

ALL-SEASON RESORT POLICY REVIEW: GAPS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Introduction

In 2024, Alberta released a new [All-Season Resorts Act](#) under Bill-35. Under this Act is the new [All-Season Resorts Policy](#) which establishes the vision, parameters, and goals for implementing year-round tourist destinations on provincial public lands (Government of Alberta, 2025). The policy illustrates the deep disconnect between top-down policy and community-level concerns through its generalized language and lack of formal directions. Tourism in Alberta will only be sustainable when policy shifts from impact mitigation towards the community's vision.

The Body

Evaluating the Policy

The *All-Season Resorts Policy*'s goal is to establish parameters for developers and industry leaders in regards to Bill-35 (Government of Alberta, 2025). According to the Government of Alberta (2025), the policy "supports the government's goal of increasing the visitor economy to \$25 billion in annual visitor revenue by 2035". Based on resort infrastructure and primary activities, the policy requires All-Season Resort plans to have a carrying capacity framework which outlines visitor thresholds aimed at ensuring the quality of visitor experience is preserved (Government of Alberta, 2025). The policy also promotes job creation while reducing pressure on local housing by requiring developers to set aside a "minimum of 5% of their total bed capacity for staff accommodation." (Government of Alberta, 2025). Finally, it mandates that

resorts must adopt FireSmart guidelines to reduce wildfire risks and collaborate with other entities to create further preventative measures (Government of Alberta, 2025).

Gaps in the Policy

- Within the *All-Season Resorts Policy*, Indigenous involvement is “actively encouraged” but not specifically outlined. Though Bill-35 mandates consultation with Indigenous communities, there is a gap within the policy on how this should be done. Additionally, there are gaps in the monitoring and compliance of consultation follow-through. As an example, during the creation of Fortress Mountain Resort’s master development plan and the environmental assessment, Indigenous communities were not consulted (Pelletier, 2026). Furthermore, during my research, I was unable to find any proof that Indigenous people were consulted in the creation of Bill-35. This creates a lack of trust in future implementation of the policy, as well as highlights the ability for developers to circumvent important aspects of the policy.
- Additionally, the policy’s environmental guidelines lack clear actionable directions and instead opt for broad suggestions (Government of Alberta, 2025). Moreover, this enables developers to submit proposals which use generalized language and omit crucial specifics. For example, the Fortress development proposal mentions water and waste management but does not outline the clear actions they plan to take (Ecosign, 2025). While attending the Fortress community engagement at Mount Royal University, I brought up this gap and asked for clarification. The answer I received was vague and gave the overall feel that it had not yet been thought through. Important guidelines for dealing with invasive species and wildlife at risk also lack detailed direction (Government of Alberta, 2025).
- Finally, there is a risk of expansion outpacing municipal infrastructure (i.e., roads, water, and waste management) and a lack of policy ensuring these sites remain accessible and affordable to the average Canadian. The overcrowding in Kananskis is already a concern for Albertans, so the release of new all-season resort plans exacerbates this issue. For example, the plans for Fortress Mountain Resort indicate an expected increase of

almost 10,000 visitors upon completion (Bow Valley Insider, 2026). Current roads in Kanasakis, like Highway 40, cannot support the associated traffic which will result in further congestion (Bow Valley Insider, 2026).

Opportunities

This research outlines five areas of opportunity drawn from global best practices: intrinsic value, co-management, nature-based climate solutions, ecological biosecurity, and revenue diversification.

Sustainable tourism is driven by the idea of intrinsic value, the inherent worth placed on a community by itself (Francis-Lindsay, 2009). Francis-Lindsay (2009) explored this through an example from Shirakawa-go, Japan, where the concepts of *kumi* and *yui* underlie their sustainability efforts. She explains how "*Kumi* refers to neighborhood associations, while *yui* refers to labor exchange". These two concepts allow for, among other things, the communal re-roofing of traditional houses within a world heritage UNESCO site (Francis-Lindsay, 2009).

Formalized co-management arrangements with Indigenous communities enable developers to create socially sustainable resorts that support local community initiatives (CPAWS, 2026). For example, the Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) mechanism used to set up the Great Bear Rainforest supports Indigenous-led companies in ecotourism and renewable energy (CPAWS, 2026). Similarly, the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park has a management committee composed of representatives of First Nations, bordering municipalities, and scientists (CPAWS, 2026). These examples showcase how cooperation between local communities and developers can strengthen projects.

