



To: Darren Enns, Jason Darrah
Town of Banff Administration

March 19, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our thoughts and feedback related to Bow Valley Naturalist's (BVN's) concerns and requested changes to the Town of Banff Special Events Policy. There are certainly areas where we agree with BVN's perspective, as well as some areas where we appear to be not as aligned.

From a Banff and Lake Louise Tourism (BLLT) perspective, we want to start off by emphasizing the importance of events in helping build our tourism brand, increasing visitation during need periods, and enhancing both resident and visitor experience. Events help us to position our destination on a highly competitive global and regional stage, diversify our tourism product to appeal to the varied interests of our visitor, provide added reasons to visit in shoulder and winter seasons, and contribute positively and significantly to the quality of life of residents. As we move forward into recovery, events will remain critically important as we work in partnership and collaboration with the Town to rebuild our economy, encourage visitors to return, and support the wellbeing of our residents.

To support our destination effectively, we need a special event policy that provides the flexibility to create and support events that are both authentic to our place and fill a need from a brand, visitation, and experience perspective. We need to continue to work in partnership and collaboration with the Town of Banff (ToB) to assess needs, and determine appropriate solutions, and we need to continue to listen to our local businesses, community organizations and residents to ensure we take into consideration their ideas, concerns, and feedback so that events serve both the needs of our destination, and of our community.

With that being said, we have provided our specific thoughts and feedback with respect to BVN's proposed special event policy changes, as well as the various areas of concern highlighted in their letter, in our responses below.

Proposed Policy Changes

1. The Need for Town of Banff to Develop Destination Event Metrics.

- BLLT works closely with ToB with respect to Destination Events, and we are in alignment with what we are looking to accomplish, and how success is measured. We are in regular communication, review and adjust plans based on Town feedback, and cooperatively assess new opportunities. ToB is not simply along for the ride as with respect to Destination Events, they are engaged, involved partners.
- Our objectives for Destination Events include enhancing both the resident and visitor experience as highlighted by BVN, but also building our brand and reputation as a vibrant, world-class destination; diversifying our tourism product to appeal to the varied interest of our visitors; and encouraging visitation during identified slower or "need periods" throughout the year to help stabilize our economy and support our local businesses.

Phone +1 403 762 0270
BanffLakeLouise.com



- Our objectives are in direct alignment with the ToB's strategic priorities, including the following elements of the Town plan:

Values:

- We value our safe and caring town and want businesses and organizations to flourish while respecting our limits to growth.

Local economy goals and objectives:

- Create memorable national park experiences.
- Encourage year-round tourism and related economic activities directed and supported by Banff's Vision, Banff & Lake Louise Tourism, Parks Canada and the Banff Heritage Tourism Strategy.

Town revenue goal:

- Promote opportunities to diversify the tourism product, providing more balance and stability within the local economy.

Facilities, programs and services goals and objectives:

- Provide a vital and healthy community.
- Offer a wide range of quality recreation and active living programs.
- Support and facilitate cultural appreciation within the community.

- BLLT agrees with BVN that the role that Destination Events play in supporting the ToB, and overall destination priorities, could be more fully articulated in the special event policy. From our perspective, a greater understanding of the role that they play will help underscore the vital contribution that they make to our community and destination.
- Rather than incorporating specific metrics for Destination Events in policy as BVN suggests, BLLT believes that policy should reinforce the need for continued collaboration and alignment, between ToB and BLLT, to ensure Destination Events are meeting the needs and priorities of the community, and destination at large.

2. Rationalization of Event Caps

- BVN's concern related to event caps appears to be grounded in what could possibly happen without greater restrictions in place on events, rather than what is currently happening in destination.
- The reality is, we have relatively few sport, food or Destination Events taking place in public spaces in Banff despite the concern that current restrictions are not sufficient. Not only are the total event days quite low relative to established caps, so are the total number of weekends affected. Larger scale events (including those organized or supported by BLLT, those organized by ToB, and those organized by third parties) currently take place over a total 19 days, with 8 of those days taking place during the week, and the remaining 11 days landing on a total of 6 weekends throughout the calendar year.
- The following chart provides an overview of larger scale event activity that takes place in public spaces within Banff against existing caps outlined in the Special Event Policy.



