



BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TO: Council

DATE: February 22, 2022 **DIVISION:** All

FILE: N/A **APPLICATION:** N/A

SUBJECT: Canadian Badlands Tourism Association

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At Council's October 26, 2021, Organizational Meeting, Council passed the following motion:

MOVED by Councillor Hanson that Administration be directed to provide a report back to Council on the cost and benefits of joining the Canadian Badlands Tourism Association no later than the end of February, 2022.

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the current status of the organization and to present new information for Council's interest in local tourism development as it relates to Business and Economic Development in Rocky View County.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

Administration recommends that the report on Canadian Badlands Tourism Association be received as information in accordance with Option #1.

INTRODUCTION:

In researching details for this Canadian Badlands Tourism Association report, Administration talked to the following individuals:

- Julia Fielding, Executive Director at Travel Drumheller.
- Councillor Donna Bigger from Wheatland County, who was the most recent Chairperson for Canadian Badlands Tourism Association.
- Anastasia Martin-Stilwell, former Travel Alberta representative, who worked directly with Canadian Badlands Tourism Association.
- Cameron Spence, Director of Tourism Development at Travel Alberta in Calgary.

The Canadian Badlands organization is now defunct. In September 2021, the Board of Directors for Canadian Badlands voted in favor of dissolution of the organization.

The www.canadianbadlands.com web domain is still active and the 'Canadian Badlands' brand is being maintained by Travel Alberta. However, as to be expected, there are no staff employed at Canadian Badlands, so reaching the correct people for an update took some time.

BACKGROUND:

Rocky View County joined Canadian Badlands in January 2020. A very successful two-day Canadian Badlands 2020 Tourism Development Conference was held in early March 2020 in Strathmore, at which Councillors and members of Administration were in attendance. It was a well-attended and very useful conference; unfortunately, no one could have predicted the profound impacts of COVID-19.

Administration Resources

David Kalinchuk, Business and Economic Development Department



Canadian Badlands was also instrumental in introducing ATIS (the Alberta Tourism Information System) to tourism and entertainment businesses in Rocky View County. Canadian Badlands assisted and supported local business in taking advantage of this state-of-the-art database system.

The global emergence of COVID-19 seriously impacted the Canadian tourism market in mid-March 2020. As Canadian Badlands felt the impacts, in July 2020, employment ended for the two the staff members at Canadian Badlands.

DISSOLUTION OF CANADIAN BADLANDS:

An outside consultant was hired in the summer of 2021 to look at the possible options for the future of the Canadian Badlands organization. Their study recommended three options, including dissolution. As stated, the Board of Directors for Canadian Badlands voted in favor of dissolution of the Canadian Badlands organization, in September 2021.

Also contributing to the changes in 2021, a number of the larger partners such as Medicine Hat and Lethbridge had pulled out of the Canadian Badlands organization. A major funding application to Travel Alberta was also denied.

Having received a membership invoice in December 2020, with administrative options given by the Business and Economic Development Department, Rocky View County chose to not renew Canadian Badlands membership for 2021.

LOOKING FORWARD:

Rocky View County continues to support local tourism, retail, and entertainment businesses through the Bragg Creek Chamber of Commerce, Langdon Chamber of Commerce, the Balzac Business Association, as well as Federal Community Futures offices in Cochrane and Strathmore. Support for local businesses, farm-based agri-tourism businesses, and entrepreneurs is a priority for Rocky View County's Business and Economic Development Department.

In the recent communications with Travel Alberta, they reported that a *2022 Bootstraps Strategy* is currently underway. This initiative will look to distribute tourism opportunities around the province, expand product development, and address COVID-19 recovery while pursuing investment for future tourism developments. With Rocky View County's central location in the province and proximity to Calgary International Airport, the County is well positioned to be a gateway for international visitors.

In light of the dissolution of Canadian Badlands, Rocky View County has been approached by economic development colleagues in the region to explore a new partnership of communities north of Calgary. This tourism partnership could include Airdrie, Beiseker, Carstairs, Cochrane, Crossfield, Didsbury, Irricana, Mountain View County, Olds, Strathmore, and Wheatland County. Nothing formally has been proposed or presented. Business & Economic Development will keep Council informed of this opportunity.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

There are no budget implications at this time.



OPTIONS:

- Option #1: Motion #1 THAT the Report on Canadian Badlands Tourism Association be received as information
- Motion #2 THAT Administration be directed to explore alternative tourism partnerships.
- Option #2: THAT alternative direction be provided.

Respectfully submitted,

Concurrence,

“David Kalinchuk”

“Byron Riemann”

Economic Development Manager

Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DK/rp