schedule for.

2. SWOT Analysis on Tourism in Blackfalds

Strengths

- Central location in province, easy for both Edmontonian and Calgarians to visit.
- Internationally Blackfalds history, culture and lifestyle is appealing.
- Tourism in Canada is growing

Weaknesses

- Lack of accommodation
- Lack of iconic attractions to market and set us apart from our neighbours and competitors.
- Not a strategically defined target market

Opportunities

- Building off successful neighbours – i.e. Sylvan Lake, Red Deer, etc.
- Showcasing our history and culture

Threats

- Investment with little to no trackable ROI
- Many small Alberta communities can make same claims as us – we need to be 1st or loudest

3. List of key contacts

- Travel Alberta
 - Vanessa Riviere – Director of Tourism Investment and Commercial Partnerships – vanessa.riviere@travelalberta.com
 - Claire Bourgeois – Manager of Corporate Content and Communications – claire.bourgeois@travelalberta.com
- GOA
 - Erin Rooney – Senior Management All Season Resorts – erin.rooney@gov.ab.ca
 - Paul Lamoureux – Assistant Deputy Minister Tourism and Sport – paul.lamoureux@gov.ab.ca

4. Event report including

- Available grants and programs – not much info about this as provincial budget hadn't been released yet.
- Important KPIs and how to measure them – this was not covered as much as I would like
- Potential alignments with Provincial goals – There is alignment with the new TDZs and Blackfalds plans, but less alignment when it comes to target market, as we are not ready to accept a lot of international tourist.

5. Contact list

- Jeff Hessel – Tourism Calgary – SR. VP. Marketing and Destination Development – jeffh@tourismcalgary.com
- Nathan Murdoch – Toonie Tours – Co-founder – nathan@toonietours.ca – (could be contact to run test tours for us)
- Corey Jarvis – Alberta Professional Outfitters Society – President – cbjarvis@gmail.com

START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE TRAVELER TWIN



DESTINATION QUIZ



TRAVELLER TWIN

Bay of Fundy
Nova Scotia



SUMMIT SUMMARY

- TOURISM IS TRADE INFRASTRUCTURE
- GROWTH REQUIRES INVESTMENT READINESS
- COMPETE DIFFERENTLY
- MEANING DRIVES DEMAND
- CONNECTIVITY ENABLES PROGRESS



UPCOMING TOURISM TOWN HALLS

TOURISM
INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION // ALBERTA

MONDAY, April 13 | GRANDE PRAIRIE

TUESDAY, April 14 | HINTON

WEDNESDAY, April 15 | EDMONTON

MONDAY, April 20 | PINCHER CREEK

WEDNESDAY, April 22 | CALGARY



SAVE THE DATE

CANADIAN TOURISM DATA COLLECTIVE:
**INNOVATION FUELLED BY
AI AND INSIGHTS**



SCAN NOW

Ta Ciri Provincial Park
British Columbia



CAMPION
Ritchie

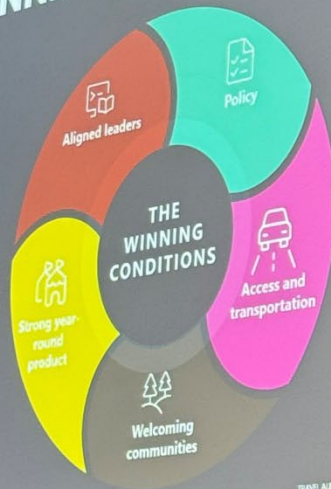
TONIGHTS AFTER HOURS MIXER

Campio Brewing - Ritchie Location
9570 76 Ave NW #101, Edmonton, AB T6C 0K2

CREATING THE WINNING CONDITIONS

Successful tourism growth requires **the winning conditions** for businesses to thrive.

Factors like local policies, access & transportation, labour availability, housing, and aligned leadership are all requirements for a strong tourism sector.



TRAVEL AGENCY 15

When
your

GENERATIVE
SEARCH
PLAYBOOK

DESTINATION CANADA COLLECTIVE

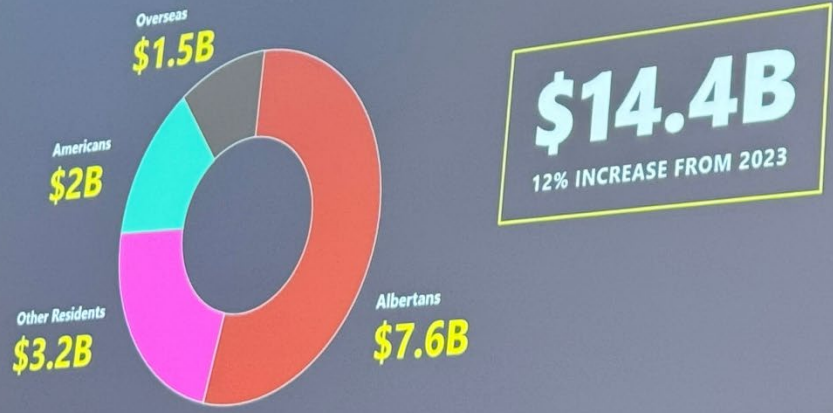
**GENERATIVE AI
SEARCH PLAYBOOK:**
A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SMARTER GEO



With support from the Government of Ontario

DESTINATION
CANADA

RECORD BREAKING REVENUES IN 2024



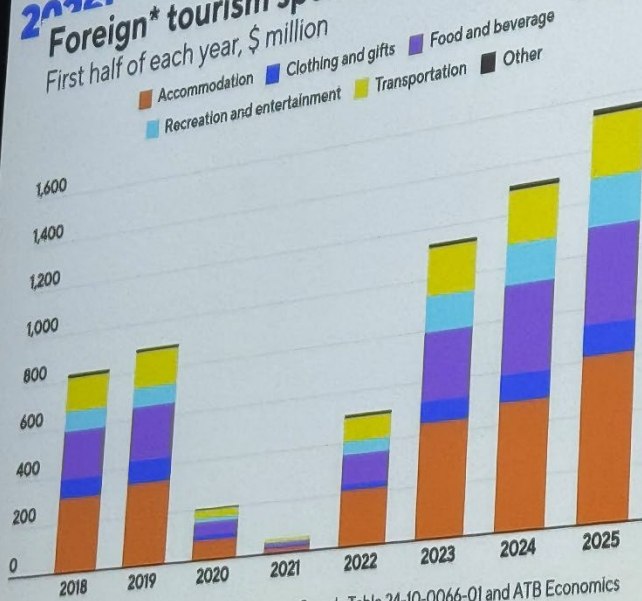
Source: Statistics Canada, Visitor Travel Survey, National Travel Survey.
Note: Numbers may not add up due to rounding.