Event Type	Organizer	Cap	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sept	Oct.-Dec.	Total
Sporting Events		48	0	2	1	0	3
Banff Marathon	3 rd Party	-	0	2	0	0	-
Melissa's Road Race	3 rd Party		0	0	1	0	-
Food/Beverage Events		24	0	0	0	0	0
Tribute to Craft	3 rd Party	-	0*	0	0	0	-
Destination Events		0	12	0	1	3	16
Santa Clause Parade	BLLT	-	0	0	0	1	-
BCMFBF Block Party	BLLT	-	0	0	0	1	
SnowDays	BLLT	-	12	0	0	0	-
Canada Day	TOB	-	0	0	1	1	-
TOTAL DAYS		72	12	2	2	3	19
TOTAL WEEKENDS		-	2	1	2	3	6

*Note: Tribute to Craft operates as part of SnowDays and takes place during the same period so have not included as additional days and weekends so as not to double-count.

- We do not share BVN's perspective that the possible growth of events is threatening or that the need to establish more stringent caps is necessary to control growth.
- Neither BLLT or ToB, have the budget, resources, or desire to grow events indiscriminately. We look to strategically and collaboratively create events or support and attract appropriate third-party events when there is a need.
- Rather than focusing on further restrictions, our view is we need to ensure that the special event policy remains flexible enough to allow for growth of appropriate events in identified periods of need.
- More directly, we believe that it is critical that the policy supports our efforts to create or attract appropriate events in those identified time periods rather than seeking to make it more challenging.

3. The Need for Policy Clarity Specifically around "Destination Events"

- As mentioned previously, our view is that any changes to policy should focus on clarifying the role of Destination Events in Banff and reinforcing the need for continued collaboration around Destination Events between ToB and BLLT, rather than attempting to define strict criteria.
- With that being said, we have responded below to BVN's specific feedback and concerns relative to a) types of Destination Events; b) timing of Destination Events; c) frequency of Destination Events.



a) Types of Destination Events/Sense of Place

- We are in strong agreement with BVN that events in Banff and Banff National Park should align with the values of the ToB and of the Park and should be anchored in a strong *sense of place*.
- BLLT's focus from a Destination Event perspective is on creating and supporting events that are authentic to our place and reflect who we are as a National park, as well as who we are as a community and as a destination. It is important to our brand, and it is important to our visitor who we know is looking for authentic experiences that provide a sense of place when they visit our destination.
- Our approach to Destination Events has been very thoughtful in this regard over the past number of years, and every event that BLLT currently operates or supports is, from our perspective, strongly aligned with our *sense of place*.
- This alignment of Destination Events with *sense of place* has been deliberate for some time now and has not been undertaken independently. BLLT has worked with our entire food sector over the past four years on a food tourism strategy that is based on establishing and promoting a "taste of place" that is authentic and representative of our region. We have held input sessions with a wide range of stakeholders, including Town of Banff and Parks Canada, to get input on our strategies for SnowDays, Christmas and a possible new future Destination Event in April to understand how we can make these events more unique and authentic to place.
- We would agree with BVN that nature-themed events such as Jasper's Dark Sky are certainly appropriate to place, and we continue to explore opportunities to develop our own unique and authentic approach to nature-themed events. *In Search of Christmas Spirit* is one recent example of how we are working to incorporate nature into our event plans, and we will continue to look at nature-based themes for future events.
- Beyond nature-themed events however, there are a wide range of events that reflect a sense of our place and are appropriate to our destination. Events that showcase our heritage and culture, our music, art, food as well as the broad range of wellness, outdoor and sporting activities enjoyed by both our residents and our visitors are all part of what define us as a place and contribute to the vibrancy and diversity of our community.
- From a BLLT perspective, we do not believe establishing strict criteria around what is and what is not reflective of our *sense of place*, in policy, is the answer. In our view, policy should seek to reinforce the need for continued collaboration, input, and discussion as we seek to create events that both build our destination brand, and authentically reflect our destination.

b) Timing of Events

- We agree with BVN and the Town of Banff that we should not be looking to create or attract new Destination Events in our busiest periods of visitation. Applications for new Destination Events in our busiest summer months are already clearly excluded as part of the ToB's Special Event Policy and BLLT has not focused on attracting or developing events during this period for many years.



