

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE COUNCIL MEETING

January 13, 2020

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 7:00 p.m., in the Conference Room, in the Administrative Centre, in Barrington, NS, with the following members present:

- Lindsay (Eddie) Nickerson, Chair
- Murray Atkinson
- Jody Crook
- George El-Jakl
- Shaun Hatfield

- Chris Frotten, CAO
- Lesa Rossetti, Municipal Clerk

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

It was agreed that the following items be added to the Agenda:

- In-Camera Session - Personnel Matter.
- Signage at the Sandy Wickens Memorial Arena.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Being duly moved and seconded that the agenda be approved as amended.

Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Being duly moved and seconded that minutes of the last meeting held December 2, 2019, be approved as circulated.

Motion carried unanimously.

RCMP REPORT

Acting Sgt. Dave Toope appeared before the meeting and provided an update of his department since his last report to committee. Topics of discussion included speeding, cell phone usage, littering and loitering. He informed members that the detachment is still down by one member.

Acting Sgt. Toope was thanked for his presentation.

SHELLEY AND DWAINÉ D'EON REQUEST - LAND AT SHEROSE ISLAND

Shelley and Dwainé d'Eon has requested to purchase a parcel of municipal property which abuts their property on Sherose Island.

Previously the committee requested the CAO to obtain additional information on the property. The CAO has had an appraisal of the property carried out and has researched the possible burial plots, settlements or archaeological features found on the property to determine whether it would

affect the development of that portion of the property. He reported that he did not find anything that would prevent development on the property in question.

Based on the appraisal carried out, market value has been determined to be \$14,000.00.

Much discussion took place regarding the sale of this property. One concern expressed related to the close proximity of the trail.

It was agreed that the CAO obtain clarification of property lines and the matter be brought back to a future meeting of the committee.

COMMERCIAL WASTE COLLECTION NOTICE

The CAO informed members that over the past few months discussions have taken place with our Municipal Waste Collector regarding past tendencies to not follow what is outlined in our by-law and collection agreement.

Staff is proposing that a letter be sent to all commercial, industrial and institutional establishments in the Municipality informing them of what our limits are as it relates to the number of bags and weight of bags and advising them that in the near future we will be enforcing the rules.

Resolution COW200101

Being duly moved and seconded that it be recommended to Council that the proposed Commercial Waste Collection letter be amended to state that these are not new regulations and that the letter be sent to all commercial, industrial and institutional establishments in the Municipality.

Motion carried.

AFFIRMATION

Eddie Nickerson
Jody Crook
Murray Atkinson
Shaun Hatfield

NEGATIVE

George El-Jakl

BY-LAW NO. 25 "TAX EXEMPTION BY-LAW"

At the request of the Barrington Leisure Park Association it is being proposed that By-law No. 25 "Tax Exemption By-law" be amended to provide the Association with a tax exemption by adding them to Schedule "B" of the By-law. It is proposed that all three properties owned by the Association be added to Schedule "B".

It is further proposed that Schedule "C" be amended to remove "Port Clyde Volunteer Fire Department" as they are no longer in operation.

It was agreed that proposed amendments to By-law No. 25 "Tax Exemption By-law" be referred to Council for First Reading.

APPLICATION FOR VENDING PERMIT - PUGGY’S KITCHEN

It was reported that a Vending Permit Application has been received from Laura Smith, Puggy’s Kitchen of Woods Harbour for permission to set up a Mobile Food Truck on municipal property located in the vicinity of the CSI Causeway.

Resolution COW200102

Being duly moved and seconded that it be recommended to Council that the Vending Permit Application received from Laura Smith of Puggy’s Kitchen, be approved, subject to all fees and documentation being received.

Motion carried unanimously.

During discussion of this matter it was suggested that By-law No. 34 “Commercial Activity on Municipal Property By-law” be amended to give authority to the CAO to approve applications submitted under this By-law.

It was agreed that proposed amendments to By-law No. 34 “Commercial Activity on Municipal Property By-law be referred to Council for First Reading.

PROVINCIAL TREE HARVESTING PLANS

In advance to the meeting members were provided with a letter from Robert Bancroft, Wildlife Biologist and Donna Crossland, MScF, concerning Provincial harvesting plans for Shelburne County forests and in particular the forest in the Deception Lake area. They are suggesting that the Municipality request the Province to adopt more suitable practices for forests in our area.

