

Report for Information

To: Mayor and Council **File No:** 550-03

Meeting Date: July 8, 2025

From: CAO, Anne Yanciw

Reviewed By: CO, Carleena Shepherd

Subject: Economic Recovery Project Close Out Report

RECOMMENDATION:

Information only, no resolution required.

BACKGROUND:

With funding from the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR), the Village engaged Strategies North to begin providing Recovery Manager services from November 15, 2024 through May 15, 2025.

An extension to the funding was requested from EMCRC but was denied. Strategies North offered to continue providing services without charge until June 15, 2025 in order to wrap up projects.

ANALYSIS:

The services required from Strategies North included assessing the economic impact of the closures of highways 16 and 93 in summer of 2024, developing a Recovery Strategy, developing a Recovery Plan, and implementing the actions of the plan.

Attached is the off-boarding package supplied by Strategies North to the Village.

IMPLICATIONS:

Strategic Priority: Development and Diversification - Promote a diverse economy and the organizations and business that make up our local networks; including our municipal corporations.

Policy/Legislation: N/A

Budget Implications: N/A

Legal Implications: N/A

Communication: This report appears on a public agenda.

Staffing Implications: N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

- Economic Recovery Management Offboarding Package



CAO, Anne Yanciw



Reviewed by: CO, Carleena Shepherd

Village of Valemount Economic Recovery Management Off-Boarding Package

June 15th, 2025



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- Press Releases: April - May 2025
- Key Messages: March - June 2025
- Briefing Notes: May - June 2025
- Letters of Support

Summary of Economic Recovery Activities and Next Steps

November 15th, 2024 - June 15th, 2025

Completed Work

On November 15th, 2024 Strategies North Advisory began work to support the Village of Valemount's economic recovery in response to the 2024 Jasper Wildfire. Over the 7 month contract as Economic Recovery Manager, Strategies North completed the following activities:

Development and Delivery of a Comprehensive Recovery Strategy

- Overview of Valemount's situation, economic impacts, community input, and opportunities for recovery.
- Instrumental for discussions with funders, partners, and Government.
- Has been utilized to inform all work done since its creation.

Community Engagement

- 2 surveys developed to engage business needs.
- In-person business meetings.
- Direct business visits.
- Consistent email communications.

Funding Coordination

- 9 funding programs for businesses and community organizations delivered to community businesses and non-profit organizations.
- Consultation and direction for potential applicants.

Development and Distribution of Media Releases.

- Media releases detailed struggles of Valemount Community and Businesses

- Lead to public support and led to non-monetary contributions and resources.

Facilitation and Development of the Discussions to Reform the VoV Chamber of Commerce.

- Worked with business owners and Tourism Valemount to create discussions about the chamber and encourage its re-development.
- Currently ongoing, with new fresh volunteers prepared to chair.

Lobbying Efforts with the Province of Alberta

- 3 lobbying meetings with ministers and officials.
- Created opportunity for businesses and organizations to submit costs related to hosting evacuees for reimbursement.
- Collection, engagement, and compilation of invoices to be submitted to the Municipality of Jasper and Alberta for reimbursement.
- Creation of a summary report detailing successes, struggles, who was contacted, and the overall goals of the meetings.

Lobbying Efforts with the Province of British Columbia

- 10 in-person lobbying meetings with ministers and officials.
- Consistent communication through email and phone discourse.
- Creation of a summary report detailing successes, struggles, who was contacted, and the overall goals of the meetings.

Lobbying Efforts with the Federal Government

- 8 Lobbying meetings with PacifiCan, PrairiesCan, Ministry of Tourism, and local Members of Parliament.
- Creation of a summary report detailing successes, struggles, who was contacted, and the overall goals of the meetings.

Led Discussions with Potential Funders and Partners

- Discussions with Community Futures, NDIT, and CBT regarding being a third party to distribute recovery funding, gaining support from all organizations and firm intent from Community Futures.
- Direct discussions with Destination BC for increased Valemount advertising in Destination BC initiatives

Developed a Funding Work Plan

- Outlines how recovery funding would be used and delivered to the business community through a third party.
- Developed two versions, one for provincial funding and one for federal funding
- Outlines how the process would function for the Village of Valemount, checks and balances, and reporting.
- Details activities, involved partners/actors, and rationale.

Developed a Recovery Action Plan with a List of Next Steps.

- Outlined major recovery objectives for the Village of Valemount.
- Outlined proposed future workplan for an extension of Strategy North's contract.
- Gave recommendations and key considerations to funders and government.

Coordination of a Local Business Skills-Building and Funding Workshop

- Collaborating and communication with Tourism Valemount
- Secured sponsorship from NDIT and partnership in delivery with CF.
- Developed survey to steer the agenda, giving presentations and discussion on finance, marketing, and economic/funding opportunities to business owners in Valemount
- 15 Business owners in attendance.

Action Items

Complete the Evacuee Reimbursement Package

1. Include costs incurred by the Village of Valemount in the package. Staff time must be entered in the Valemount_EmployeeSchedule spreadsheet, and any expenses included in the Valemount_DetailForm. Any expenses should be invoiced, and supported with documentation/receipts.
2. Total the amount of all invoices (businesses, non-profits, and the village).
3. If you have any relevant details on Evacuees add and edit in the Valemount Evacuee Spreadsheet file.
4. Send the total reimbursement amount, and the completed package (including all invoices, and any necessary receipts and documentation) to Emily Dawson, edawson@jasper-alberta.ca, from the Municipality of Jasper.
5. Discuss and engage with Jasper until funds are received.

Distribute Reimbursement Funding to Businesses

1. Using the provided contact list, distribute funds to individual businesses and organizations.
2. Create a report detailing the funds received and paid to businesses.

Follow Up and Continue Discussions with the Federal Government

1. Follow up with key contacts, including Members of Parliament, PacifiCan, and PrairiesCan, to maintain ongoing engagement and ensure timely awareness of any forthcoming discussions, developments, or updates relevant to the community.
2. Valemount to follow up with members of the Shadow Cabinet regarding the letter addressed to Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) to ensure it receives appropriate consideration and response.
3. Valemount to reach out to ADM Evans who may be able to assist in scheduling a meeting with Minister Olszewski.

Support the Chamber of Commerce

1. Support the development of the Chamber of Commerce by working with businesses and Tourism Valemount through advertising, communications, and public support.

Develop Project Opportunities with Columbia Basin Trust

1. Contact Columbia Basin Trust (Will Nixon), who previously expressed interest in supporting a distinct deliverable project.
2. Develop a relevant project to achieve tangible results for the community's economy. Can involve Tourism Valemount as a potential partner.
3. Work with CBT to secure funding.
4. Implement Project.

Appendix A: Recovery Strategy and Workplans

- **Recovery Strategy**
 - **Economic Recovery Workplan**
 - **Federal Recovery Funding Workplan**
 - **Provincial Recovery Funding Workplan**
-

Village of Valemount Economic Recovery Strategy

JANUARY 10, 2025



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Background

Overview

On July 22, 2024, the Municipality of Jasper and the surrounding area was evacuated due to wildfires. Highway 16 from British Columbia through Jasper National Park along with Highway 93 south to the Icefields were immediately closed to all commercial and tourist traffic. Valemount's 2022 Annual Report stated the Village as a "critical service provider for transportation of goods and people across the country",¹ so with an economy largely based on tourism and typically having otherwise significant commercial trucking in the area, Valemount was immediately negatively impacted by the fires and closures.

Due to the highway closures preventing access and smoky conditions, many tourists cancelled trips altogether. Valemount was cut off as a commercial stop, losing the overnight and refuel traffic it would typically get from traffic along Vancouver/Edmonton routes. Local businesses were unable to ship products or supplies in or out of the community. The highway closures crashed Valemount's peak revenue season, delivering a hard blow to its economy.

The highway would be completely closed for almost three weeks. On August 9, 2024, Highway 16 opened to reduced traffic and only fully opened another ten days later on August 19, 2024. Highway 93 opened to traffic on August 23, 2024 but routes were still impacted from both fear of further closures and lack of communication for their reopening. With summer coming to an end and the days starting to cool, Valemount's residents and businesses lost their busiest part of the year.

In November 2024, Valemount engaged Strategies North Advisory to assist the community in providing recovery management services. As part of these efforts, Strategies North is undertaking communications and engagement with community, government and organization relationship building, economic advisory, and proposal funding coordination. The desire for these efforts is to have Valemount be able to undertake a coordinated strategy, working in collaboration with government and other stakeholders to provide the community its needed support and resources.

The Village of Valemount has faced adversity before and wants to grow despite the challenges it faces. In 2006, the local sawmill, employing nearly 20% of Valemount's population, shut down and permanently closed in 2009. This was one of the first tests of resilience for the community but unlike residents of some small towns in similar situations, Valemount's people remained. As a beautiful middle-of-everywhere place surrounded by multiple mountain ranges, provincial parks, and recreation sites, tourism then grew to be the local dominant industry. The most northern of only 14 resort municipalities in British Columbia, Valemount has persisted through the COVID-19 pandemic, a Trans Mountain

¹ Village of Valemount, *2022 Annual Report*. (Valemount, BC: Village of Valemount), 2023.

Pipeline boom and bust, and will now rebound through the 2024 highway closure impacts with the right recovery actions and support.

The Wildfires: Valemount's Response

The Jasper wildfires forced thousands to evacuate on short notice, most without a plan of where to go. The Municipality of Jasper and Jasper National Park issued an evacuation order, simply telling people to use Highway 16 towards British Columbia.² 16,000 evacuees arriving in the middle of the night - almost 15 times the population of Valemount - were welcomed into the community with open arms. Valemount Mayor Owen Torgerson said "[Valemount is] a kin community to Jasper. We'll do whatever we can for our neighbours"³ after spending the first night directing the flood of traffic. Businesses and organizations opened their doors, allowing evacuees to rest, shower, and eat, and provided them goods and services at no cost to them. Almost every building with space in the community was open and looking to help out, from churches and the food bank to hair stylists giving free cuts and an RV park opening up their sites to any and all evacuees and asking for nothing in return, even when doing so put financial strain on themselves.



Providing emergency accommodation, preparing meals, and offering services, Valemount's response was immediate. The community came together, juggling an interprovincial crisis event with little capacity themselves, showing how important having strong businesses and organizations in a place like this is. When disaster strikes, British Columbia as a province and Canada as a country rely on the support of local businesses and community groups. These people and organizations step up because it's needed, even though it can be difficult. However, it is important to ensure that those businesses and organizations are not overly disadvantaged because of the help they provide, and that they survive to be there for the future. There is a collective responsibility to make sure the businesses, organizations, and communities that stepped up are supported. They weren't just vital in the moment, they're key to the long-term prosperity of the community.



² Municipality of Jasper, "Wildfire Timeline," (Jasper, AB: Municipality of Jasper), 2024.

³ Macdonald, Nancy, "Jasper evacuees huddle in Valemount, watching in disbelief as details of wildfire's devastation emerge," *The Globe and Mail*, July 25, 2024.

* Photos courtesy of Lianne Abbott

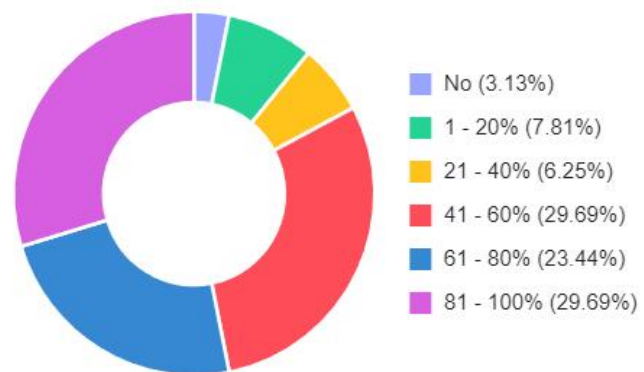
Once the needs of evacuees were addressed, Valemount then looked to their own business' and organizations' health. Some had now increased costs of their own, and many began to express concerns about the impacts of the wildfires and closures on the Village and its economy.

Community Engagement

Stakeholder Consultation

In response to business and organization's concerns, the Village of Valemount in partnership with Tourism Valemount created and distributed an initial survey for local businesses and organizations. Responses were collected between August 13th and 19th, with 64 businesses responding. Over half of the businesses were tourism accommodations, tour operators, or destination amenities. Another 16% was restaurant and food service, 7% was retail, and 20% was other including healthcare, personal services, forestry, materials and supplies, manufacturing, and more. Of the respondents, 62 (**97%**) indicated that the closures had already negatively impacted their business. **Almost 77%** of respondents stated that more than 50% of their business revenue was generated in the summer season. When asked if they were experiencing a reduction in revenue during the closure times, 97% of respondents said yes and almost 30% indicated that they were experiencing a large **reduction in revenue of 81-100%**, with a respective average and median loss of **\$35,000 and \$15,000**.

Have you experienced a reduction in anticipated revenue?



When asked in the survey whether the businesses thought the current financial supports and resources that they had available would be sufficient to help them remain viable until a return to normal operations, **70% of respondents said no**. This highlights the serious worry local businesses and organizations faced and are continuing to face.

On December 6, 2024, a secondary impact survey was developed for businesses and other organizations to further quantify the impact now that the immediate events of the July/August closures had passed. As of December 16th, 16 organizations and businesses responded to the survey. When asked about employment, six businesses had just one employee/were owner/operated, six businesses had 2-4 employees, one business had 5-10 employees, and two businesses had greater than 10 employees. Half had part-time employees, the others did not. In this later impact survey, the average and median reported revenue losses were **\$46,520 and \$35,000** respectively. There are a few potential reasons for the increase in these amounts over the previous survey. First, is that the August

survey was conducted while impacts were still active, and so losses would increase over time. Secondly, with a smaller sample size, these amounts are influenced more by extreme numbers including one business who reported a \$250,000 loss. Finally, it is likely that businesses who were affected the most would be more likely to respond to the additional survey.

Beyond loss of revenue, businesses were also asked if they had incurred additional costs, with 50% saying yes, and those with the highest reported additional costs being **because of the support they provided to Jasper evacuees**. The main ways businesses were affected overall was from reduced tourist traffic, cancellations, and delays in receiving/shipping items. Due to the impacts, over half (56%) of businesses reported having to reduce hours or lay off employees, with a reported **33 positions having their hours reduced and 5 positions laid off**. For funding assistance thought to be needed, the average and median amounts were **\$33,340 and \$25,000** respectively, lower than the losses and costs reported but similar amounts. Many businesses discussed the desire for increased marketing efforts of the community, and 7 of the 16 indicated that a low-interest loan would be helpful. Recovery funding was desired for operating costs, payroll, rent, and utilities.

In addition to the surveys distributed, Strategies North conducted additional one-on-one discussions with 11 businesses and organizations over the phone and via a specific email address created for Valemount recovery efforts. Businesses from a variety of industries were contacted, from retail to specialty service, hospitality, and resource extraction. In these one-on-one discussions, stakeholders were consulted about what resources might be available to them, what their main challenges were, and what they believed to be most important for the development of the report and Strategy.

Strategies North had further conversations with Tourism Valemount, discussing Valemount tourism needs and efforts both from a recovery and growth perspective. The discussion highlighted both challenges and opportunities. Challenges include funding cuts, staffing shortages, and limited housing, which affect the ability to expand operations and provide services. Additionally, better coordination and communication within local organizations are needed to drive promotional efforts. Tourism Valemount indicated future strategies could focus on attracting younger demographics, particularly millennials and international visitors, through targeted marketing campaigns and partnerships with regional and national organizations. There is also strong potential in infrastructure development, utilizing available land for new projects, and expanding services like the Visitor Centre. Addressing these gaps and capitalizing on emerging opportunities can play a pivotal role in supporting economic resilience and year-round tourism growth beyond initial recovery.

Discussions with other individuals and organizations that will remain anonymous reiterated these points, highlighting the desire to continue to develop tourism while Jasper is rebuilding, though fewer tourists may naturally visit the area because of the expected decrease in Jasper tourism. Additionally, the reliance on summer visitors was noted to see what can be done to strengthen winter tourism as well as explore other industries, circular

economies, and partnerships including with surrounding First Nation communities in order to build further economic resilience.

Community Meeting

On November 27th, 2024, Strategies North Advisory hosted an open meeting in the Valemount Village office for local businesses and organizations. The meeting was held to connect with the businesses directly, identify challenges caused by the closures, and provide an opportunity to share experiences and help shape recovery efforts. Businesses shared that they were still paying off or just recently paid off COVID-19 CEBA loans when the closures happened. Others had made investments in their businesses planning for an increased busy season, taking on debt and/or hiring new employees in preparation. Unlike in Jasper, where business interruption insurance payouts could help cover some of the losses, Valemount businesses discussed being **unable to make successful insurance claims to help ease the financial impacts**.

Attending business owners said that the approach to reopening the roads was confusing for both businesses and tourists as to when they would be available for travel. Some production and shipping companies were unable to meet promised delivery dates, and missed lucrative times for wholesale shipments and purchases preparing for Christmas. With this and tourists cut off from visiting, it had not only an immediate revenue impact but also a reputational one, with tourists opting to go elsewhere and customers finding other non-Valemount suppliers to avoid further closures and uncertainty.

Similar to what was in the engagement surveys, the businesses discussed Valemount needing additional opportunities to strengthen year-round tourism over only summer tourism, conduct broader marketing for the area, and develop other industries.

Following the community meeting, Strategies North visited seven individual businesses on November 28th that were unable to attend the meeting. These visits were done at each place of business to ensure their perspectives were heard directly, providing an opportunity for one-on-one discussions about the impacts they've experienced operating and their thoughts on strengthening Valemount's economic resilience. High staffing costs and overhead were discussed, particularly in the absence of revenue to cover them. Many had mentioned the Trans Mountain Pipeline as both a blessing and a curse, bringing new people to the community but driving up the cost of housing and goods as well. After lulls from the pipeline work moving on in 2023 businesses were hoping for a successful 2024 season. Some of the businesses mentioned being hit hard after the closures, taking on evacuees from Jasper at high cost, providing services for free instead of for revenue or to what little tourists were in town.

The community and individual business meetings were an important element to the overall recovery strategy, and Strategies North considers the meeting to be a success for gathering information and community input as well as building connections in Valemount.

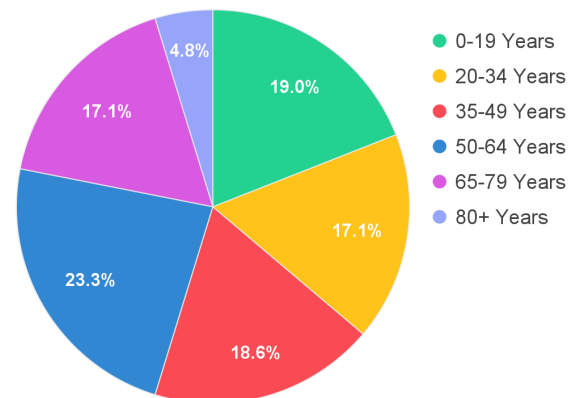
Valemount Profile

Demographics

Population

As of the 2021 Federal Census, 1052 people call the Village of Valemount home with a growth of 3% (31 people) over the 2016 Census.⁴ This is modest but positive growth for the time period. Referring to the Census, the population of Valemount can be separated into the following six age demographics: 0-19, 20-34, 35-49, 50-64, 65-79, and 80+.

Valemount Population by Age (2021 Census)



The 0-19 age group (the second largest at 200 people, or 19% of the population), seems to be growing quickly. Through reporting from local businesses and organizations in Valemount during the community meetings and engagement, it's believed that **15-30 children** have been born in 2024 alone, a transformative amount over previous years, highly substantial for a town of just over 1000 people, and considerable compared to the growth rate recorded in the Census. Additionally, State of the Basin, a publication from Selkirk College that collects educational information for the Columbia Basin area puts the school enrollment for Valemount Elementary and Secondary in the 2022/2023 school year at 210, a figure greater than the previous Census's age group demographic.⁵ Based on these factors, Valemount's population may be growing by virtue of its appeal to families and younger people.

Employment by Industry

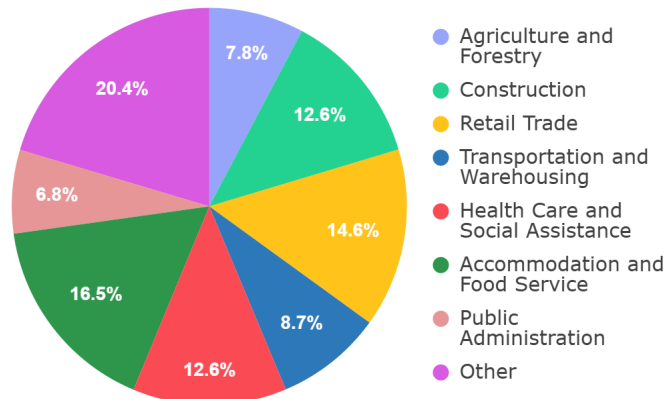
From the 2021 Census, the single largest employing industry in Valemount is Accommodation and Food Service, which makes up for **16.5%** of all jobs in the community. Behind it is Retail at **14.6%**, which is primarily geared towards tourism and necessity/household retail. Other notable and sizable employers are the Health Care/Social Assistance and Construction and Transportation Industries. The "Other Category" includes the remainder of industries in Valemount such as Private Administration, Manufacturing, Finance, as well as Specialty Services and Goods. Between all of the industries, the amount of the community's employment in tourism-related areas is potentially **30-40%**, or **160-220**

⁴ Statistics Canada, *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population: Valemount, Village [Census Subdivision], British Columbia*, released February 9, 2022

⁵ Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, "Student Enrolment," *State of the Basin*, 2023.

jobs. It can be reasonably assumed that there are some changes between 2021 and now, especially with the creation of new start ups in the community. However it is fairly likely that the shares of occupation by industry have stayed similar due to general trends in the community and show the importance of tourism and commercial trade to the area.

Occupation by Industry (2021 Census)



Income

In 2021, the median total individual income within Valemount was **\$36,800**, with the Village Median Market income being **\$29,200**.⁶ At this time the largest percentage of residents (36.0%) annually made \$20,000-40,000 net income, 18.6% of residents had under \$20,000 annual net income, and the best paid bracket at \$100,000+ annual net income made up only 6.4% of the population.

