

Key Messages – Catalyst Funding & Destination Development Supports

February 5, 2020

General Key Messages

- We are putting forestry workers, their families and communities impacted by mill closures at the forefront of government supports.
- We also need to help communities diversify their economies so they can better weather the cyclical down turns in the forestry industry.
- That's why the Province, through Destination BC, is providing \$1 million to support tourism development, to help rural communities diversify and keep people working.
- A key component of the Strategic Framework for Tourism is to promote tourism in all regions of the province, and we want to make sure people in these communities see the benefits of tourism.
- \$200,000 will go to each Regional Destination Marketing Organization (RDMO) to support community tourism development planning and destination development projects in rural communities and communities impacted by mill closures.
- RDMOs will work in collaboration with the impacted communities and government to prioritize the needs of the people who live there and determine what tourism projects will have the greatest impact.

Questions and Answers:

1) What is the Catalyst Fund?

- In May 2019, DBC announced the creation of a new \$1 million Destination Development Catalyst Fund to support the implementation of key projects identified in the 10-year local area destination development plans.
- The initial intent of the fund was to support the implementation of key tourism projects identified in the planning area 10-year Destination Development Strategies and action plans across the province.

2) You committed to roll-out the Fund in the Fall - why the delay?

- Soon after Destination BC announced the fund, the Ministry committed to work with the Regional Destination Marketing Organizations (RDMOs) to review their roles and responsibilities related to tourism marketing and destination development.
- Given the inter-connections with this work and the intent of the catalyst fund, the roll-out was put on hold, pending outcomes of those discussions.

3) Why has the \$1M in funds been redirected to the RDMOs?

- Tourism has the potential to help communities diversify their economies and there are several communities experiencing significant declines in their forestry sectors.
- Enhancing tourism offerings requires on-the-ground support and expertise, and the RDMOs are in the best position to support that work.
- We made the decision to allocate the \$1 million in catalyst funding for fiscal year 2019/20 to the RDMOs to support tourism strategic planning and destination development projects at the local level.

4) Where is the money coming from? How come it's not going to forestry workers?

- The \$1 million in funding is coming from Destination BC.
- Government has established programs to support interior forestry workers such as the Retirement Bridging Program, the Job Placement Program and the Skills Training Grants for Employers Program.
- These programs are specifically designed to support forest workers.
- The funding we're providing to the RDMOs is to support economic diversification in these communities through tourism.

5) How does this funding align with or differ from FLNRO programs?

- This funding is intended to help rural communities and communities impacted by mill closures as they explore new opportunities in the tourism sector.
- While this funding is going to support communities impacted by the cyclical downturns in the forestry industry, it is unique from other programs offered by FLNRO because it is intended to help these communities realize the benefits of tourism.

- The tourism industry in B.C. is thriving, and many rural communities in B.C. hold great potential for tourism growth.

6) Which communities will be included and which communities won't?

- The situation in the forestry sector is fluid and changing, which is why the RDMOs will be working closely with Community Transition Teams to determine the areas with greatest need.
- Eligible communities will include rural communities, with a population of under 25,000, that are experiencing permanent or indefinite mill closures and those undergoing transition.
- For example:
 - Some of the rural communities experiencing permanent or indefinite closures include Fort St James, McKenzie, Quesnel, Clearwater, and Merritt.
 - And there are many other communities experiencing economic transition such as those in the Kootenay Rockies and many across Vancouver Island.

7) Who is deciding how funding will be allocated? How are they deciding?

- The situation in the forestry sector is fluid and changing, which is why the RDMOs will be working closely with Community Transition Teams to determine what tourism projects will have the most impact.
- Eligible communities will include rural communities, with a population of under 25,000 that are experiencing permanent or indefinite mill closures and those undergoing transition.
- Funding will be allocated to support tourism strategic planning, or tourism infrastructure, amenity or product development within these areas.
- Where there are many communities experiencing significant declines across any one tourism region, priority may be given to projects of regional scope as identified in the regional Destination Development Strategy.

8) How will the catalyst funding flow to communities?

- The decision on how best to flow funds to support the impacted communities to diversify their economies through tourism will vary by region and may look different for each community.
- For example, funding may be used to support trail development in a community whereas another community may wish to develop a tourism master plan which could be led through the RDMO directly or by a third-party contractor.
- TAC expects to see preliminary project lists in late April/early May and will work closely with the RDMOs as discussions with the impacted communities commence.

9) How does this funding differ from the Community Supports Grant Program?

- The Community Support Grant Program provides short-term funding to support Interior B.C. communities that have been impacted by a permanent or indefinite mill closure or shift reduction.
- Funding under this program is to support community transition and support services for impacted forestry workers.
- This destination development funding will go towards rural communities in all five of B.C.'s tourism regions, not just the interior, as well as communities in transition.

10) Why is there no funding being provided to the Vancouver Coast and Mountains region?

- We are focusing on rural communities, with a population of less than 25,000, outside of urban centres that need support and in areas most heavily impacted by permanent or indefinite mill closures or shift reductions.

11) What will the funding be used for?

- The overall purpose of this one-time funding is to elevate tourism opportunities and aid in mid to longer-term economic diversification and recovery in these impacted communities through destination development.
- The funding is not to be used for marketing or promotional activities.
- Projects will be determined with community input, but could include trail projects, Indigenous tourism experiences, research studies and signage projects.

12) How will projects be selected?

- Projects are to be identified in collaboration with the impacted communities and staff in the Rural Development Unit of the Ministry of Forest, Lands, Natural Resources Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD).
- Eligible communities will include rural communities, with a population of under 25,000 that are experiencing permanent or indefinite mill closures.
- Projects are expected to support the community's relevant destination development strategy to drive visitation and support community economic diversification beyond their primary resource sectors.
- This could include supports for tourism strategic planning, tourism infrastructure projects, and/or amenity and product development in these communities.

13) Has a similar amount been budgeted for 2020/21? Will those funds also be channeled through the RDMOs?

- The funding for 2019/20 is a one-time grant designed to support rural communities impacted by mill closures to diversify their economies through destination development and tourism.

- We are committed to supporting destination development across the province and are continuing to explore options on how best to help communities implement their local destination development strategies.

14) How is the Minister filling the gap in funding in areas not experiencing mill closures?

- We recognize that there is a need to invest in destination development initiatives in communities across the province to help them develop their visitor economy.
- We are committed to continuing to explore ways to support them, especially with product and infrastructure development.
- We continue to work with our colleagues in other ministries like Municipal Affairs and Housing, Environment and Climate Change, and Transportation to help identify areas where their work can support tourism and destination development.