



## **WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT FOR THE VALLEY REN LIAISON AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

**Submitted by:** Chrystal Remme, WHRM Councillor District 3

**Meeting Date:** July 14th, 2025

**Meeting Location:** Municipality of the County of Kings

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### **SUMMARY/UPDATE OF THE COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES:**

The Valley REN Liaison and Oversight Committee (LOC) met on July 14th. Here's an update on what was covered:

#### **Annual Report & Program Updates**

- The REN shared highlights from their 2024–2025 Annual Report. The focus continues to be on workforce development, immigration, business support, and tourism.
- The Connector Program has shifted to focus more on skilled trades.
- Agri-Food Tech, FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) readiness, and addressing tourism service gaps are also part of the work plan.

#### **PESTLE-R Report**

- The REN has contracted 21FSP to conduct a PESTLE-R analysis—looking at Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental, and Regional factors affecting the Valley.
- The goal is to help the region get ahead of potential risks and be proactive in planning.
- The REN will provide the next steps once the analysis is complete.

#### **Tourism Marketing Levy & DMMO Proposal**

- The REN gave a presentation on the proposed marketing levy and Destination Marketing and Management Organization (DMMO).
- Through consultations, they heard the following from businesses across the Valley:
  - 39% support the levy.
  - 34% are cautious supporters, wanting transparency and accountability.
  - 27% are opposed, citing concerns about costs, administrative burden, and fairness.
- One of the main concerns is that only accommodations would collect the levy, even though wineries, restaurants, attractions, and tour operators all benefit from tourism.
- To help address this, the REN is looking at a membership model so that other tourism-related businesses can also contribute, helping spread the costs beyond just accommodations. They're still working on finalizing the funding model.

- There is strong interest in year-round tourism promotion, focusing on visitors who stay longer and contribute more to local businesses, not just increasing tourist numbers.
- The consultation also highlighted the importance of ensuring that regional marketing efforts don't overshadow local identities and experiences.
- A Joint Council session will be held on September 17th to discuss the levy and DMMO further. The REN will circulate more information in the coming weeks.

#### **Culinary Program Cutbacks at NSCC**

- The committee also discussed the NSCC cutting the Culinary Arts program, which will have direct impacts on restaurants and the tourism sector across the Valley.
- The loss of this program could affect local businesses that rely on trained kitchen staff, and it ties into broader workforce development and tourism initiatives.

#### **BRE (Business Retention & Expansion) Survey**

- The REN will be launching a new BRE Diagnostics survey this fall to gather information on business needs and challenges across the Valley.
- The survey will provide insights into business climate, workforce issues, and supports required.

#### **Next Meeting:**

The next regular committee meeting will be in October.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

There are no action items for Council from this meeting.

Report Prepared by: Chrystal Remme, WHRM Councillor, District 3