Incomes are lower in Valemount than British Columbia as a whole, but this is manageable as the cost of living is lower as well. However, lower incomes put strain on individuals during economic uncertainty. This is especially true when living in a small community where products and services now have to be imported at a higher cost, the economy pressures people to relocate to other areas, or in the case of housing and other costs being driven up, as was seen during the Trans Mountain Pipeline work due to the influx of people. It can be assumed that there may have been a general increase in net income during the Trans Mountain Pipeline project in the region, particularly for those involved with food service and accommodation. However, now that the pipeline has moved on, this could no longer be the case.

With a reported reduction in hours and layoffs because of the closures it can be surmised that many people in Valemount are making less than they were before the wildfire. This will affect the annual net income for 2024 and, should economic troubles continue, into 2025 as well.

Tourism Industry

Valemount's current place in the tourism industry is as a resort/hospitality town. It primarily interacts with tourists by providing lodging and food service to support largely free activities such as mountain biking and hiking. There are several businesses who offer

⁶ Statistics Canada, *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population: Valemount*.

rentals to support these free activities. While there are some in-town businesses and organizations that do charge for recreational activity, they are mostly limited to winter activities such as snowmobiling, snow cat skiing, heli skiing, and dogsledding, or whitewater rafting in the summer.

Valemount boasts several key attractions that draw tourists year-round. The Valemount Bike Park, with many free-access trails maintained by Valemount and Area Recreation Development Association (VARDA), is a top summer destination with room to grow. For hikers, the area offers both more intense trails like Mt. Trudeau and Canoe Mountain and more casual options like Cranberry Marsh and Rearguard Falls. In winter, snowmobiling areas such as Allan and Clemina Creek, also maintained by VARDA, provide popular experiences. The nearby Mt. Robson Provincial Park is another draw for Valemount. The Village, due to its proximity, serves as a potential hospitality hub for those entering Mount Robson park for a day visit.

Importantly, while Valemount has many valuable and popular attractions, the local tourism industry has been geared towards being part of the chain of Jasper National Park, in the way of providing a secondary attraction before or after a tourist's visit to Jasper. With this said, Valemount provides similar outdoor experiences as Jasper, albeit at a generally lower cost and lower number of tourists. Valemount is smaller, but can be considered to still possess much of the same appeal that makes the National Park so popular.

A major struggle, noted by businesses and organizations in the community, is attracting tourists travelling through to stop in town and spend money at local businesses. For tourists, as attested by local organizations and businesses, a barrier is that some local businesses operate at either low or odd hours that lowers their convenience. Tourists coming to a largely closed downtown is an occasional issue as reported by stakeholders, a feature compounded by significant economic pressures from the recent highway closure.

Overall, the tourism industry of Valemount is full of potential for growth due to its natural surroundings, strategic location, and the rising popularity of outdoor attractions. That said, there are some hurdles to overcome like making local businesses more accessible, offering more services, and diversifying its attractions. By developing community infrastructure, improving marketing efforts, and supporting investment in local organizations and businesses, Valemount could position itself from being a stop along the way to becoming a more desired destination in its own right.

Community SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Involved and Collective Community

Valemount embodies the culture and atmosphere of the northern small town. Businesses, organizations, schools and the municipality are deeply connected, sharing information, and

dedicated to overall community success. During the Jasper wildfire the community as a whole demonstrated its quality, with all hands on deck to help the evacuees as much as they were able, by volunteering their spaces, homes, goods, and time. Citizens are educated on what is happening in the community, and committed to ensuring that Valemount succeeds.

A Perfect Place to Grow

In spite of contractions surrounding the closing of the mill and the pipeline now moving past Valemount, the Village possesses a healthy and growing population, including young families and new people moving into the community. Valemount is also one of the few communities in the north that has been successful with healthcare access and in retaining doctors, as medical professionals coming to the community want to stay in it.

With suitable investment, there are opportunities for future business and land development including an industrial park just outside the community. New development can leverage Valemount's strategic location and access to transportation corridors, and presents a chance to diversify the local economy and further growth.

Weaknesses

Low Diversification

After the permanent closure of Valemount's mill in 2009, Tourism has been the primary industry for the Village of Valemount. Most businesses are either partially or entirely reliant on tourist activity for income generation. Years with poor snowfall, or crises like the wildfire or COVID-19 have damaged Valemount's economy. Additionally, Valemount currently lacks many secondary but important services such as dentistry, specialty clinics, and orthodontics that would allow many working professionals and potentially entire companies to put their stake in the Village.

Lack of External Domestic and International Knowledge of the Community

Valemount has historically relied primarily on proximity for attracting visitors; being placed on the route between Jasper/Alberta and the Interior and Lower Mainland of British Columbia. It currently lacks as strong of a domestic and international presence as desired to draw more and varied tourists to the region.

Opportunities

Repositioning of Community Events

While many of the Village's events do in fact attract tourists, Valemount could profit from having businesses and organizations better position themselves to engage in the influx of potential economic activity. In conducted interviews, stakeholders identified that many businesses (particularly those in food service) were not open to engage with tourists during

events. By better coordinating with and between business owners, the Village's economy can pick up much of this underutilized activity during and surrounding events.

Tourism without Jasper

The Jasper wildfire was a profound tragedy for its residents, and surrounding areas. Jasper needs time to recover its full presence in the tourism market, a presence that Valemount has historically relied on for visitor traffic. This presents both a need and opportunity for Valemount to expand its image outside of the Robson Valley. Valemount has the opportunity to position itself as the “place to go” in the region, and possesses many similar recreational and tourist attractions found in Jasper, and high availability for lodging.

Threats

Downward Economic Spiral

The biggest threat to Valemount is the prospect of a spiralling economic decline. Currently, many community businesses fear they are on the edge of closing their doors for the foreseeable future. In a small town, losing one business means potentially losing the ability to buy a good or service within the community. This can mean less money being spent in the community by virtue of fewer options, possible unemployment from business shutting down, and with less money now being spent in other businesses more may be lost - potentially creating a cycle that challenges recovery and eliminates job opportunities. If it gets to this point, this can be a difficult situation to recover from as it may mean less ability to attract both tourists and residents, the community becoming less attractive for future investment, and current residents needing to move elsewhere for more opportunity. Proactive recovery actions along with existing community resilience can help prevent this from occurring.

Economic Impact

Pre-Wildfire Context

Like many small towns transitioning from forestry, Valemount's economic position has fluctuated greatly over recent years. The permanent closure of the Valemount sawmill marked a turning point for the community. The Village pivoted toward tourism as its primary industry, leveraging its scenic location and outdoor recreation opportunities. While tourism would eventually become a strong economic driver, the transition left gaps in stability and employment. Businesses and residents adapted to the change in Valemount's economic outlook.

Tourism in British Columbia is one of the province's largest contributors to the economy, earning **\$18.5 billion in revenue** and contributing **\$7.2 billion to GDP** in 2022 - greater than all other primary resource industries such as mining, oil & gas, agriculture, and

forestry.⁷ Valemount's Thompson Okanagan region has steadily grown its tourism industry, with the regional share of tourist expenditures rising 2.7% and total overnight expenditures increasing by 48% from 2013-2017.⁸

The COVID-19 pandemic was a major disruption after this shift. Travel restrictions and health measures hurt the tourism industry, heavily affecting businesses that relied on visitors. Many Valemount businesses took on Canada Business Emergency Account (CEBA) Loans, expecting to pay them off when traffic returned. Recovery from the pandemic started in 2022 as restrictions eased and travelers returned, but the economic foundation remained fragile. The Trans Mountain Pipeline construction brought a temporary increase of people during this time, with workers increasing demand for local services, accommodations, and businesses. Businesses invested heavily, hired staff, and purchased equipment to meet demand. A testament to the resiliency of the community, new start-ups were created during the last five years alongside COVID-19 and the pipeline work in the food service, retail, hospitality, and other services. Importantly, these entrepreneurs were primarily in the 30-40 age group, and were otherwise typical mom-and-pop shops.

Reportedly, pipeline activity brought a temporary boom to the community, while the hospitality industry had the struggle of trying to find enough beds for the workers, let alone the workers and regular tourist traffic. Businesses described the influx as feeling like an extra two thousand people living in the Village and that the town was constantly busy. During this time it was reported that the cost of living increased to match the influx of people, with things like housing units that would rent for hundreds of dollars prior to the pipeline project being rented for thousands during.⁹ However, 2023 marked the last year of pipeline activity near Valemount and as the workforce left, businesses that had invested in themselves hoped for strong tourist seasons to sustain their growth. This rapid cycle of expansion and contraction strained businesses and local resources, leaving many vulnerable.

2024 looked to be a fine tourist year. Yet by July 2024, just before the busiest part of the season, **Valemount had not fully stabilized from the effects of the prior disruptions when the wildfires and highway closures occurred.** The fires created a cascade of direct, and indirect, economic impacts. Businesses still paying off CEBA loans, those that had hired more staff or purchased more equipment. While some level of closures were understandably necessary for safety during the wildfire, the process could have been managed differently and unlike other areas, **Valemount was unable to utilize insurance and didn't have access to sufficient recovery funds.** These compounding challenges emphasize the urgent need for recovery efforts to stabilize and rebuild the local economy.

⁷ Destination BC, *2022 Value of Tourism Snapshot* (Vancouver: Destination BC, February 29, 2024).

⁸ Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, *Thompson Okanagan Ten-Year Tourism Strategy*, updated 2019 (Kelowna, BC: Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association).

⁹ Williams, Arthur, "Too Much Boom: Pipeline Workers Outnumber Residents in One Northern BC Village," *Prince George Citizen*, December 17, 2024.

Total Effects

There are multiple ways that the closures affected Valemount's local economy. **Direct effects** are primary effects that occur when the first new dollar is spent in the community, and local businesses sell goods or services to the visiting tourist or to other customers. Direct effects can be broadly used to estimate the GDP contributed from an industry.

Secondary effects, indirect and induced, come after the first round of spending. With that dollar received from the tourist or other customer, a business can pay its suppliers, creating indirect effects. When suppliers are local or work a lot with many local businesses, these indirect effects grow. Induced effects are the other important secondary effect, and are the changes in spending from household income. When a dollar is spent in businesses, people employed in that business can earn an income which they can spend on things like their housing, groceries, personal services, and more. This provides revenue to other businesses and the cycle of economic impact can continue. Along each step of the cycle, there is tax revenue that is collected by the municipal, provincial, or federal level. Some of this tax revenue is reinvested in the local community, setting it up for further growth. This is a deeply intertwined relationship, and any shocks to any of the steps can have profound ripple effects.

Each dollar spent in an industry has an economic multiplier that attempts to capture the extent of the interconnectedness and secondary effects given a change in direct effects. For each industry and sector, these multipliers vary drastically between regions and local areas. For Valemount, given the reliance on tourism as its primary industry, tourism spending is expected to have a significant multiplier effect for the community with many supporting and local-only businesses indirectly reliant on it. Other industries along with tourism assumed to have significant multipliers in Valemount are forestry, food, and construction materials. The total impact for any changes in these industries is the combined amount of the direct, indirect, and induced impacts.

For Valemount, the economic effects will not just be a one-time event as there may be impacts that could cause future challenges. This includes tourists finding other places to visit that they may repeatedly go to because they couldn't go to Valemount, travelling visitor and commercial traffic utilizing alternate routes that don't go through Valemount, and importantly the reputational impact of Valemount as a product supplier. Past customers may have found new suppliers that they will continue business with in the future. Valemount businesses that were suppliers struggled with receiving a lack of clear communication for the highway reopening, damaging relationships with customers passing that on through inaccurate estimates and delayed shipments.

Lost Revenues

Many Valemount businesses operate at a loss during the winter and count on the summer to carry them through. That opportunity was unavailable to them this year because of the highway closures. With the main highways closed, there were limited tourist visits, few people stopping through, and the potential revenue during this time was lost. Many businesses saw immediate cancellations of tourist bookings, not only during the closures, but for the remainder of the year and into 2025. Businesses were unable to ship products east, losing that revenue. Because of the indirect and induced effects mentioned above, the less money the businesses first impacted received, the less they can spend at other businesses, decreasing their revenue. With average lost revenues in the tens of thousands being reported by businesses, this is a significant amount for the community and its residents.

The most noticeable impacts for Valemount are in the tourism industry. Destination BC statistics show that tourist visits contracted by 26% from 2023 to 2024. Consistently, the summer months (June 1 - September 30) have been the highest visited time in Valemount by tourists. Summer 2023 counted 8,494 visits, whereas summer 2024 **decreased to 5,738** visits.¹⁰ In the May 2017 Regional Tourism Profile for Thompson Okanagan developed by Destination BC, each visitor to the region on average spends \$378.¹¹ While this value is not specific to Valemount, it can be used to approximate total revenue. In addition, Tourism Valemount currently estimates that due to price increases since that report and previous winter tourism reports done for Valemount, the total spend per visitor is closer to \$700. This put the estimated lost revenue for the decrease of 2756 visitors at **\$1,041,768 to \$1,929,200**. This is only the direct impact for tourism, the total impact for all businesses, tourism focused and not, is expected to be higher.

Increased Costs

A major difficulty stemming from the highway closures was the sudden breakdown of supply chains for retail and wholesale. For those businesses in Valemount that export their products, many of their main customers are eastward, including Jasper. For businesses importing products and supplies, many relied on the eastern highways to bring these into the community. Businesses reliant on trade through Jasper experienced increased costs through having to find and plan alternate shipping routes, needing to source different suppliers - particularly on short notice, and inventory spoilage. In addition to the reduction in revenues, these increased costs hit local businesses hard.

Some Valemount businesses and organizations donated and/or provided services to Jasper evacuees out of their own pocket. Valemount Pines Golf & RV Park at one point **hosted 600**

¹⁰ Destination BC, *2024 Visitor Services Statistics Program* (Vancouver: Destination BC, 2024).

¹¹ Destination BC, *Regional Tourism Profile: Thompson Okanagan* (Vancouver: Destination BC, May 2017).

evacuees (a number over half the population of Valemount) on their site and did not charge them anything to be there. Hundreds of evacuees benefitted from the food, water, space, electricity, and labour that Valemount Pines provided, but the business now mentioned that they are in financial distress and facing risk of closure due to the increased costs hosting evacuees and the lack of visitors following. For the owners though, it was an easy choice having previously been on the other side of wildfires and relying on support in the past. CBC News: The National reported Valemount Pines’ story in July 2024,¹² showing the generosity of Valemount businesses like Valemount Pines Golf & RV Park and the community’s willingness to support others in times of crisis, even at their own expense. However, this placed additional financial strain on businesses already struggling multiple ways with reduced revenues and increased costs.

While increased costs are not as significant as lost revenues (and the inability to pay existing costs because of it), 70% of businesses in the December 6th impact survey reported having some form of increased cost. Across the entire community, this is hundreds of thousands of dollars of additional costs due to the Jasper wildfires and following highway closures.

Employment

As with any business or organization, some sort of revenue is necessary to employ people and create jobs. Similar to direct, indirect, and induced effects of spending, the same can be thought of when it comes to jobs. Jobs earn an employee/business owner operator an income, which they then use to spend on housing, services, goods, taxes, and savings. This spending supports other jobs and investment in the community, making employment a critical factor for a community’s economy.

One way to analyze employment in a community is with Location Quotient (LQ). An area’s LQ is a measure of its specialization, showing the local amount of employment in a given industry relative to a broader average. According to BCStats, “a location quotient of 2 indicates that an area has twice as many jobs in a given industry relative to the size of the economy, while an LQ of 0.5 means there are half as many jobs”.¹³ Below are McBride-Valemount 2020 location quotients compared with BC as a whole.¹⁴

Forestry	Mining, Oil and Gas	Fishing, Hunting and Trapping	Agriculture and Food	Tourism	High Tech Manufacturing	Public Sector	Construction	Film and TV	Other Basic
5.72	1.20	0.00	2.95	1.89	0.11	0.68	1.36	0.00	0.69

¹² CBC News: The National, “RV Park Lets Jasper Wildfire Evacuees Stay for Free,” YouTube video, posted July 30, 2024

¹³ BCStats, *Local Area Economic Profiles*, released July 18, 2023 (Victoria: BCStats, 2023).

¹⁴ BCStats, *Local Area Economic Profiles*.

While some of the results may be skewed to the inclusion of McBride and surrounding areas to Valemount, they still provide some insights. Above 1.25 is typically considered a high LQ, indicating the region with Valemount has **forestry, agriculture and food, tourism, and construction as key industries**. These are all industries that would be hit hard from the closures with no tourists and restrictions on commercial trucking.

The highway closures, both through the decrease in revenue and the increase in costs, have reduced jobs in Valemount. For tourism, the employment impact ratio for jobs is estimated to be **1.17**, meaning that for every one tourism job lost, **0.17 indirect and induced jobs (0.08 and 0.09 respectively) are lost** in supporting industries (indirect jobs) and because the job loss causes less spending (which in turn causes the induced job loss).¹⁵ 33 positions were reported as having reduced hours and 5 positions were reported as laid off from the December 6th impact survey. This would have ripple effects with a calculated 6 additional positions having reduced hours and one additional position being laid off from indirect and induced impacts, from just the 16 businesses that responded. The total consequence of reduced hours and layoffs in the community is likely much higher considering all of the businesses in Valemount and those that did not respond to the survey.

Recovery

Goals and Objectives

While Valemount was spared physical wildfire damage, the economic impacts of the highway closures present unique challenges. With no visible destruction, no ability for insurance claims, and no clear pathway for external support, the community faces unseen but substantial challenges like potential business closures and job losses. It is important to implement recovery efforts to address the impacts before they become harder to overcome.

With that, there are two primary goals in regard to supporting Valemount's economy following the COVID-19 pandemic, Trans Mountain Pipeline bust, and most recently the wildfire highway closures: **Recovery and Growth**. Recovery efforts are intended to support the immediate need faced by businesses in order to prevent job loss and business closures. Growth efforts are beyond immediate needs and are focused on ways the local economy can grow, business marketing efforts can be increased, and the community can diversify and create economic resilience.

It is important to focus first on recovery actions to prevent the downward spiral that can tank a local economy and devastate a community. The objective for these initiatives is to deploy them quickly, before the next summer, and broadly to the businesses that need it.

¹⁵ BCStats, *Local Area Economic Profiles*.

This is to allow businesses to have the funding support they need to sustain operations or reopen next operating season.

Objectives for growth actions are to implement resources to assist the community to grow for future seasons. This can take form as support and training for individual businesses, new marketing efforts, and for the Village of Valemount as a whole to invest in community infrastructure, look at ways to develop new amenities, form new partnerships, and diversify the local economy.

From July 2023 to July 2024, Community Futures Fraser Fort George conducted interviews with 210 businesses in the Fraser-Fort George Regional District. This included 55 businesses in the Robson Valley – Canoe and Electoral Area H, evenly spread between McBride, Valemount, and outlying areas. The outcome of these interviews noted:

“The economy of the Robson Valley-Canoe relies heavily on forestry, tourism, and agriculture, making it vulnerable to sector-specific downturns and climate change unpredictability. The mixed economic impacts of the Trans Mountain Pipeline project further highlight the need for diversification and sustainable practices. Businesses in the Robson Valley-Canoe require comprehensive financial and educational support to navigate these challenges and leverage opportunities...”¹⁶

Key challenges were described as supply chain issues, struggles with marketing, and difficulties finding skilled workers. A gap in support that was said to require attention included difficulties accessing loans and grants, and a need for streamlined loan processes and increased financial support, including for cash flow management and diversification. As part of Valemount’s economic recovery efforts, Valemount must work with stakeholders to address these challenges and gaps and help ensure that both recovery and growth goals are supported.

Proposed Action Plan

As a municipality, Valemount cannot provide direct support such as grants, loans, or tax breaks to businesses. For Valemount businesses, the Village should look to work with both the BC provincial and federal government for funding support. Based on self-reported survey data, further community engagement, and calculated amounts of losses, the estimated amount to meet immediate community recovery needs is **\$1,500,000**. This amount is anticipated to be sufficient to assist the majority of affected businesses with payroll and staffing costs, operational expenses, and costs required to continue until the next operating season. Valemount should discuss with the levels of government, starting

¹⁶ Community Futures Fraser Fort George, *Regional Business Liaison Outreach Program 2023-2024 Report* (Prince George, BC: Community Futures Fraser Fort George, 2024).

with the Government of British Columbia, to have this amount of funding available. Throughout this process, Valemount will work with Strategies North Advisory and other organizations as identified to help progress the initiatives.

To deploy funding while meeting available capacity and legal requirements, the provincial government should have the amount allocated and available on an application basis for affected businesses and organizations. The funding can be administered through existing mechanisms via Northern Development Initiative Trust, Columbia Basin Trust, or Community Futures. Main reasons to administer funds this way are because of the level of familiarity among local entities with these organizations, their ability to administer the funding, and being a third party separate from the Village to have confidentiality and impartiality from community affairs. Once an application process is available, the Village of Valemount and Strategies North will communicate it to eligible businesses and organizations and provide support in connecting them with available resources.

Separate from discussions regarding economic impacts of the closures, Valemount should work with the Government of Alberta for support to provide to businesses and organizations that had increased costs due to hosting or providing goods and services to Jasper evacuees. When the evacuation order was given, Jasper and Alberta directed people to British Columbia. The fact that the businesses and organizations in Valemount opened their doors at their own expense should not disproportionately burden them for their generosity. Support from the Government of Alberta would not only acknowledge the contributions made but also strengthen BC/Alberta cooperation in disaster response and recovery efforts.

This funding is envisioned to be similar to COVID-19 or disaster funding in its availability to community entities and speed in roll out. The Canada Emergency Business Account Loan is an example of this on a larger scale, provided by the Government of Canada. For other COVID-19 funding in the past, the Government of British Columbia has provided \$100 million towards fully funded non-repayable grants to support economic resilience, tourism, heritage and urban and rural economic development projects in communities under the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program. There are other examples of potentially similar executions in recent history beyond COVID-19. In 2022, PacifiCan provided \$5.5 million to Community Futures for businesses and enterprising not-for-profits in communities impacted by wildfires, floods, and mill and mine closures, and in 2018 PacifiCan (then Western Economic Diversification Canada) provided \$1.3 million to Community Futures for small businesses located in communities hit hardest by wildfires.¹⁷

¹⁸ Through these, businesses were able to receive professional advisory services, training, recovery expertise and support, and access to financing for rebuilding initiatives. In 2021, the Village of Lytton faced a terrible wildfire that destroyed much of the town. In response,

¹⁷ Government of Canada, "Government of Canada Announces Funding for Disaster Recovery in British Columbia," *Canada.ca*, September 2022.

