

# CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALBERTA'S CROWN LAND OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY

DRIVING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, DIVERSIFICATION AND JOB CREATION

Providing and enhancing crown land outdoor recreation is critical for maintaining the long-standing traditions and way of life of Albertans. But it is also essential to Alberta's economic future. A deliberate focus on unlocking the potential of our outdoor recreation will attract new investment and businesses to the province,

create more opportunities for Albertans and visitors to vacation in Alberta, and slow the leakage of visitation and recreational investment that Alberta has been missing out on. To begin this new era, and to unlock the potential of our outdoor recreation economy, the sector needs:

## SIX ACTIONS TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF THE OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY

### 1 A COORDINATED AND UNIFIED VOICE

Alberta's outdoor sector is fragmented and lacks a unified and coordinated voice. Though there are many outdoor organizations, businesses and not-for-profits, the outdoor industry has yet to come together. A unified and coordinated voice is critical for unlocking the potential of the industry, and ensuring strong and effective government advocacy for supportive policy and investment.

### 2 SUPPORTIVE CROWN LAND POLICY

To date, crown land policy views outdoor recreation as a land use that needs to be managed and not as an industry that should be supported and enabled like other traditional crown land industries (oil and gas, forestry, mining). The province needs a supportive crown land policy framework, especially on public lands, that views outdoor recreation as an industry, and one prioritized for growth. Proactive land use planning that establishes clear objectives for the outdoor recreation economy and ensures the integrity of and access to outdoor recreation resources are retained, enhanced and appropriately managed. And, in the case of public lands, deliberate focus on supporting the increase in and improvement of visitor amenities and services will help elevate the economic benefits of outdoor recreation on public lands.

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3

### **INVESTMENT IN NEW AND RENEWAL OF EXISTING CROWN LAND OUTDOOR RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

Whether it's trails, campgrounds, boat launches, staging areas, white water play parks or other infrastructure, expenditures on outdoor recreation is an investment that yields significant returns. Alberta's outdoor recreation infrastructure in provincial parks is aging, and outdoor recreation infrastructure on public land is lacking and limited. Unlocking the potential of the crown land outdoor recreation economy requires government, private sector and user investment in new and renewed outdoor infrastructure to provide novel, inclusive, accessible and equitable opportunities for all. Alberta needs to invest in creating world class outdoor experiences that allows the province to compete on the national and international outdoor recreation economy stages.

4

### **INVENTORYING OF CROWN LAND OUTDOOR RECREATION RESOURCES**

Outdoor recreation resources are the lifeblood of the outdoor economy. Yet Alberta lacks an up to date inventory of crown land outdoor recreation resources and amenities. The lack of inventory puts the sector at great risk of not being effectively or meaningfully included in land use decisions that can negatively impact the sector.

5

### **MEASURE AND MONITOR THE OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY**

Data on outdoor recreation is fundamental for informed crown land policy decisions. Measuring and monitoring the performance of the crown land outdoor recreation economy and participation should be expanded and ongoing to help the sector demonstrate its positive contributions to communities, Albertans, and the economy.

6

### **OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION**

Jurisdictions around the globe have realized that unlocking their outdoor recreation potential requires deliberate focus. These jurisdictions have established government "Offices of Outdoor Recreation" who provide dedicated attention to coordinating and creating the policy environment, business attraction, investments in, and prioritization of the outdoor recreation economy on crown lands. Success requires coordination across government departments (parks, lands, tourism, recreation), different levels of government and the private sector. These offices reduce governmental silos, listen to public concerns, remove barriers to access, and prioritize programs that encourage growth of the industry and protection of recreation resources.