



## **DESTINATION GREATER VICTORIA UNVEILS 10-YEAR MASTER PLAN FOR REGION'S VISITOR ECONOMY** **Bold vision identifies opportunities to maintain Greater Victoria's position as a premier destination**

**Victoria, B.C. (Nov. 5, 2024)** – As Greater Victoria's visitor economy nears the end of successful year, Destination Greater Victoria (DGV) today unveiled its 2025-2035 Destination Master Plan, which outlines the vision, goals, and actions for the sustainable development of the visitor economy in the region over the next 10 years.

Created with support from leading travel and tourism consulting firms MMGY NextFactor and FLOOR13, the development of the plan included more than a year of extensive engagement with the tourism community, DGV members, First Nations, business organizations, municipal governments, regional organizations, provincial ministries, federal departments, transportation providers, community organizations, and the public.

The Destination Master Plan identifies strategic goals and initiatives related to tourism infrastructure, attractions and experiences, stewardship and placemaking, connectivity and mobility, and sustainability and innovation. In addition, it provides analysis of Greater Victoria's hotel sector and future conference centre options.

"Greater Victoria is globally recognized as a must-see destination that delivers world-class experiences while thriving in alignment with local community values and the natural environment," says Paul Nursey, CEO of Destination Greater Victoria. "Despite our continued success, our growing visitor numbers, and accolades, like being recently voted the Best Small City in the World by Condé Nast Traveler for a second consecutive year, there is work to do to stay ahead of the competition. It's essential for the region to continue developing its potential and elevate visitor experiences. With this plan, we have an exciting vision for the future that reflects the aspirations and priorities of individuals and organizations throughout the region. It's a bold vision that proposes goals and initiatives that will help support and grow our visitor economy while positively impacting the quality of life and experiences of visitors as well as residents of Greater Victoria."

Among the **key strategic goals and initiatives** of the Destination Master Plan are:

**Enhance Tourism Infrastructure:** Greater Victoria's visitor economy will benefit from the development and revitalization of community assets that enable tourism activities, contribute to the overall visitor experience and enhance the quality of life of residents year-round. Proposed initiatives include: renewing and elevating the iconic Inner Harbour and Ship Point; developing additional meeting, conference and hosting facilities; increasing Greater Victoria's hotel room inventory; and ensuring the Royal BC Museum remains in the Inner Harbour.

**Create New Attractions, Events, & Experiences:** Greater Victoria's visitor economy will benefit from supporting and developing additional attractions, events, and experiences that drive visitation, overnight stays and extended stays by meetings and conference delegates. Proposed initiatives include: supporting the development of attractions such as the Future of History Project and Art Gallery of Greater Victoria; attracting or developing a signature annual winter event; developing and promoting activations in downtown Victoria; and developing a regional event strategy.

**Emphasize Stewardship and Placemaking:** Supporting and showcasing Greater Victoria's people, cultures, diversity, inclusivity and commitments to sustainability will strengthen our visitor economy while providing meaningful opportunities for community engagement and regional collaboration. Proposed initiatives include: developing and supporting agritourism; developing and promoting unique neighbourhoods and their character; and supporting Indigenous artists and Indigenous led initiatives and experiences.

**Augment Connectivity and Mobility:** Increasing access to sustainable transportation and mobility options will positively influence tourism, while fostering economic development, addressing climate change and enhancing the

quality of life for residents. Proposed initiatives include: developing an integrated regional transportation strategy; improving delegate and traveller air access to Greater Victoria; supporting potential cruise disembarkation at Ogden Point; and developing scenic pathways and trails and shared multi-modal options that provide active transportation options.

**Ensure Continued Sustainability and Innovation:** Regional, venue and tourism-specific commitments to sustainability play an important role in attracting visitors and meetings to Greater Victoria, while providing communities, residents and businesses with numerous long-term social, economic and environmental benefits. Proposed initiatives include: leveraging Biosphere Certification for Greater Victoria; developing and implementing an industry-leading circular economy strategy; supporting healthy and sustainable local food systems; and working with industry and government partners to reduce waste and carbon emissions.

The analysis of Greater Victoria's hotel sector notes that one of the most significant issues likely to impede or constrain its visitor economy is the lack of available hotel inventory to meet the growing demand for accommodations at different price points. The Plan identifies several potential initiatives to consider as part of a regional hotel development strategy, including: developing a regional inventory of potential development sites; municipal tax deferral incentives; expediting zoning changes; leveraging existing hotel companies to add secondary brands in market; and increasing the speed and efficiency of hotel development applications.

Among the key recommendations in the Plan is that a feasibility study be initiated to explore conference centre options. The Victoria Conference Centre's current size and configuration constraints significantly limits the ability to grow larger group business and excludes DGV from bidding on most association group business events. An expanded facility would ensure Greater Victoria remains competitive in the Canadian business events market and can host lucrative US and international business events.

"As Destination Greater Victoria does not own the assets and experiences of the local visitor economy, achieving the shared vision articulated in this plan will require a collective, community-wide implementation effort across multiple organizations and levels of government," adds Nursey. "DGV looks forward to continuing to partner and collaborate with stakeholders across the region to advance the important initiatives in this Plan."

**About Destination Greater Victoria:** Destination Greater Victoria (Greater Victoria Visitors and Convention Bureau) is our region's official, not-for-profit destination marketing and management organization working in partnership with nearly 1,000 businesses and municipalities in Greater Victoria. For more information, visit the [2025-2035 Destination Master Plan](#) and [Destination Greater Victoria website](#).

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## BACKGROUND

### Greater Victoria's Visitor Economy

- Destination Greater Victoria's latest economic impact study shows the visitor economy has recovered from the effects of the pandemic overall and continues to be a significant driver of employment and economic growth in the region.
- In 2023, Greater Victoria welcomed 4.9 million visitors, generating \$3.5 billion in economic outputs, contributing \$2 billion to the region's gross domestic product (GDP), contributing \$510 million towards taxes, and supporting 25,000 jobs.

### Visitation

- YYJ is forecasting 3% annual increases in passenger traffic from 2025, culminating in 3 million passengers by 2040.
- Greater Victoria's international ferry services report having regained pre-pandemic traffic levels in 2023 and are forecasting 3% to 4% increases in demand over the next several years.
- Cruise business returned to pre-pandemic levels in 2023 and is forecast to remain strong for the coming years, in addition to possible establishment of lines disembarking passengers in Victoria as part of their itinerary.
- Convention business is ahead of pace for upcoming years and remains strong beyond 2026.

### Accommodations

- Greater Victoria's visitor economy would benefit from an additional 800-1,200 full-service hotel rooms over the next five years.
- Our growing region could absorb 2,000 new hotel rooms over the next decade, while maintaining healthy business conditions for existing hotels.
- Greater Victoria's hotel inventory has fallen by 27% over the past decade to a record low of 4,695 rooms, leaving visitors with fewer hotel options and rising hotel rates that discourage convention business and leisure travellers.

### Conferences and Events

- Business events generate about 40% of overall tourism spending in Canada, which amounts to approximately \$47 billion in direct revenues annually. (Source: Meetings Mean Business Canada)
- Business events are the most lucrative segment for many destinations because meetings and conference delegates: stay longer and spend more than leisure travellers; use more services; are more likely to extend their stay or return for leisure purposes; and generate valuable tourism sector revenue during off-peak seasons.
- Doubling the conference centre's size, and hosting 19 to 23 additional conventions per year, could grow VCC's economic impact to Greater Victoria's economy by an estimated 50%. (Source: CBRE Convention Centre Study 2020)