

Kootenay Rockies COVID-19 Resident Sentiment Survey on Tourism

Conducted on behalf of Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association by the Interdisciplinary Intern Research Team at Selkirk College's Applied Research and Innovation Centre

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Methodology

To help inform COVID-19 recovery operations and identify suitable next steps for businesses and local tourism organizations, Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association approached the Interdisciplinary Research Team at the Applied Research and Innovation Center of Selkirk College to develop a survey. This voluntary online survey, published through Survey Monkey, targeted residents of the Kootenay Rockies region. The Interdisciplinary Research Team developed, implemented and conducted the survey, and obtained the survey responses. The survey was open from June 29 to July 5, 2020, and response data were downloaded July 10, 2020. Those responses were aggregated and analyzed for dissemination to Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association.

Please see **Appendix A** for the list of survey questions and possible responses.

Disclaimer

This survey was conducted using a convenience sampling method in which respondents volunteered (or self-elected) to take the survey on the internet. As such, survey responses cannot be guaranteed to be representative of the entire study area.

Survey Results

Kootenay Rockies Region

Demographics

Of the 1,069 total survey responses, 880 respondents provided valid responses about their community of residence, which was aggregated by regional district (see **Table 1**). The highest response rate came from Revelstoke & Area, followed by Kimberley. The lowest response rate was obtained from North Kootenay Lake (Meadow Creek & Lardeau). A total of 20 respondents identified themselves as residents of other communities, which include include Balfour, Brisco, Christina Lake, Genelle, Grasmere/South Country, New Denver, Salmon Arm, Silverton, Skookumchuck, Wasa, Windermere, and Wycliffe. These communities were aggregated into the regional districts listed in **Table 1**.

Regional District	Total	Percent
Central Kootenay	127	14.4%
Columbia Shuswap	334	38.0%
East Kootenay	332	37.7%
Kootenay Boundary	87	9.9%
Grand Total	880	100.0%

Table 1: Number of respondents per regional district

As shown in **Table 2**, the highest responses came from the Health Care sector (8%), followed by the Accommodation, Educational Services, Professional Services, and Tourism/Outdoor Recreation sectors (at 7%, respectively). Of the total survey respondents, 23% identified that their sector of employment did not fit in the pre-designated categories (None of the above). Of the 880 respondents, 32% indicated that they get part or all of their income from the tourism industry.

Sector of Employment	Count	Percent
Accommodation	62	7%
Agriculture	6	1%
Arts & Culture	31	4%
Construction	26	3%
Educational Services	64	7%
Finance/Insurance	51	6%
Food Services	46	5%
Forestry	17	2%
Health Care	68	8%
Manufacturing	7	1%
Mining/Oil & Gas	20	2%
Non-Profit Services	43	5%
Professional Services	60	7%
Public Administration	33	4%
Retail	37	4%
Tourism/Outdoor Recreation	65	7%
Transport	11	1%
Unemployed	30	3%
None of the above	203	23%

Table 2: Respondent sector of employment

Comfortability & Concerns of Residents

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of tourism in supporting their community's economy, vibrancy, and quality of life (**Figure 1**).

In regards to the current economy, 446 respondents ranked tourism as very important and 339 respondents ranked it as important. Tourism was ranked as very important to the future economy by 485 respondents, and important by 309 respondents.

The majority of respondents ranked tourism as being very important (344 responses) or important (339 responses) to the current vibrancy of their community. Tourism was ranked as very important to the future vibrancy by 368 respondents, and important by 351 respondents.

In regards to current quality of life, 294 respondents ranked tourism as very important and 294 respondents ranked it as important. The majority of respondents ranked tourism as being very important (330 responses) or important (293 responses) to the future quality of life of their community.