¹⁸ Government of Canada, "Small Businesses Impacted by Wildfires in British Columbia Receive Recovery Support," *Canada.ca*, February 2018.

the Government of British Columbia provided \$1 million of funding directly to the Village efforts to restart the local economy, and PacifiCan provided (and is still providing until March 2025) a Business Restart Program committing \$7.2 million in both non-repayable and repayable funding to businesses for a wide range of activities.¹⁹²⁰ Most recently in response to the Jasper wildfires themselves, the Government of Alberta is committing \$2.5 million to tourism and business recovery and the Government of Canada is providing \$3.45 million in non-repayable funding directly for businesses, corporations and sole proprietorships alike, to support their recovery along with \$500,000 for Tourism Jasper for marketing and tourism recovery and growth.²¹²² These are a few examples of potential efforts that can be learned from to approach supporting Valemount's needs.

Eligibility and approval for any funding support can be developed between government, Valemount, and the administering organization (if it's not the government directly) but is recommended to be based on proof of loss of revenue and/or increased costs including costs incurred to support Jasper evacuation efforts and resident safety. Non-repayable grant funding is obviously preferred to ease the financial burden on businesses. However, low-interest loans with favourable repayment terms such as an interest-free period and delayed principal repayment could still provide a lot of support for many businesses and organizations. It would be especially beneficial to have loans be partially forgivable if spent on payroll, operating expenses, or equipment purchases. This would allow businesses time to recover their footing and make the most out of their next operating season, **benefit an estimated over 200 jobs**, and help ensure dollars go efficiently to where they're needed most. Businesses could be required to keep detailed records for how funds are spent, and ensure expenditures benefit business continuity or community growth.

Over the near future of Valemount's recovery initiative until the summer, Strategies North will communicate with individual businesses to connect them with existing funding opportunities they can access for marketing and growth, complementing any immediate recovery support that has been provided and helping further economic resiliency. The Village of Valemount itself can also look to secure external funding itself to invest in community infrastructure such as land development and main street revitalization (furthering past efforts done 15 years ago), conduct broad community marketing and tourism awareness, and continue community-to-community work with neighbouring community partners, focusing on economic development. Additional efforts can include expanding community events for tourism as well as conducting regular initiatives such as "buy local" and workforce development, once immediate recovery needs are supported.

¹⁹ Government of British Columbia, "Grant to support Lytton's wildfire recovery," *BC Gov News*, 2021.

²⁰ Government of Canada, "Business Recovery Funding for Lytton," *Canada.ca*, accessed December 18, 2024.

²¹ Government of Alberta, "Supporting Jasper's Tourism Recovery," *Alberta.ca*, 2024.

²² Shokeir, Peter, "Federal Grants to Assist Jasper Small Businesses with Wildfire Recovery," *Fitzhugh*, November 15, 2024.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To help ensure the success of the Valemount Economic Recovery Strategy, ongoing monitoring and evaluation is important for adapting the approach and measuring progress towards the goals and objectives. Key activities and metrics include:

Discussions and Engagement

Regular and meaningful engagement with key stakeholders will be conducted to monitor the recovery process and keep it aligned with community priorities and provide opportunities for input. This includes:

- Council updates in February and May 2025 to help ensure alignment of the initiative with Valemount's broader goals.
- A second in-person community engagement visit by Strategies North planned for March/April to gather further feedback from businesses and organizations, sharing progress and resources.
- Ongoing discussions with Valemount administrative staff to support regular communication, provide opportunities to address emerging challenges, and help ensure alignment with municipal operations.

Community and Stakeholder Surveys

A follow-up survey is planned for late spring/early summer (April/May) to gather updated feedback from businesses, organizations, and other stakeholders. This will provide insight into how the recovery efforts are perceived and identify any emerging challenges or opportunities.

Funding Support

Securing and effectively utilizing funding is critical to the recovery process. Strategies North will monitor funding applications made by the Village of Valemount, as well as approvals and other funding support pledges to the Village and businesses to ensure progress aligns with anticipated results.

Tourism Tracking

Metrics such as visitor numbers and associated economic impacts can be tracked in 2025. These figures will be compared against baseline data from 2023 and 2024 to assess recovery trends and identify areas needing further intervention. The monitoring and evaluation process will rely on regular data collection, transparent reporting, and flexibility to adjust strategies as conditions evolve. Staying accountable to the community, Strategies North aims to help ensure Valemount's economic recovery is impactful and economic growth is sustainable.

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Village of Valemount Economic Recovery Work Plan

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Executive Summary

On July 22, 2024, the Municipality of Jasper and the surrounding area was evacuated due to wildfires. Highway 16 from British Columbia through Jasper National Park along with Highway 93 south to the Icefields were immediately closed to all commercial and tourist traffic. The Village of Valemount saw its main connective highways closed during its peak operating season, almost 20,000 evacuees compared to its population of 1,050, and the village's commercial activity cut off.

With highway closures out of the village's control, loss of revenue for Valemount tourism businesses was estimated at up to \$1,929,200 and was self-reported by 64 businesses, tourism and not, at over \$2.2M. Many businesses in Valemount are cyclical and rely on strong summer revenues, leaving them now in a precarious financial position. As part of its economic recovery efforts, the Village of Valemount along with Strategies North Advisory Inc. conducted multiple engagements, surveys, and discussions to gauge the losses and recovery needs. Of 64 local businesses surveyed, 97% experienced a reduction in revenue during wildfire closures, with almost 30% indicating that they experienced a reduction in revenue of 81-100%. Due to the reduction in revenue, 70% of businesses indicated they do not have sufficient resources to cover their expenses and remain viable without support.

The Village has been lobbying government for \$1.5 million in financial support, to be distributed to local businesses through an independent third party organization. This amount was determined through the significant community engagement conducted and is less than both reported and estimated revenue losses. It has been identified as a critically needed amount that local businesses and organizations can use to keep operations going through to the next operating season and prevent a downward economic spiral in the community.

While lobbying activities continue, Valemount is persistent in other activities to bolster its local economy and recover from the wildfire aftermath. These include working with Northern Development Initiative Trust, Columbia Basin Trust, and Community Futures for a variety of initiatives including accessing their funding programs and connecting local businesses with them for resources and services. Local businesses have and will continue to be engaged with funding program information, and relationships are being developed to increase the likelihood of a successful 2025 summer tourist season.

This plan acknowledges the unique circumstances of the indirect effects of the 2024 Jasper Wildfires on the Village of Valemount and outlines a pathway for the village to help its local economy recover. Valemount is a resilient community that, with sufficient resources and opportunity, will be able to succeed in its recovery and growth.

Recovery Objectives

Assist Businesses and Nonprofit Organizations in Accessing Resources: Identify and share funding programs and other opportunities able to be utilized by Valemount businesses and nonprofits to support their operations

Facilitate Business Recovery and Adaptation: Explore and share resources, training programs, and best practices to help Valemount businesses and nonprofit organizations adjust their operations in response to the economic challenges.

Strengthen Local Business Networks and Collaboration: Develop initiatives that help foster connectivity, collaboration, and partnerships among Valemount businesses and nonprofit organizations with each other and with other organizations in the region.

Support Initiatives That Promote Valemount: Work with local organizations, tourism associations, regional partners, and others to support initiatives to help grow Valemount's appeal to residents, visitors, and potential investors.

Resilience Building: As current government funding programs are insufficient to meet the needs of the community, activities identified in the work plan primarily focus on significant non-lobbying activities to help build resilience and partnerships for Valemount's recovery and growth.

Identify and Progress Opportunities for Additional Funding Support: Work with relevant partner organizations and government to find opportunities for broader funding support for the local Valemount community such as reimbursement for evacuee costs and general recovery funding.

Work Plan

The following is a list of activities to help progress the Village of Valemount's economic recovery. Following the Jasper wildfires, many businesses and organizations were hit hard with cut revenues and increased costs. These activities are designed to help identify and secure resources to help recover from those direct effects, and to bolster the community's general economic activity in the near future as well as for current and future tourism seasons.

Ongoing Funding Program Updates

Description

Establish a consistent system for identifying new and relevant funding programs and other opportunities that Valemount businesses and nonprofit organizations can access. This involves actively monitoring government announcements, funding agency websites, and industry-specific resources. Once identified, clear and concise communication materials will be developed, summarizing the fund's objectives, eligible applicants, potential funding amounts, application deadlines, and where to find more detailed information. Recovery Manager will then work with the Village of Valemount to share communication materials with the Valemount community through appropriate channels.

People/Partners Involved

Recovery Manager (responsible for identifying programs and developing communication materials), Village of Valemount (responsible for sharing communication materials through their networks)

Timeline

Ongoing throughout project as funding programs are available

Deliverables

Distributed funding opportunity communication materials

Tourism Funding & Strategy Workshop

Description

Organize and facilitate a workshop specifically for tourism-related businesses in Valemount. The session will aim to educate participants about currently available funding programs and various financing options relevant to the tourism sector. Additionally, expert-led sessions will cover crucial aspects of business strategy, effective marketing techniques tailored for tourism, and sound financial management practices. A key component will also be a discussion around the potential for reigniting the Valemount Chamber of Commerce to provide ongoing support and advocacy for local businesses.

People/Partners Involved

Recovery Manager (Facilitate connections between Tourism Valemount and NDIT/CF, secure funding for workshop), Northern Development Initiative Trust (Workshop sponsor),

Community Futures (Workshop subject matter), Tourism Valemount (Workshop lead), Local Businesses (Attendance)

Timeline

Planning in May 2025, workshop June 2025

Deliverables

Workshop agenda outlining session topics and speakers, workshop execution, and resource materials (handouts, funding guides) shared with attendees.

Regional Partnership Building

Description

Develop and continue to build strong working relationships with key industry organizations and other relevant government bodies operating within the broader region. This outreach aims to promote Valemount businesses to a wider audience and identify potential new opportunities for collaboration, resource sharing, and joint initiatives. A specific initial effort in May-June 2025 will focus on connecting Valemount businesses with opportunities for greater exposure through partnerships with TNRD Areas A and B.

People/Partners Involved

Recovery Manager (Communications and coordination), Regional District Fraser-Fort George, Thompson-Nicola Regional District Areas A & B, Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, Tourism Industry Association of BC, Destination BC, BC Economic Development Association, Tourism Wells Gray, Municipality of Jasper, others as identified.

Timeline

Ongoing throughout project, specific initiative with TNRD Areas A and B in May-June 2025

Deliverables

A documented list of established contacts within regional organizations, a summary report outlining potential collaborative opportunities identified through these connections



Support Valemount Promotion Efforts

Description

Develop materials to be shared with media outlets and work with partners to increase promotion of Valemount and Valemount's economic recovery efforts. Tourism Valemount, DestinationBC, and media outlets are the main organizations the Recovery Manager will work with throughout this activity. There may be opportunities to engage with organizations outside of the region, province, or country

People/Partners Involved

Recovery Manager (Communications and coordination), Local and Regional Media Outlets, Tourism Valemount, Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, Tourism Industry Association of BC, Destination BC, others as identified

Timeline

Ongoing throughout the project, discussions with Destination BC for increased involvement in Invest in Iconics strategy in Fall 2025.

Deliverables

Records of collaborative engagements with media outlets and communications with other partner organizations.

Tourism Valemount Marketing/Presence Update Project

Description

Working with Columbia Basin Trust and Tourism Valemount, establish and secure funding for a project for direct marketing by Tourism Valemount or efforts to increase Tourism Valemount's presence such as website, social media, and/or digital app upgrades. The marketing project will assess demographics, key current or future trends, and opportunities for Tourism Valemount.

People/Partners Involved

Recovery Manager (Communications and coordination, working with CBT to secure funding), Tourism Valemount (project ideation), Columbia Basin Trust (project funding)

Timeline

June-July 2025 for project funding

Deliverables

Completed funding proposal with CBT, a project plan detailing strategy, partners, and methodology.

Grant Proposal Development Coaching

Description

Offer individualized virtual coaching sessions to Valemount businesses and the Village of Valemount to assist them in developing strong applications for relevant government and trust funding opportunities. This would involve guidance on understanding eligibility criteria, crafting compelling narratives, developing realistic budgets, and ensuring all application requirements are met. Businesses can reach out for support via a dedicated Recovery Manager email inbox.

People/Partners Involved

Recovery Manager (coaching and guidance, inbox management), Valemount Businesses.

Timeline

Ongoing throughout (as funding opportunities arise and businesses reach out).

Deliverables

Number of businesses supported.

Government Relationship Management

Description

Respond to inquiries and facilitate connections between Village of Valemount and relevant government contacts as needs arise, leveraging and reinforcing established relationships. Continue to keep government apprised of the current situation in Valemount with regular check-ins and meetings. Work with government contacts for updates regarding new and available funding programs.

People/Partners Involved

Recovery Manager (coordination, facilitation), Village of Valemount (communications), Government Representatives (communications)

Timeline

Ongoing throughout (as funding opportunities arise and changes in the community situation occur)

Deliverables

Record of communications with government contacts

Alberta Evacuee Hosting Reimbursement Application

Description

Coordinate with Government of Alberta for final confirmation regarding the reimbursement mechanism for costs incurred by Valemount businesses hosting evacuees, work with the Village of Valemount to compile the necessary information and prepare a comprehensive reimbursement application. This will involve liaising with businesses to gather their cost details and ensuring all required documentation is included in the Village's submission.

People/Partners Involved

Recovery Manager (coordination with businesses and Village, application preparation support), Village of Valemount, Valemount Businesses, Government of Alberta.

Timeline

May-July 2025

Deliverables

Reimbursement application submitted by the Village of Valemount, compiling cost information provided by local businesses.



Coordinating Valemount/Government Regarding Community Transition Services

Description

Work collaboratively with the Government of BC and the Village of Valemount to identify and coordinate resources and services needed to support the community as Valemount's economic conditions evolve, particularly in light of events like the anticipated closure of the cedar mill at the end of June. This will involve assessing community needs, connecting with relevant government programs, and facilitating access to support for affected businesses and workers.

People/Partners Involved

Recovery Manager (coordination), Government of BC - various ministries, Village of Valemount, Local Businesses.

Timeline

Immediate and ongoing, particularly focusing on the period around and after the cedar mill closure.

Deliverables

Communications between ministries, organizations, and businesses outlining identified community transition needs.

Business Communication & Engagement

Description

Regularly communicate updates on recovery initiatives, funding opportunities, workshop information, and other relevant news to the Valemount business community. Proactively engage with businesses by responding to inquiries, soliciting feedback on recovery efforts, and fostering two-way communication to ensure their needs are being addressed. Connect with businesses individually in-community where they're at to learn updates about individual business situations and areas in need of additional support. Conduct follow-up community surveys.

People/Partners Involved

Recovery Manager (communications virtually and in-community), Valemount business community

Timeline

Throughout the project. In-community visits for 1-on-1 business discussions intended for July and October 2025.

Deliverables

Documented record of communications with the Valemount business community.

Chamber of Commerce Re-establishment Support

Description

Connect parties interested in re-establishing the Valemount Chamber of Commerce. Provide opportunities, such as including Chamber of Commerce discussions in workshop agendas, for interested parties to further this goal. Work with Tourism Valemount as a lead organization to champion the initiative in the community.

People/Partners Involved

Recovery Manager (support), Tourism Valemount, Valemount business community.

Timeline

Throughout the project.

Key Considerations

- Work plan activities are directly focused on Valemount's economic recovery following recent wildfire challenges. Each activity is designed to provide support to local businesses/organizations and help address immediate and future needs of recovery & resilience rather than focusing on general economic development or advocacy. Activities build on work to date rather than duplicate efforts or existing capacity.
- The Recovery Manager will act as a central coordinator and facilitator for the work plan activities, leveraging partnerships and community capacity for effective implementation. Their role will primarily focus on connecting stakeholders, ensuring

overall alignment with recovery objectives, and getting initiatives started with means for execution in plan rather than the direct execution of each individual activity.

- Valemount is still facing significant challenges in preventing job loss and business closures. This includes people in the community having to volunteer their time at businesses rather than work for pay, and important local businesses such as the brewery, golf club & RV park, and potentially a large hotel being put up for sale.
- Strategies North, in its role as Recovery Manager for the Village of Valemount, can continue to oversee and implement these initiatives. The budget for these activities are integrated within the existing agreement and cost structure covered by BC Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR). Where specific projects need additional financial resources, such as venue rental or specialized expertise for workshops, the Recovery Manager will work with partner organizations like NDIT, CBT, and Community Futures to secure the necessary supplementary funding.
- A strong rationale exists for BC EMCR to approve an extension of the current contract, as Valemount is still in need of support and the ongoing economic recovery requires sustained and coordinated effort. The activities outlined help to address both immediate recovery needs and longer-term resilience and growth opportunities.
- Continued communication will be a key component of this work plan to ensure that the Village of Valemount, local businesses and organizations, and relevant organizations/government agencies are kept informed of progress, opportunities, and any evolving circumstances.
- Leveraging existing regional expertise and capacity will be prioritized. Partnering with organizations such as Community Futures, NDIT, and CBT will help ensure efficient delivery of information, initiatives, and services.
- This plan is designed to have activities that can efficiently and quickly work within the community to provide timely support.

Reporting and Monitoring

To help ensure the success of the Valemount Economic Recovery Strategy, ongoing reporting and monitoring is important for adapting the approach and measuring progress towards the goals and objectives. The reporting and monitoring approach for this work plan is:

Deliverable Tracking: Maintaining a running list of deliverables completed.

Qualitative Feedback: Feedback gathered through surveys, engagement, and direct communication with the Valemount business community and administration.

Monthly Updates: Monthly briefs summarizing activities and deliverables completed each month, along with key highlights or challenges encountered.

Communications with Council: Council updates in August and November 2025 to help ensure alignment of the initiative with Valemount's broader goals and provide Mayor and Council information on activities completed, including compilation of other project updates.

Final Report: A summary report at the end of the project outlining completed activities and key outcomes.

The reporting and monitoring process will rely on regular data collection, transparency, and flexibility to adjust strategies as conditions evolve. Staying accountable to the community, the aim is to help ensure Valemount's economic recovery is impactful and economic growth is sustainable.





Village of Valemount

Work Plan for Economic Recovery Funding

MARCH 31, 2025



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Executive Summary

On July 22, 2024, the Municipality of Jasper and the surrounding area was evacuated due to wildfires. Highway 16 from British Columbia through Jasper National Park along with Highway 93 south to the Icefields were immediately closed to all commercial and tourist traffic. The Village of Valemount saw its main connective highways closed during its peak operating season, almost 20,000 evacuees compared to its population of 1,050, and the village's commercial activity cut off.

With highway closures out of the village's control, loss of revenue for Valemount tourism businesses was estimated at up to \$1,929,200 and was self-reported by 64 businesses, tourism and not, at over \$2.2M. Many businesses in Valemount are cyclical and rely on strong summer revenues, leaving them now in a precarious financial position. As part of its economic recovery efforts, the Village of Valemount along with Strategies North Advisory Inc. conducted multiple engagements, surveys, and discussions to gauge the losses and recovery needs. Of 64 local businesses surveyed, 97% experienced a reduction in revenue during wildfire closures, with almost 30% indicating that they experienced a reduction in revenue of 81-100%. Due to the reduction in revenue, 70% of businesses indicated they do not have sufficient resources to cover their expenses and remain viable without support.

The village has been lobbying the B.C. government for \$1.5 million in financial support, to be distributed to local businesses through an independent third party organization. This amount was determined through the significant community engagement conducted and is less than both reported and estimated revenue losses. It has been identified as a critically needed amount that local businesses and organizations can use to keep operations going through to the next operating season and prevent a downward economic spiral in the community.

This document outlines a work plan to address the urgent recovery needs of Valemount's business community, currently insufficiently met by available funding programs. A targeted approach is proposed, with a dedicated \$1,500,000 recovery funding program to be administered by an independent third party organization to ensure objective, transparent, and accountable distribution. With third parties already identified and engaged, the Village of Valemount is well prepared to have future committed funding administered to businesses efficiently with suitable guidelines and reporting requirements to ensure funds can be allocated effectively.

This plan acknowledges the unique circumstances of the indirect effects of the 2024 Jasper Wildfires on the Village of Valemount and outlines a pathway for successful support. Once immediate recovery needs are met, the village is well positioned to capitalize on a variety of future economic development growth opportunities.

Objectives

Secure Targeted Recovery Funding: Obtain dedicated funding (\$1,500,000) from the Federal Government to address Valemount's specific economic recovery needs, able to be accessed by Valemount businesses. Funds are intended to prevent business closures and job losses.

Establish Independent and Accountable Fund Administration: Utilize a recognized third-party organization to manage the administration and distribution of funds, ensuring objectivity and adherence to developed guidelines. Funding received to also include amounts to cover the costs for administration, separate from the \$1.5M.

New Program Development: Work with the government and third party organization to create clear guidelines for the Valemount business community, outlining eligibility criteria, reporting requirements, and funding parameters. Funding to be accessible as a program Valemount business organizations can apply to.

Independent Application and Review Process: The third party organization to develop and implement an accessible and efficient application process, followed by application review and approval. The application process is hoped to be as accessible as possible, so that all local businesses who need support will be able to apply. Valemount will not participate in the approval process to maintain independence.

Timely Disbursement and Suitable Reporting: Disbursement of funds without delay to approved businesses, with the third party working with unapproved applications to try to get them to an approved state while funding is available. Reporting requirements designed to ensure accountability and audit compliance, without being overly burdensome on approved businesses.