Alberta's parks are carbon-rich natural assets with stored carbon stocks worth trillions of dollars (CPAWS, 2026). Developers have the opportunity to conserve this valuable resource by recognizing the value in its preservation when it is attached to a dollar figure. For a comparison, the Great Bear Rainforest set the precedent by monetizing forest carbon, raising more than \$85 million to be allocated to Indigenous shareholders to fund further stewardship initiatives (CPAWS, 2026).

Tourism is one of the major pathways for the invasion of non-native species, considering the numbers of people and vehicles moved around throughout the season (Anderson et al., 2015). To limit this negative impact, resorts have the opportunity to implement boat disinfection and mountain biking tire cleaning stations, which are known to obtain high compliance levels among visitors (Anderson et al., 2015).

Protected areas can be economic anchors and thus profits should be reinvested back into the community (Stone & Nyaupane, 2018). In Botswana, the Chobe Enclave Conservation Trust (CECT) reinvested tourism profits into built capital like grinding mills and shops, diversifying the economy away from pure materiality (Stone & Nyaupane, 2018).

The Alberta tourism industry has the opportunity to enhance reconciliation through the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Actions](#) (CTA), specifically numbers 7, 57, 79, 87 and 88, 90, 91, and 92 (Brant, 2023). CTA seven through ninety-one calls on the government to collaborate with Indigenous communities to address gaps in education, employment, sports and recreation, as well as many other opportunities that often leave Indigenous communities and people behind. Despite being addressed to the government, the corporate sector can also address these CTA's and improve reconciliation. For example, to address CTA seven which aims at addressing education and employment gaps, developers could work with local Indigenous communities to create specific education and employment programs for Indigenous youth.

The most important CTA for All-Season Resorts is ninety-two which recommends the adoption of the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP) by the corporate sector. UNDRIP was developed with Indigenous communities from around the world with the sole purpose of creating a universal framework for reconciliation and well-being of Indigenous people (NCTR, 2025). All-Season Resorts have the opportunity to participate in reconciliation by partnering with local Indigenous tourism initiatives like Destination Blackfoot and Indigenous Tourism Alberta (*Destination Blackfoot*, n.d. and *Home*, n.d.).

Recommendations

Based on this research, I have outlined four recommendations for policy changes towards the *All-Season Resorts Policy*. The policy should provide clear expectations for community consultation and requirements to build and support accessible infrastructure. Additionally, it should include mandatory Indigenous partnerships and youth vocational training opportunities.

- **Value Community Voices:** There should be a specific community engagement policy that requires developers to demonstrate broader community acceptance and measurable alignment with local needs before Master Development Plan approval. For example, the policy should outline how to more correctly engage with youth and young families. These groups hold an important role in the discussion of sustainable tourism as they represent the future generations. Unfortunately, the barriers for young adults and families accessing engagement opportunities are often overlooked during the process. There are many ways developers can reach these audiences, including providing childcare, multiple time slots, snacks or coffee so workers can join during lunch breaks, and ensuring the location is accessible via multiple forms of transit. An example of a community engagement with limited accessibility would be the Fortress All-Seasons Resort's engagement which took place at Mount Royal University during reading week when students would not be on campus or would be too busy to join.
- **Mandatory Indigenous Partnership:** Indigenous involvement should be transitioned from "encouraged" to a weighted criteria in the Expression of Interest (EOI) process. This should include expectations for continued involvement throughout the resort's future, as well as compensation for their expertise.
- **Accessible & Transit-First Infrastructure:** The policy should address the desire for less car reliance by prioritizing public transit options over increased road expansion. This would require developers and municipalities to work together in ensuring all locals are able to physically access the resorts.
- **Youth Vocational Training:** In order to address the policy's desire to provide economic benefits, it should provide a framework for vocational training programs for youth. As an example, the Falmouth Heritage Renewal in

Jamaica trains local youth in historic restoration and environmental stewardship, creating high-value jobs for local people (Francis-Lindsay, 2009).

Conclusion

Sustainable tourism is about ensuring that Albertans feel like cultural stewards of their own land through protecting it for future generations. The *All-Season Resort Policy* should reflect this notion through detailed and actionable recommendations that go above mere suggestions. It should outline a standard that supports the interests of Albertans and furthers the efforts towards reconciliation. This report is far from a comprehensive dive into the *All-Season Resort Policy* leaving many points for further exploration including and not limited to concerns for wildlife corridors, thoroughness of environmental assessments, and land zoning and Indigenous land rights.

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