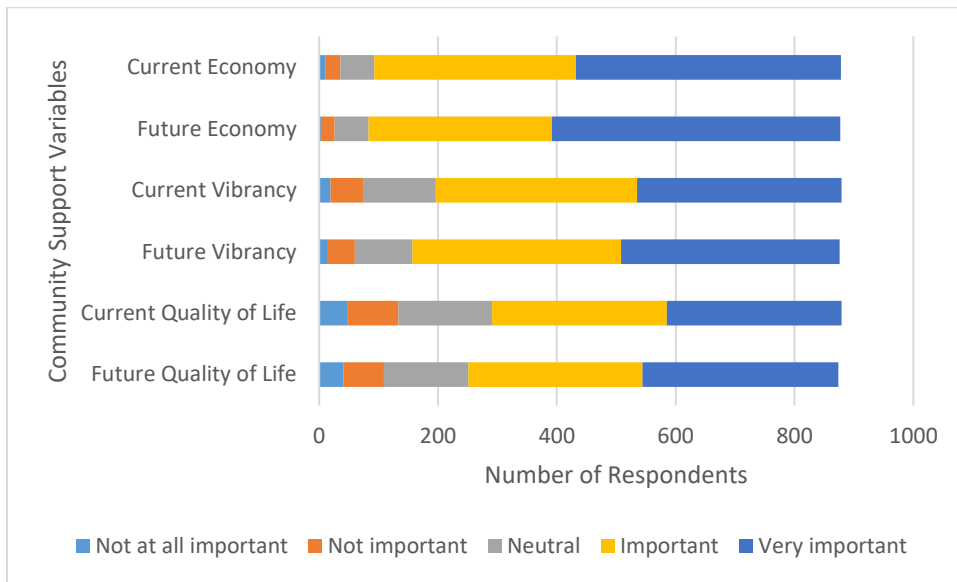


Figure 1: Ranking current and future importance of tourism on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important) based on three variables: economy, vibrancy, and quality of life

The majority of respondents indicated that they are currently comfortable (317 responses) or somewhat comfortable (262 responses) visiting local businesses in their community (**Figure 2**).

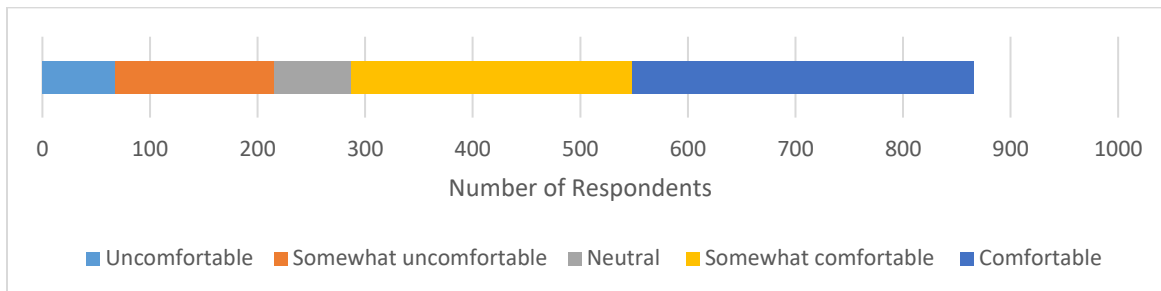


Figure 2: Ranking current level of comfort visiting local businesses in their community, on a scale from 1 (uncomfortable) to 5 (comfortable)

Respondents were asked to rank the COVID-19 related concerns they have when visiting local businesses and attractions in their community (**Figure 3**). The highest ranked concern, from 200 respondents, was sharing spaces with visitors from outside of their community, followed by 199 respondents most concerned with other customers not complying with health & safety guidelines. Of the possible concerns, 411 respondents ranked increased costs related to COVID-19 as the least concerning.