Work Plan

	Activities	Description	People Involved
1	Ongoing Discussions with Government	Valemount will continue discussions with the Government regarding recovery needs, emphasizing that current available programming does not adequately address these needs and support is critical to maintain the community.	Village of Valemount, Federal Government, Strategies North Advisory

2	Funding Commitment	The Federal Government will commit \$1,500,000 in recovery funding, plus associated third-party administrative costs to the recovery initiative.	Federal Government (Pacifcan, other)
3	Third-Party Organization Selection	Valemount will continue discussions with Community Futures, Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT), and Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) to finalize selection of the organization to administer the funds. Selection will consider Government preferences, organizational ability and capacity, and local familiarity. Community Futures is currently the primary choice and has confirmed their availability.	Village of Valemount, CF, NDIT, CBT
4	Funding Guidelines Development	The selected third-party organization, with input from Valemount, will develop and share funding guidelines to be distributed among the Valemount business community. These guidelines will include funding maximums, required documentation, eligible expenses, application forms, reporting requirements, and application deadlines. Funding guidelines will be developed to maximize efficiency of funding received within the community and will be similar to other successful program guidelines.	CF/NDIT/CBT, Village of Valemount
5	Application Submission	Guidelines and application forms will be shared among the local business community, and businesses will prepare and submit applications to the selected third-party organization.	Village of Valemount, Valemount businesses, CF/NDIT/CBT

6	Application Review	The third-party organization will independently review applications, without Valemount's input, for approvals, rejections, or required edits.	CF/NDIT/CBT, Valemount businesses (for application edits)
7	Application Approval	The third-party organization will approve applications that meet the established requirements and guidelines, within the total program budget.	CF/NDIT/CBT
8	Funding Disbursement	Funding agreements signed with businesses with approved applications, funding is disbursed.	CF/NDIT/CBT, Valemount businesses
9	Reporting and Audit Compliance	Per funding agreements, approved businesses will submit required reporting to the third-party organization, including materials necessary to meet audit requirements and show appropriate use of funds.	Valemount businesses, CF/NDIT/CBT
10	Program End	Funding program application deadline has passed accepting no other applications and/or funding is all disbursed. Village of Valemount to work with the third-party organization to report on the impact to the community. Specific Valemount business information obtained during the application process to remain confidential from Valemount.	Village of Valemount, CF/NDIT/CBT

Key Considerations

- This plan is rooted in the clear and demonstrable need for targeted funding that is not met by existing programs.

- Open and consistent communication will be maintained with the Federal Government, the selected third-party organization, and the Valemount business community.
- An independent third party organization must control and administer the funds, for transparency, objectivity, and adherence to municipal legislation.
- Community Futures, NDIT, and CBT, have all indicated in discussions with Valemount that they are available to administer potential funding received. The Valemount business community is most familiar with Community Futures, and as such is Valemount's preference. Discussions with Community Futures confirm capacity and ability to expediently get started.
- Funding guidelines, application process, and approval process will be followed to meet reporting and audit compliance.
- Funds are hoped to prevent the worst of the negative effects from the decrease in revenue and economic activity during the highway closures including business curtailments and job loss. Eligible costs under the funding program therefore may include payroll expenses, utilities, business rent/lease payments, insurance, and inventory. Funding levels under the program should be based on metrics such as the amount of revenue lost and number of local jobs maintained or gained.
- This plan is designed to be able to quickly deploy the urgently needed funds to the Valemount business community, once received.

Further Growth Initiatives

With immediate recovery needs addressed, the Village of Valemount can turn focus to future growth and resilience-building initiatives. From discussions with Northern Development Initiative Trust, NDIT sponsored a skills building and NDIT-funding workshop in the community with Tourism Valemount as a leading organization. Fifteen local businesses attended the workshop, NDIT worked with them to go over its available funding programs that they can utilize and Community Futures led training in financial management, marketing, and strategy. Further with Columbia Basin Trust, CBT has indicated it has project funding available for growth activities. The Village of Valemount, in collaboration with Tourism Valemount, will utilize this opportunity following the NDIT workshop to develop new marketing strategies and materials. This project with CBT will help develop broader community appeal and capacity, as individual businesses also build their capacity in tandem.

In conversations with Destination BC, while Destination BC does not currently have direct funding it did indicate other ways it can support the village's future growth. This included

potentially increasing its inclusion in the Invest in Iconics Strategy to improve Valemount's presence provincially, nationally, and internationally as a top destination. Tourism Valemount will continue to work with the visitor services team, and Destination BC has indicated a desire for increased contact with the organization. In 2026, new opportunities such as the Co-operative Marketing Partnerships Program will be available. In partnership with multiple communities in BC including Simpcw First Nation, other First Nations, and other municipalities, the village can access this upcoming funding to faster progress broader regional tourism efforts it is planning such as a multi-community tourism circuit.

Valemount will continue to collaborate with the town of Jasper, particularly in the intermediate term as Jasper is also recovering. Valement strengthening its tourism, local investment, and economic development as Jasper does the same can benefit both communities by increasing the size of the pie when it comes to tourism visitation. The village will also further community-to-community work with other neighbouring community partners including Simpcw First Nation and Lheidli T'enneh First Nation.

While doing the above, Valemount will soon develop a local economic strategy as well as a tourism strategy leveraging the recovery funding providing necessary stability to pursue future growth opportunities. Recovery support will also help non-tourism businesses, as Valemount will explore ways to build contacts to increase community investment, diversify its local economy, and strengthen other industries such as manufacturing, construction, agriculture, technology, or others as identified in the economic development strategy. Valemount is currently undertaking and will continue to undertake and grow local events, buy local and workforce development programs, and infrastructure development with the aim of bringing tourists to the village and spurring economic activity. This has been identified in the village's recently completed 2025-27 Resort Development Strategy, to bring higher visitor numbers to Valemount. To assist with these goals, the village will explore any new funding programs offered by PacifiCan, NDIT, JEDI, and other sources.

Building on the foundation laid by successful recovery efforts, the Village of Valemount is also encouraging re-establishment of its local Chamber of Commerce, facilitating connections and communications while maintaining the organization's independence. The Valemount Chamber of Commerce will help empower the business community and strengthen them in looking at ways to develop partnerships, find synergies, and build local capacity and long-term economic resilience. Following the NDIT-sponsored workshop, the Chamber is meeting to move forward with its re-establishment.

Conclusion

This proposed work plan offers a clear and structured solution to address Valemount's unique economic recovery needs. Establishing a framework and ensuring independent

administration, recovery funding support can meet community needs not met by current funding programs and can contribute to the region's economic resilience. Once current recovery needs are met, the Village of Valemount is well positioned to work with partners and develop its capacity to invigorate future economic development.





Village of Valemount

Work Plan for Economic Recovery Funding

MARCH 31, 2025



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This document outlines a work plan to address the urgent recovery needs of Valemount's business community, currently insufficiently met by available funding programs. A targeted approach is proposed, with a dedicated \$1,500,000 recovery funding program to be administered by an independent third party organization to ensure objective, transparent, and accountable distribution. With third parties already identified and engaged, the Village of Valemount is well prepared to have future committed funding administered to businesses efficiently with suitable guidelines and reporting requirements to ensure funds can be allocated effectively.

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Work Plan

	Activities	Description	People Involved
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2	Funding Commitment	The BC Government will commit \$1,500,000 in recovery funding, plus associated third-party administrative costs to the recovery initiative.	BC Government (EMCR, JEDI, other)
3	Third-Party Organization Selection	Valemount will continue discussions with Community Futures, Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT), and Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) to finalize selection of the organization to administer the funds. Selection will consider BC Government preferences, organizational ability and capacity, and local familiarity.	Village of Valemount, CF, NDIT, CBT
4	Funding Guidelines Development	The selected third-party organization, with input from Valemount, will develop and share funding guidelines to be distributed among the Valemount business community. These guidelines will include funding maximums, required documentation, eligible expenses, application forms, reporting requirements, and application deadlines. Funding guidelines will be developed to maximize efficiency of funding received within the community.	CF/NDIT/CBT, Village of Valemount
5	Application Submission	Guidelines and application forms will be shared among the local business community, and businesses will prepare and submit applications to the selected third-party organization.	Village of Valemount, Valemount businesses, CF/NDIT/CBT
6	Application Review	The third-party organization will independently review applications, without Valemount's input, for approvals, rejections, or required edits.	CF/NDIT/CBT, Valemount businesses (for application edits)

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8	Funding Disbursement	Funding agreements signed with businesses with approved applications, funding is disbursed.	CF/NDIT/CBT, Valemount businesses
9	Reporting and Audit Compliance	Per funding agreements, approved businesses will submit required reporting to the third-party organization, including materials necessary to meet audit requirements and show appropriate use of funds.	Valemount businesses, CF/NDIT/CBT
10	Program End	Funding program application deadline has passed accepting no other applications and/or funding is all disbursed. Village of Valemount to work with the third-party organization to report on the impact to the community. Specific Valemount business information obtained during the application process to remain confidential from Valemount.	Village of Valemount, CF/NDIT/CBT

Key Considerations

- This plan is rooted in the clear and demonstrable need for targeted funding that is not met by existing programs.
- Open and consistent communication will be maintained with the BC Government, the selected third-party organization, and the Valemount business community.
- An independent third party organization must control and administer the funds, for transparency, objectivity, and adherence to municipal legislation.

- Community Futures, NDI, and CBT, have all indicated in discussions with Valemount that they are available to administer potential funding received. The Valemount business community is most familiar with Community Futures, and as such is Valemount's preference. Discussions with Community Futures indicate capacity and ability to expediently get started.
- Funding guidelines, application process, and approval process will be followed to meet reporting and audit compliance.
- Funds are hoped to prevent the worst of the negative effects from the decrease in revenue and economic activity during the highway closures including business curtailments and job loss. Eligible costs under the funding program therefore may include payroll expenses, utilities, business rent/lease payments, insurance, and inventory. Funding levels under the program should be based on metrics such as the amount of revenue lost and number of local jobs maintained or gained.
- This plan is designed to be able to quickly deploy the urgently needed funds to the Valemount business community, once received.

Further Growth Initiatives

With immediate recovery needs addressed, the Village of Valemount can turn focus to future growth and resilience-building initiatives. In discussions with Northern Development Initiative Trust, NDI has indicated that they will support a skills building and NDI-funding workshop in the community with Tourism Valemount as a leading organization. Local businesses will be able to attend the workshop, building skills and receiving training in financial management, marketing, and operations. NDI will also work with businesses to go over its available funding programs that they can utilize. The Village of Valemount will continue working with Community Futures and Columbia Basin Trust for their input and additions in the workshop. Further with Columbia Basin Trust, CBT has indicated it has project funding available for growth activities. The Village of Valemount, in collaboration with Tourism Valemount, will utilize this opportunity following the NDI workshop to develop new marketing strategies and materials. This project with CBT will help develop broader community appeal and capacity, as individual businesses also build their capacity in tandem.

In conversations with Destination BC, while Destination BC does not currently have direct funding it did indicate other ways it can support the village's future growth. This included potentially increasing its inclusion in the Invest in Iconics Strategy to improve Valemount's presence provincially, nationally, and internationally as a top destination. Tourism Valemount will continue to work with the visitor services team, and Destination BC has indicated a desire for increased contact with the organization. In 2026, new opportunities

such as the Co-operative Marketing Partnerships Program will be available. In partnership with multiple communities in BC including Simpcw First Nation, other First Nations, and other municipalities, the village can access this upcoming funding to faster progress broader regional tourism efforts it is planning such as a multi-community tourism circuit.

Valemount will continue to collaborate with the town of Jasper, particularly in the intermediate term as Jasper is also recovering. Valement strengthening its tourism, local investment, and economic development as Jasper does the same can benefit both communities by increasing the size of the pie when it comes to tourism visitation. The village will also further community-to-community work with other neighbouring community partners including Simpcw First Nation and Lheidli T'enneh First Nation.

While doing the above, Valemount will soon develop a local economic strategy as well as a tourism strategy leveraging the recovery funding providing necessary stability to pursue future growth opportunities. Recovery support will also help non-tourism businesses, as Valemount will explore ways to build contacts to increase community investment, diversify its local economy, and strengthen other industries such as manufacturing, construction, agriculture, technology, or others as identified in the economic development strategy. Valemount is currently undertaking and will continue to undertake and grow local events, buy local and workforce development programs, and infrastructure development with the aim of bringing tourists to the village and spurring economic activity. This has been identified in the village's recently completed 2025-27 Resort Development Strategy, to bring higher visitor numbers to Valemount. To assist with these goals, the village will explore funding programs offered by PacifiCan, NDIT, JEDI, and other sources.

Building on the foundation laid by successful recovery efforts, the Village of Valemount will encourage re-establishment of its local Chamber of Commerce, facilitating connections and communications while maintaining the organization's independence. The Valemount Chamber of Commerce will help empower the business community and strengthen them in looking at ways to develop partnerships, find synergies, and build local capacity and long-term economic resilience.

Conclusion

This proposed work plan offers a clear and structured solution to address Valemount's unique economic recovery needs. Establishing a framework and ensuring independent administration, recovery funding support can meet community needs not met by current funding programs and can contribute to the region's economic resilience. Once current recovery needs are met, the Village of Valemount is well positioned to work with partners and develop its capacity to invigorate future economic development.

Appendix B: Lobbying and Advocacy

- **Summary of Lobbying and Advocacy**
 - **Lobbying Master Report**
 - **Lobbying Workplan : January 28th 2025**
 - **Press Releases: April - May 2025**
 - **Key Messages: March - June 2025**
 - **Briefing Notes: May - June 2025**
 - **Letters of Support**
-

Valemount Government Relations Super Summary

Purpose: To highlight the most critical information included in the final Master Lobbying Report.

Key Next Steps

- Valemount to reach out to ADM Evans who may be able to assist in scheduling a meeting with Minister Olszewski.
- Follow up with MP Lloyd's office regarding the joint advocacy efforts within the Official Opposition's Shadow Cabinet, particularly MPs Baldinelli and Zimmer.
- Follow up with MP Lloyd regarding any communications with Minister Olszewski.
- Complete compilation of submitted evacuee support invoices and share with Jasper and Alberta for reimbursement.
- Continue to discuss emergency management and response gaps for cross-provincial and interjurisdictional events with BC and the federal government.

Highlights

Federal

- PacifiCan and Tourism Offices are aware of this funding gap and are exploring the potential of creating a 'rainy day fund' for the Regional Director Generals of PacifiCan and PrairiesCan to avoid going through the Treasury for small sums.
- A letter addressed to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change was drafted and dated June 6th regarding Parks Canada's responsibilities pertaining to Valemount's recovery. This letter has been shared with MP Dane Lloyd, MP Bob Zimmer, and MP Tony Baldinelli, who have stated they will work together as members of the Shadow Cabinet to ensure this letter receives proper consideration.

Alberta

- Alberta, through mutual aid with Jasper, has committed to funding Valemount's as well as Valemount businesses' and organizations' costs for hosting evacuees.

British Columbia

- Valemount's circumstances were brought up by MLA Rosalyn Bird in the legislative session on March 13th, 2025.
- A letter was sent to the Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness as well as the Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation from MLA Bird.

- MLA Bird shared a letter dated March 27th from EMCR and JEDI, stating Valemount received government support for a community recovery manager (services provided by Strategies North) and a Community Economic Recovery Table. However, the letter lacked a clear funding avenue and didn't mention the recovery table's failure to provide direct support opportunities.

General Strategy

- The support of George Lampreau, Chief of Simpcw First Nation was very helpful in meeting with BC, and should be included in meetings and official communications whenever possible to highlight Valemount's interconnected relationship with the Nation.
- Meeting with opposition parties remains critical in filling the wider policy gap and ensuring advocates should government change.

Key Advocates

- MP Bob Zimmer - MP Prince George–Peace River–Northern Rockies BC
- MP Tony Balducci - Shadow Minister for Tourism, MP Niagara Falls–Niagara-on-the-Lake ON
- MP Dane Lloyd - Shadow Minister of Emergency Preparedness, MP Sturgeon River–Parkland AB
- Michele Evans - Assistant Deputy Minister, Prairies Economic Development Canada, Alberta Region, Government of Canada
- MLA Rosalyn Bird - MLA Prince George – Valemount, Province of BC
- TJ Keil - Special Advisor to the Premier, Province of Alberta

Largest Hurdles

- One of the challenges is the lack of a direct funding route as Valemount does not 'check any of the boxes' of available programs, and available programs are few in number.
- The prorogation of parliament and the election greatly disrupted the scheduling and quality of conversations with the federal government. This was worsened as timing was also delayed when meeting with BC due to the interregnum period which reduced the progress that could be demonstrated to Canada during these meetings.
- All funding was effectively frozen for the last several months and until early May due to prorogation and election.

Village of Valemount

Master Lobbying Report

STRATEGIES NORTH ADVISORY INC.
467 ST. PAUL STREET
KAMLOOPS, BC V2C 2J7
PH: 613-406-3188

June Federal Meetings

Executive Summary

Lobbying Meeting Dates: June 4th - June 12th, 2025

Progress Made

- The Village of Valemount drafted a letter addressed to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) emphasizing the responsibility of the federal government to support Valemount in their economic recovery. Also copied on this letter is the Prime Minister's Office, Secretary of State for Small Business and Tourism, Minister for Housing and Infrastructure, Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience, the Minister of Transport and Internal Trade. Minister Steven Guilbeault was also copied as he was the Minister responsible for Parks Canada at the time of the 2024 Jasper Wildfire.
- MP Lloyd, MP Zimmer, and MP Baldinelli were sent this letter and informed us that they would be working together to ensure it receives proper consideration from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change as well as the government as a whole.

Challenges/Uncertainties

- No clear commitments on federal funding were made by any department. There is no clear funding avenue or program that fits Valemount's needs, and the difficulty of securing funding was emphasized during several meetings.

Key Next Steps

1. Follow up with key contacts, including Members of Parliament, PacifiCan, and PrairiesCan, to maintain ongoing engagement and ensure timely awareness of any forthcoming discussions, developments, or updates relevant to the community.
2. Valemount to follow up with members of the Shadow Cabinet regarding the letter addressed to Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) to ensure it receives appropriate consideration and response.
3. Valemount to reach out to ADM Evans who may be able to assist in scheduling a meeting with Minister Olszewski.

Meetings, Coordination & Logistics

What Worked

- All meetings kept roughly to schedule and did not go significantly overtime.

What Didn't

- Finding contact information for new Ministers and MPs was sometimes challenging due to the recent election and formation of cabinet.

Meeting: MP Bob Zimmer, MP for Prince George–Peace River–Northern Rockies

Date and Time: Wednesday, June 4th, 2025 (1:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. PST)

Meeting Attendees:

- MP Bob Zimmer, Prince George–Peace River–Northern Rockies
- Paul Noble, Legislative Assistant

Highlights:

- Prior to this meeting, MP Zimmer had already met with Mayor Torgerson and Anne Yanciw and spoken extensively about Valemount's economic circumstances following the 2024 Jasper Wildfire.
- Mayor Torgerson emphasized that he had already spoken with the Alberta and British Columbia governments, and that the Federal government is now the last stop for the Village of Valemount.
- The Mayor emphasized that Parks Canada's heavy-handed approach to highway closures following the wildfire severely impacted Valemount's economy during its peak tourism season, especially given its status as a resort municipality
- **The Mayor discussed the fact that some businesses had closed, but took care to point out that even the businesses that only curtailed their business operations will not be well-equipped to collect revenue this season. Many surviving businesses have had to cut staff or limit operating hours, both of which will reduce their ability to capitalize on summer tourism.**
- MP Zimmer recommended we get in contact with MP Dan Albas, the Shadow Minister for Transport.

- The Mayor emphasized the significant gaps in the federal emergency response and emergency management strategies as they fail to address the communities that are indirectly, but still severely impacted.
- MP Zimmer highlighted the role of Parks Canada and the minister responsible for it at the time of the Jasper Wildfire, stating that Valemount's case could be strengthened if negligence on behalf of Parks Canada can be illustrated.
- MP Zimmer was asked to advocate on behalf of the Village of Valemount as their representative in Parliament. This is especially critical given the delays caused by the prorogation of Parliament in January and the ensuing federal election.
- MP Zimmer offered to support a letter addressed to the government if provided with one. Strategies North and the Village of Valemount worked to draft a letter addressed to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Honourable Julie Dabrusin.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Ensure that the letter addressed to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is sent to MP Zimmer, which he received on Friday, June 6th.
- Valemount to consider reaching out to MP Dan Albas, Shadow Minister for Transport, to see if he is available to discuss the Village of Valemount's economic recovery.
- Follow up with MP Zimmer's office regarding the joint advocacy efforts within the Official Opposition's Shadow Cabinet.

Meeting: MP Tony Baldinelli, Shadow Minister for Tourism

Date and Time: Tuesday, June 10th, 2025 (8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. PST)

Meeting Attendees:

- MP Baldinelli, Niagara Falls–Niagara-on-the-Lake
- William Morrison, Member's Assistant
- Sandra Bales, Member's Assistant

Highlights:

- The Mayor highlighted how the interjurisdictional nature of the 2024 Jasper Wildfire has complicated and delayed the process of reimbursing the Village of Valemount for their role in welcoming the evacuees from Jasper. The involvement of Parks Canada, the Province of Alberta, and the Municipality of Jasper has pushed Valemount's economic recovery needs to the periphery.
- MP Baldinelli highlighted that tourist-centered businesses, such as those in Valemount, often need to generate 70-75% of revenue during the four-month long summer season.
- The importance of approaching the Village of Valemount's economic recovery, as well as wider federal emergency management strategies as a non-partisan issue was stressed.
- MP Baldinelli stated that in his riding of Niagara Falls--Niagara-on-the-lake, there are 14,000 hotel rooms that are expected to host evacuees from Manitoba and Ontario during climate-related emergencies, which is paid for by the federal government. MP Baldinelli inquired as to how the Jasper Wildfire evacuation was administered, and the division of

responsibility between the federal government and the provincial governments of Alberta and British Columbia.

