



Report on Impact to Business of the Closures of Highway 16 and Highway 93

August 26, 2024

On July 22, 2024 shortly after 9:00 pm, the Municipality of Jasper and the surrounding area within Jasper National Park were evacuated due to wildfires. Highway 16 from the BC side of the BC/Alberta border through Jasper National Park was immediately closed to all but emergency response traffic, as was Highway 93 from the intersection with Highway 16 to the Icefields.

Commercial and tourist traffic from, to and through Valemount was immediately impacted.

Valemount is a community highly dependent on tourism. It is a community collecting the Municipal-Regional District Tax (MRDT) and is one of the 14 communities in the Resort Municipality Initiative.

Although both summer and winter tourist traffic is important to Valemount, summer accommodation numbers have always exceeded winter. Valemount is a natural overnight stop on the route for bus tours from Vancouver to Calgary via the Icefields. Mount Robson, the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies, is only 20 minutes away from Valemount, and is a particularly popular tourist destination. There is a high percentage of international tourists through Valemount in summer for those two destinations alone.

Besides the Icefields route and Mount Robson, a number of tourists visit other attractions around Valemount in summer. Mountain biking, white-water rafting, hiking and camping are all popular activities, and these attract many Canadian tourists, often from Alberta and other provinces to the east. The routes used to access Valemount for those tourists are Highway 16 and Highway 97.

Highway 16 is a heavily used commercial traffic route as well. It is a natural refuelling and overnight point for commercial traffic between Vancouver and Edmonton and as such, Valemount was immediately and drastically impacted by the closure of Highway 16. Local commercial enterprises were also affected by the inability to move people and products.

On August 9, 2024 Highway 16 opened to traffic from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. It opened fully on August 19, 2024. Highway 93 opened to traffic on August 23, 2024. Until the wildfires causing the closures are under control, further closures still remain a risk.

While the commercial trucking impact was significant, tourism, as the dominant industry in Valemount, was impacted the most.

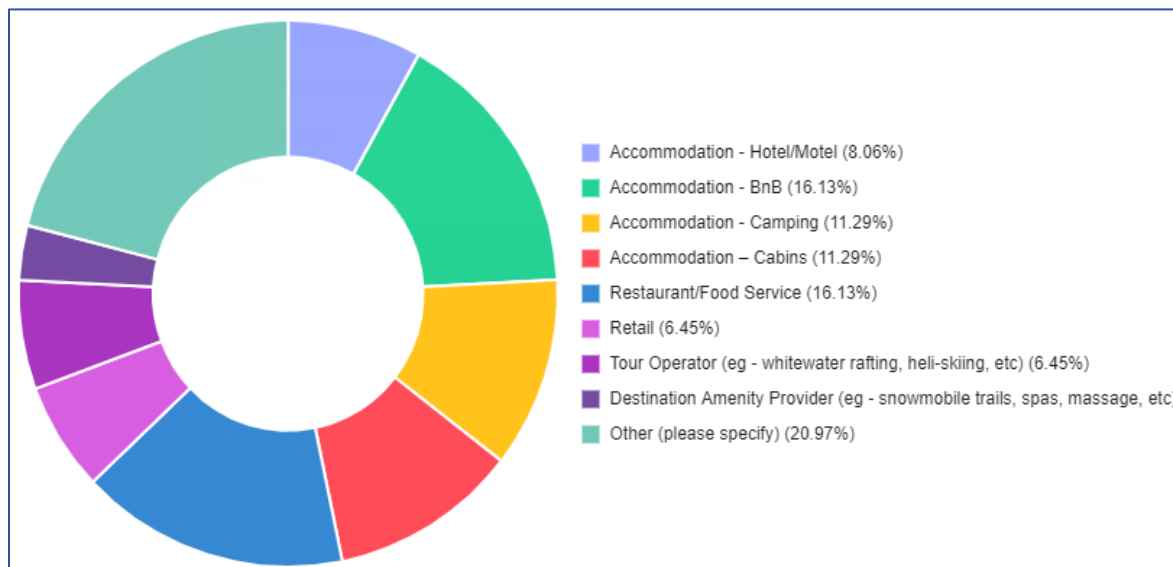
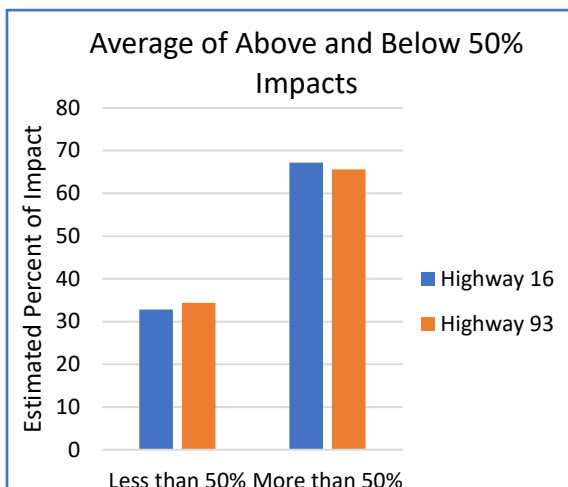
When businesses in Valemount began to express their concerns over the impacts of the closures, the Village of Valemount, together with Tourism Valemount, created and circulated a survey to local businesses to collect information on the magnitude of the impacts. Between

August 13th and August 19th, businesses were invited to participate in the survey digitally or by filling out a paper copy.