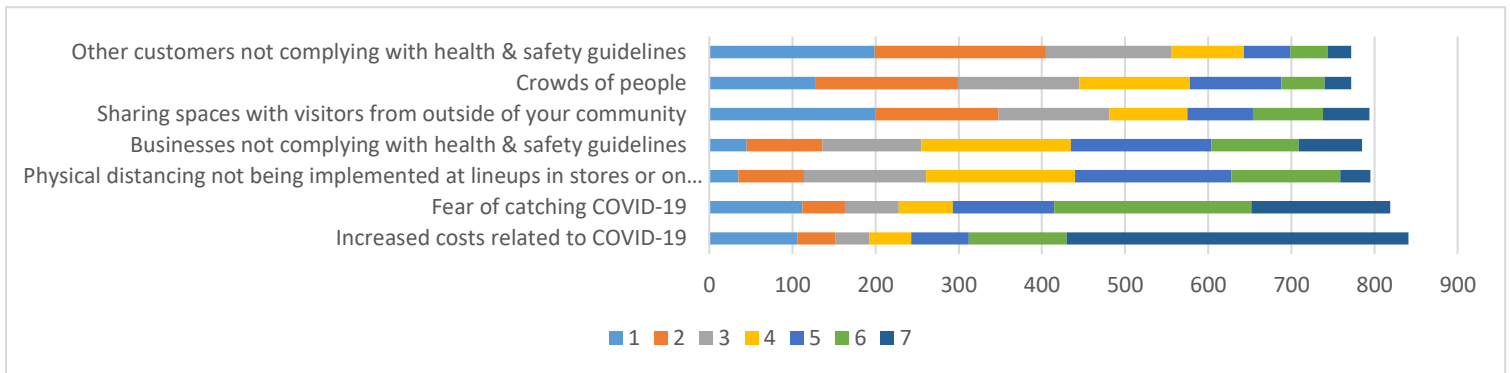


Figure 3: Ranking COVID-19 related concerns when visiting local businesses and attractions in their community, from 1 (greatest concern) to 7 (least concern)

When asked where they would welcome visitors from as provincial restrictions relax, 797 respondents were comfortable with visitors from the Kootenay Rockies region (**Figure 4**). Of the total respondents, 43 answered that they would welcome visitors from the United States - Pacific Northwest, and 34 answered that they would welcome visitors from other areas of the United States.