- Anne Yanciw explained that in BC's regulations, evacuees are usually eligible for reimbursement for hotel costs immediately upon evacuation, however, the Province of Alberta has slightly different rules that require evacuees to cover the hotel costs of the first week. The evacuees received by Valemount were evacuated from Alberta, highlighting the interjurisdictional nature of effective emergency management strategies.
- Anne stated that the lack of hotel room capacity meant that evacuees were staying in people's homes or camping in backyards, meaning that the reimbursement of hotel costs would be ineffective in this case.
- The Village of Valemount stressed that the prolonged highway closures following the wildfire had a severe impact on the local economy that could have been avoided.
- The Mayor informed MP Baldinelli of the formal letter that was sent to MP Zimmer, which was written by the Village of Valemount and addressed to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Honourable Julie Dabrusin.
- MP Baldinelli confirmed that he would connect with MP Bob Zimmer and MP Dane Lloyd to ensure they coordinated their advocacy approach on behalf of Valemount.
- The Mayor stated that the degree to which the highways were shut down in the Summer 2024 was not only unprecedented, but excessive in the length and severity of the closures that had been decided by Parks Canada.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Follow up with MP Baldinelli's office regarding the joint advocacy efforts within the Official Opposition's Shadow Cabinet.

Meeting: MP Dane Lloyd, Shadow Minister of Emergency Preparedness

Date and Time: Tuesday, June 10th, 2025 (9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. PST)

Meeting Attendees:

- MP Dane Lloyd, Sturgeon River—Parkland AB
- Harry McGuire - Legislative Assistant

Highlights:

- MP Lloyd has met previously with Mayor Torgerson and Anne Yanciw, and is very familiar with the background of Valemount's economic conditions and the context in which it is seeking economic recovery funding.
- The Mayor emphasized how the heavy-handed approach taken by Parks Canada in closing the highways for an excessive amount of time has created gaps in the federal government's ability to support Valemount in their economic recovery.
- The Mayor asked MP Lloyd to connect with MP Baldinelli and MP Zimmer to ensure that they coordinated their approach to advocating for Valemount within the government.

- MP Lloyd has met with Valemount several times and has worked to find possible solutions, however many of these routes have been unsuccessful.
- The Library of Parliament was directed to conduct research on possible funding routes that could be applicable to the Village of Valemount, but they were unable to find any leads.
- MP Lloyd stressed that his ability to continue to push for the provision of economic recovery funding is severely limited.
- MP Lloyd was encouraged by Valemount's detailed and thorough strategy in preparing to distribute funding through connecting with Community Futures.
- The Mayor suggested that a program similar to the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) program adopted during COVID-19 could work in Valemount's case. MP Lloyd found this parallel noteworthy.
- The Mayor argued that the federal government should learn from Valemount's experience being heavily involved with an interprovincial emergency and evacuation.
- MP Lloyd expressed a deep understanding of and concern for communities that are indirectly impacted by disasters similar to the 2024 Jasper Wildfire, as there are significant gaps in the federal government's approach.
- **MP Lloyd stated that he will write to his Liberal counterpart in the Emergency Management and Community Resilience portfolio, the Hon. Eleanor Olszewski.**

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Follow up with MP Lloyd's office regarding the joint advocacy efforts within the Official Opposition's Shadow Cabinet.
- Follow up with MP Lloyd regarding any communications with Minister Olszewski.

Meeting: Pacific Economic Development Canada, President's Office + Prairies Economic Development Canada, Alberta Region

Date and Time: Thursday, June 12th, 2025 (2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. PST)

Meeting Attendees:

- Tammy Schulz, Acting Vice President, PacifiCan
- Eric Neudorf, Advocacy Manager, PacifiCan
- Michele Evans - Assistant Deputy Minister, PrairiesCan

Highlights:

- The Mayor began the meeting by outlining how the 2024 Jasper Wildfire has impacted the Village of Valemount, emphasizing the evacuations and the long-term economic impact of the highway closures.
- The Mayor expressed that opportunities to meet with the federal government have been severely limited since January 2025 due to the prorogation of Parliament and ensuing election in the spring.

- VP Schulz inquired about the impact of increased domestic tourism within Canada on Valemount, expressing that Valemount may be unable to take advantage of this opportunity if businesses are short-staffed and have limited hours.
- VP Schulz emphasized that non-repayable loans are rarely granted by the federal government, and recommended that Valemount look into programs that are meant to support communities rather than businesses.
- One such program within PacifiCan is Community Economic Development and Diversification (CEDD).
- ADM Evans informed us that PrairiesCan is continuing to monitor the recovery and rebuild of Jasper, and highlighted the marketing strategies employed by Tourism Jasper.
- VP Schulz strongly recommended that Valemount get in touch with the Minister responsible for PrairiesCan, the Honourable Eleanor Olszewski.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Valemount to follow up with PacifiCan and PrairiesCan in the following weeks as new ministerial portfolios begin to take shape.
- Valemount to reach out to ADM Evans who may be able to assist in scheduling a meeting with Minister Olszewski.

Alberta and March Federal Meetings

Executive Summary

Lobbying Meeting Dates: March 5th-April 2nd, 2025

Progress Made

- MPs Van Popta and Lloyd were greatly appreciative of Valemount's support of Jasper and alluded to their support of this initiative should they be elected to Cabinet.
- Awareness was raised across the federal body and Liberal and Conservative Parties regarding the clear recovery funding gap for neighbouring communities providing support surrounding disasters.
- We learned PacifiCan and Tourism are aware of this gap and are exploring the potential of creating a 'rainy day fund' for the Regional Director Generals of PacifiCan and PrairiesCan to avoid going through Treasury for small sums.
- The Special Advisor to the Alberta Premier T.J. Keil was understanding of Valemount's situation and committed to bringing it to Premier Smith for increased communications between her and Premier Eby.
- Alberta MLA Shepherd was receptive to Valemount's efforts and shared the same perspective as Valemount when it came to securing support. He indicated he would help push for advocacy from Alberta for BC and Federal funding.
- Alberta, through mutual aid with Jasper, has committed to funding Valemount's as well as Valemount businesses' and organizations' costs for hosting evacuees.

Challenges/Uncertainties

- No clear commitments on federal funding were made by any department, with all funding being effectively frozen for the last several months and until early May due to prorogement and election.
- The prorogement of parliament and the election greatly disrupted the scheduling and quality of conversations with the federal government. This was worsened as timing was also delayed when meeting with BC due to the interregnum period which reduced the progress that could be demonstrated to Canada during these meetings.

Key Next Steps

1. Organize discussions with the Municipality of Jasper to establish an MOU for evacuee-hosting costs to be submitted to Jasper for payment to Valemount, with Jasper ultimately being reimbursed from the Province of Alberta.
2. Follow up with the federal government, particularly PacifiCan, following the election, and encourage their communication with BC to provide recovery funding.
3. Continue discussions with Alberta to facilitate reimbursement for evacuee support to Valemount's businesses and organizations, and for advocacy for other lobbying efforts

Meetings, Coordination & Logistics

What Worked

- All meetings kept roughly to schedule and did not go significantly overtime.

What Didn't

- Unfortunate last minute changes of plans disrupted scheduling meetings, causing a few to be cancelled and all to be held virtually.
- The spread out schedule of virtual meetings made it more difficult to schedule during Valemount and governments availabilities

Federal Meetings:

Meeting: MP Van Popta, Shadow Minister of Pacific Economic Development

Date and Time: Wednesday, March 5th, 2025 (11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. PST)

Meeting Attendees:

- MP Tako Van Popta, Langley–Aldergrove BC

Highlights:

- Following introductions and an overview of the evacuation and highways closures from Mayor Torgerson, MP Van Popta inquired if tourists stopped coming to Valemount following

the highway closures. The Mayor explained that they've been massively impacted by the devastation to Jasper Park.

- MP Van Popta suggested approaching PacifiCan, to which Mayor Torgerson explained they have but do not fit in their boxes, and would be better able to access funding if half of the Village had burned down. He requested MP Van Popta assist in navigating federal waters and note the gaps in PacifiCan and Valemount's dire need for funding.
- Grant noted that they have discussed this matter with the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, Community Futures, and local trusts who understand the impacts of this disaster but are constrained by particular criteria. He shared how this is a cross-provincial issue and Valemount would engage with both BC and Albertan officials.
- **MP Van Popta noted that the Village is suffering and \$1.5 million is not overly expensive.** He inquired if other small towns in the area would pursue the same funding. Mayor Torgerson explained that the neighbouring communities are much smaller and saw less of a financial impact than Valemount. Grant noted Valemount has received a letter of support from the neighbouring interior region as the Village provides a direct line for their tourism.
- As the meeting concluded **MP Van Popta noted that he may not be able to do much with the impending election, but that this issue certainly has his attention.**

Follow-Up Action Items:

- The Economic Recovery Strategy was shared with MP Van Popta's office outlining the reasoning behind the \$1.5 million ask.
- Follow up with updates and requesting advocacy following election results.

Meeting: Tourism, Minister's Office

Date and Time: Thursday, March 6th, 2025 (9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. PST)

Meeting Attendees:

- Jose Villagra - Regional Advisor

Highlights:

- Following introductions, it was noted that Jose Villagra and Mayor Torgerson had spoken previously by chance, and that he and other Minister's offices are aware of this unique issue, and that hoped to provide assistance in the time he has before the election, and would ensure this is passed on to his successor if need be.
- The Mayor explained the impacts of the highway closures and threats of closure to local businesses. Jose noted it has also been difficult for Jasper and Hinton AB to coordinate a response due to competing priorities between BC and AB.
- Mayor Torgerson shared they have met with regional managers at PacifiCan and PrairiesCan, but they do not fit in their boxes.
- Grant shared the request for \$1.5 million, emphasizing Valemount's importance in western Canadian tourism as a transition space from Jasper to the Okanagan. He highlighted letters of

support from other areas of BC that recognize Valemount's significance in sustaining tourism between AB and BC.

- Jose explained that from their Ministry **any money they could have requested is frozen until a new budget, but that they have ideas going into a new budget that could assist with individual situations like these.**
- He committed to reaching out to PacifiCan and Treasury on what they could do, but noted the delays built in as a new government is elected.
- Grant shared that they have spoken with Community Futures and they have indicated they can administer recovery funds. He noted they would be in Victoria soon, Jose committed to speaking with Tourism BC on this issue and seeing what they have at their disposal.
- He noted that federally they can work with Community Futures, but that PacifiCan's limited administration and size is restrictive. He shared his vision of creating a 'rainy day fund' for the Regional Director Generals of PacifiCan and PrairiesCan to avoid going through Treasury for small sums.
- As the meeting concluded, Jose reiterated he would reach out to his colleagues at PacifiCan and see what his provincial counterparts think.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Jose to discuss recovery funding for Valemount with the Minister of Tourism and the general funding gap that burdens neighbouring towns providing support during disasters.
- Jose to reach out to PacifiCan and Treasury on what possible funds may be available and processes for accessing auxiliary funds.
- Jose to reach out to provincial counterparts and discuss possible funding solutions.

Updates:

- Jose followed up by email suggesting several measures Valemount was already undertaking such as meeting with Alberta, PacifiCan, and Community Futures.

Meeting: MP Lloyd, Shadow Minister of Emergency Preparedness

Date and Time: Wednesday, March 19th, 2025 (9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. PST)

Meeting Attendees:

- MP Dane Lloyd, Sturgeon River—Parkland AB
- Harry McGuire - Legislative Assistant

Highlights:

- Following introductions, the Mayor shared the impacts of highway closure and evacuees on Valemount, and how they have only now been able to engage with BC following the interregnum, and are also looking for federal support.

- MP Lloyd thanked Valemount for the assistance they provided Jasper. A discussion ensued concerning the breakdown of costs for evacuees and business recovery, Grace shared the recovery strategy.
- MP Lloyd asked what BC was doing, Mayor Torgerson responded that only just began talking with them due to the interregnum.
- MP Lloyd shared that **with the upcoming election there will be no new money until the end of April at the earliest** as the new government would need to put it in the budget. He noted that even had Valemount come to him 6 months ago there was nothing to be done due to prorogement of Parliament, and even **the response to Jasper is moving very slowly.**
- **He committed to looking for and advocating for any recovery funding** to go to Valemount. He directed Harry to share any business supports for disasters they could find.
- As the meeting concluded the Mayor recognized the horrible timing and MP Lloyd was very committed to getting any information they could to Valemount in the short term.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- The Economic Recovery Strategy was shared with MP Van Popta's office outlining the reasoning behind the \$1.5 million ask.
- Follow up with updates and requesting advocacy following election results.
- Harry to provide any identified recovery and business support funding.

Updates:

- Harry provided a list of the following funding opportunities, though most if not all have already been explored by Valemount and Strategies North:

Federal Resources

Pacific Economic Development Canada (PacifiCan)

- PacifiCan offers a variety of [Funding for businesses and non-profits in British Columbia](#) that may be of interest. For example, the [Community Economic Development and Diversification in British Columbia](#) program “creates enduring economic benefits for British Columbians. It invests in projects that harness local ambitions, assets, knowledge and economic opportunities to create more prosperous and resilient communities.” Applications for this program are accepted on an ongoing basis. For more information, your constituents may wish to [contact PacifiCan](#) directly.

Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC)

- The [BDC](#) is a financial institution owned by the Government of Canada that supports Canada's small and medium-sized enterprises. They offer various financing options that could be of interest, including [Small business loans](#) and [Consulting](#) services. For more information, your constituents may wish to contact a [BDC Business Centre in British Columbia](#).

Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada (ISED)

- The [Canada Small Business Financing Program](#), from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), “makes it easier for small businesses to get loans from financial institutions by sharing the risk with lenders.” According to the [Frequently asked questions](#), “[m]ost start-ups and existing for-profit, not-for-profit and charitable small businesses in Canada with gross revenues of \$10 million or less are eligible to apply for loans under this program.” Your constituents can consult the [interactive map](#) to find participating lenders.
- ISED’s [Business Benefits Finder](#) is a search tool that provides a customized list of federal and provincial grants, loans and financing opportunities. Please note that certain filters must be selected to present more targeted results.

Provincial Resources

- Government of British Columbia – [Economic development funding & grants](#)
- Province of British Columbia (WorkBC) – [Industry and Employers](#)

Additional Resources

- The University of British Columbia – [Funding & Financing](#)

Meeting: Prairies Economic Development Canada, Alberta Region

Date and Time: Thursday, March 20th, 2025 (1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. PST)

Meeting Attendees:

- Michele Evans - Assistant Deputy Minister

Highlights:

- The Assistant Deputy Minister for PacifiCan was originally supposed to attend, but was unfortunately unable to.
- ADM Michele Evans expressed her appreciation for all of Valemount’s contributions to Alberta and understands that Valemount is facing similar challenges to Jasper.
- ADM Evans let us know that Terry Duguid, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, announced on March 5th, 2025 that Jasper would be receiving federal support for business, reconstruction, and tourism initiatives in order to bolster economic activity and rebuilding efforts in Jasper.
- **The federal support for Jasper will likely benefit Valemount indirectly as the initiative is targeted at the Jasper region.**
- **ADM Evans is unable to offer Valemount any programming as her mandate ends at the Albertan border.**
- ADM Evans mentioned that she knew of Red Cross support that Valemount received, however this amounted to \$1000 per business which was insufficient.

- ADM Evans discussed how Jasper was able to receive funding from Community Futures, however the difficulty for Valemount is that Community Futures Fraser–Fort George is focused on long-term economic development, whereas Valemount needs immediate relief funding.
- ADM Evans recommended that we go through the Provincial Disaster Assistance Act, however this may not be possible as Valemount was not directly impacted by any natural disasters.
- ADM Evans assured us that she would advocate for Valemount both within Alberta and federally.
- Jasper’s relief funding was administered through Community Futures West Yellowhead.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- ADM Evans to connect with relevant colleagues in PacifiCan, specifically to discuss the possibility of making programming more flexible in order to provide adequate support as this is what was done in Alberta to support Jasper.
- Strategies North to follow up with PrairiesCan following the federal election as they are unable to make funding decisions until a new cabinet is formed.

Alberta Meetings:

Meeting: Premier’s Office

Date and Time: Monday, March 17th, 2025 (9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. PST)

Meeting Attendees:

- TJ Keil - Special Advisor to the Premier

Highlights:

- Following introductions, Mayor Torgerson explained how Valemount requires \$1.5 million for economic recovery from BC and Canada, and \$500k from Alberta for costs incurred while hosting evacuees.
- TJ Keil noted that Valemount isn’t located in Alberta and there is a great demand on their resources, however, interior BC is closely linked to Alberta.
- He noted that this issue is under federal jurisdiction and inquired into communications and issues relating to that process. The Mayor shares they have engaged at a high-level with Canada, and that they do not want to question opening their doors for future emergencies if there is no support provided afterwards.
- Nick mentioned wanting to set a precedent when emergencies and evacuees cross a provincial border that they won’t be overly burdened.
- TJ recognized how this matter was beyond just a financial and timely ask, he mentioned **discussing this with Premier Eby to make sure people are taken care of on both sides of the map.**

- He commented on how this ask looks to Rimbey AB who also have a large financial ask, but that it remains an important issue at large.
- Mayor Torgerson agreed this is a conversation Premiers Eby and Smith need to have, TJ committed to making that chat happen. He also affirmed Valemount is meeting with the right people and that their ask seems reasonable.
- As the meeting concluded TJ affirmed he would pass this matter on to Premier Smith who would discuss this with Eby and advocate for funding from BC.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- TJ to discuss this matter with Premier Smith who would discuss with Eby and advocate for funding for Valemount's recovery from BC.
- Grace to follow up within 3 weeks on next steps.

Updates:

- Received communication that Alberta would provide reimbursements for hosting evacuees through a Memorandum of Understanding between Jasper and Valemount.

Meeting: Strategic and Integrated Services Division, Transportation and Economic Corridors

Date and Time: Tuesday, March 18th, 2025 (10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m PST)

Meeting Attendees:

- Alan Windhorst - Executive Director, Strategic Policy and Business Services Branch, Transportation and Economic Corridors
- Paul C Smith - Assistant Deputy Minister, Capital Planning, Grants and Engineering Services Division Transportation and Economic Corridors

Highlights:

- Following introductions Mayor Torgerson noted how highway closures disrupted key supply chain routes for weeks and that they were looking to discuss what they can do through the disaster recovery fund. He noted the strain that assisting evacuees took on the Village and that they don't want to question whether they should help in the future.
- Alan Windhorst thanked the Mayor and Village as an Albertan and as he had a friend evacuate. He noted **their office does not administer any funding programs around disaster recovery**, but that they should discuss the matter with Municipal Affairs.
- Alan inquired if Valemount is still getting truck traffic and if tourism is down. Mayor Torgerson explained that their biggest economic driver is the summer, and how businesses lost revenue that is critical to maintaining operations at a loss through the winter.
- Following a question from Alan, the Mayor indicated they are involved in northern resource corridor discussions between BC and AB, but that long-term planning only works if they can meet immediate needs.

- He also explained to Alan that tariffs will definitely play a key role in the future along supply chains but it is too early to tell how. He noted they don't export anything to the US, and fibre tariffs won't have much impact on Valemount while general cost increases will.
- The Mayor shared they don't check any of the boxes needed to receive relief funding from BC.
- Grant inquired how their office anticipates the impact of tariffs. Alan shared they are not sure besides cross border traffic diminishing, and an increase in domestic Canadian tourists.
- Grant noted how critical breaking down interprovincial barriers to trade and transport are now, and how it will be more advantageous for Valemount and Jasper, and future emergency response.
- Alan agreed they need to do a better job looking beyond the border and that while they don't have programming they would be happy to pass this information along, as this will happen again. He noted that disaster recovery needs to better think of who's supporting evacuees.
- As the meeting concluded, Mayor Torgerson highlighted that they hope to engage in the future on the impact of Highway 16.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Alan to discuss the need for a solution to the recovery gap for neighbouring communities providing support surrounding disasters.

Meeting: MLA Shepherd, Shadow Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services

Date and Time: Thursday, April 3rd, 2025 (10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m PST)

Meeting Attendees:

- MLA David Shepherd, Edmonton-City Centre

Highlights:

- Following introductions, Mayor Torgerson explained that the BC Economic Recovery team has only found funding opportunities Valemount does not qualify for or does not address short-term needs.
- Anne expressed gratitude for Alberta stepping up and beginning the process of reimbursing expenses incurred from hosting evacuees. Nick highlighted how it is still in development and Valemount should serve as a pilot project for supporting communities during interprovincial disasters.
- Mayor Torgerson emphasized the need for Premiers to communicate more as these events will increase in frequency and severity.
- MLA Shepherd confirmed that it was a Parks Canada and thus federal decision to close the highways. Mayor Torgerson noted the complexities working across jurisdictional lines and inquired how the MLA would recommend moving this forward.
- **MLA Shepherd agreed that compensating support for evacuees is well within Alberta's jurisdiction and would advocate for a better and quicker process. He also confirmed he**

will advocate for a compensatory program following highway closures which should come from BC or the federal government.

- MLA Shepherd committed that he would discuss this with MLAs Kyle Kasawski and Heather Sweet and advocate for Valemount and this recovery gap with incumbent MP candidates to hopefully spur action shortly following the election.
- As the meeting concluded Mayor Torgerson suggested MLA Shepherd visit and try out Highway 16's road excellent cycling. MLA Shepherd confirmed he would discuss this matter with his colleagues soon and get back to us regarding any conversations he has had in the next 2 weeks.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- MLA Shepherd to discuss the need for better interprovincial recovery systems with MLAs Kyle Kasawski (Shadow Minister of Municipal Affairs) and Heather Sweet (Shadow Minister of Rural Economic Development).
- MLA Shepherd to advocate for Valemount and the recovery gap for supporting communities during disasters with incumbent MP candidates during this election period.
- MLA Shepherd's office to follow up on these conversations in the next 2 weeks, or by April 17th

British Columbia Meetings

Executive Summary

Lobbying Meeting Dates: March 10th-12th, 2025

Progress Made

- The Conservative Caucus was overall receptive to giving financial support to Valemount and highlighted the possibility of Valemount serving as a pilot project for communities that have been indirectly impacted by natural disasters.
- Valemount's circumstances were brought up by MLA Rosalyn Bird in the legislative session on March 13th, 2025.
- A letter was sent to the Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness as well as the Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation from MLA Bird.
- On March 31st 2025, we received a reply from MLA Bird with a letter from EMCR and JEDI sent March 27th stating that Valemount had received government support in funding a community recovery manager, through which Strategies North was hired, and by establishing a Community Economic Recovery Table. However, no clear funding avenue was identified in the letter and the lack of direct support opportunities brought forward by the recovery table was not mentioned.