During discussion of this matter it was noted that the Town of Shelburne has supported this request.

Resolution COW200103

Being duly moved and seconded that the CAO draft a letter and bring it back to the next meeting of the committee for consideration.

Motion carried unanimously.

JANITORIAL CONTRACT

It was reported that tenders were called for the provision of Janitorial Services for a 3 year period. As a result, the two following tenders were received:

Tenderers	Tendered Sums for First Year* (lowest first) + HST				
	Admin Ctr.	Library	Rec Ctr.	Arena	VIC
Enslow’s Maintenance & Cleaning Services	\$20,780.00	\$7,969.50	\$11,413.75	\$10,171.75	\$2,909.50
Buff Zone Cleaning Services Inc.	\$47,541.00	\$19,527.00	\$23,473.80	\$37,970.70	\$6,009.90

*The costs increase by approximately 1.5% - 2.0% each year for the duration of the agreement.

It is recommended that the tender submitted by Enslow's Maintenance and Cleaning Services, without the cleaning of the Arena and VIC, be selected for the following reasons:

1. Upon evaluating the two tenders using the prescribed evaluation criteria, Enslow's Maintenance & Cleaning Services attained the most points.
2. The tendered cost of janitorial services for the Arena and VIC does not justify the procurement of this service.

Resolution COW200104

Being duly moved and seconded that it be recommended to Council that the tender received from Enslow's Maintenance and Cleaning Services for janitorial services, for a three year period, excluding the arena and VIC, be accepted, as recommended by staff.

Motion carried unanimously.

FUTURE VIC OPERATION

A drop in visitor numbers due to more people accessing destination information via their mobile phones and other devices has prompted staff to review future VIC operations. Based on the review, 4 recommendations have been brought forward. A copy of the Staff Report is attached and forms part of the minutes.

Resolution COW200105

Being duly moved and seconded that it be recommended to Council that the Municipality cease operations of the VIC located at 2517 Highway 3, Barrington and focus the Municipality's attention to serving its visitors through its social media platforms, ShowMe Map and mobile VIC, as recommended by staff.

Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution COW200106

Being duly moved and seconded that it be recommended to Council that the Municipality sell or lease long-term the VIC building located at 2517 Highway 3, Barrington, as recommended by staff.

Motion carried unanimously.

SIGNAGE AT THE SANDY WICKENS MEMORIAL ARENA

It was suggested that signage at the Arena should be installed more securely and that the resizing of signage could result in the sale of additional signage.

MEETING WITH MP

The CAO informed members that MP Bernadette Jordan is available to meet with members on Thursday February 13, 2020 at 11:00 a.m.

IN-CAMERA SESSION

At this time an In-Camera Session was held in accordance with Section 22(2)(a)(c) of the Municipal Government Act, to deal with the possible sale and use of municipal properties as well as personnel matters.

The regular Committee meeting was called back to order.

REPORT ON IN-CAMERA SESSION

It was reported that during the In-Camera Session discussion took place regarding the specifics of the future sale or long-term leasing of the Visitor Information Centre located at 2517 Highway 3, Barrington and the CAO advised members of a recent personnel matter. Another personnel matter was also discussed in the presence of the Municipal Clerk in the absence of the CAO.

Resolution COW200107

Being duly moved and seconded that it be recommended to Council that after having received a satisfactory performance evaluation, the salary for the Chief Administrative Officer be increased to the 3rd level on the Salary Band effective April 1, 2020.

Motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:35 p.m.

Chair

Secretary for the Meeting



STAFF REPORT

SUBMITTED BY: Chris Frotten

DATE: December 12, 2019

SUBJECT: Future of VIC Operations & Building

ORIGIN

During recent years, visits to our local Visitor Information Centre (VIC) have declined and the expenses associated with its operations and building maintenance have increased. For these two reasons and in light of the upcoming budget deliberations, Staff has performed a financial review of the VIC and has assessed whether its current operations (including location and building) is in the best interest of the Municipality.

BACKGROUND

Since 2004, the Municipality has owned and operated the VIC at its current location which has offered a friendly place to learn about our local area as well as access to free Wi-Fi and clean washroom facilities.