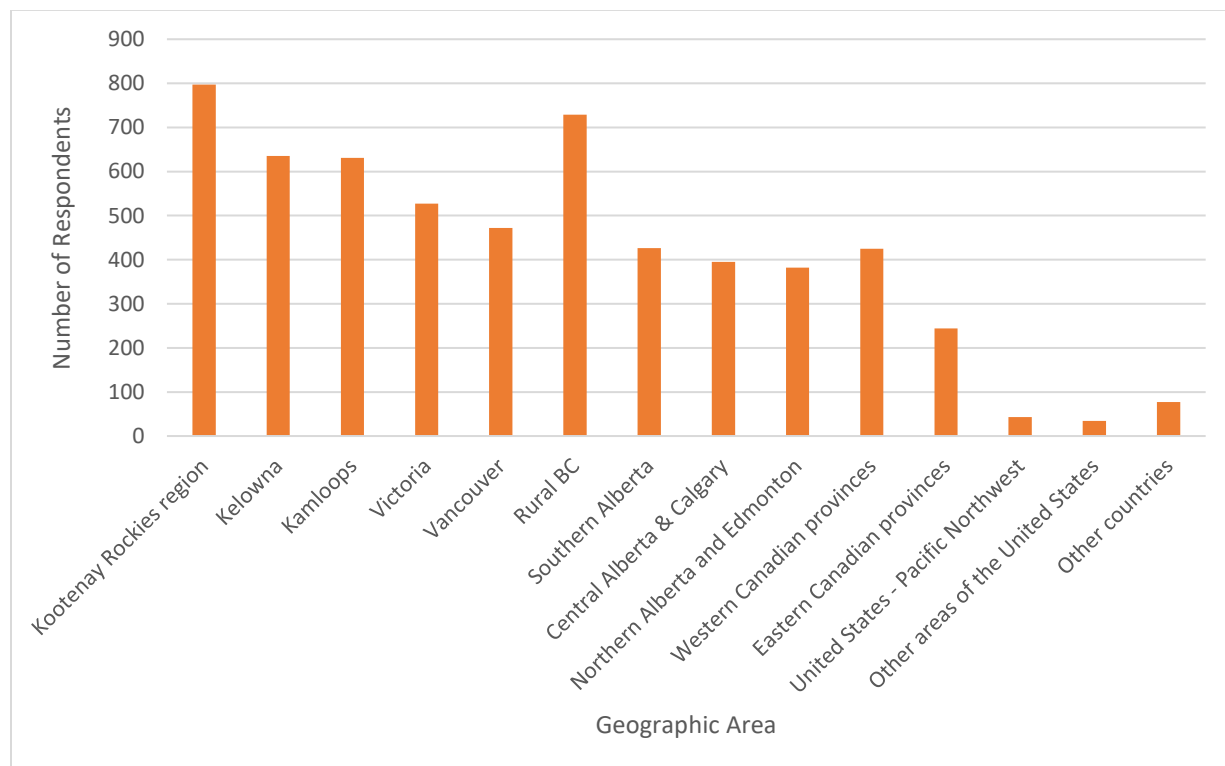


Figure 4: Where respondents would welcome visitors from as provincial restrictions relax

When asked to rank their comfortability travelling this summer, the majority of respondents answered that they are comfortable (318 responses) or somewhat comfortable (265 responses) travelling within BC (see **Figure 5**). Respondents indicated that they are uncomfortable (264 responses) and somewhat uncomfortable (191 responses) travelling to another province this summer.

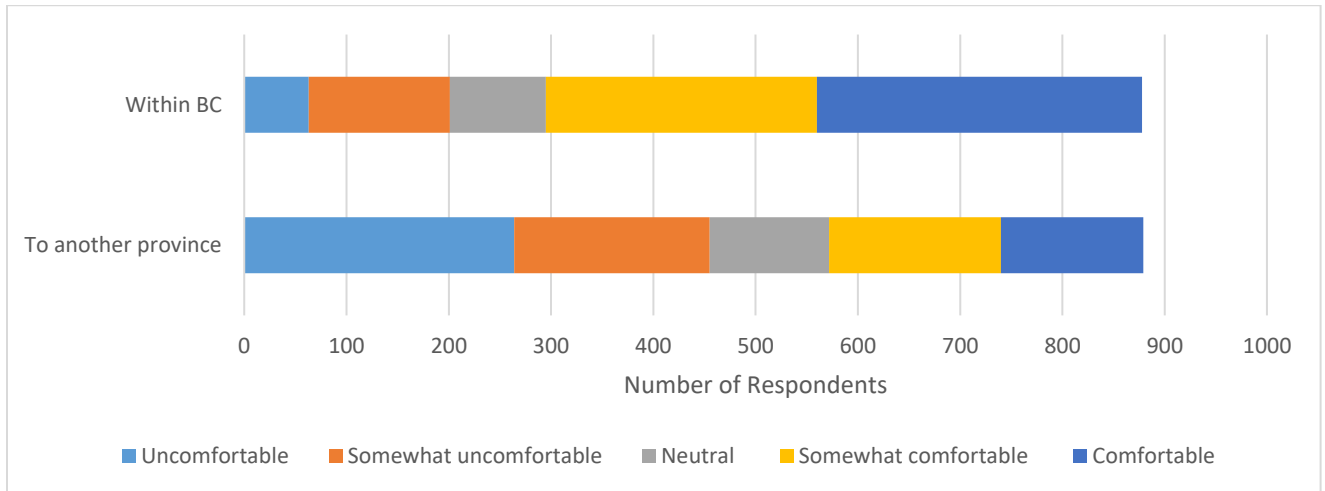


Figure 5: Ranking comfortability travelling within BC and to another province)

General Sentiment

Respondents were invited to share how they expect local businesses and attractions to ensure the safety of residents and visitors (**Table 3**) and what measures would make them feel more comfortable welcoming visitors to their community (**Table 4**). Keywords and phrases were extracted from each response to best capture the sentiments from all 880 respondents. Using this method, a single respondent could then provide multiple keywords and phrases.