Tourism - the sleeper pick of 2025 & 2026

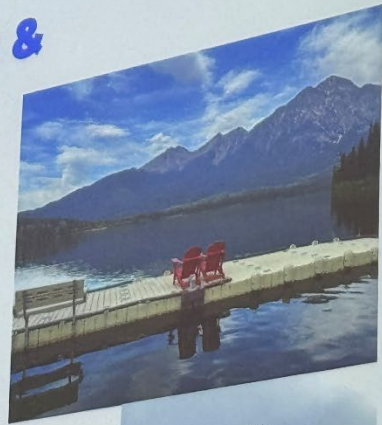
Foreign* tourism spending in Alberta

First half of each year, \$ million

ATB Economics

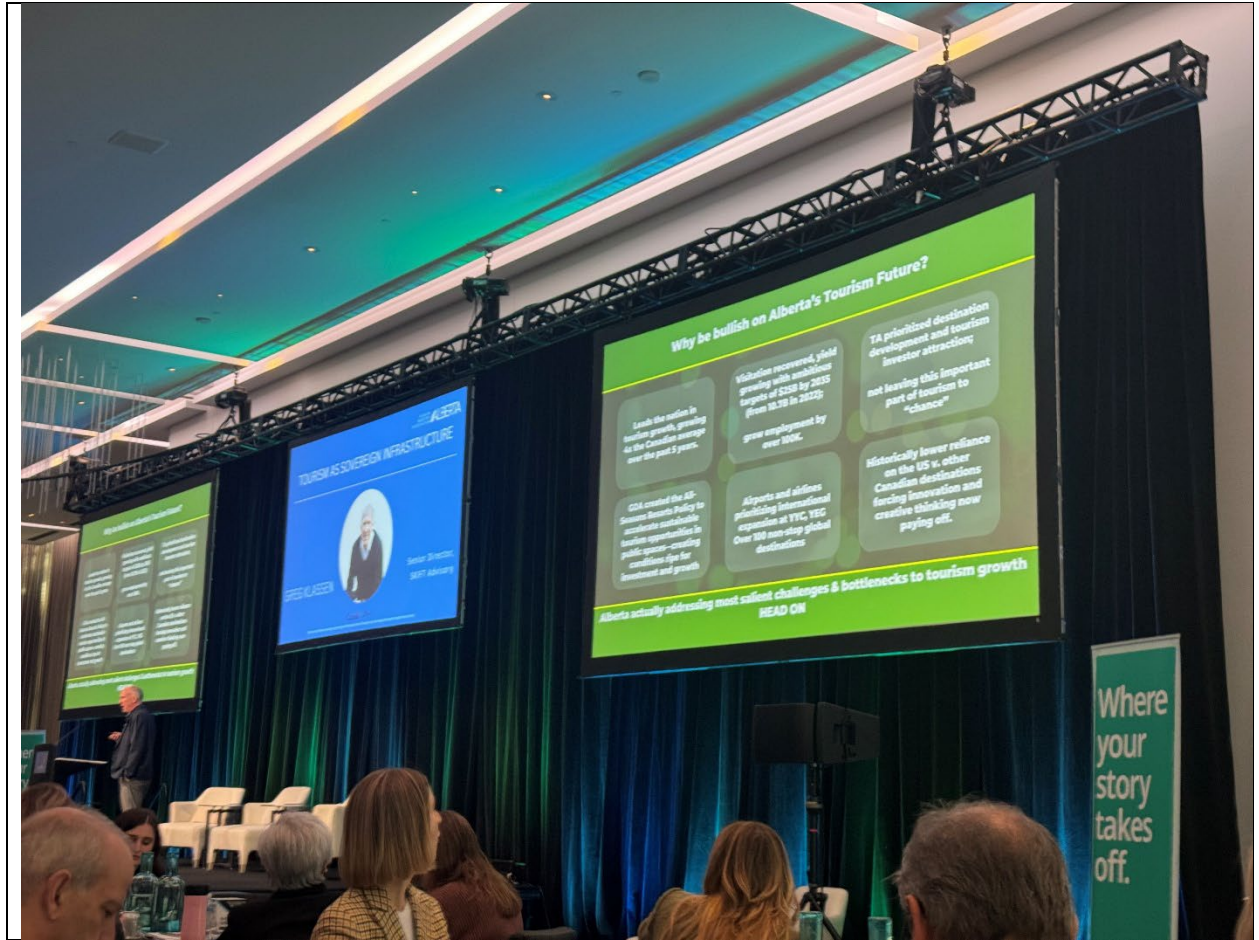


*Non-resident visitors to Canada. Source: Statistics Canada Table 24-10-0066-01 and ATB Economics



In Summary

Dubai chose tourism because it was one of the few sectors that could deliver scale, speed, global integration, employment and brand power—while leveraging geography, capital availability and policy autonomy.



Why be bullish on Alberta's Tourism Future?

- Canada the nation is tourism growth, growing at the Canadian average over the past 5 years.
- COVID created the All-Season Resorts Policy to maximize sustainable tourism opportunities in public spaces—creating conditions ripe for investment and growth.
- Visitation recovered, yield growing with ambitious targets of \$2B by 2035 (from 18.3B in 2022); gross employment by over 100k.
- Alberta and allies prioritizing international expansion at VTC, VTC. Over 100 non-stop global destinations.
- TA prioritized destination development and tourism investor attraction; not leaving this important part of tourism to "chance".
- Historically lower reliance on the US v. other Canadian destinations forcing innovation and creative thinking now paying off.

Alberta actually addressing most salient challenges & bottlenecks to tourism growth
READ ON

ALBERTA
TOURISM AS SOVEREIGN INFRASTRUCTURE

GREG ALDEEN
Senior Director
1977 January

Key messages and objectives

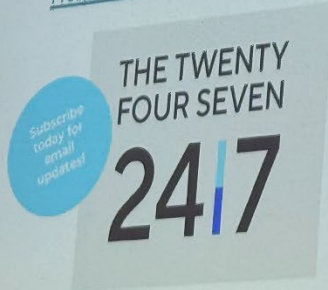
- 1. Increase tourism revenue
- 2. Create jobs
- 3. Enhance visitor experience
- 4. Promote sustainable tourism
- 5. Support local businesses
- 6. Increase international arrivals
- 7. Enhance destination branding
- 8. Support tourism infrastructure
- 9. Increase tourism investment
- 10. Enhance tourism marketing

Where
your
story
takes
off.