Challenges/Uncertainties

- One of the challenges is the lack of a direct funding route as Valemount does not 'check any of the boxes' of available programs, and available programs are few in number.
- Some Conservative MLAs commented that the NDP government may be reluctant to provide funding at this time as the budget will be presented soon.
- One key challenge brought up in several meetings was the need to have an external organization distribute any government funding that Valemount may receive. Strategies North engaged with Northern Development Initiatives Trust (NDIT), Columbia Basin Trust (CBT), and Community Futures, all of which indicated their willingness to distribute funds.

Key Next Steps

1. Follow-up with all key contacts we met with while in Victoria.
2. Consolidate letters of support from key stakeholders in the area and ensure that they are sent to the relevant government contacts.

3. Ensure that Valemount's circumstances stay relevant and receive media attention to put further pressure on the BC government.
4. Publish a press release on the BC government's unwillingness to support Valemount's economic recovery.
5. Share a formal letter on behalf of Valemount responding to EMCR and JEDI regarding their refusal of additional support.
6. Share a work plan to government contacts outlining how funds will be managed and administered

Meetings, Coordination & Logistics

What Worked

- Meeting with a mix of both NDP and Conservative politicians, as well as DMs and ADMs allowed us to reach a wide variety of ministries and departments.
- Headway was made with the Conservative Caucus, as they were eager to push this case to the NDP government.
- The presence of George Lampreau, Chief of Simpcw First Nation, greatly increased the leverage when meeting with government officials.

What Didn't

- Our schedule while in Victoria was quite busy, with Tuesday being especially busy for meetings. Having fewer meetings may have helped with our overall stamina.
- The majority of our meetings were only 30 minutes long, which did not always leave ample time. In the future, it may be beneficial to schedule fewer, but longer, meetings.
- Miscommunication regarding in-person lobbying dates necessitated travel plan changes and additional costs for Valemount.

Meeting Summaries and Action Items:

Meeting: Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation + Emergency Management and Climate Readiness

Date and Time: March 10, 2025 (9:35 a.m. - 9:55 a.m.) | 501 Belleville Street, Victoria, BC

Meeting Attendees:

- Minister Diana Gibson - Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation (JEDI)
- Tim Lesiuk - ADM, Small Businesses, Economic Development Division (JEDI)
- Jane Constable - Ministerial Advisor (JEDI)
- Minister Kelly Greene - Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR)
- Mack McCorkindale - Ministerial Advisor (EMCR)
- Kevin Dunbar - Executive Director, Provincial & Regional Operations (EMCR)
- Shannon Tucker - Executive Director, Wildlife Recovery Coordination (EMCR)

Highlights:

- Both Ministers were interested in Valemount's non-tourism industries as it relates to the viability of Valemount's economy as a whole.
- Minister Gibson in particular was interested in Valemount's economic development post-recovery and indicated that she would be **interested in continuing the conversation to discuss economic diversification in the region.**
- Minister Gibson emphasized the economic potential of Valemount and the surrounding region, and although she is not in a position to direct recovery funds towards Valemount, she will advocate on Valemount's behalf in securing funding.
- Minister Greene stressed her understanding of Valemount's importance in the region, as well as the importance of neighbouring communities in Emergency Management Responses.
- Ministers Greene and Gibson said they would follow up with colleagues to discuss Valemount's economic recovery and future economic development.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Strategies North should continue to follow-up with both offices to ensure their support and advocacy for Valemount.

Meeting: MLA Tony Luck, Shadow Minister for Municipal Affairs and Local Government

Date and Time: March 10, 2025 (10:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.) | 501 Belleville Street, Victoria, BC

Meeting Attendees:

- MLA Tony Luck
- Joshua Hawkenson - Legislative Assistant

Highlights:

- MLA Luck highlighted the difficulties for communities indirectly impacted by natural disasters as there is no direct funding route.
- MLA Luck seemed eager to discuss this with fellow Conservative colleagues, as well as bring it up with officials in the NDP government.
- MLA Luck emphasized the importance of neighbouring communities in emergency response.
- MLA Luck highlighted the importance of communities like Valemount to British Columbia's tourism industry.
- MLA Luck will follow up with MLA Bird and other colleagues in the Conservative Caucus in order to send a letter to the Premier's Office and put pressure on the NDP Government.
- MLA Luck also said he would discuss this matter with Conservative colleagues in order to garner the opposition's support for this initiative.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Strategies North to continue to follow-up with MLA Luck for updates on conversations he may have had with his colleagues.

Meeting: Infrastructure

Date and Time: March 10, 2025 (11:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.) | 501 Belleville Street, Victoria, BC

Meeting Attendees:

- Minister Bowinn Ma

Highlights:

- Minister Ma agreed to meet with us as she was Minister of Emergency Management during the 2024 Jasper Wildfire.
- Minister Ma's mandate largely covers service delivery, and does not have to do with roads or transportation-related infrastructure.
- However, Minister Ma said she would advocate on Valemount's behalf.
- As she was Minister of Emergency Management during the Wildfire, Minister Ma understands the severity of the situation and Valemount's critical role in safely evacuating people from Jasper.
- Minister Ma emphasized the complications of Valemount's situation as a result of the interprovincial nature of the Jasper Wildfire evacuation.
- Minister Ma assured us that she would advocate on behalf of Valemount within the NDP caucus.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Strategies North to continue following up with her office, and ensure that she knows how critical Valemount's infrastructure is to surrounding communities, including Simpcw First Nation. Although her mandate does not cover economic recovery funding, it is important to note that Valemount plays a significant role in ensuring that neighbouring communities have access to public services like healthcare.

Meeting: MLA Sharon Hartwell, Shadow Minister for Rural Communities and Rural Development

Date and Time: March 10, 2025 (3:45 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.) | 501 Belleville Street, Victoria, BC

Meeting Attendees:

- MLA Sharon Hartwell - Shadow Minister
- Siavash Tahan - Research Officer for the Conservative Party of BC

Highlights:

- MLA Hartwell was particularly interested in Valemount's post-recovery economic development and the marketing strategy around it.
- MLA Hartwell highlighted the criticality of finding an avenue by which funding could be allocated should Valemount receive government funding (NDIT, CBT, Community Futures, etc.)
- Siavash Tahan was particularly invested in Valemount's economic recovery and was greatly interested in the amount of tourists Valemount receives, their contribution to the economy, and information about the next season's tourism numbers.
- MLA Hartwell assured us that she would connect with colleagues in the Conservative caucus regarding this initiative.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Strategies North to follow up with MLA Hartwell and inform her that we have had discussions with Northern Development Initiatives Trust, Community Futures, and the Columbia Basin Trust; all of which indicated willingness to distribute any economic recovery funding Valemount may receive.
- Strategies North to follow up with Siavash Tahan with the statistical information he was asking for.

Meeting: Environment and Parks, Deputy Minister's Office

Date and Time: March 11, 2025 (9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.) | 525 Superior Street, Victoria, BC

Meeting Attendees:

- Kevin Jardine - Deputy Minister
- Jim Standen - Assistant Deputy Minister
- John Hawkings - Executive Lead

Highlights:

- Although the Ministry of Environment and Parks is not involved in situations like this, DM Jardine made it clear that they would be interested in working Valemount for recreational development due to Valemount's proximity to provincial parks, including Mount Robson and Jackman Flats
- Environment and Parks sees a lot of opportunity for tourism development, particularly venture tourism, in Valemount.
- ADM Standen mentioned that he would be very interested in getting involved with Simpcw First Nation's Indigenous Tourism Initiative, which would take advantage of the close relationship between the Village of Valemount and Simpcw First Nation.
- Overall, the Ministry of Environment and Parks is keenly aware of Valemount's economic opportunities in tourism, and while they are not involved with economic recovery funding, DM Jardine and ADM Standen will be strong advocates in securing government funding for Valemount.
- DM Jardine will connect with colleagues in Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport as well as Transportation and Transit to further this initiative.
- DM Jardine also recommended we reach out to the Deputy Minister for Transportation, Heather Wood, and the Associate Deputy Minister for Transportation, Highways and Regional Services Division, Paula Cousins.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Strategies North to reach out to Heather Wood (Deputy Minister for Transportation) and Paula Cousins (Associate Deputy Minister for Transportation, Highways and Regional Services Division)
- Strategies North to follow-up with the Ministry in order to ensure ongoing support for this initiative.

Meeting: Housing and Municipal Affairs, Assistant Deputy Minister's Office

Date and Time: March 11, 2025 (10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.) | 800 Johnson Street, Victoria, BC

Meeting Attendees:

- Tara Faganello - Assistant Deputy Minister
- Brian Bedford - Executive Director, Local Government Infrastructure and Finance

Highlights:

- ADM Faganello asked about the potential long-term economic impacts of the highway closures in the summer of 2024 and any possible funding avenues or organizations that could distribute any funds that Valemount may receive.
- ADM Faganello also emphasized that it may be difficult to get provincial funding at the moment given the current deficit. (The budget was tabled on March 4, 2025 with a deficit of \$9.135 billion, which is about 1 billion more than last year).
- Bedford assured us that he will follow up with colleagues in relevant ministries.
- From Bedford's perspective, there are two key pieces to consider in Valemount's circumstance:
 - First, the interprovincial nature of the evacuations and highway closures, which can make this a difficult situation to navigate.
 - Secondly, the 'domino effect' experienced by neighbouring rural communities as they are key in supporting one another in disaster situations. If one community collapses, it can lead to neighbouring communities collapsing too.
- ADM Faganello and Brian Bedford will connect with colleagues in the Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport and Jobs, Economic Development & Innovation.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Strategies North to follow up regarding conversations they will have had with colleagues in relevant ministries.
- Strategies North to follow up with ADM Faganello to inform her that we have had discussions with Northern Development Initiatives Trust, Community Futures, and the Columbia Basin Trust; all of which indicated willingness to distribute any economic recovery funding Valemount may receive.

Meeting: Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, Deputy Minister's Office

Date and Time: March 11, 2025 (11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.) | 1803 Douglas Street, Victoria, BC

Meeting Attendees:

- Silas Brownsey - Deputy Minister
- Nick Grant - Assistant Deputy Minister

Highlights:

- Similarly to our meeting with Environment and Parks, this ministry is not involved with economic recovery funding, but expressed great interest in venture tourism development in the region, especially in regard to Simpcw First Nation's Indigenous Tours Initiative.
- As the \$1.5 million ask is purely for business support, it does not fall under the mandate of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport.

- Both DM Brownsey and ADM Grant see great economic opportunity in the Valemount area, and as such, will connect with colleagues in relevant ministries and advocate for Valemount.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Strategies North to follow up with DM Brownsey and ADM Grant so as to receive updates about conversations had with their colleagues and any progress that has been made.

Meeting: MLA Rosalyn Bird, Prince George – Valemount

Date and Time: March 11, 2025 (1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.) | 501 Belleville Street, Victoria, BC

Meeting Attendees:

- MLA Rosalyn Bird

Highlights:

- MLA Bird discussed at length a long-term tourism development economic plan for the region.
- She was also interested in seeing Valemount's Economic Growth Plan.
- Similar to Environment & Parks and Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport, MLA Bird recognizes the immense potential of the region surrounding Valemount in bringing tourists to British Columbia.
- MLA Bird also voiced her concern about having a funding avenue or organization that could distribute any government funding that Valemount may receive. Nick let her know that we had had conversations with NDIT, CBT, and Community Futures.
- MLA Bird noted that neighbouring communities, including McBride, were facing similar challenges to Valemount.
- As Valemount's representative, MLA Bird said that she would connect with colleagues in the Conservative caucus as well as in the NDP government in order to garner support for Valemount's economic recovery.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Strategies North to send Valemount's Economic Growth Plan to MLA Bird, which was done on March 24th.
- Strategies North to continue following-up with MLA Bird in order to keep tabs on progress made within the NDP government and the Conservative caucus.

Meeting: Ministry of State for Local Governments and Rural Communities

Date and Time: March 11, 2025 (3:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.) | 501 Belleville Street, Victoria, BC

Meeting Attendees:

- Minister Brittny Anderson - Local Governments and Rural Communities
- Evan Brown - Executive Advisor to Minister Anderson
- Vincent Portal - Director of Intergovernmental Relations for the Office of the Premier
- Steve Morissette - Parliamentary Secretary

Highlights:

- Both Minister Anderson and Vincent Portal stated that they were not aware of any grants or funding available for Valemount.
- Similar to several other officials that we met with, Minister Anderson was very interested in the development of the tourism industry in Valemount and the region surrounding it.
- Minister Anderson closed by expressing that she had a much better understanding of Valemount's circumstances following the meeting and was therefore in a better position to advocate on Valemount's behalf.
- Minister Anderson stated that she would follow up with her colleagues that we had met with during our trip to Victoria.
- Steve Morissette, the Parliamentary Secretary for Local Governments and Rural Communities, will be visiting Valemount in the coming weeks.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Strategies North to continue following-up with Minister Anderson, Vincent Portal, and Steve Morissette in order to keep tabs on any updates or progress made.

Meeting: MLA Harman Bhangu, Shadow Minister for Transportation and Transit

Date and Time: March 11, 2025 (4:15 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.) | 501 Belleville Street, Victoria, BC

Meeting Attendees:

- MLA Harman Bhangu
- Dion Weisner - Legislative Assistant

Highlights:

- MLA Bhangu had an especially strong understanding of the business difficulties resulting from highway closures due to his background in the trucking industry.
- MLA Bhangu stated this is an issue that should remain nonpartisan.
- MLA Bhangu emphasized the connection between the success of rural businesses and transportation.

- MLA Bhangu assured us that he would follow up with colleagues in the Conservative Caucus in order to garner support for this initiative and put pressure on the NDP government.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Strategies North to continue following-up with MLA Bhangu's office to keep tabs on any progress made.

Meeting: MLA Bird and MLA Luck

Date and Time: March 12, 2025 (9:45 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.) | 501 Belleville Street, Victoria, BC

Meeting Attendees:

- MLA Rosalyn Bird – Prince George–Valemount
- MLA Tony Luck - Shadow Minister for Municipal Affairs and Local Government

Highlights:

- MLA Bird and MLA Luck told us that they were drafting a letter to the Premier that would be sent to his Office by the end of the day.
- In this letter, they suggested to the Premier that Valemount could act as a pilot project for economic recovery funding meant for communities indirectly impacted by disasters and emergency situations.
- MLA Bird wants to highlight to the Premier the immense value that the North brings to British Columbia.

Follow-Up Action Items:

- Strategies North to send a paragraph to support the letter to the Premier, which was completed later that day.

Contact Lists:

Federal Contacts

Name	Department/Office	Position/Title	Email	Phone
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Village of Valemount Economic Recovery Action Plan

January 28th, 2025

The following is an action plan to support the economic recovery of the Village of Valemount and its community entities following the impacts of the 2024 Jasper wildfire which severely disrupted the village's economy.

Please note these specific contacts, recommended actions, and dates are subject to abrupt change as a result of the current political landscape. A federal election is likely to be called in early April 2025, which would prohibit any previously scheduled meetings with federal Ministers and MP offices, and top ranking officials.

Given that Parliament is prorogued until March 24, 2025, there is little ability to have meetings in Ottawa until the house returns, only to then be thrust into an election where it's 'pencils down.'

Timeline

Potential British Columbia Lobbying Meeting Dates:

Due to the Legislative Assembly's sessional calendar and BC's annual budget being announced March 5, 2025, the optimal dates to meet with relevant politicians in Victoria are **March 10-11**. Alternative dates include March 31-April 3. We recommend blocking off two full business days for meetings.

Potential Alberta Lobbying Meeting Dates:

Due to the Legislative Assembly's sessional calendar and Alberta's annual budget being announced at the end of February 2025, the optimal dates to meet with relevant politicians in Edmonton are **March 17-18**. Alternative dates include March 10-13. We recommend blocking off two full business days for meetings.

Potential Federal Lobbying Meeting Dates:

Valemount should target the strategic window between March 24 - April 15, focused on meeting with Valemount's Member of Parliament, relevant Minister's offices, the opposition (Conservatives), and top ranking officials (Deputy Ministers, Assistant Deputy Ministers, Director Generals). We recommend blocking off two full business days for Ottawa meetings **March 26-27**. Alternative dates include March 31-April 3.

Action Plan

Activities	Description	People Involved	Timeline
Business & Organization Funding Opportunities	Identify and share funds Valemount businesses and organizations may apply to for recovery, operations, or growth support	Strategies North (materials preparation), Valemount Corporate Services (sharing materials)	Ongoing, through to end of project.
NDIT/CBT/CF Comm-unications and Relationship Building	Discuss with Northern Development Initiative Trust, Columbia Basin Trust, and Community Futures regarding funding opportunities and support, and alternative support methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including administrative execution of any government funding 	Strategies North, Valemount CAO	Jan 27 begins the next level of communications. Meetings and discussions in Feb 2025 and throughout gov lobbying efforts. Communications continue through to end of project.
Letters of Support	Develop a list of municipalities, regional districts, Destination BC, and other relevant organizations to request a letter of support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a template example that can be shared 	Strategies North (template/ materials preparation), Valemount Mayor (sharing materials)	Feb 12 begin reaching out to potential municipalities and organizations
BC Provincial Lobbying	<p>Initial Discussions and Materials: Initiate discussions and prepare briefing notes for the BC government, emphasizing the economic impact and urgent need for recovery funds to prevent an economic downward spiral.</p> <p>Meetings with Government Officials: Arrange meetings with key decision-makers and advocate for the allocation of \$1.5M of recovery funds and support for discussions with the Federal Government.</p>	Strategies North, Valemount CAO, Valemount Mayor	<p>Scheduling communications Jan 29 - March 7.</p> <p>Targeting meetings for March 10 - 13.</p> <p>Follow-up communications after initial meetings through to end of project.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on recovery needs from highway closures and lost community income. <p>Ongoing Communication and Advocacy: Maintain regular follow-up communication with government officials, providing updates on the situation and continuing to advocate for support.</p>		
Alberta Provincial Lobbying	<p>Identify and Engage Alberta Contacts: Identify relevant Alberta government contacts and initiate discussions regarding potential support for businesses and organizations that incurred costs assisting Jasper evacuees.</p> <p>Meetings with Government Officials: Arrange meetings with key decision-makers and advocate for the allocation of \$1.5M of recovery funds and support for discussions with the Federal Government.</p> <p>Prepare and Submit a Formal Request: Prepare and submit request materials to the Alberta government outlining the costs incurred by Valemount businesses and organizations in supporting evacuees, requesting financial support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss increased costs and financial instability from providing support to Jasper, as evacuees were directed by Jasper and Alberta to head to BC and resulted in thousands arriving in Valemount. Highlight importance for interprovincial cooperation during emergencies. <p>Ongoing Communication and Advocacy: Maintain regular follow-up communication with government officials, providing updates on the situation and continuing to advocate for support.</p>	Strategies North, Valemount CAO, Valemount Mayor	<p>Scheduling communications Feb 10 - March 14, 2025.</p> <p>Targeting meetings March 17 - 20.</p> <p>Follow-up communications after initial meetings through to end of project.</p>

Federal Lobbying	<p>Initial Discussions and Materials: Initiate discussions and prepare briefing notes for the federal government, highlighting the economic impact and disaster response of Valemount.</p> <p>Meetings with Government Officials: Arrange meetings with key decision-makers to present the case for Valemount and advocate for the allocation of recovery funds and funds to support businesses/organizations that have increased costs from Jasper support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight both recovery needs resulting from highway closures as well as increased costs and financial instability from providing support to Jasper. <p>Ongoing Communication and Advocacy: Continue developing relationships, providing updates on the situation and continuing to advocate for support.</p>	Strategies North, Valemount CAO, Valemount Mayor	<p>Scheduling communications Feb 10 - March 24, 2025</p> <p>Meetings to be scheduled March 26 - 27.</p> <p>Follow-up communications after initial meetings through to end of project.</p>
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Recommended Valemount Representatives

- Mayor
- Chief Administrative Officer
- Economic development position(s) - Strategies North can provide through our role as Recovery Manager as well as lobbying support
- Limit representatives to a maximum of 4-6 people whenever possible (including consultants and other guests attending with the municipality).
 - In our experience, larger groups add friction for government contacts who have to locate and book large meeting rooms.
 - Also, Ministers' offices (MINO) don't take large group meetings solo, likely so that there's an extra witness on their end, reducing the risk that their responses are misrepresented.

Targeted Offices

Province of BC

- Office of the Premier
- Jobs, Economic Development, and Innovation, Minister's Office
- Transportation and Transit, Minister's Office
- Housing and Municipal Affairs, Minister's Office

- Local Governments and Rural Communities, Minister of State's Office
- Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, Minister's Office
- Environment and Parks, Minister's Office
- Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, Minister's Office
- MLA Rosalyn Bird

Province of Alberta

- Office of the Premier
- Deputy Premier and Minister's Office of Public Safety and Emergency Services
- Municipal Affairs, Minister's Office
- Tourism and Sport, Minister's Office
- Environment and Protected Areas, Minister's Office
- Forestry and Parks, Minister's Office
- Transportation and Economic Corridors, Minister's Office
- Jobs, Economy and Trade, Minister's Office
- MLA Martin Long

Federal Government

- Public Safety, Minister's Office
- Public Safety, Deputy Minister's Office
- Public Safety, Emergency Management and Programs Branch
- King's Privy Council for Canada and Emergency Preparedness
- ECCC, Minister's Office
- Tourism, Minister's Office
- Pacific Economic Development Canada, President's Office (based in Surrey)
- Pacific Economic Development Canada, Programs and Partners, Economic Recovery (based in Vancouver)
- MP Bob Zimmer, Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies BC
- MP Gerald Soroka, Yellowhead AB
- Conservative Party Leader's Office
- NDP Leader's Office
- Relevant Shadow Ministers (Conservative MPs likely to hold Ministerial positions by fall 2025)

Best Practices

- Relevant briefing notes/supplementary materials should be shared with government at least 2 business days prior to meetings if possible so they can familiarize themselves with the matter.
- When meeting in-person, ensure you arrive a minimum of 15 minutes early, you may wish to arrive earlier if you are with a large group. Ensure you have the correct entrance in the itinerary and enter through there. Check in with any security, provide photo ID as requested, and you may need to go through a similar process as airport security.
- Provide an overview on not just the topics of discussion but also your community as many politicians will not be familiar with Valemount's location or unique context.