Safety Expectations

Of the 943 keywords and phrases extracted regarding safety expectations (see **Table 3**), the most frequent response was that organizations like local businesses and attractions, as well as visitors and residents alike, follow the federal and provincial health guidelines regarding COVID-19. Specific authoritative organizations listed included the Public Health Agency of Canada, BC Centre for Disease Control, BC Ministry of Health, and WorkSafeBC.

Safety Expectations	Count	Percent
Follow guidelines	204	21.6%
Sanitization	156	16.5%
Physical distancing	127	13.5%
Masks	83	8.8%
Limit number of customers	76	8.1%
Enforce guidelines	58	6.2%
Already implementing safety protocols	27	2.9%
Signage	20	2.1%
Communicate safety protocol	19	2.0%
Responsibility of individual/consumer	19	2.0%
Outdoor spaces	9	1.0%
Screening	8	0.8%
Do not welcome visitors	7	0.7%
Physical barriers	6	0.6%
Train staff	6	0.6%
Other	118	12.5%

Table 3: *Keywords extracted from responses to how respondents expect local businesses and attractions to ensure the safety of residents and visitors*

Comfortability Measures

From 960 keywords and phrases extracted regarding comfortability measures (see **Table 4**), the most frequent response was the preference for masks to be worn by residents, visitors, and employees of local businesses and attractions. Of the 147 mentions of masks, many respondents expressed a preference for masks to be worn while indoors in public spaces. The second most frequent response was regarding the implementation of physical distancing, most commonly mentioned in conjunction with limitations on occupant density at local businesses and attractions.

Comfortability Measures	Count	Percent
Masks	147	15.3%
Physical distancing	84	8.8%
Enforce guidelines	64	6.7%
Follow guidelines	63	6.6%
Do not welcome visitors	47	4.9%
Already comfortable	40	4.2%
Border closed	38	4.0%
Sanitization	38	4.0%
Screening	26	2.7%
Restrict extraprovincial visitors	23	2.4%
Vaccine	23	2.4%
Stay home	21	2.2%
14 day quarantine	20	2.1%
Signage	19	2.0%
Restrict visitors from areas with high rates of infection	18	1.9%
Other	289	30.1%

Table 4: Keywords extracted from responses about what measures would make respondents feel more comfortable welcoming visitors to their community

Open Commentary

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to voluntarily provide open commentary. A qualitative analysis was conducted on these responses, and they were categorized into levels of connotation regarding tourism: positive, negative, and neutral. Of the 348 total respondents who provided commentary, 54 provided positive comments about tourism, 122 provided negative comments about tourism, and 172 provided neutral comments about tourism or comments that did not specifically address tourism. The remainder of the responses (532) were left blank. Please see **Appendix B** for examples of respondent commentary.

Appendix A: Research Questions

1. In which community do you reside?

- Canal Flats
- Castlegar & Area
- Cranbrook
- Creston & Area
- East Shore of Kootenay Lake (Kootenay Bay to Wynndel)
- Fairmont Hot Springs/Columbia Lake
- Fernie & the Elk Valley
- Golden & CSRD Area A
- Invermere & Area
- Kimberley
- Nakusp & Area
- Nelson & Area
- North Kootenay Lake (Meadow Creek & Lardeau)
- Radium Hot Springs & Area
- Revelstoke & Area
- Rossland
- Salmo
- Slocan Valley
- Trail & Area (Fruitvale, Warfield)
- Other (please specify)

2. What age group do you fit into?

- 19-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

3. Do you get part or all of your income from the tourism industry? (For example: working in a tourism business, earning income from a vacation rental, selling arts & crafts to visitors...)