Check out:

- The Twenty-Four - Daily Insight
- The Seven - Weekly Commentary
- Quarterly Outlook with Scenarios
- Special Reports

<https://www.atb.com/economics>

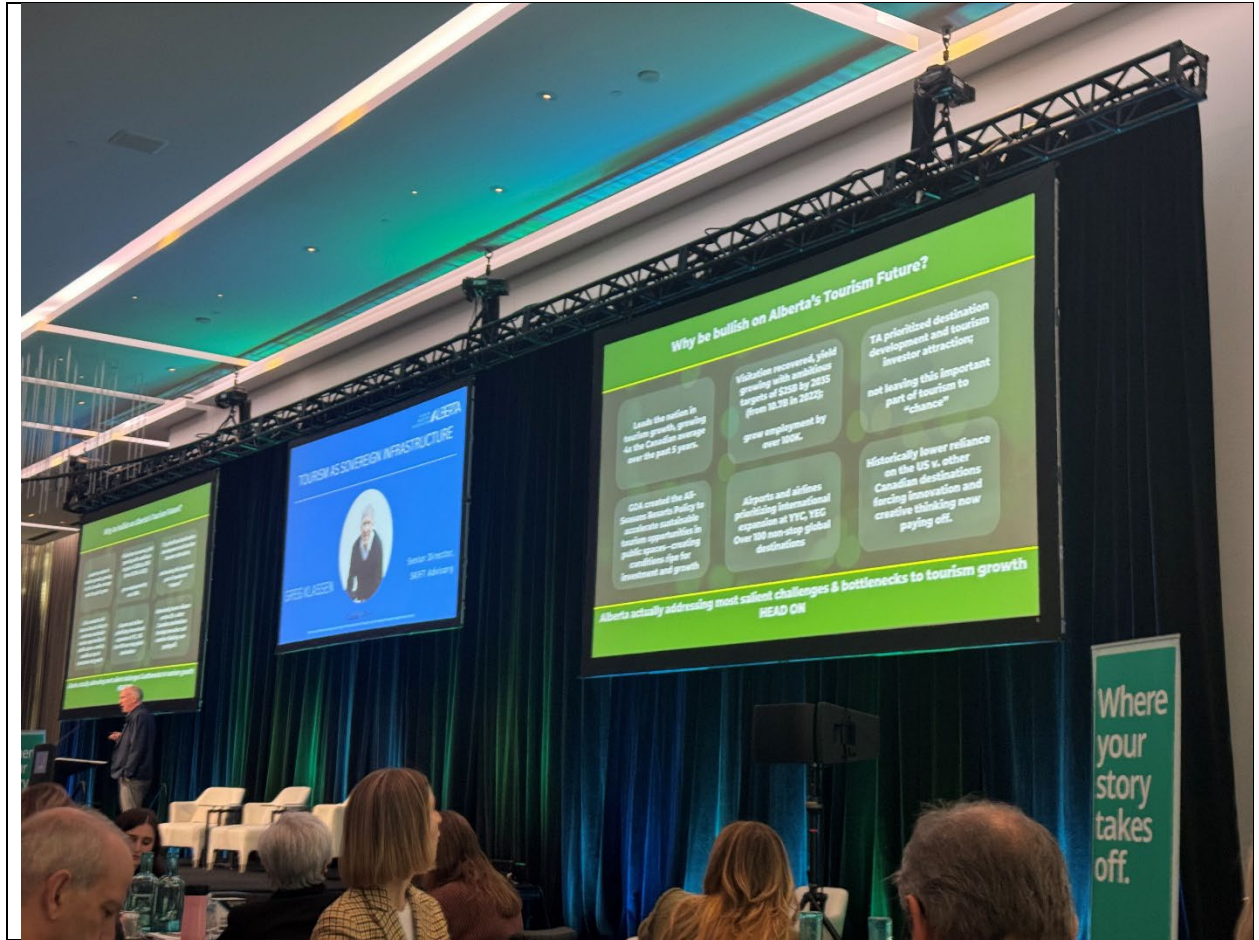


LinkedIn

Mark Parsons  · 1st
VP & Chief Economist, ATB Financial
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada · [Contact info](#)

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TOURISM AS SOVEREIGN INFRASTRUCTURE



Greg Klassen
Director
2021 - Present

Key findings and recommendations

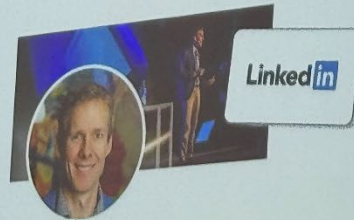
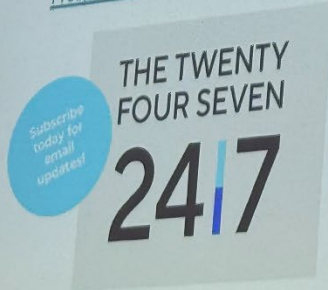
- 1. Diversify tourism product offerings
- 2. Invest in infrastructure
- 3. Enhance marketing and promotion
- 4. Streamline regulatory processes
- 5. Foster public-private partnerships
- 6. Develop a tourism workforce strategy
- 7. Enhance data collection and analysis
- 8. Promote sustainable and responsible tourism
- 9. Strengthen industry collaboration
- 10. Increase investment in tourism


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THE TOURISM ADVANTAGE

2X

the municipal
revenues per capita
in tourism-based
communities

*...which can be reinvested in the amenities that
make your town a great place to live*





Wh
you

THE DESTINATION LIFECYCLE

VISIT
If you build a place where people want to visit, you'll build a place where people want to live



INVEST
If you build a place where business and residents invest, then you have built a place where people will want to visit.



