

**Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission  
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
September 28, 2023**

**The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission acknowledges this meeting was held on the Traditional Territory of the Syilx/Okanagan Peoples.**

✓ = attended    X= Absent    \* Not required    A= Alternate Attended

**Advisory Council Executive:**

✓	Calissi, James, Chair
✓	Larson, Janice, Vice-Chair
✓	Checkley, Mike, Past Chair

✓	Hughes-Geekie, Sharon
✓	Nagy, Angela
X	Quinn, Paula

**Advisory Council:**

X	Alexander, Andrea
X	Barker, Phil
✓	Benson, Gavin
X	Blitz, Maurice
X	Bruns, Myles
X	Buchanan, Brad
✓	Carroll, Mandi
✓	Cannan, Ron
✓	Collins, Dave
✓	Csek, Nikki
✓	Dawn, Jeremy
X	Douglas, Laurel
X	Evans, Bob

✓	Friesen, Jason
X	Gipps, Paul
A	Harper, Shauna
X	Ireland, Blair
X	Labrecque, Cory
A	Lake, Brea
✓	Lewis, Chris
✓	Malcolm, Ryan
X	Mitchell, Kray
✓	North, Steve
X	Preston, Adriana
X	Price, Dan
X	Quinn, Paula

X	Ritchie, Geoff
✓	Robinson, Heather
X	Rogers, Dan
X	Stack, Luke
X	Stewart, Tony
X	Sulentich, Ruth
✓	Threlfall, Rich
✓	Thurnheer, Laura
X	Udzenija, Nicole
✓	Wentworth, Noel
X	White, Jill
✓	Widmer, Larry

**Staff and Consultants:**

✓	Allin, Paige
X	Braun, Tory
✓	Lesack, Sascha

✓	Mallory, Krista
✓	Stark Leader, Myrna
✓	Trevino, Valentina

✓	Weston, Eva
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**Guests:**

Ballantyne, Lisanne
Ginter, Sally

Needham, Karen
Schlosser, Joanna

## **1. Call to Order**

Chair James Calissi called the meeting to order at 7:34 am.

## **2. Adoption of Minutes**

Minutes of June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 unanimously approved.

## **3. Staff Update**

Krista Mallory, Manager of the COEDC, provided an update on the ETSI-BC Forest Impact Recovery Program. The COEDC has secured funding to hire an advisor who will serve as a consultant and gather valuable information regarding the impact of on-going changes in the forest sector on businesses in the Central Okanagan region, with a focus on rural communities.

Eva Weston, Business Development Officer with the COEDC, provided an update on the industry familiarization tours, organized in collaboration with Tourism Kelowna, for elected officials and regional partners. The first tour, scheduled for Tuesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, will focus on agriculture and viticulture. The second tour, set for November 8<sup>th</sup>, will center around cleantech, manufacturing, and aerospace.

## **4. Tourism and Wine Business Wildfire Impact Update**

Lisanne Ballantyne, CEO of Tourism Kelowna, provided an update on the wildfire impact on the tourism industry. **See attached presentation for details.**

Joanna Schlosser, Founder of Niche Wine Company and Director of Marketing at Quail's Gate Winery, provided an update on the wildfire impact on the wine industry.

- Niche Wine Company is located in West Kelowna and has been producing wine since 2009. They are a micro-producer, with a 10-acre farm that offers an Agri-tourism and community experience. Unfortunately, Niche Wine Company suffered property damage from the 2023 McDougall Creek Wildfire, including the loss of an equipment shed and deer fencing, and have since been closed.
- The tourism ban during the McDougall Creek Wildfire has had a significant impact on the wine industry in the Central Okanagan. Revenue and tourism numbers have been comparable to those of November, which is typically a slower period for viticulture businesses. Wineries heavily rely on wine clubs as a consistent revenue stream throughout the year. However, due to the tourism ban and closures, some wineries have been unable to sign up new members from the middle of August onwards. This lack of wine club signups will impact revenue for the fall and moving into the spring.
- Despite being a resilient community, the wine industry is facing multiple challenges, including COVID, supply chain issues, climate issues, confusing messaging around health and alcohol,

inflation, economic crisis, and wildfires. It is crucial to collectively examine the experiences of wineries and find ways to improve and create a significant shift in the industry.

- Niche Wine Company, as a small business and part of the BC wine community, recognizes the need to diversify their revenue streams. They are exploring the creation of a more immersive Agri-tourism experience to attract the next generation of tourists. This aligns with a global trend.
- One challenge faced by small businesses and the wine industry is the limited time available to pivot and create new revenue streams. This is particularly problematic due to the misalignment of government regulations at different levels.
- The wine industry requires support from the community and regulators to implement innovative ideas that can change the industry's trajectory during times of crisis.

## 5. Discussion

- Communication gaps within the provincial emergency response logistics chain need improvement.
- Recommendation to leverage existing technology platforms to enhance communication between emergency response teams and accommodators. This would ensure clearer information is provided to those affected by an emergency regarding available accommodation options.
- The significance of proactive emergency avoidance investments, such as implementing regional fire smart requirements, was emphasized. Given the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters due to climate change, it is crucial to consider these investments. Additionally, efforts should be made to focus on climate mitigation activities, climate action, and accelerating community and business response activities to decarbonize operations and businesses, thereby staying ahead of climate change.
- As we look to the impact of climate change and wildfires, forest management is a large contributor, especially in interface areas. There is an opportunity to advocate to the province to look at their forest management systems as well as to collaborate and learn from more traditional forms of fire mitigation.
- Extreme media coverage of the wildfires has a large impact on businesses, tourism and post-secondary institutions. We need to continue to undertake initiatives that Tourism Kelowna has taken to shift into marketing and promoting the region as a 4-season destination to overcome these negative impacts the wildfires and smoke have had on the region's image and reputation. There is an opportunity to shift our focus to bring visitors to the Central Okanagan in the other months of the year highlighting the unique offerings of each season.



## **6. New Business**

- No new business

### ***Adjournment:***

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 am.

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