- Yes
- No

4. In which sector are you employed?

- Accommodation
- Arts & Culture
- Agriculture
- Construction
- Educational Services
- Food Services
- Forestry
- Health Care
- Finance/Insurance
- Mining/Oil & Gas
- Manufacturing
- Professional Services
- Public Administration
- Non-Profit Services
- Retail
- Tourism/Outdoor Recreation
- Transport
- Unemployed
- None of the above

5. On a scale from 1 to 5, please rate the following statement.

Currently, how important is tourism in supporting your community's:

Economy (jobs, revenue for businesses, etc.)

Vibrancy (festival and events, dining and shopping options, lively downtown, etc.)

Quality of life (recreation opportunities, services and amenities, affordability, etc.)

- Not at all important
- Not important
- Neutral
- Important
- Very important

6. On a scale from 1 to 5, please rate the following statement.

In the future, how important is tourism in supporting your community's:

Economy (jobs, revenue for businesses, etc.)

Vibrancy (festival and events, dining and shopping options, lively downtown, etc.)

Quality of life (recreation opportunities, services and amenities, affordability, etc.)

- Not at all important
- Not important
- Neutral
- Important
- Very important

7. On a scale from 1 to 5, please indicate your current level of comfort visiting local businesses in your community.
 - Uncomfortable
 - Somewhat uncomfortable
 - Neutral
 - Somewhat comfortable
 - Comfortable

8. What COVID-19 related concerns do you have when visiting local businesses and attractions in your community? Please rank from greatest (1) to least (7) concern.
 - Other customers not complying with health & safety guidelines
 - Crowds of people
 - Sharing spaces with visitors from outside your community
 - Businesses not complying with health & safety guidelines
 - Physical distancing not being implemented at lineups in stores or on streets
 - Fear of catching COVID-19
 - Increased costs related to COVID-19

9. What measures would make you feel more comfortable welcoming visitors to your community? Please specify.

10. As provincial restrictions relax, where would you welcome visitors from? Please select all that apply.
 - The Kootenay Rockies region
 - Kelowna
 - Kamloops
 - Victoria
 - Vancouver
 - Rural BC
 - Southern Alberta
 - Central Alberta & Calgary
 - Northern Alberta and Edmonton
 - Western Canadian provinces
 - Eastern Canadian provinces
 - United States - Pacific Northwest
 - Other areas of the United States
 - Other countries

11. On a scale from 1 to 5, please indicate your current level of comfort travelling **within BC** this summer.
 - Uncomfortable
 - Somewhat uncomfortable
 - Neutral
 - Somewhat comfortable
 - Comfortable

12. On a scale from 1 to 5, please indicate your current level of comfort travelling to **another province** this summer.
- Uncomfortable
 - Somewhat uncomfortable
 - Neutral
 - Somewhat comfortable
 - Comfortable
13. How do you expect local businesses and attractions to ensure the safety of residents and visitors?
14. What comments would you like to add to the survey?

Appendix B: Open Commentary

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to voluntarily provide open commentary. A qualitative analysis was conducted on these responses, and they were categorized into levels of connotation regarding tourism: positive, negative, and neutral. Of the total respondents who commented on tourism, 54 provided positive comments, 122 with negative comments, and 172 with neutral comments or comments that did not specifically address tourism. The remainder of the responses were left blank. For examples of some of the respondent commentary received, see **Table 24**.