We are very fortunate to have a large space to display local visitor information that is used by both locals who gather information for their summer vacations, and visitors who ask about local attraction and events and their dates and times. In addition to providing information to visitors, we offer space for organizations who would like to advertise events, Seniors Services occupies the VIC during the months of March and April to conduct their Low-Income Tax Preparation program and the Shelburne County Learning Network leases the space upstairs to use for their purposes.

Finally, the Centre provides a summer job for a student each year, a part-time job to a local resident, as well as a 20-week manager's position.

As mentioned above, the VIC, which operates from May-September, has seen a consistent decline in visits. In 2009, the VIC had 3,238 visitors during the season - last year, it only had 1,555. In addition, 215 of those visits were from residents of the Municipality and 241 were only for the use of the washrooms. Therefore, in reality, the VIC only served 1,116 visitors last year.

In addition to declining visitation, the operating and building maintenance costs have increased over the years. In fiscal 15/16, the VIC had an operating deficit of \$22,484 – this year, we are in line for an approximate \$35,000 deficit. Almost 60% of the operating budget is salaries but that has been consistent

over the past 5 years. The second and third largest expenses are the Power/Cable and Property Maintenance, and these have both increased over the past 5 years.

DISCUSSION

It has been common practice to operate an official visitor information centre. These visitor centres can evoke civic pride when locals provide top-notch hospitality and valuable services to travellers. This makes some people reluctant to change. Why break a trusted model? Every destination needs its visitors to have positive experiences, and a well-managed visitor centre is one way to make that happen.

But the assumption that every destination needs a physical, permanent visitor centre is a destination marketing idea that is outdated. Just because you built it, doesn't mean your visitors still need it.

As visitors are using mobile technology more and more to access information, some destinations are rethinking the way they provide visitor servicing. In 2015, the Province closed visitor information centres in Digby and Pictou after measuring a consistent decline in the number of tourists visiting information centres, citing a 19% drop in fewer visits. In 2019, Tourism Nova Scotia (TNS) closed its literature distribution centre in Dartmouth given the seasonal and declining demand for tourism literature.

Not so long ago, visitor centres provided information, maps and travel advice that were in short supply elsewhere, filling a vital need for trip planning after arrival.

Today, smartphones are filling the information gap more thoroughly and conveniently than visitor centres can. The mobile internet has dramatically changed the way visitors plan their trips, and today, many visitors are finding that support online, anywhere they go.

Visitors servicing needs will vary from one destination to the next, but there seems to be an overarching trend at work. In the past, people proactively sought out the visitor centre. Now, if visitors happen to find one, they will probably wander in – why not? But they no longer see it as a must-do as soon as they arrive. That's a fundamental change.

It is time to review and reimagine our visitor servicing to align with the provincial and our own local strategy and respond to the needs within the customer journey. This could reveal perceptions and expectations of the local tourism industry and modern travellers, within the context of today's visitor servicing trends.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

As mentioned above, we have typically invested approximately \$31,000 in the VIC and visitor servicing in the past 5 years. Even if we were to close the VIC, the financial impact would not be substantial. Although we wouldn't operate a brick-and-mortar location, we would still be required to invest in visitor servicing which would account for the minimal savings.

That being said, the investments we would make would be strategic and would more accurately respond to the needs of the modern-day traveller. An example of a strategic investment is in the ShowMe Map

which is an interactive map that features tourism businesses, attractions, festivals & events (<https://www.shelburnecounty.ca/>).

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

PUBLIC CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATIONS

This staff report was shared with both the Director of Marketing and Tourism Development, Suzy Atwood, who oversees the VIC operations and the VIC Manager, Diane Smith, who manages the VIC.

They both agree that the current VIC location and operation is not working in the best interest of the Municipality, but they do feel that an in-person service is still needed.

They believe we need to put a lot more work in establishing experiences for the visitor, before we venture into pop-up/mobile VICs. Diane notes that visitors currently make short term visits to our area for lobster and the beaches and do not stop because of any signage, advertisement or mobile/pop-up we may have. She does mention that our lobster supply is limited in the summer, and people visiting our beaches for a couple of hours does not generate a lot of revenue so longer-term stays need to be our goal. From her experience over the past 20 years, essentials such as accommodations, boat tours, craft shops, shopping, as well as learning experience tours are key to achieving this goal.