- Keep a close eye on the time throughout the meeting and try not to run over by too much to maintain a positive relationship with government officials. Ensure you offer ample opportunity for officials to respond to questions and make statements that you can then hold them to during meeting follow up. This is critical to ensuring progress following meetings with government.



News release — For immediate release

Village of Valemount Struggling to Survive After Inaction by B.C. Government

Valemount, British Columbia, April 3 2025 — The Village of Valemount is seeking \$1.5 million in urgent financial support from the Government of British Columbia to avoid business shutdowns and layoffs as the community struggles with the ongoing economic impacts of the 2024 Jasper Wildfire.

In summer 2024 the Jasper Wildfire saw highways closed, thousands of evacuees coming to Valemount, and the village's commercial activity cut off. Local businesses and organizations rose to meet challenges, with locals stepping up to find evacuees food, water, and a place to sleep. Since then, faced with economic pressures due to the indirect effects of the disaster, more and more Valemount businesses shut their doors, restaurants are empty, and hotels vacant. With the most important revenue generating time passed and disrupted, the community fears economic collapse.

Mayor Owen Torgerson and CAO Anne Yanciw, along with Chief of Simpcw First Nation George Lampreau and members from consulting firm Strategies North, were in Victoria the week of March 10th to speak with B.C. government officials for funding assistance. While the B.C. government continues to provide supportive words, they have not committed funding at this time.

"Our village faces the prospect of losing nearly all our businesses and livelihoods because we helped evacuees and then were cut off for weeks by circumstances out of our control," said Owen Torgerson, Mayor of Valemount.

Having sustained direct damage from the fire, Jasper is able to access insurance coverage, disaster recovery funding, and other government funding — support that has not been available to Valemount.

"If your village is devastated by the ripple effects you can't see, you get nothing except kind words. The B.C. government's words have to turn into action or our village will be left struggling to survive, and what message does that send to small communities across our province?"

Following the fires, the province provided the Village of Valemount with funding to develop an economic recovery plan, but has not provided means to implement it. In a joint response to Valemount's lobbying meetings, the Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness and the Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation did not commit to any funding support. They instead directed the village in general to look for funding programs, despite recognizing that there are no specific programs that meet Valemount's needs — something raised by the village multiple times to government representatives. Meetings had discussed how the few available funding programs, described by government staff as unfortunately sparse, are not applicable. The Province of Alberta is now working to support the village to help repay some of the costs incurred from hosting evacuees, and Valemount hopes that its own province of B.C. will do the same to tackle the larger economic impacts and demonstrate their commitment to supporting rural communities.

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Quick Facts

- On July 22, 2024, the Municipality of Jasper and the surrounding area was evacuated. Parts of 16 and Highway 93 connecting Valemount were immediately closed to all commercial and tourist traffic during the village's peak operating season. Highway 16 was reopened on August 19, 2024 and Highway 93 on August 23, 2024.
- At its height, Valemount welcomed almost 20,000 evacuees from Jasper compared to its population of 1,050.
- In a report completed by Strategies North Advisory Inc., the loss of revenue for Valemount tourism businesses due to wildfire highway closures was estimated at up to \$1,929,200. This is only the direct impact for tourism; the total impact for all businesses, tourism focused and not, is expected to be higher.
- The Village has been lobbying the B.C. and federal governments for \$1.5 million in financial support, to be distributed to local businesses through an independent third party organization. This amount was determined through significant community engagement to identify what local businesses and organizations would need to keep operations going.
- Of 64 local businesses surveyed, 97 per cent experienced a reduction in revenue during wildfire closures, with almost 30 per cent indicating that they experienced a reduction in revenue of 81-100 per cent. Seventy per cent indicated that because of the reduction in revenue, they do not have sufficient resources to cover their expenses and remain viable.
- Valemount is the northernmost of 14 resort municipalities in B.C. and a vital element of the northern B.C. and Alberta tourism circuit. While the smallest population-wise of the resort municipalities, it is not the smallest in contribution to B.C. GDP.
- With travel routes reopened, Valemount is an international tourist destination for all seasons with activities including mountain biking, hiking, boating, off-roading, snowmobiling, heli-skiing, and more.

Contact

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News release — For immediate release

Release number — 25-02

Village of Valemount denied support as other recovery efforts are funded.

Valemount, British Columbia, May 6th, 2025 — Discussions between the Village of Valemount and the Provincial and Federal Governments have reached a deadlock, leaving Valemount's businesses stuck with the economic uncertainty.

The Northern B.C. community was hit hard by the 2024 Jasper wildfire, receiving evacuees from Jasper during the emergency and weeks of highway closures in the aftermath. This caused a drop in tourism in the region, leading to both a sizable loss in revenue and economic impact larger than the COVID-19 pandemic. In the face of this, the Valemount community and its businesses are still fighting hard to bounce back from the disaster. At this time, only the Province of Alberta has committed to providing financial support to Valemount, specifically by reimbursing the Village for the costs incurred while hosting evacuees.

Valemount's situation is compounded by two other factors. First, the disruption to tourism has left the community in an incredibly vulnerable position and less able to weather downturns or business closures in other sectors, such as the forest products industry. Also, the Village is facing a severe setback in funding to promote its tourist attractions to potential visitors due to the fact its Municipal and Regional Tax Program disbursement has been cut by almost 20 per cent this year.

Following the economic impacts, the Village developed an economic recovery strategy funded by B.C. EMCR, which included engaging the provincial government in order to secure recovery funding of \$1.5 million.

The Village of Valemount approached several officials within the BC government, including the Ministry of Emergency Management & Climate Readiness, the Ministry of Infrastructure, and the Ministry of State for Local Governments and Rural Communities among others. The Honourable Diana Gibson, Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation, stated on behalf of government that this kind of recovery funding was not something that the Province provided nor was it supposed to.

Earlier this year, British Columbia launched a \$10 million fund to help tree fruit farming businesses after extreme weather conditions resulted in low yield. According to the Province, more than \$237 million has been spent supporting tree fruit growers since 2020, which sets a clear precedent for how the Province handles businesses struggling with climate-related impacts. There are several parallels between this and Valemount's businesses, as both were severely impacted by factors outside of their control and both are critical to the wellbeing of the economies in their respective regions.



Valemount continues to face economic uncertainty in the lead up to the critical summer tourism season while the Province has yet to commit to providing the support that is sorely needed by businesses in the community. Despite this, the Village is enduring and ready to welcome visitors. As Canadians look for alternatives to spending their holidays in the United States this summer, Valemount is faced with a huge economic opportunity that they wish to reap the benefits of. The ask of \$1.5 million in recovery funding from the Province is not only in line with the set precedent, but will allow Valemount to take full advantage of the economic opportunities they are presented with.

Quotes

‘Valemount is only asking for what other industries in BC are provided to weather economic downturns. No business, township, or village should be prioritized over another, that is not what will build us a stronger BC.’ - Mayor Owen Torgerson, Village of Valemount

‘My only goal is to ensure Valemount remains vibrant with places open for business. Every dollar of the requested \$1.5 million will be reinvested into the community to ensure our sustainability not just for this year but lay the foundation for decades to come in the region.’ - Mayor Owen Torgerson, Village of Valemount

‘The Village of Valemount is a shining example of what intergovernmental relationships between municipalities and First Nations communities can and should look like – mutual respect and support. Without the Village of Valemount, Simpcw’s main access for healthcare and other essential services will be essentially cut-off. Valemount is not only critical as a major artery for tourism but also ensuring people have access to the basic care and services they need’ - Kukpi7 George Lampreau, Simpcw First Nation

Quick Facts

- Due to the wildfires, Highway 16 and Highway 93 connecting Valemount were closed on July 22, 2024. Highway 16 was reopened on August 19, 2024 and Highway 93 on August 23, 2024.
- In surveys of local businesses, 97 per cent experienced a reduction in revenue during wildfire closures. Seventy per cent indicated that because of the reduction in revenue, they would not have sufficient resources to cover their expenses and remain viable.
- Valemount is an international tourist destination for all seasons with activities including mountain biking, hiking, boating, off-roading, snowmobiling, heli-skiing, and more. It is located between three different mountain ranges; the Columbia, Rocky and Monashee.
- The Village’s leadership has been in communication with the Province of B.C. and Federal Government for months but elections, intergnum, and prorogement have resulted in a distinct delay in responding to an economic crisis that has been ongoing since July 2024.



- The Provincial Government has stated that it does not provide funding to compensate affected businesses and local governments for lost income from natural disasters and related events, like the decline in business activity related to the Jasper 2024 wildfire.
- Over the last 5 years, the Government of British Columbia has contributed \$237 million to the private tree fruit industry, including a \$10 million funding program in February 2025 following extreme weather conditions.
- The Province of Alberta is working to support the Village repay some of the costs incurred from hosting evacuees, and Valemount is looking to the province of B.C. to do the same to tackle the economic impacts and demonstrate their commitment to supporting rural communities.
- Valemount has developed mechanisms for an economic recovery funding program, similar to the funding program available for the tree fruit growers recovery.
- The Village of Valemount has received formal letters of support for their economic recovery efforts from the Municipality of Jasper, Tourism Industry Association of B.C., Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, Regional District of Fraser Fort George, Thompson–Nicola Regional District Electoral Area A, and more organizations across the province.

Contact

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Village of Valemount – Key Messages

Alberta March 2025

This document is intended to supplement your briefing notes.

- Note Valemount’s geographic and demographic information for those unfamiliar.
- Focus on the economic impact of the 2024 Jasper wildfire, and specifically how taking on the almost 20,000 evacuees and providing goods and services to them at no cost affected businesses and nonprofit organizations financially.
- Share the human stories of how Valemount businesses and individuals supported Albertan evacuees, and the direction from the Province of Alberta for residents to evacuate west into BC.
- In emergency situations, it is critical that the affected community can depend on neighbouring communities, and these neighbouring communities should not be left unsupported in their own challenges because they provided assistance.
- Note Jasper’s support of Valemount’s recovery efforts to date, notably their recognition of Valemount’s significant contributions to the region’s tourism economy and its vital role in supporting Jasper’s emergency response, it is imperative that targeted funding and recovery assistance be made available.
- Focus on the ask of \$500k compensatory funding to repay businesses and non-profits that incurred costs because of evacuees, potentially through the Disaster Recovery Program
- Stress the urgency of the need for financial support to cover immediate recovery needs like payroll and operational expenses in order to sustain local businesses until the next season. The urgency has been seen in recent business shut downs, layoffs, and 70% of businesses indicated they did not have enough support or resources to remain viable until a return to normal operations.
- Emphasize the deep and interconnected relationship between Jasper and Valemount, with tourism serving as a major driver for both communities.

Village of Valemount – Key Messages

Victoria BC March 2025

This document is intended to supplement your briefing notes.

- Note Valemount's geographic and demographic information for those unfamiliar.
- Focus on the economic impact of the 2024 Jasper wildfire, and specifically how the highway closures during peak revenue season has hurt Valemount businesses and employment.
- Emphasize Valemount's position as a small municipality as well as a resort town that increasingly contributes to BC's tourism industry.
- In emergency situations, it is critical that the affected community can depend on neighbouring communities, and these neighbouring communities should be supported by the provincial government.
- Business losses: A survey of 64 local businesses revealed that 97% experienced a reduction in revenue during the closure, with the only support so far being limited to federal programs like Work-Sharing and Red Cross support. Insurance claims were not available for support of any kind.
- Emphasize the risk of a downward economic spiral caused by a loss of revenue during the busy, summer season. 70% of businesses indicated they did not have enough support or resources to remain viable until a return to normal operations.
- Stress the urgency of the need for financial support to cover immediate recovery needs like payroll and operational expenses in order to sustain local businesses until the next season. The urgency has been seen in recent business shut downs
- Highlight the rationalization behind the \$1.5 million ask and cooperation to date with relevant trusts and regional organizations.

Village of Valemount – Key Messages

Federal Meetings June 2025

This document is intended to supplement your briefing notes.

- Clarify Valemount’s geographic and demographic information for those unfamiliar.
- Focus on the economic impact of the 2024 Jasper wildfire, and specifically how the highway closures during peak revenue season has hurt Valemount businesses and employment.
- Emphasize Valemount’s position as a small municipality as well as a resort town that increasingly contributes to Canada’s tourism industry. As Canadians look for alternatives to vacations in the United States, this ask can be framed as a targeted investment in Canada’s domestic tourism infrastructure and rural economic development.
- In emergency situations, it is critical that the affected community can depend on neighbouring communities, and these neighbouring communities should be supported by the government.
- The Government of Canada has “committed to doing everything it can to support all those affected by the 2024 Alberta wildfires, and is committed to supporting Canadians whose lives are impacted when disasters strike, helping communities recover, and, ultimately, increasing our resiliency.”
- Business losses: A November 2024 survey of 64 local businesses revealed that 97% experienced a reduction in revenue during the closure. 70% of businesses indicated they did not have enough support or resources to remain viable until a return to normal operations. Valemount is facing the risk of a downward economic spiral.
- The urgency is compounded by the fact that Valemount’s Municipal & Regional Tax disbursement has been cut by 20% this year, limiting its ability to promote the Village’s tourist attractions. Emphasis that this is as dire for the Village as Covid, but without any relief measures.
- Stress the urgency of the need for financial assistance such that Valemount can reap the full benefits of the upcoming tourist season. Emphasize that the BC government has decided that this kind of funding is out of scope, and the current impacts of business closures and job loss.

- Emphasize the effort Valemount has put into creating a detailed recovery strategy, work plan for funding received, and recovery efforts separate from funding. Valemount has garnered support from the Northern Development Initiative Trust and Community Futures, with both organizations expressing their willingness to deploy any funding Valemount may receive. Valemount also has formal letters of support from the Municipality of Jasper and the Thompson-Okanagan Tourism association, among others.

February 28th, 2025

Village of Valemount - Economic Recovery Alberta Briefing Note

Issue

The Village of Valemount in British Columbia is seeking financial support in order to prevent job losses and bolster local businesses within the community which have been threatened by the 2024 Jasper Wildfire.

Background

- Incorporated in 1962, Valemount currently has a population of just over 1,000. It is located in North Thompson Valley, just over one hour from the BC-Alberta border.
- Surrounded by multiple mountain ranges and provincial parks, Valemount took advantage of its middle-of-everywhere location in order to develop its dominant tourism industry.
- The local economy was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing travel restrictions.
- In response to the 2024 wildfire, Jasper and Alberta enacted a mass evacuation between July 22 and August 17, directing more than 20,000 people to British Columbia, wherein a welcome centre was quickly established in Valemount as a resting place for the evacuees.
- Valemount's population increased 18-fold overnight, and local business and residents quickly opened their doors to welcome the evacuees as reception centres, hotels, and other lodgings quickly hit capacity.
- Critically, Valemount businesses were unable to access insurance for the purpose of securing recovery funds.
- Of the 64 businesses surveyed in August 2024 regarding the impact of the wildfires on businesses and organizations:
 - 97% of respondents experienced a reduction in revenue during the closure times,
 - Nearly 30% of respondents indicated that they had experienced a large reduction in revenue, in the range of 81-100%.
 - 50% of businesses indicated that they had incurred additional costs as a result of the wildfires, with the most significant reported costs being due to the support provided to Jasper evacuees.

Current Situation

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The biggest threat to the Village of Valemount is the possibility of a downward economic spiral caused by a chain reaction of business closures. Many businesses rely on profits gained from the summer season to support them during winter losses; however, that opportunity was negated by the highway closures and was further compounded by the fact that many businesses provided out-of-pocket support to Jasper's evacuees by offering goods and services at no cost.

Unlike in Jasper, where business interruption insurance payouts could help cover some of the losses, Valemount businesses have not qualified for critical insurance claims that would help ease the financial impacts. To date, the only recovery support provided to the Village of Valemount's local businesses and organizations has been special measures under the federal Work-Sharing Program, which allows employees to work reduced hours while being compensated through Employment Insurance for a portion of their lost wages, and Red Cross' Support to Small Businesses and Not-for-Profits Program, which is limited to \$1,000 per business and nonprofit.

Key Considerations

The primary goals in supporting Valemount's economy are recovery and growth. Recovery efforts are needed in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the wildfire-related highway closures. The focus should first be on the prevention of an economic downward spiral; measures must be deployed to businesses in a timely manner such that they have the funding to sustain operations before next summer. Furthermore, recovery efforts will support the community in growing its capacity for future seasons as well as diversifying the local economy to reduce reliance on summer tourism.

Valemount is the closest community to Jasper National Park, one of the most popular tourist destinations in Alberta. Valemount's economy is inextricably linked to Jasper's, and Valemount has proven to be a vital support system for Jasper National Park, as demonstrated by Alberta and Jasper's direction of evacuees into BC, namely, Valemount.

Next Steps

The Village of Valemount and local businesses are seeking funding support from the provinces of BC, Alberta, the federal government, and any other entities that can aid in disaster-related funding that is available to community entities in a timely fashion.

The Village of Valemount is requesting \$500,000 from the Province of Alberta as compensatory support for businesses that supported evacuees out-of-pocket, and will work with the City of Jasper to include such costs in their Alberta Disaster Recovery Program application. This figure does not include the necessary administrative costs for deploying recovery funding

In addition to compensation for evacuee support, the estimated amount to meet immediate community recovery needs is \$1,500,000. This amount is anticipated to be sufficient to assist the majority of affected businesses with payroll and staffing costs, operational expenses, and costs required to continue until the next operating season.

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February 28th, 2025

Village of Valemount - Economic Recovery British Columbia Briefing Note

Issue

The Village of Valemount in British Columbia is seeking financial support in order to prevent job losses and bolster local businesses within the community which have been threatened by the 2024 Jasper Wildfire.

Background

- Incorporated in 1962, Valemount is a resort municipality in BC with a population of just over 1,000 located approximately one hour away from the Albertan border.
- The local economy was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing travel restrictions.
- Despite its economic resilience, Valemount is heavily reliant on its tourism industry and the local economy lacks diversity.
- In response to the 2024 wildfire, Jasper and Alberta enacted a mass evacuation between July 22 and August 17, directing more than 20,000 people to British Columbia, wherein a welcome centre was quickly established in Valemount as a resting place for the evacuees.
- As a direct result of the wildfires, Highway 16 and Highway 93 were closed to commercial and tourist traffic in mid-July, which immediately and severely impacted Valemount's economy as commercial and tourist access to the Village was cut off during its peak revenue season.
- The highway closures were especially problematic for Valemount's economy as many businesses rely on profits from the summer season to support them through the winter.
- Critically, Valemount businesses were unable to secure recovery funding through insurance.
- Of the 64 businesses surveyed in August 2024 regarding the impact of the wildfires on businesses and organizations:
 - 97% of respondents experienced a reduction in revenue during the closure times,
 - Nearly 30% of respondents indicated that they had experienced a large reduction in revenue, in the range of 81-100%.
 - 50% of businesses indicated that they had incurred additional costs as a result of the wildfires, with the most significant reported costs being due to the support provided to Jasper evacuees.

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Current Situation

The biggest threat to the Village of Valemount is the possibility of a downward economic spiral caused by a chain reaction of business closures. Many businesses rely on profits gained from the summer season to support them during winter losses; however, that opportunity was negated by the highway closures. This is further exacerbated by the fact that the local economy has little diversity, making Valemount highly vulnerable to external factors, including climate change and the resultant increase of natural disasters.

Unlike in Jasper, where business interruption insurance payouts could help cover some of the losses, Valemount businesses have not qualified for critical insurance claims that would help ease the financial impacts. To date, the only recovery support provided to the Village of Valemount's local businesses has been special measures under the federal Work-Sharing Program and the Red Cross' Support to Small Businesses and Not-for-Profits Program, which is limited to \$1,000 per organization.

Key Considerations

As a small community and resort municipality that is increasingly contributing to BC's tourism industry, support for Valemount's recovery and growth is critical. Recovery efforts are needed in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the wildfire-related highway closures. The focus should first be on the prevention of an economic downward spiral; measures must be deployed to businesses in a timely manner such that they have the funding to sustain operations before next summer. Growth actions should assist the community in growing its capacity for future seasons as well as diversifying the local economy to reduce reliance on summer tourism.

According to Statistics Canada, BC experienced net-negative interprovincial migration for the first time in 2023, with the main reasons being the high cost of living and lack of economic opportunity. The government of BC can use this opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to ensuring its residents are able to thrive within the province.

Next Steps

The Village of Valemount and local businesses are seeking funding support from the provinces of BC, Alberta, the federal government, and any other entities that can aid in disaster-related funding that is available to community entities in a timely fashion.

The estimated amount to meet immediate community recovery needs is \$1,500,000. This amount is anticipated to be sufficient to assist the majority of affected businesses with payroll and staffing costs, operational expenses, and costs required to continue until the next operating season. To deploy funding while meeting available capacity and legal requirements, funding should be allocated and available on an application basis for affected businesses and organizations. The funding can be administered through existing mechanisms via Northern Development Initiative Trust, Columbia Basin Trust, or Community Futures. This figure does not include the necessary administrative costs for deploying recovery funding

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February 29th, 2025

Village of Valemount - Economic Recovery Federal Ministerial Briefing Note

Issue

The Village of Valemount in British Columbia is seeking financial support in order to prevent job losses and bolster local businesses within the community which have been threatened by the 2024 Jasper Wildfire.

Background

- Incorporated in 1962, Valemount currently has a population of just over 1,000. Located in the North Thompson Valley, approximately one hour from the BC-Alberta border, the village is surrounded by three mountain ranges, provincial and national parks, and pristine nature.
- Valemount has taken advantage of its middle-of-everywhere location in order to develop its dominant tourism industry.
- The local economy was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing travel restrictions.
- In response to the 2024 wildfire, Jasper and Alberta enacted a mass evacuation between July 22 and August 17, directing more than 20,000 people to British Columbia, wherein a welcome centre was quickly established in Valemount as a resting place for the evacuees.
- Valemount's population increased 18-fold overnight, and local business and residents opened their doors to welcome the evacuees as reception centres and other lodgings quickly hit capacity.
- As a result of the wildfires, Highway 16 and Highway 93 were closed to commercial and tourist traffic for 3 weeks, which had immediate and severe consequences on Valemount's economy, cutting off access to the village as a commercial stop and tourist destination during its peak revenue season.
- Critically, Valemount businesses were unable to access recovery funds through insurance.
- Of the 64 businesses who responded to a survey in August 2024 concerning the impact of the wildfires on businesses and organizations, 97% of respondents experienced a reduction in revenue during the closure times, and almost 30% indicated that they experienced a large reduction in revenue of 81-100%.
- 50% of businesses indicated that they incurred additional costs as a result of the wildfires, with the highest reported costs being due to the support provided to Jasper evacuees.