Community	Comment
Castlegar & Area	I believe that now is a good time to invest in Boosting Local Tourism. Castlegar is busier than ever... Why because most people had previously gone elsewhere to recreate.
Castlegar & Area	Let's continue to support local businesses
Cranbrook	I am seeing too little caution & compliance locally to trust that many people understand that we are a long way from "normal." Until that happens, I am really uncomfortable welcoming more people into the area.
Cranbrook	Too many comments about Americans. Border is closed and only a few of them broke the rules. If we do not encourage Albertans and other areas to come to Kimberley businesses won't survive. We also need to encourage people NOT to shop online. Businesses support the community. Does Amazon sponsor kids teams????
Cranbrook	Respect for all - handle with kindness
Golden & CSRD Area A	Public washroom facilities have presented specific challenges. A method to identify where public facilities are available throughout the region would be really helpful.
Golden & CSRD Area A	Too many people are becoming complacent or allowing their personal opinions to affect their activities/ behaviour in public, and/or their business' decisions to continue enforcing important measures like social distancing during COVID-19. Conversely, small businesses are suffering immensely due to increased stress, increased costs, and decreased profits. It's a double edged sword and further support is needed from both sides if we are to move forward into a healthy and prosperous future.

Invermere & Area	I support a sensible relaxation of current restrictions with clear direction to us all on what to expect and how to behave. I don't want to see the sacrifices that we have all made get wasted with a careless reopening.
Kimberley	There must be a balance between careful caution among residents and visitors and creating a welcoming destination for tourists to enjoy and spend their dollars.
Kimberley	Would love to see area re-opening to tourism however feel we need to set our own fact braised [sic] best practices for people to follow. Understand that there is no way to enforce civic guidelines but believe reasonable prevention measures would be met with acceptance if all businesses/locals are following. We have done well to date, luck and circumstances have been on our side!
Kimberley	The focus need to be on saving small business and supporting the arts. Tons of funding has been cut already and it's destroying and will continue to destroy out local economy. We don't have big box stores and we are really feeling the pinch at register. The gov [sic] also needs to step in and extend its relief to credit card gouging, and utility relief.
Kimberley	Social distancing doesn't happen in stores. I will not go to any businesses requiring masks or spaced seating. I will also not give them any contact tracing info. Covid is really only dangerous to the very sick and elderly. Business owners need to tell the government to open everything now, otherwise the restaurant industry and small stores are finished.
Nakusp & Area	The economy has to be opened up immediately
Revelstoke & Area	I'm concerned about general mental health in the community and beyond as this persists.
Revelstoke & Area	Insist that Interior Health disclose active cases within our community.

Revelstoke & Area	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment. It is difficult to expect all personnel to practice a high standard of public health, and so, much effort has to go into teaching the basic understandings to those not as well versed in these things. Added costs to businesses for supervision and materials need to be recognized.. If we have to pay a bit more, it is worth it. It is cheaper to prevent than to treat! Not to mention to save lives, life is beyond wealth. We also want others to know that the community of Revelstoke has high standards of safety for all: residents and visitors.</p>
Revelstoke & Area	<p>none, except to say that tourism is vital to our community, summer and winter...things will be difficult I think until we have a vaccine</p>
Revelstoke & Area	<p>I would like to see tourism boards actively supporting the public health guidelines, providing the details of social distancing protocols and doing more to ensure they are practiced. That helps support businesses that are trying to do the right thing, instead of willfully ignoring non-compliant businesses to boost tourism.</p>
Revelstoke & Area	<p>Very happy to see residents engaged. A destination is only as good as the community it is built on. And people are the core of the community and visitor experience. Would like to see more opportunities for residents to provide feedback on this in the future.</p>
Rossland	<p>It is a tough balance to protect the long term health of our community, and meet the demands of businesses who perceive they are reliant on tourism revenue, and that local based revenues are inadequate. A strong "shop/play local/regional" program may show the value of our local market to businesses who consider tourism dollars only come from "away". Anyone who visits our community from anywhere else - even 5K down the road - is a visitor.</p>
Trail & Area (Fruitvale, Warfield)	<p>We have been very fortunate in this region to have very low infection rates from the pandemic. Opening our doors to outsiders also opens up a huge risk, and considering the median population age being at greater risk of death from infection its insane to put economics before residents' safety.</p>

Table 5: Selection of open commentary from survey respondents (note: this does not include all open commentary provided)