As for a short-term solution, they both believe that partnering with a museum to operate the VIC could work, however they are cautious to choose one museum over another since we have two major museums in different locations this could be used. As well, an employee of a museum wouldn't be trained to the level of a VIC employee, which might decrease the level of service. They mention that a partnership with the Chamber of Commerce could be beneficial, but the Municipality would still need a location, and as the organization is based on volunteers, it may not be capable of providing the consistent direction and support.

In conclusion, they believe a mobile structure (such as the glass front structure below) would work. They believe that either side of the Causeway would be a great location as the current location is perceived as "back-tracking".

RECOMMENDATION

A drop in visitor numbers due largely to more people accessing destination information via their mobile phones and other devices has compelled us to review our current service delivery. To provide concrete recommendations, we have researched and analyzed visitor behaviour, local perceptions and current visitor centre performance. We then reviewed the research in the context of provincial and national trends that shape the way we provide effective visitor servicing. Based on our review, here are our 4 recommendations:

I. Cease Operations of the VIC located at 2517, Highway 3 in Barrington & Sell or Lease (Long-Term) the Building.

As we've established that our permanent brick-and-mortar visitor centre no longer meets our needs and the mobile internet has dramatically changed the way visitors plan their trips – we are recommending to cease operating the VIC in the current building at 2517 Highway 3 in Barrington and sell or lease long-term the building. We already have two interested parties in the building; therefore, we suggest continuing to pursue opportunities such as these.

II. Develop an Alternative or Create a Pop-Up/Mobile VIC

Although the permanent VIC no longer meets our needs, the current VIC Manager and our Director of Marketing and Tourism Development firmly believe that there is still a need for in-person, one-on-one visitor information services in the Municipality.

There are many ways in which we could provide this service without a permanent location. The first option would be to partner with a location organization to house a VIC at their location. For example, the Municipality could partner with the Cape Sable Historical Society to house the VIC in one of their facility and provide the human resources to Staff it. Not only would this draw visitors to their facility, it would also promote collaboration and could induce unknown opportunities. Another example of partnership is attached. In BC, the City of Castlegar partners with the local Chamber of Commerce to operate the VIC and provide visitor information. This is common in the Annapolis Valley and in the U.S.

Another option would be to create a “pop-up” or “mobile” VIC. This concept is well known throughout the world, but examples can be found as close as Yarmouth, Chester and Cape Breton Island. In this scenario, we would build a mobile structure or purchase promotional items that could be set up at various locations, either locally or regionally, to promote our area and provide visitor information. An initiative of this nature could also be done in partnership with local organizations or even businesses. An example of this is Yarmouth and Acadian Shores' Summer Cruiser which meets visitors wherever they are—at events like Seafest or the Classic Car Show, at attractions like the Cape Forchu Lightstation and at travel junctures like the CAT ferry terminal in Maine.

Not only would this option provide a more cost-effective approach, it would allow us to easily adapt our service delivery (i.e. to high traffic locations or special events) and would allow us to target certain groups depending on the location and/or event. Furthermore, the information provided to these target groups would be directed to them specifically. Finally, the modernization of the look and/or use of the structure or promotional items would be less costly and time consuming.



III. Improve Service Delivery and Invest in Digital Content & Software

Visitor centres can be likened to the offline manifestation of a destination's website. If you aren't careful, they can become an artificial step in the traveller's journey. Why do we need visitors to go through our stationary visitor centre? Why not take our services to them instead?

We can now provide excellent service to visitors online, from anywhere. Tools like SMS, TripAdvisor, other social media sites, direct messaging and email help provide the same service we would give people at our visitor centre, but now you can also do it before and after their trip. To begin with, our existing visitor centre staff could do this from their brick-and-mortar location. Many destinations are also creating mobile visitor servicing locations that enable them to locate where tourists are to add value to the traveler experience.

We should be asking ourselves how our investment in a visitor centre increases the economic spend or visitor dispersal or length of stay in our Municipality. If it doesn't, we need to think about testing a different approach. This way of thinking represents an evolution in visitor servicing, not a deconstruction. It doesn't mean letting go of staff or losing our in-person touch points, it simply means doing it in a modern and mobile way that meets the needs of today's visitors.

IV. Map the Customer's Journey

To effectively match visitor services with visitor needs, we need a process to align a strategy with visitor behaviour and the customer journey.