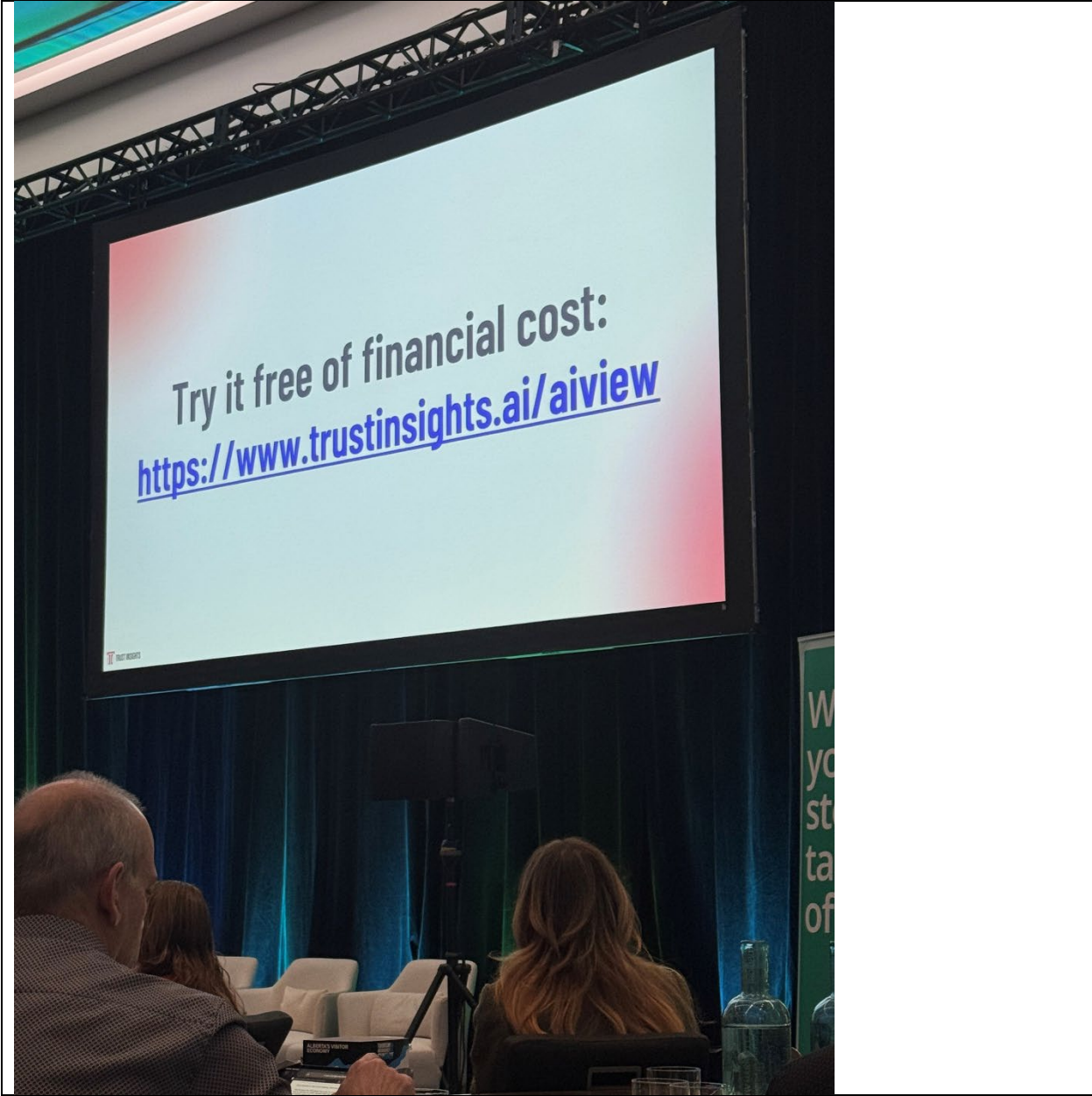
LIVE
If you build a place where people want to live, you'll build a place where people want to work

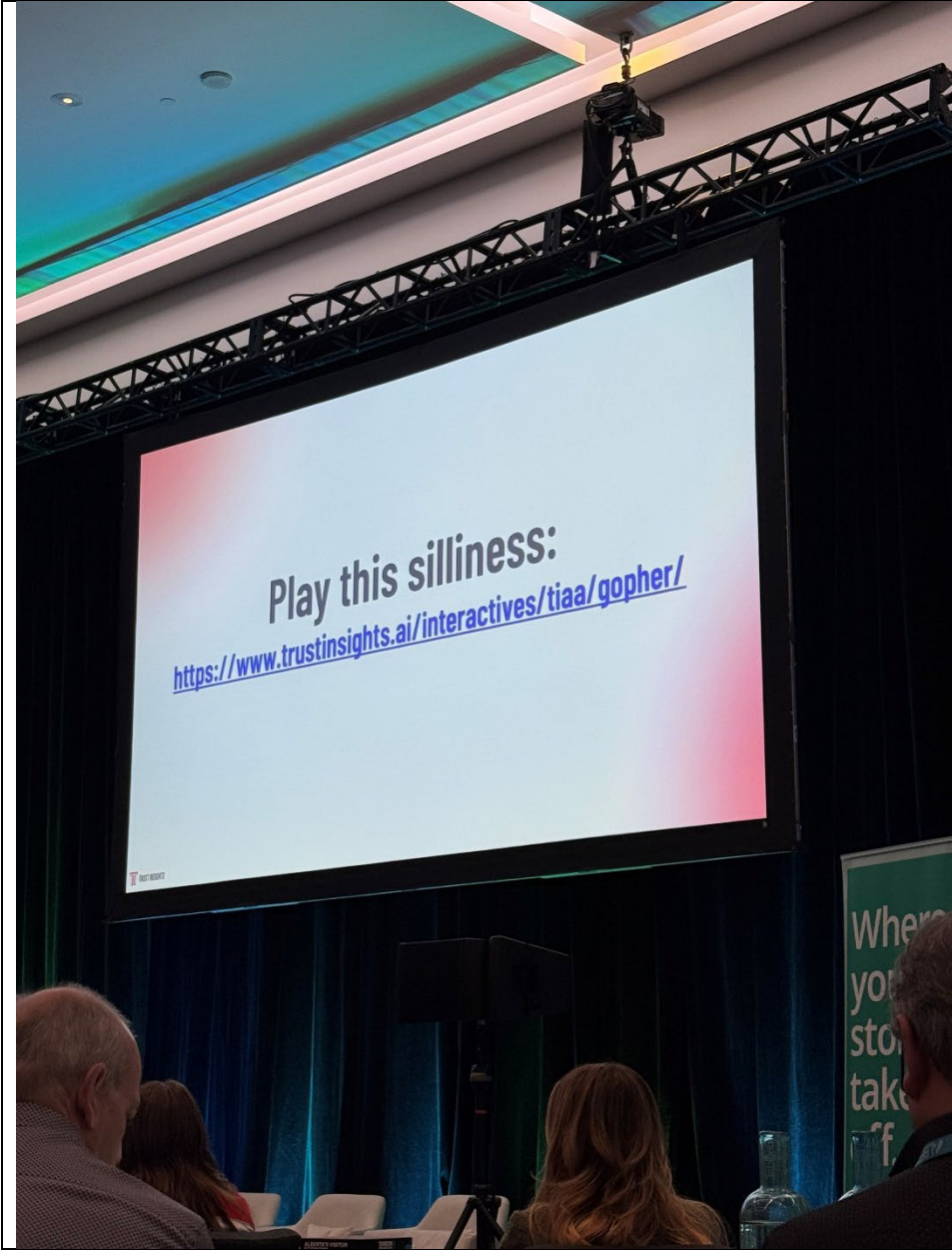


WORK
If you build a place where people want to work, then you have built a place where businesses and residents will invest.



