

Unique Partnership Announced to Grow Business Investment and Tourism in the Central Okanagan

Tuesday, December 3, 2019: Kelowna, BC – Joining forces to create greater economic impact: that's the goal of a first-ever partnership between the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) and Tourism Kelowna. The two organizations have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to jointly leverage the region's key industry sectors to generate business investment and attract new meetings and conferences.

"New and big business opportunities can start with a visit to a new destination either on vacation or attending a business meeting or conference," said Corie Griffiths, Director of the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission. "When business leaders and key decision makers are introduced to new destinations, especially an attractive year-round destination like ours, they begin to see potential and new opportunities for growth."

The new partnership will initially focus on agriculture, viticulture, aerospace, and digital technology industries, sectors recognized as major economic drivers for Kelowna and the Central Okanagan. The partners will collaborate on regional promotion and sales campaigns and work with leading industry associations and economic incubators like Accelerate Okanagan to market and reinforce the Central Okanagan business advantage to businesses and business leaders.

"Collaboration is the foundation of our work at Tourism Kelowna," said Lisanne Ballantyne, President & CEO of Tourism Kelowna. "When we recognized our shared mandates, targets, and messaging it made strategic sense to combine our budgets and expertise with COEDC. Together we can now access new grants and federal promotion partners so suddenly an investment amount grows to generate a much larger reach than we could have achieved on our own."

The impact of business events goes beyond the immediate economic activity – it can trigger a series of investment attraction events leading to big business opportunities, assist in talent recruitment, and lead to business relocation or expansion projects. The resulting impact of strategic investments in business events and economic development initiatives are often long-lasting and can include further economic sector collaboration; the creation of new partnerships for research, investment, and trade; job growth, and enhanced quality of life for residents.

"Business events are a catalyst for long-term economic development," said Virginie De Visscher, Senior Director Business Development, Economic Sectors who leads Canada's national meetings strategy at Destination Canada, the federal agency responsible for marketing Canada for leisure and business travel. "It's exceptionally gratifying to see Tourism Kelowna and the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission embrace Canada's national meetings strategy. This approach of aligning with regional economic sector priorities is not only effective, but it is also leading edge and we applaud Tourism Kelowna's and the COEDC's forward vision."

About the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC)

The Central Okanagan Region is the most entrepreneurial region in Canada, BC's fastest growing tech hub and among the fastest growing metro areas in Canada. As the region's primary business resource, the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission, a service of the Regional District of Central Okanagan, works to foster a healthy and dynamic community economy by supporting existing business growth and encouraging new business investment in the region. In October 2019, the COEDC launched [Moving Forward to 2025](#), a new strategic plan identifying Competing Globally as a key strategic pillar and Agriculture and Viticulture, Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing and Digital Tech as sectors in focus. This partnership directly aligns with the COEDC's vision to showcase the Central Okanagan as an innovative, future-focused region in these industry sectors.

About Tourism Kelowna

As the lead destination marketing organization (DMO) for the Central Okanagan, Tourism Kelowna works on behalf of over 415 local businesses and the larger tourism and hospitality community to generate overnight visitor demand that economically benefits Kelowna and its surrounding areas. Meetings, conferences and event tourism play a major role in Tourism Kelowna's four-season development strategy, helping to round-out hotel occupancies and local spending during traditionally slower tourism months. Kelowna attracts 2 million visitors annually who in turn generate \$337 million in local spending. A vital economic driver for the region, Kelowna's tourism industry provides 12,000 jobs, \$142 million in tax revenue and generates \$1.25 billion in total economic output annually.

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