- Our mandate at BLLT is to build, support and attract events in key need periods (shoulder season and winter)-where visitation and occupancy in the destination are typically at their lowest. We are looking to help smooth out the peaks and valleys throughout the year for our local businesses and workforce in support of a more consistent, sustainable model.
- With that being said, there are a few events that do take place in the summer months that we believe should be grandfathered and protected. The first is the ToB's own Canada Day Celebrations which we suspect we can all agree is an important event for both residents and visitors. The other two are the Banff Marathon and Melissa's Road Race which appear to be a concern from a BVN perspective.
- Banff Marathon was established in June when June was an identified need period, and it has become a valuable asset to the destination from a marketing and branding perspective. It displays Banff as a wellness and active, outdoor lifestyle destination to an international audience while at the same time demonstrating a globally recognized commitment to sustainability (as the first Canadian organization ever to be recognized by the UN for sport climate action). It is one of the few events in our destination that has an impact internationally alongside the FIS World Cup, Ice Magic and SnowDays and reflects well on the overall destination brand. The event is also important to many of our local businesses, and, we believe, to the many local volunteers and participants who take part in the event each year.
- Melissa's Road Race draws a significant regional audience to our destination, many of whom stay in destination, eat in our restaurants, and shop in our stores. While September has become a busier period in Banff, it has done so in part because Melissa's takes place during this time and we believe our local businesses would feel the impact in a significant way if this event were no longer able to continue. Further, if sense of place is important, we would argue that the long history of Melissa's in Banff is part of our culture and an important and valued event property for both our regional visitor, and many of our residents.

c) Frequency of Events

- Our comments with respect to BVN's concerns about frequency of events are mostly captured in our feedback in BVN's proposed changes to event caps.
- From a BLLT perspective, we don't believe that restrictions need to be put in place to control frequency of Destination Events. Policy, in our view, should remain flexible enough for us to continue to work responsibly and collaboratively with our partners at the Town of Banff and Parks Canada to continue to attract and grow events in support of our collective objectives in need periods.

OTHER BVN CONCERNS

1) Noise/Connection to Nature

- We agree with BVN that the natural beauty of our destination and a desire to connect with our natural environment in some way is a motivator for most visitors to the Park. We also agree that excessive noise in public spaces isn't appropriate and that limits to sound levels for special events should be considered and maintained.

Phone +1 403 762 0270
BanffLakeLouise.com



- With that being said, we know from our research, that there are a wide variety of ways that visitors look to connect with our natural environment. For some, it is birdwatching in quietude, for others it may be listening to music in a park, wandering among snow sculptures, or running in an organized event surrounded by mountains. We believe the special event policy needs to remain flexible enough to allow for the design and creation of appropriate events that appeal to the varied interests of both our residents and our desired visitors and, where appropriate, the responsible use of amplified sound.
- Rather than seeking to eliminate events that have sound as part of the experience, BLLT believes that concerns over unnecessary noise are more appropriately addressed with limits and controls.

2) Paid/Exclusive Events

- BLLT is not in support of BVN's recommendation to adjust the Special Events policy to exclude paid or exclusive events from taking place in public spaces in Banff. While we agree that accessible-to-all free events are desirable (the majority of events that BLLT creates, and supports are free to the public) we strongly believe that there is also a need and a place for events that limit registration/attendance or charge a fee.
- The ability to place limits on attendance or participation for some events is important from a demand management perspective allowing BLLT or other event organizers to manage the number of people in a public space to a level that the public space, and the event infrastructure, can accommodate.
- The ability to charge for some events, creates the opportunity to augment the free public events, supported or operated by BLLT or TOB, with select third-party events as part of an overall strategy to build out our tourism offering and level off visitation in need periods. If paid events were eliminated, the option of encouraging and attracting third party events to help fill need periods would be eliminated.
- While we agree that we need to continue to create and support Destination Events that are accessible at no cost to all, we also believe that a sustainable strategy needs to have the flexibility to include both free events, and paid events.



3) Emphasis on Entertainment and Sporting Events

- There are only three sporting events that we are aware of that take place on Town of Banff public lands. The previously mentioned Banff Marathon, Melissa's Road Race and Winterstart. The only entertainment-based event we are aware of that takes place on public lands is Harvest Festival which is a community event organized by and for the community.
- It is difficult for us to comment on the feedback BVN has provided with respect to how residents, businesses and the visitors view the sporting events currently taking place in destination as we are unsure of the source, and whether the feedback reflects the broad sentiment across all these groups. On our end, we have no evidence through our various touchpoints that these events reflect poorly on our destination or contribute to visitor perception of overcrowding or commercialization. Nor have we heard any significant concerns from local businesses that we serve. If there is broad resident concern, it would be helpful to understand how this information was gathered, who contributed to the feedback, and what the specific feedback has been.

Sincerely,

David Matys
Director, Events and Animation
Banff Lake Louise Tourism

Phone +1 403 762 0270
BanffLakeLouise.com