Source: Destinations International

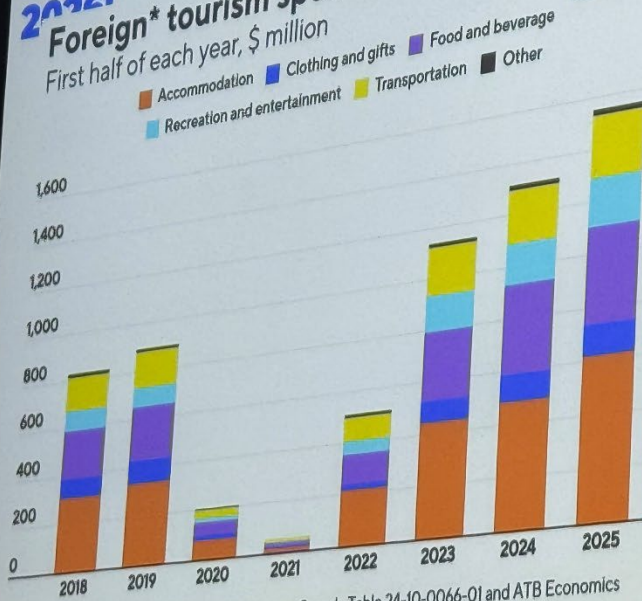




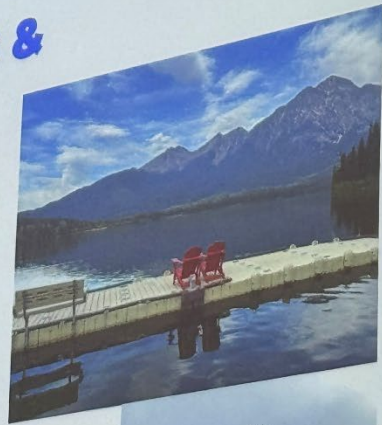
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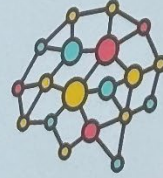
Top 3 Thinking Skills in an AI-First World



