

DESTINATION BC NEWS EXTRA!

Special BC Tourism Industry Conference edition

MARCH 3, 2017



Shirley Bond, Minister of Jobs, Tourism & Skills Training and Minister Responsible for Labour at the BC Tourism Industry Awards in Victoria.

Photo credit: Gabriel Teo, Destination BC

Minister Bond announces new funding model for Destination BC

During an already successful conference the Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Jobs, Tourism & Skills Training and Minister Responsible for Labour, added to the good news announcing the creation of a stable funding formula so Destination BC's can continue its work of growing British Columbia's tourism industry. Minister Bond spoke about how tourism is a key sector in the government's BC Jobs Plan and an important economic driver in the province. During her keynote address Minister Bond highlighted how the \$98 million annual investment from the province helps the sector create jobs in every region of the province. She also praised the efforts of Destination BC, TIABC, the team at Vancouver International Airport, and all tourism operators who contribute to our global reputation.

"You are a key reason why we're experiencing such positive tourism growth," Minister Bond told the crowd. "You're providing the world-class tourism experience that visitors are looking for and putting BC at the top of the list for travellers from around the world."

New funding model

Minister Bond also provided highlights of Destination BC's new funding model, including:

- First, the funding model will protect DBC's annual base funding of \$50 million
- Second, it will be tied to both the broader tourism sector's success and DBC's performance – allowing for increases of up to 2% per year
- Third, funding increases will be cumulative, meaning that DBC's budget can build year-over-year
- This means that there is an opportunity over the next six years for DBC's annual base budget to increase by \$5 million over what it is today.

Every increase will be a permanent addition to Destination BC's base budget going forward, said Minister Bond. "This is really positive news."

Exceptional results

In additional encouraging news, Minister Bond shared the exceptional results of the BC tourism industry over the past year, including:

- BC saw over 5.5 million international visitors in 2016 – an increase of 12.3%.
- Over 600,000 more visitors arrived in 2016 compared to 2015.
- BC tourism contributed \$7.4 billion to BC's gross domestic product, an increase of 5.6%.
- Tourism generated \$15.7 billion in revenue, an increase of 5.3% over 2014.
- The industry supported nearly 19,000 tourism-related businesses.

Budget 2017 included good news for tourism businesses

Minister Bond noted that British Columbia tabled its fifth-consecutive balanced budget, with a number of items that will benefit tourism and many tourism businesses, including:

- \$36 million for the BC Parks Future Strategy that will benefit tourism through improved services and supports
- A cut to the small business tax rate from 2.5% to 2% effective April 1, 2017
- Reduction and eventual elimination of PST on electricity will reduce costs for small tourism businesses. For example, PST on electricity cost the accommodation and food services sector \$11M in 2015/16.
- \$40 million to extend rural broadband service – this will help tourists and local businesses connect in more remote B.C. locations.
- \$4.7 billion ministry and partner investment in transportation infrastructure over the next three years.

More details on the funding—and the year-end tourism industry performance figures—can be found [here](#).

Message from Marsha Walden, CEO, Destination BC



Destination BC CEO Marsha Walden at the BC Tourism Industry Conference (BCTIC) in Victoria, which was organized by the Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC) and Destination BC.

Photo credit: Gabriel Teo, Destination BC

The Victoria Conference Centre halls were buzzing with optimism during the recent BC Tourism Industry Conference! There were happy reunions of colleagues, excited exchanges of business cards and ideas—all buoyed by a wealth of positive tourism news. We even celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC (AtBC) during the conference. We've had a lot to smile about, as evidenced by our outstanding year-end figures, which you can review [here](#).

We in the BC tourism industry can come to work every day—whether the setting is a hotel, campground, vineyard, ferry, café, or office—and

know that we are making a difference in people's lives. Not only are we fulfilling dreams and sharing our culture and wild environment, but **we are fuelling BC's economy**. At 5.6% year over year growth, tourism is significantly outperforming the BC economy as a whole, which grew at a healthy 3.1%. In fact, among all of BC's natural primary resource industries, tourism generates the highest GDP—that is, our industry's economic bang for the buck—not only the highest direct GDP revenues (at \$7.4 billion), but also among the highest spin-off benefits. You are going to hear me repeat that fact a lot in the next few years!

We saw our pride in our work electrify the BCTIC awards gala, as we, our partners with the Tourism Industry Association of BC, and individual award sponsors presented five **BC Tourism Industry Awards** to deserving colleagues. Some of this year's recipients brought us to tears with their dedication and to our feet with our admiration.

Capping all this off was the news that we can proceed, together, on a strong footing. Minister Shirley Bond took the opportunity during her lunchtime address at the conference to announce that a new funding model will protect Destination BC's annual base of \$50 million and allow for ongoing increases tied to both our performance and the success of the tourism sector. This formula ensures that Destination BC and the tourism industry have certainty and stability going forward. We appreciate all that Minister Bond did to ensure our funding was put in place for the benefit of our industry.

As we approach year-end, and look at the stellar results we're helping to produce, we should all stand a little taller. Tourism is a significant contributor to British Columbia's social, cultural and economic well-being. Thank you for all you've done to make good things happen this year. As my colleagues at Destination BC emphasized in their conference presentations, we are all stronger, together—and I am so excited for our future as we move forward with stable funding, full hearts and renewed purpose.

A sample of the big tourism news in 2016

While we can't list all the major news for BC tourism in 2016, here is a sampling of some major developments that took place last year. Feel free to send us your top stories at ContactTourism@destinationbc.ca. What a year it was!

- **New BC Parks strategy supports more campsites, park rangers, increased access**
The five-year BC Parks Future Strategy, "Protecting our Legacy Together," offers up good news for BC tourism with plans to hire more park rangers, create new campsites, to improve access for people with disabilities, and to launch a new BC Parks Foundation. [Read more](#)
- **Federal government moves to lift Mexico visa requirements**
The Government of Canada lifted the Mexican visa requirement as of December 1st, 2016. [Read more](#)
- **Ferry route between Port Hardy and Bella Coola supports economy**
The Government of British Columbia and BC Ferries committed to a seasonal direct ferry service between Port Hardy and Bella Coola to support Aboriginal tourism and the mid-coast economy. [Read more](#)
- **Major federal investments in Destination Canada**
Destination Canada given an extra \$50-million over two years in the budget tabled by federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau. [Read more](#)
- **Connecting America receives funding**
The federal government committed to invest \$10 million per year for three years in the Connecting America marketing program to increase the number of leisure travellers to Canada from key American regions. [Read more](#)
- **Tourism Events Program supports events**
The Province's Tourism Events Program is designed to support world-class events that can enhance the volume of visitors to BC and increase global recognition for the province. [Read more](#)
- **Eight communities adopt the 3% increase under the Municipal and Regional District Tax Program**
See the FAQ [here](#).
- **Air Canada introduced a wealth of new routes to YVR**, including Nagoya and Taipei, Frankfurt and London, Delhi, Chicago, Brisbane, and many others. [Read more](#)
- **Other airlines also added routes to YVR**, including to Nanjing, China, Hong Kong, Zhengzhou, Mexico City and more. WestJet also launched its inaugural London Gatwick-YVR Service [Read more](#)

Read more of this list on our [website](#).

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12th Floor, 510 Burrard Street, Vancouver, BC, V6C 3A8