We think we know our destination better than anyone. But when's the last time we saw it from our visitors' point of view?

Mapping one or more of our Municipality's customer journeys can reveal how your visitors interact with our Municipality and where their pain and pleasure points are. It puts us in our visitor's shoes, allowing us to see the destination the way they do. A good customer journey map would show us areas of improvement or opportunity that touch on every aspect of our Municipality: from marketing and promotion to destination experience, the role and place of partners and stakeholders and even the way regional boards and cooperatives are structured and organized.

It's a common mistake to confuse the customer journey with commonly accepted stages of travel. Google has identified five stages of travel for marketers: dreaming, planning, booking, experiencing and sharing. These stages are more or less the same for every destination, but the actual customer journeys within those stages can vary a great deal from destination to destination and from persona to persona. If you're a diving destination, for instance, a highly experienced diver is probably looking for something completely different in every stage throughout the entire journey than a novice who wants to get certified.

This is why research into a deep understanding of our Municipality and what drives our personas is such an immensely important foundation for creating a customer journey. We need to immerse ourselves in our visitor behaviour, because what people say they do within traditional research tools like surveys and focus groups is often a very different reality than what people actually do. To be able to understand our

visitors' motivations, barriers, wants and needs, we need to instead conduct thorough interviews and observations in order to uncover what people are doing, and constantly ask why they are doing it.

Continuously mapping out your customer journeys can be one of the most valuable, foundational things we can do as a destination. This design thinking approach perfectly combines insights on our visitors and our destination, which allows us to identify improvements and opportunities in all areas of the path to purchase, from consumer engagement, to experience design all the way to business and organizational strategy.

SUGGESTED MOTION

Move to cease operations of the VIC located at 2517, Highway 3 in Barrington and focus the Municipality's attention to serving its visitors through its social media platforms, ShowMe Map and mobile VIC.

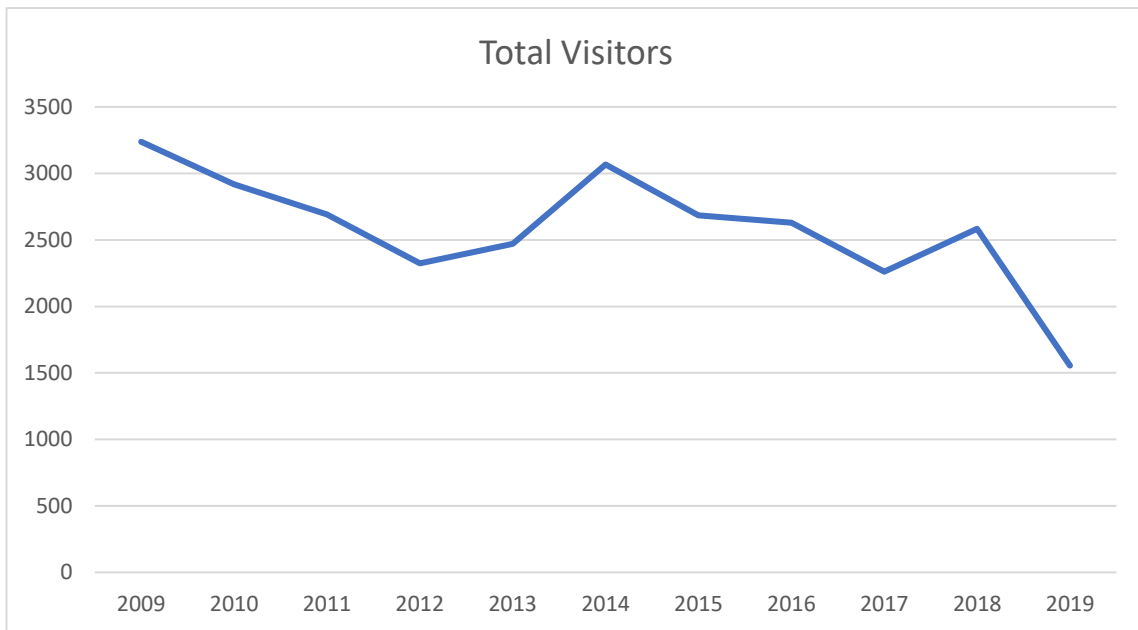
Move to sell or lease long-term the VIC building located at 2517, Highway 3 in Barrington.