CRITICAL



CREATIVE



CONTEXTUAL

CURRENT STATE

\$14.7B

2025 ESTIMATED
VISITOR
SPENDING

265,000

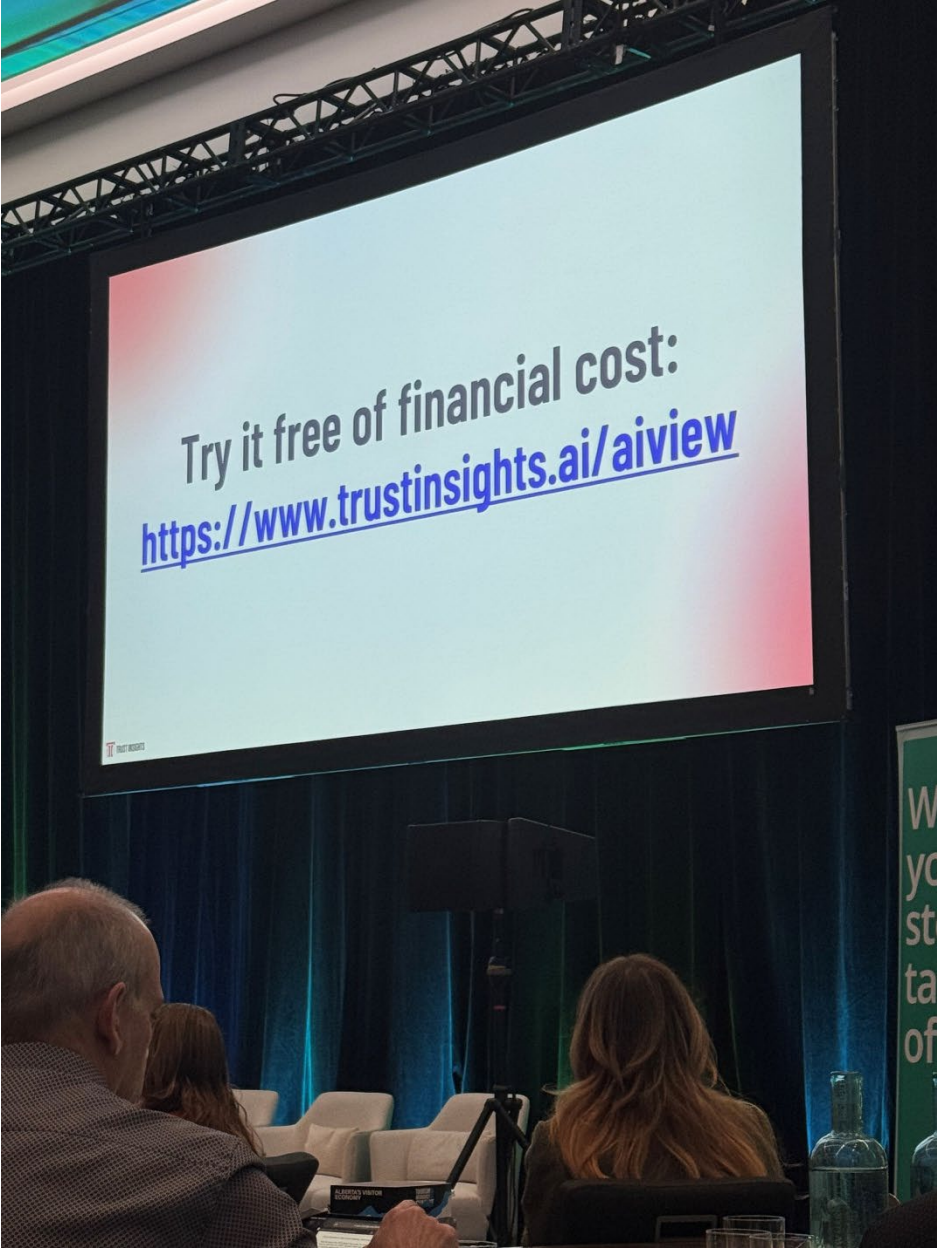
TOTAL
TOURISM
EMPLOYMENT

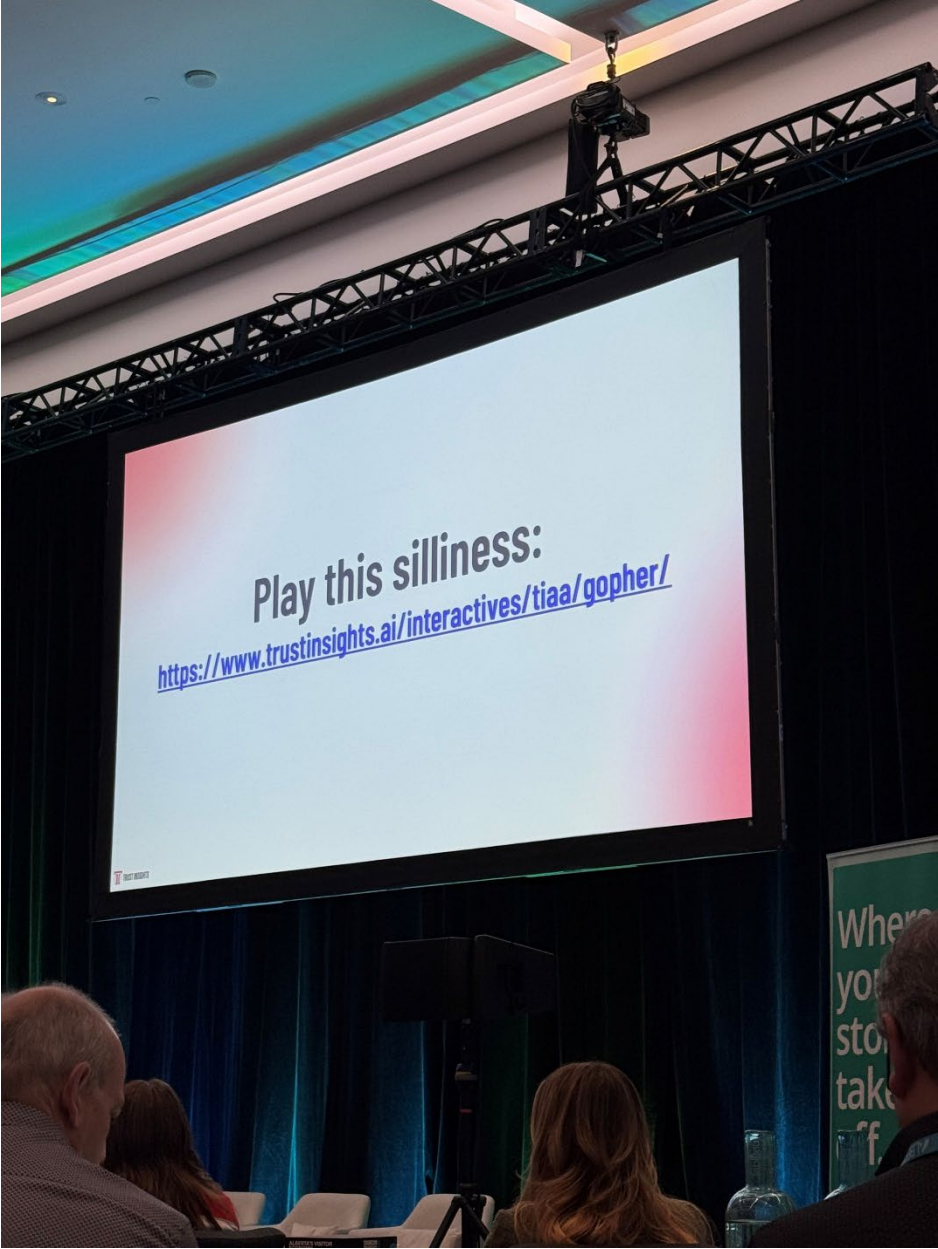
5,000

NEW TOURISM
BUSINESSES
SINCE 2023

TOURISM
INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION

ALBERTA





What Models & Tools To Use For Creation : February 2026

| Media Type | First Choice | Second Choice | Open Weights |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Text | Claude Opus 4.6 | Gemini 3 Pro | GLM 4.7 Flash |
| Coding & Interactives | Claude Opus 4.6 | OpenAI Codex 5.3 | Kimi K2.5 |
| Video | Google Veo 3.1 | OpenAI Sora 2 | Wan 2.1 |
| Images | Google Nano Banana Pro 2 | ChatGPT Image | Flux 2 Dev |
| Audio (Text to Speech) | Eleven Labs | Google TTS | Qwen TTS |
| Audio (Music) | Suno | Riffusion | n/a |
| Synthesizing qualitative data | NotebookLM | n/a | Open Notebook |
| Synthesizing quantitative data | Google Colab | n/a | Jupyter Lab |

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The Magic Trick:

Ask me one question at a time until you have enough information to complete the task.

Where
your

CURRENT STATE

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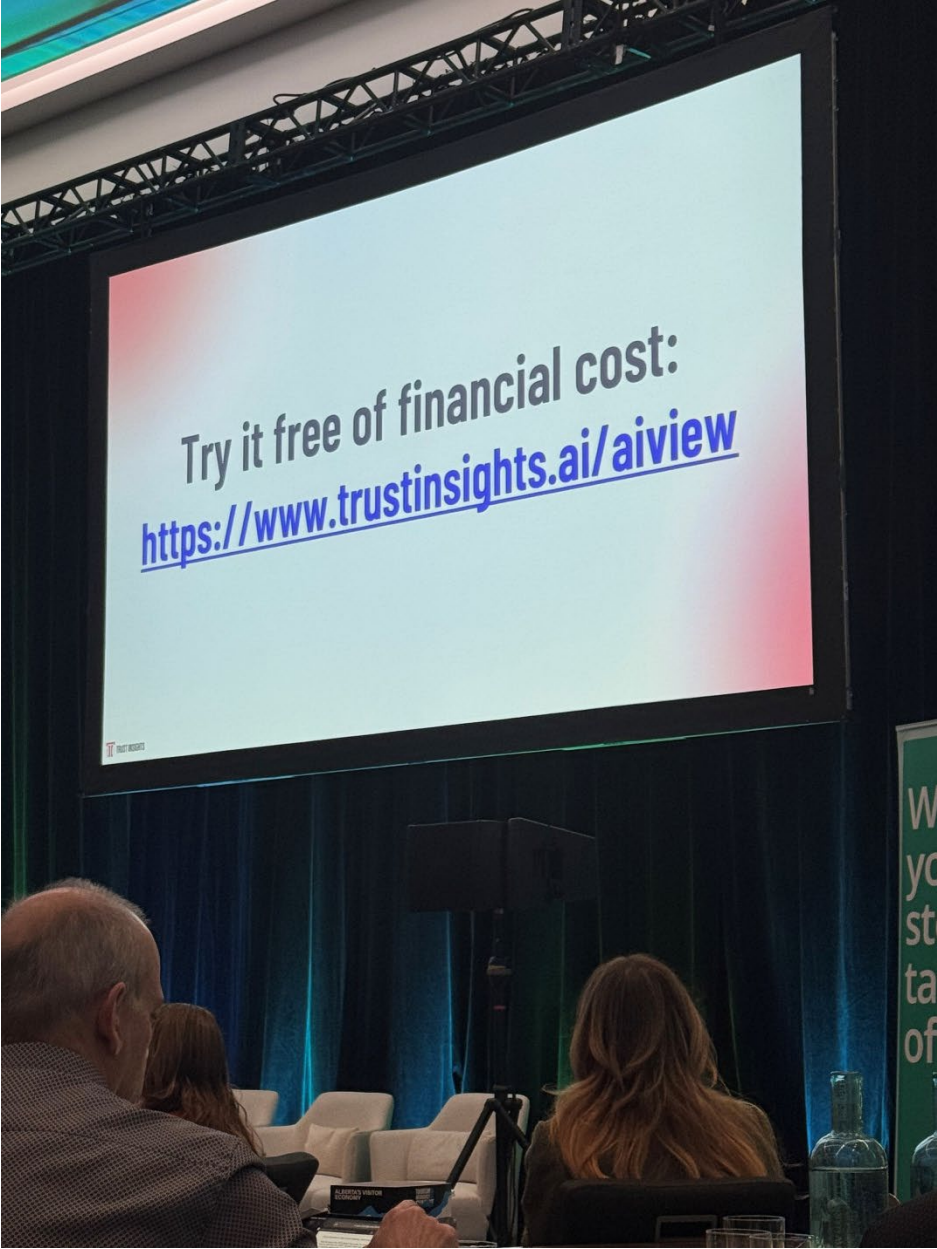
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TOURISM
EMPLOYMENT