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Current Situation

The biggest threat to the Village of Valemount is the possibility of a downward economic spiral caused by a chain reaction of business closures. Many businesses rely on profits from the summer season to support them through the winter; however, this was not possible due to the highway closures. This is exacerbated by low diversification of Valemount's economy, making the community highly vulnerable to external factors, like climate change-related natural disasters.

In Jasper, business interruption insurance payouts could help to cover some of the losses; however, businesses in Valemount have not qualified for critical insurance claims that would ease the financial impacts. To date, the only recovery support provided to the Village of Valemount's local businesses has been special measures under the federal Work-Sharing Program, and Red Cross' Support to Small Businesses and Not-for-Profits Program, which is limited to \$1,000 per organization.

Key Considerations

Recovery and growth are the key goals in supporting Valemount's economy. Recovery efforts are needed in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the wildfire-related highway closures. The focus must first be on the prevention of an economic downward spiral, and as such, measures must be deployed to businesses in a timely manner to ensure that they have funding to sustain operations. Growth actions should assist the community in diversifying economic capacity for future seasons so as to reduce reliance on summer tourism.

The federal government is responsible for ensuring that all Canadian communities have effective disaster recovery measures needed to protect the quality of life for its residents. Current measures have proven inadequate as there has been extensive jurisdictional confusion over whether it is BC, Alberta, or the federal government's duty to provide support to Valemount.

Next Steps

The Village of Valemount and local businesses are seeking funding support from the provinces of BC and Alberta, as well as the federal government and any entities that can aid in disaster-related funding that can be made available in a timely manner.

The estimated amount needed to meet immediate community recovery needs is \$1,500,000, not including the necessary administrative costs for deploying recovery or the excess costs that many businesses and non-profit organizations incurred to house, feed, and provide services to the 16,000 evacuees. This estimate is anticipated to be sufficient in assisting the majority of affected businesses with payroll, staffing, and operational costs necessary to sustain the economy until next summer.

To deploy funding while meeting available capacity and legal requirements, funding should be allocated and available on an application basis for affected businesses and organizations. The funding can be administered through existing mechanisms via Northern Development Initiative Trust, Columbia Basin Trust, or Community Futures.

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June 3rd, 2025

Village of Valemount - Economic Recovery Federal Ministerial Briefing Note

Issue

The Village of Valemount in British Columbia is seeking financial support in order to prevent job losses and bolster local businesses within the community which have been threatened by the 2024 Jasper Wildfire.

Background

- Incorporated in 1962, Valemount currently has a population of just over 1,000. Located in the North Thompson Valley, approximately one hour from the BC-Alberta border, the village is surrounded by three mountain ranges, provincial and national parks, and pristine nature.
- Valemount has taken advantage of its middle-of-everywhere location in order to develop its dominant tourism industry.
- The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing travel restrictions greatly impacted the local economy.
- In response to the 2024 wildfire, Jasper and Alberta enacted a mass evacuation between July 22 and August 17, wherein a welcome centre was quickly established in Valemount as a resting place for the approximately 20,000 evacuees that were received.
- **Valemount's population increased 20-fold overnight, and local business and residents opened their doors to welcome the evacuees as reception centres and other lodgings hit capacity.**
- As a result of the wildfires, Highway 16 and Highway 93 were closed to commercial and tourist traffic for 3 weeks, which had immediate and severe consequences on Valemount's economy, cutting off access to the village as a commercial stop and tourist destination during its peak revenue season.
- Critically, **Valemount businesses were unable to access recovery funds through insurance.**
- Of the 64 businesses who responded to a survey in August 2024 concerning the impact of the wildfires on businesses and organizations, 97% of respondents experienced a reduction in revenue during the closure times, and almost 30% indicated that they experienced a large reduction in revenue of 81-100%.
- 50% of businesses indicated that they incurred additional costs as a result of the wildfires, with the highest reported costs being due to the support provided to Jasper evacuees.

Current Situation

The biggest threat to the Village of Valemount is the possibility of a downward economic spiral caused by a chain reaction of business closures. Many businesses rely on summer profits to support them through the winter; however, this was not possible due to the highway closures. The Municipal Regional District Tax (MRDT) numbers, provided by the Province of BC, indicate that **the**

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year-over-year effect of the highway closures on occupancy was as large as the effect from COVID-19.

In Jasper, business interruption insurance helped cover some losses; however, businesses in Valemount have not qualified for critical insurance claims to ease financial impacts. To date, the only recovery support for local businesses has been the federal Work-Sharing Program and the Red Cross Support to Small Businesses and Not-for-Profits Program, which is limited to \$1,000 per organization. Valemount has actively engaged with the BC and Alberta governments. Alberta is currently working with Valemount to reimburse the costs associated with hosting Jasper's evacuees.

Despite the clear economic fallout, **the BC government has refused to commit any recovery funding** despite having supported similar economic recovery efforts in the past. In contrast, Alberta is actively working to reimburse costs Valemount incurred from hosting evacuees through Jasper. Due to the highway closures, Valemount is currently in the midst of extensive business closures, with businesses being listed for sale resulting in devastating job losses.

Key Considerations

Recovery and growth are the key goals in supporting Valemount's economy. Recovery efforts are needed in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the wildfire-related highway closures. The focus must first be on the prevention of an economic downward spiral, and as such, **measures must be deployed to businesses in a timely manner to ensure that they have funding to sustain operations.** Growth actions should assist the community in diversifying economic capacity for future seasons so as to reduce reliance on summer tourism.

The federal government is responsible for ensuring that all Canadian communities have effective disaster recovery measures needed to protect the quality of life for its residents. Current measures have proven inadequate as there has been **extensive jurisdictional confusion** over whether it is BC, Alberta, or the federal government's duty to provide support to Valemount.

Next Steps

The Village of Valemount and local businesses are seeking funding support from the provinces of BC and Alberta, as well as the federal government and any entities that can aid in disaster-related funding that can be made available in a timely manner.

The estimated amount needed **to meet immediate community recovery needs is \$1,500,000**, not including the necessary administrative costs for deploying recovery or the excess costs that many businesses and non-profit organizations incurred to house, feed, and provide services to over 20,000 evacuees. This estimate is anticipated to be sufficient in assisting the majority of affected businesses with payroll, staffing, and operational costs necessary to sustain the local economy.

Funding must be deployed while meeting available capacity and legal requirements, and as such, **Valemount has coordinated to have any funding be administered through existing mechanisms with Community Futures.**

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March 3, 2025



To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Municipality of Jasper, I am writing to express our strong support for the Village of Valemount's efforts to secure assistance for their economic recovery following the summer 2024 wildfires. While the fires themselves did not directly impact Valemount, the disruption they caused to the broader regional tourism economy has had significant consequences for the community.

Jasper and Valemount share a deep and interconnected relationship, with tourism serving as a major driver for both communities. The wildfires and the resulting evacuation of Jasper led to a substantial decline in visitor activity, affecting businesses, employment, and the overall economic stability of the region. Valemount, has faced its own economic hardships because of this disruption.


Beyond its economic ties to Jasper, Valemount demonstrated remarkable generosity and resilience during the wildfire crisis, serving as a refuge for displaced residents and visitors. The community provided critical support at a time when Jasper was evacuated and we will be forever grateful.

We recognize that the community of Jasper and its businesses have been the recipients of extensive support following the wildfires. In that same spirit, we hope that Valemount will receive similar consideration considering the similar economic hardships they have faced.

Given Valemount's significant contributions to the region's tourism economy and its vital role in supporting Jasper's emergency response, it is imperative that targeted funding and recovery assistance be made available. Investing in Valemount's economic recovery will not only benefit the community itself but will also contribute to the long-term resilience and sustainability of the broader regional economy.

We strongly urge provincial and federal decision-makers to recognize the challenges facing Valemount and to provide the necessary support to ensure their recovery.

Sincerely,


Bill Given
Chief Administrative Officer
Municipality of Jasper

Strategies North Inc.
467 St Paul Street
Kamloops British Columbia
V2C 2J7

March 4, 2025

RE:Village of Valemount's Economic Recovery Initiative- Letter of Support -

To Whom It May Concern;

On behalf of the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA), we are pleased to offer our strong support for the Village of Valemount's efforts to secure funding for economic recovery in the aftermath of the 2024 Jasper Wildfire and subsequent highway closures.

As one of British Columbia's 14 designated Resort Municipalities, Valemount plays a critical role in the Thompson Okanagan region's tourism economy. Its strategic location near national and provincial parks makes it a key destination for visitors from across Canada and internationally. However, the disruptions caused by the wildfire-related highway closures during the peak summer season have had profound and lasting economic consequences. The loss of vital tourism and commercial revenue has placed significant strain on local businesses, non-profit organizations, and the broader community—jeopardizing jobs and economic stability.

TOTA recognizes that Valemount's recovery is essential not only for its residents and businesses but also for the regional tourism network. A strong and resilient Valemount benefits the entire Thompson Okanagan tourism sector by maintaining visitor flow, supporting regional economic diversification, and reinforcing the area's reputation as a premier travel destination. Funding support will be instrumental in stabilizing the local economy, preserving essential tourism infrastructure, and ensuring businesses can withstand future challenges posed by climate-related disruptions.

We strongly encourage the approval of this funding and recognize the significant impact it will have on Valemount's long-term sustainability. If further information or discussion is required, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Ellen Walker-Matthews
Ellen Walker-Matthews (Mar 4, 2025 13:55 PST)

Ellen Walker-Matthews
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA)






2025-03-04 | TOTA Letter of Support -The Village of Valemount's Economic Recovery Initiative

Final Audit Report

2025-03-04

Created:	2025-03-04
By:	Jacqueline Ritch (jacqueline@totabc.com)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAA_hpFV9oOaqqHPwSTAXCBUGyDcwWNd2YI

"2025-03-04 | TOTA Letter of Support -The Village of Valemount's Economic Recovery Initiative" History

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Usoff Tsao, Director,
Electoral Area "A" (Wells Gray Country)

300-465 Victoria Street
Kamloops, BC V2C 2A9
Tel: 250-377-8673
Toll Free in BC: 1-877-377-8673
Email: admin@tnrd.ca

The Region of BC's Best

May 1, 2025

ADDRESS OF SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION

To: Whom it may concern;

Subject: Economic Recovery for the Village of Valemount

To whom it may concern,

The Thompson Nicola Regional District Electoral Area A is nestled in the same North Thompson Valley as Village of Valemount on Simpcw First Nation territory. As such, we share an approximately 330km economic and social corridor where success of each community hinges on the health of all communities in the valley. As an elected representative of Area A residents, I wholeheartedly support Village of Valemount's funding requests. One should see funding their request as not only directly benefitting Village of Valemount but all communities in the North Thompson and Robson Valleys.

Please accept this letter in support of the Village of Valemount's economic recovery and efforts to secure funding in order to preserve the local economy and support small businesses and non-profit organizations in the aftermath of the 2024 Jasper Wildfire and highway closures. This funding would not only aid Valemount's economic recovery, but also help mitigate the financial impacts of future natural disasters.

On July 22, 2024, the Municipality of Jasper and surrounding areas were evacuated due to wildfires and the nearby highways were immediately closed to all commercial and tourist traffic. Valemount's population increased over 15 fold overnight from evacuees as a welcome centre was established in the village in order to care for the evacuees with businesses and organizations even giving people a place to stay once the welcome centre had reached capacity. The highway was completely closed for almost three weeks and afterward routes were still affected both from fear of further closures and limited communication for their reopening. With an economy largely based on tourism and typically having otherwise significant commercial trucking in the area, Valemount was immediately negatively impacted. As many Valemount businesses are cyclical and rely on strong summer revenues, the threat of a downward economic spiral of business closures as a result of the 2024 Jasper Wildfire and its highway restrictions is a very real threat for the community and its residents' livelihoods. This has already been seen by a loss of jobs and decrease in the local economy and the issue is ongoing.

Please note: the views expressed in this letter do not reflect the views of the TNRD Board of Directors as a whole.

MUNICIPALITIES: Ashcroft | Barriere | Cache Creek | Chase | Clearwater | Clinton
Kamloops | Logan Lake | Lytton | Merritt | Sun Peaks

ELECTORAL AREAS: "A" "B" "E" "I" "J" "L" "M" "N" "O" "P"

The Village of Valemount has proven itself to be perseverant and reliable in times of difficulty, and we would like to express our full support for this economic recovery initiative and the aid it will provide for this community. Valemount did not hesitate to support its neighbours in need through the evacuations and now needs support itself because of a crisis caused by a climate event out of its control.

Valemount's economic recovery speaks to the resilience of small, remote communities facing unforeseen challenges. Your timely support would make a significant difference in Valemount's ability to recover and thrive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Usoff Tsao', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Director Usoff Tsao
Electoral Area "A" (Wells Gray Country)

cc: Legislative Services, TNRD



REGIONAL DISTRICT of Fraser-Fort George

March 5, 2025

To whom it may concern:

Support for the Economic Recovery of the Village of Valemount

On behalf of the Regional District of Fraser-Fort Board of Directors, please accept this letter to support the Village of Valemount's economic recovery after the 2024 Jasper Wildfire and its efforts to secure funding to preserve the local economy and support small businesses and non-profits. This funding would aid in Valemount's economic recovery and also help support its response and management of future disasters.

Valemount's proximity to several national and provincial parks make it a tourist hotspot. However, there are significant lasting impacts from the 2024 Jasper Wildfire and Valemount is at the edge of a downward economic spiral that could cause business closures, threatening the community and its residents' livelihoods. Valemount has faced economic hardships before such as the closure of its forest-based economy, the switch to tourism and the COVID-19 pandemic, but the community did not shy away from offering support to their Albertan neighbours in their time of need.

When Jasper and the surrounding area was evacuated on July 22nd and directed west towards BC, Valemount's population increased over 15-fold overnight. The Red Cross has acknowledged the critical role Valemount played in the evacuation when it did not hesitate to establish a welcome centre across provincial boundaries and provide essential services for evacuees. Valemount businesses, organizations and residents also volunteered support and services at no cost to the evacuees. These same businesses, organizations and residents are still experiencing the long-term impacts of the wildfire, the highway closures and the general downturn in tourism, and they now need assistance themselves.

We fully support the community of Valemount receiving aid to help with its economic recovery.

If you need more information or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Lara Beckett
Chair

LB:he

155 George Street, Prince George, BC V2L 1P8

ELECTORAL AREAS A, C, D, E, F, G AND H | MACKENZIE | MCBRIDE | PRINCE GEORGE | VALEMOUNT



Re: Funding to Support Economic Recovery in the Village of Valemount

To Whom it may Concern:

March 25, 2025

On behalf of the Tourism Industry Association of British Columbia, I am writing to urge the Province of British Columbia to provide support in the form of a grant to the Village of Valemount to help the community recover from the aftermath of the devastating wildfire in Jasper, Alberta in late July 2024. This funding would not only help Valemount in its economic recovery efforts, but also help the Village prepare for the likelihood of other natural disasters.

Valemount is one of 14 designated resort municipalities within BC and its proximity to several national and provincial parks has made it a popular place for visitors from all over the world who not only support local businesses but also contribute to British Columbia's broader visitor economy.

When Jasper and neighbouring communities were evacuated due to the massive fire that damaged much of the Alberta resort town, all highways leading to and from Jasper were closed to commercial and tourist traffic for almost three weeks. Although Valemount welcomed thousands of evacuees for a period of time, many of the products and services local businesses provided were offered for free, both out of need but also compassion. Compounding the situation was the fact that bookings and expected business during that time failed to materialize given the evolving circumstances surrounding Jasper and entire region.

Because so many Valemount businesses rely on summer tourism revenues, particularly from visitors that travel to and from Alberta, the highway closure and other factors resulted in job losses and a downturn in the local economy that continues well into 2025.

While the Village of Valemount has proven itself to be resilient in times of difficulty, the community is still reeling and requires support through various economic recovery initiatives that will help preserve jobs and rebuild local businesses to ensure the visitor economy thrives once again. We urge the Province of British Columbia to consider providing a grant to allow Valemount to fully recover and rebuild its visitor economy now and in future.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Walt Judas".

Walt Judas
CEO, TIABC

wjudas@tiabc.ca:

778-953-0620

March 4, 2025

Re: Economic Recovery for the Village of Valemount

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Tourism Valemount Society Board of directors please accept this letter in support of the Village of Valemount's economic recovery and efforts to secure funding in order to preserve the local economy and support small businesses and Non-profit organizations in the aftermath of the 2024 Jasper Wildfire and highway closures. This funding would not only aid in Valemount's economic recovery, but also help mitigate the financial impacts of future natural disasters.

Valemount is one of 14 designated Resort Municipalities within BC and its proximity to several national and provincial parks has made the village a tourist hotspot. Our village seeks to attract visitors nation-wide, internationally, and from other nearby locations such as Jasper, AB to generate local revenues and contribute to British Columbia's tourism industry. On July 22, 2024, the Municipality of Jasper and surrounding areas were evacuated due to wildfires and the nearby highways were immediately closed to all commercial and tourist traffic. With tourism as our main economic driver and typically having otherwise significant commercial trucking in the area, our community was immediately and significantly negatively impacted. The highway was completely closed for almost three weeks and afterward routes were still affected both from fear of further closures and limited communication for their reopening. With many Valemount businesses being cyclical and relying on strong summer revenues, the threat of a downward economic spiral of business closures as a result of the 2024 Jasper Wildfire and its highway restrictions is a very real issue for the community and its residents' livelihoods. This has already been seen by a loss of jobs and decrease in our local economy.

Our community has proven itself to be resilient in times of difficulty, and Tourism Valemount would like to express our support for this economic recovery initiative and the aid it will provide for Valemount and tourism in British Columbia and Canada.

If you require any more information or would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best Regards,

Sincerely,



Marcie Down

Executive Director, Tourism Valemount

250-566-3335

execdirector@visitvalemount.ca

March 04, 2025

Re: Economic Recovery for the Village of Valemount

Please accept this letter as a statement of support for the Village of Valemount's efforts toward economic recovery and the pursuit of funding to safeguard the local economy, as well as assist small businesses and tourism in the wake of the 2024 Jasper Wildfire and subsequent highway closures.

Valemount is one of 14 designated Resort Municipalities in British Columbia, and its close proximity to several national and provincial parks has made it a prime destination for tourists. Our organization is directly involved in outdoor recreation within the Valemount region, attracting visitors from BC, Alberta, and beyond. On July 22, 2024, the Municipality of Jasper and surrounding areas were evacuated due to wildfires, leading to the immediate closure of nearby highways to all commercial and tourist traffic. This road closure significantly disrupted the tourism economy, and Valemount was directly and substantially affected as a result of the three week closure.

Many businesses in Valemount rely on a strong summer season, and the threat of an economic downturn due to business closures caused by the 2024 Jasper Wildfire and the associated highway restrictions is a very real concern for the community and its residents. This has already manifested in job losses and a downturn in the local economy. The Village of Valemount has demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of adversity, and VARDA would like to offer our full support for this economic recovery initiative and the assistance it will provide to the community and tourism sector in both British Columbia and Canada.

Should you require any further information or wish to discuss this matter in more detail, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Warm regards,

Sincerely,



Curtis Pawliuk
Executive Director (VARDA)

VARDA

www.ridevalemount.com

info@ridevalemount.com

facebook.com/ridevalemount

PO Box 721 • Valemount, BC V0E 2Z0

Re: Support for Economic Recovery in the Village of Valemount

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of Vantage Hotels and the independently owned Best Western Plus Valemount, I am writing to express our strong support for the Village of Valemount's economic recovery efforts and its pursuit of funding to sustain the local economy and support small businesses and non-profit organizations in the wake of the 2024 Jasper Wildfire and the resulting highway closures. This funding is critical not only for immediate recovery but also for ensuring long-term resilience against future natural disasters.

As one of British Columbia's 14 designated Resort Municipalities, Valemount plays a vital role in the province's tourism industry. Its location near several national and provincial parks attracts visitors from across Canada and beyond, as well as travelers from Jasper, Alberta, and other nearby regions. However, the events of July 22, 2024, had a devastating impact on our community. The wildfires in Jasper led to mandatory evacuations, and the closure of key transportation routes effectively cut off Valemount from its primary sources of economic activity—tourism and commercial transport. The highway remained completely closed for nearly three weeks, with lingering disruptions and uncertainty continuing to deter visitors and affect businesses.

While Best Western is a globally recognized brand, each hotel is independently owned and operated. In our case, this hotel—along with a property in Lake Louise and a hotel in Jasper that was tragically lost to the wildfire—is owned by a single family. Like many businesses in the region, we rely heavily on peak summer revenues to sustain operations throughout the year. The prolonged highway closures, loss of tourism, and disruption of commercial traffic have already led to job losses and economic strain. Without targeted financial support, the risk of business closures and long-term economic downturn in Valemount is significant—not only for our hotel but for the entire local economy.

This community has always demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity, but we cannot recover alone. As a key hospitality provider in Valemount, the Best Western Plus Valemount stands in full support of this economic recovery initiative. Assistance through dedicated funding will not only aid in restoring our local economy but also help safeguard the future of tourism in British Columbia and Canada.

We appreciate your consideration of this critical issue. If you require further information or wish to discuss this matter in more detail, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Best Regards,

Tony Bielec

Director of Operations

Vantage Hotels | Best Western Plus Valemount



HEAD OFFICE



VantageHotels.ca



902 Connaught Drive
Jasper, Alberta T0E 1E0



+780-852-3327

Page 140 of 178

OUR HOTELS

Mount Robson Inn - Jasper, AB

Best Western Plus - Valemount, BC

Mountaineer Lodge - Lake Louise, AB