ATTACHMENTS

- 2009-2019 VIC Statistics
- 5-Year Financial Comparison of the VIC
- Castlegar News - City and chamber of commerce renew contract to operate visitor information centre

**Barrington Visitor Information Centre
Statistics Report**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Visitors</u>
2009	3238
2010	2919
2011	2691
2012	2324
2013	2471
2014	3068
2015	2684
2016	2629
2017	2261
2018	2584
2019	1555



Municipality of the District of Barrington
VIC Financial Statements
5 Year Comparison

Budget Manager	Type	Account Number	Account Name	15/16 Actuals	16/17 Actuals	17/18 Actuals	18/19 Actuals	19/20 Actuals
VIC	Federal Governr	01-17100-200	Recreation & Culture - VIC	1,272	-	1,299	1,980	1,388
	Provincial Gover	01-17500-050	PEP Grant from DSWNS	6,052	5,068	2,500	2,500	2,250
Revenue Total				7,324	5,068	3,799	4,480	3,638
Tourism	01-26910-001	Salaries/Wages	18,966	18,595	19,695	21,006	18,317	
	01-26910-002	Employment Insurance	499	489	449	488	415	
	01-26910-003	Canada Pension	233	213	231	294	233	
	01-26910-004	Workers Compensation	283	285	302	336	291	
	01-26910-007	Training/Development	246	103	85	225	60	
	01-26910-010	Supplies	431	405	262	563	560	
	01-26910-011	Advertising	210	493	480	674	-	
	01-26910-012	Telephone	267	401	597	217	91	
	01-26910-013	Property Maintenance	2,458	1,491	4,356	4,622	1,603	
	01-26910-014	Travel	348	180	215	17	-	
	01-26910-015	Insurance	1,359	1,389	1,416	1,471	964	
	01-26910-016	Miscellaneous	33	30	-	15	124	
	01-26910-024	Power/Cable	4,641	4,370	5,191	5,954	2,185	
	01-26910-005	Group Insurance	-	-	-	-	-	
	01-26910-008	Vacation Accrual	-	166	1,976	2,953	267	-
Expense Total				29,807	30,215	30,327	36,147	24,845
Net Income (Deficit)				- 22,484	- 25,147	- 26,528	- 31,667	- 21,207

City and chamber of commerce renew contract to operate visitor information centre

The City of Castlegar has renewed its contract with the Castlegar Chamber of Commerce to operate Castlegar's visitor information centre.

BETSY KLINE / Feb. 6, 2016 3:00 p.m. / NEWS

The City of Castlegar has renewed its contract with the Castlegar Chamber of Commerce to operate Castlegar's visitor information centre. The new contract is valid for three years, expiring at the end of 2018.

The city provides about 75 per cent of the funding necessary to run the visitor centre. The formula the city uses to calculate the amount it contributes is to transfer 95 per cent of business licence revenues collected in the past year, which will be approximately \$80,000. The city will also provide the chamber a grant of \$6000 to help with the cost of publishing the annual visitors guide. In addition, the city will also provide up to \$1250 towards the printing of city maps or other marketing initiatives.

Last year over 15,000 people physically went through the doors of the visitor centre and thousands more contacted the office through email or phone calls. "I think it is really important that people understand the economic benefit of having the visitor centre open year round," said Castlegar Chamber of Commerce executive director Tammy Verigin-Burk. "It is so critical that we operate here."

Statistics show that a high percentage of people who relocate to a town come there first as a visitor, so staff works at promoting Castlegar, not just as a place to visit, but as a place to live and do business. "Having the visitor centre and the chamber of commerce together in the same office adds a whole piece to it that if you were a stand alone visitor centre, you don't have," said Verigin-Burk. "We like to say that it is kind of like a one stop shop for visitors, that we can completely market our town to them." Questions can be answered not just about local attractions, but on housing prices, business opportunities and similar things people want to know before making a decision to relocate.

The chamber of commerce and the city have a good working relationship, Verigin-Burk describes it as phenomenal. They try to work collaboratively, making sure the city knows what the chamber is up to. The chamber also works to ensure that they are using the same branding, trying to sell Castlegar as a brand. Verigin-Burke explained, "When people come into this office, it's not just, 'Welcome to Castlegar,' and we send them off. We make sure that it is a whole package, that we are selling our town from all different lenses."