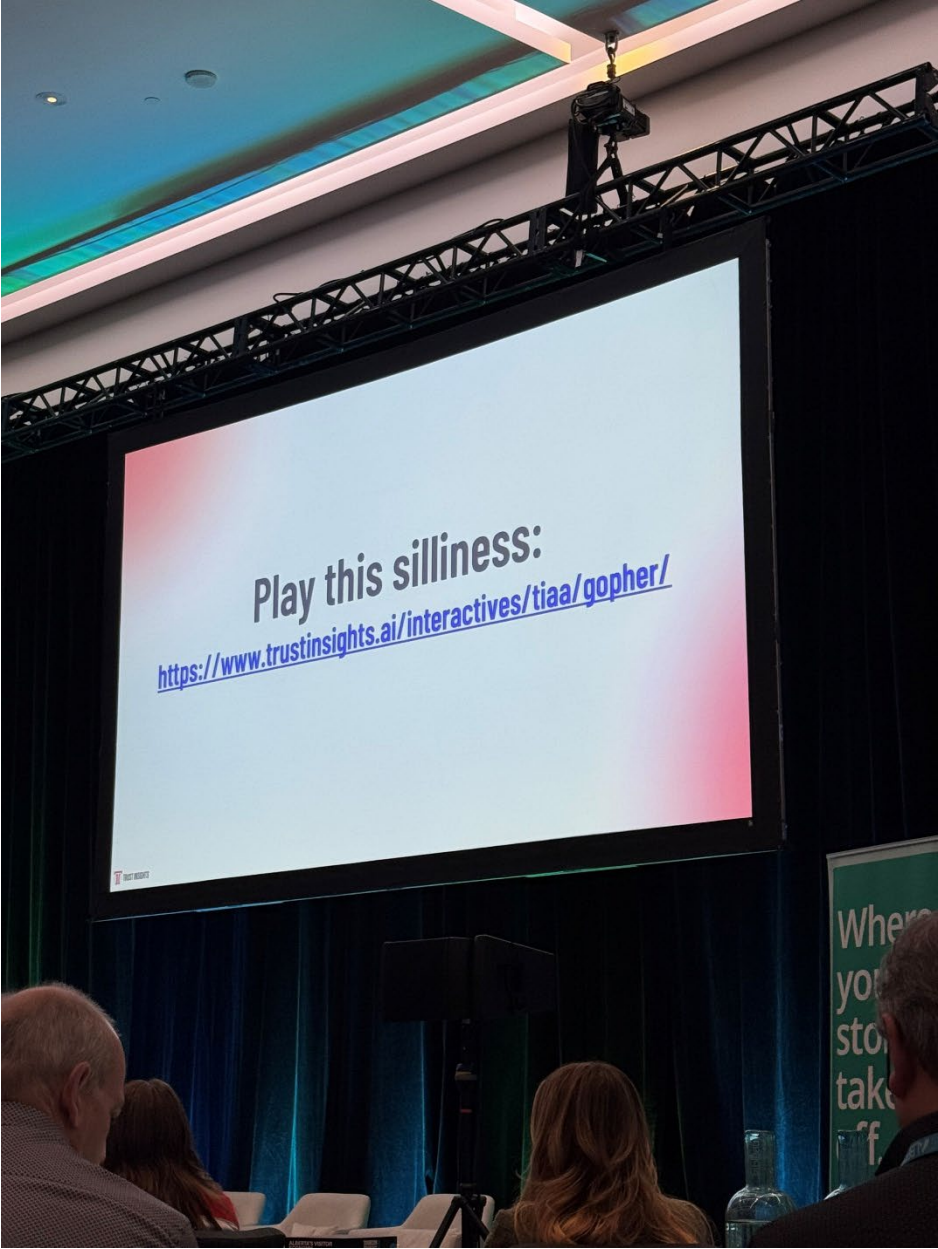
5,000

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BUSINESSES
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TOURISM
INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION

ALBERTA





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Where
your

EDA Conference Plan

Basic Information

Website - https://www.edaalberta.ca/event_website.php

Dates - April 14 – 16th

Location – Kananaskis

Priority Sessions

April 15th

- Pre-Session #1: Economic Development for Elected Officials *for elected officials only
- **Pre-Session #2: Discover Powerful New Data Tools for Economic Developers**
9:00 AM – 10:30 AMat Mount Kidd Ballroom
- Pre-Session #3: Leading Well- Sustaining Your Effectiveness as a Community Leader
9:00 AM – 11:00 AMat Rockies Room
- **Opening Luncheon & Plenary: Turning Fresh Ideas Into Bold Futures. Alberta's Opportunity Moment. - 12:00 PM – 1:30 PMat Olympic Ballroom**
- **A1: Sector Roundtable- Agriculture & Agri-Food - 1:45 PM – 3:00 PMat Olympic Ballroom**
- **A2: Sector Roundtable-Energy, Petrochemicals & Renewables - 1:45 PM – 3:00 PMat Explorer Room**
- **A3: Sector Roundtable: Tourism & Creative Services - 1:45 PM – 3:00 PMat Mount Kidd Ballroom**
- **A4: Sector Roundtable Aviation, Aerospace & Defense - 3:15 PM – 4:30 PMat Olympic Ballroom**
- **A5: Sector Roundtable: Life Sciences, Health & Biotech - 3:15 PM – 4:30 PMat Explorer Room**
- **A6: Sector Roundtable-Applied & Deep Tech - 3:15 PM – 4:30 PMat Mount Kidd Ballroom**
- **EDA Board & Elected Officials Meet & Greet - 5:00 PM – 6:00 PMat Woody's Pub & Patio**
- **Community Awards of Excellence Dinner: Celebrating Alberta. Shaping our Future. 6:30 PM – 9:30 PMat Olympic Ballroom**

April 16th

- **Breakfast Plenary: Canada's Competitive Edge: Alberta's Role in a Changing Global Investment Landscape - 8:00 AM – 8:45 AMat Olympic Ballroom**
- **B1 Workshop- Powering Growth- Smarter Electricity Investments for Competitive Communities - 9:00 AM – 10:15 AMat Olympic Ballroom**
- **B2 Workshop- The Next Generation of Economic Infrastructure - 9:00 AM – 10:15 AMat Explorer Room**
- **B3 Workshop- Small Business, Big Impact: Financial Training and Entrepreneur Support - 9:00 AM – 10:15 AMat Mount Kidd Ballroom**
- **B4 Workshop - Do More With Less: A Hands-On AI Workshop for Alberta Economic Developers (*pre-registration required) - 9:00 AM – 10:15 AMat Rockies Room**
- **C1 Workshop- The Digital Frontline: AI, Extended Reality, and Cyber Risk in Economic Development - 10:30 AM – 11:45 AMat Olympic Ballroom**
- **C2 Workshop- Fresh Lenses on Rural Housing: An Interactive Simulation - 10:30 AM – 11:45 AMat Explorer Room**
- **C3 Workshop- Manufacturing 4.0: Innovate, Digitize, Automate: Alberta's Next Advantage 10:30 AM – 11:45 AMat Mount Kidd Ballroom**
- **C4 Workshop- Borderless Growth: A Hands-On Workshop on Using Talent Pathways & Global Investment Tools to Build Alberta's Next Economy**

10:30 AM – 11:45 AMat Rockies Room

- Luncheon & Plenary: Alberta at a Crossroads- Competing Nationally. Leading Internationally. 12:00 PM – 1:30 PMat Olympic Ballroom
- D1- Workshop- The Next Digital Frontier: Alberta 2030- Readiness in Action 1:45 PM – 3:00 PMat Olympic Ballroom
- D2 Workshop- Wildfire-Resilient Communities: Planning, Recovery & the Future of Housing 1:45 PM – 3:00 PMat Explorer Room
- D3 Workshop- Pitch Practice & Prep Workshop 1:45 PM – 3:00 PMat Mount Kidd Ballroom
- D4 Workshop- Building Regional Data Partnerships for Investment Attraction 1:45 PM – 3:00 PMat Rockies Room
- Bonus Workshop #1- Your Voice. Our Future. 3:15 PM – 4:30 PMat Mount Kidd Ballroom
- Bonus Workshop #2- The Winning Conditions: Unlocking Tourism Growth in Your Community 3:15 PM – 4:30 PMat Rockies Room
- EDA Chair's Recognition Dinner 6:30 PM – 9:00 PMat Olympic Ballroom

April 17th

- Plenary #1: Economic Futures- Alberta's Outlook and Opportunities Ahead - 8:30 AM – 9:15 AMat Olympic Ballroom
- Plenary #2: From Blueprint to Bold Future — How ATCO is Reinventing Essential Infrastructure 9:15 AM – 10:00 AMat Olympic Ballroom
- Plenary #3: Be Bold- Alberta's Next Chapter - 10:00 AM – 10:45 AMat Olympic Ballroom
- Closing Ceremony - 10:45 AM – 11:00 AMat Olympic Ballroom

Purpose

Continue to gain an understanding of my role as Economic Development Officer in the Town of Blackfalds, exploring opportunities to work more efficiently while exploring targeted sector opportunities.

Goals/Objectives/Tactics

1. Gain a better understanding of how I can use new technology and strategies to increase my capacity as a single person department.
 - a. Attend as many sessions as possible on AI and technology that are offered.
 - i. Come back with one recommendation that I should implement in 2026
 - b. Stay current on Albertan Economic Development trends and best practices by attending sessions on future trends.
 - c. Attend all networking sessions to learn from colleagues.
2. Explore how I can engage better with our local food producers.
 - a. Attend sessions on the food production and agricultural sectors.
 - i. Come back with one strategy to implement in Blackfalds.
 - b. Focus on the food production and value add with investment attraction.
 - i. Come back with one suggestion for CAEP and how they can have a role in this area.
3. Explore the opportunities that are presented by the tourism sector.
 - a. Attend sessions related to tourism and identify new ways to measure and estimate impact of Drift Scape program.
 - b. Continue to gather stats to help support work in Tourism.
4. Host discussion on billion dollar plus projects and how to evaluate them.

a. Use Whova app to create a event to have this discussion.

Deliverables

1. A contact list of new contacts
2. A conference report to share with EDTAC
3. One AI/technology application that I can implement – with IT approval
4. The start of a matrix on how to evaluate and rate billion dollar plus projects.

Contact List

| |
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| |
| |

MEETING DATE: April 13, 2026

PREPARED BY: Peter McGee, Economic Development Officer

SUBJECT: **Economic Development 2026 Projects**

BACKGROUND

The Blackfalds Council has approved the 2026 budget for the Economic Development Department, outlining key projects and initiatives aimed at fostering community growth and engagement. The strategic focus includes several high-impact programs designed to enhance economic resilience and attract investment.

Economic Development Strategy

The Council has authorized funding for a comprehensive update to the existing Economic Development Strategy. EDO McGee will collaborate with internal staff to develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) for selecting a qualified consulting firm. The process will involve the Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee (EDTAC) from the initial selection through to the final approval of the strategy, ensuring stakeholder engagement and alignment with community goals.

Event Expansion Activities

This initiative aims to amplify the positive economic impacts of local events. Strategies include increasing event attendance, extending visitor duration within Blackfalds, and encouraging attendees to explore different commercial districts. These efforts are intended to boost local business activity and enhance community vibrancy.

Labour Market Study

A collaborative regional Labour Market Study will be undertaken, led by Lacombe County, involving seven municipalities. The study seeks to analyze workforce trends, identify skill gaps, and develop a Workforce Strategy that supports economic resilience and sustainable growth. This initiative is critical for adapting to evolving labor market demands and ensuring long-term competitiveness.

Tourism Attraction Creation

Efforts to attract tourists will focus on enhancing visual appeal and engagement through new murals and interactive programs. These initiatives aim to increase visitor interest, promote cultural engagement, and stimulate local economic activity by leveraging artistic and regional assets.

Data Collection

The budget allocates funds for the purchase of pedestrian counters to be strategically placed throughout town. Data collected will inform business development strategies, support new business attraction, and optimize commercial district planning.

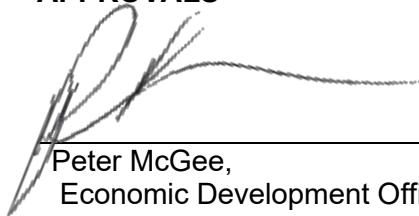
Advertising and Promotion

This component addresses marketing challenges identified in the 2025 Business Walk. The focus is on expanding advertising efforts to increase visibility of Blackfalds and its business community, thereby attracting new customers and investment opportunities.

ATTACHMENTS

None

APPROVALS



Peter McGee,
Economic Development Officer

Author