64 respondents completed the survey. Of those, 62 out of 64 said the highway closures had impacted their business.

A question was presented on the impact to business of each highway closure. Results below and above 50% have been averaged in the figure to the right.

The businesses completing the survey were in the following sectors:



Those who selected “Other” reported being in the sectors in the table to the right:

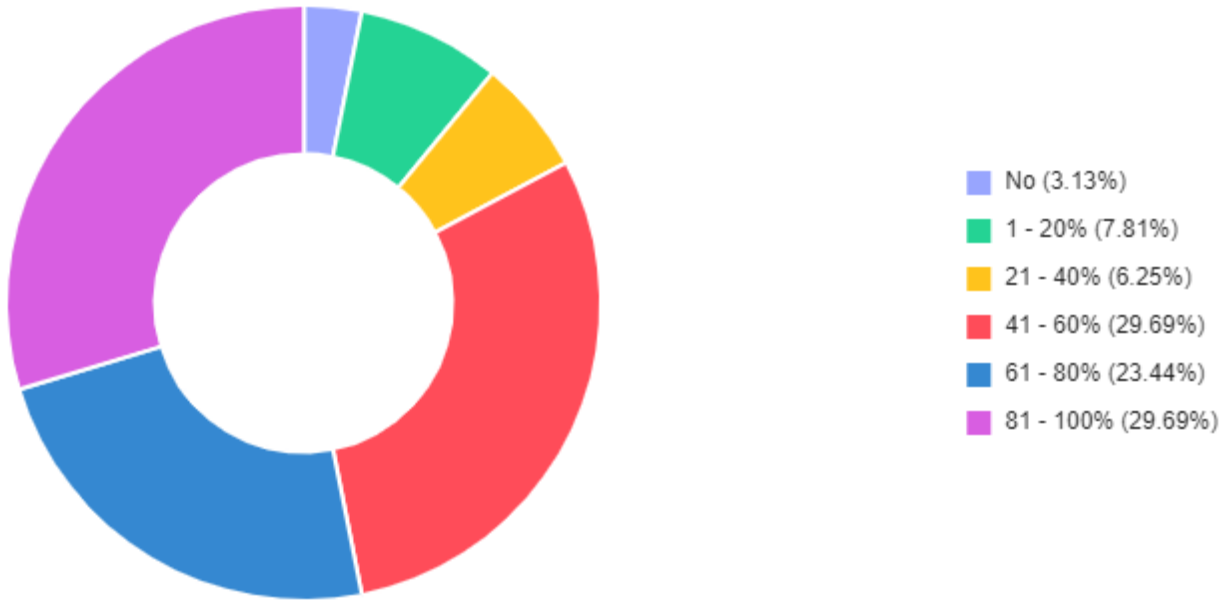
Survey respondents were asked to estimate what percentage of their revenue was generated in each season.

77% of respondents indicated that more than 50% of their business revenue was generated in summer. The average percentage of revenue generated in summer for those respondents is shown on the following page:

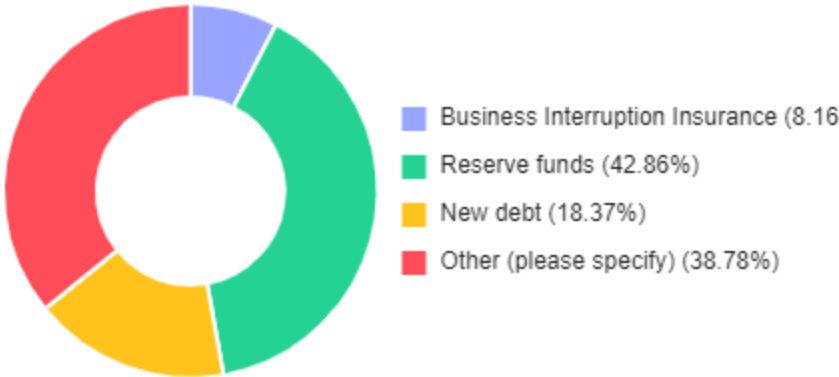
sand and gravel
transportation - mtb shuttle
vacation homes
accommodation - b&b, cabin rentals, rv site rentals
bnb , cabins , campground
brewery/manufacturing/distribution
camping rv park and golf course
cdmo
forestry consulting
forestry / natural resource consulting
hair salon
heathcare

Number of Respondents Indicating Over/Under 50% of Revenue Generated per Season		
	Less than 50% of revenue	More than 50% of revenue
Spring	63	1
Summer	15	49
Fall	61	3
Winter	62	2

Respondents were also asked to estimate the percentage of revenue lost. The estimated percentage of lost revenue reported is shown here:



In the question “Do you have other financial supports available?” respondents were provided three options and an “Other” category.



A textbox to describe the “Other” selection was provided, and the following unedited responses were received.

Explanation	#
no	6
buisness interruption insurance does not apply , reserve funds carried us through winter and spring plus we paid our 40k covid loan january 2024 , no banks will touch up , all credit is maxed so making massive interest payments on everything	1
business interruption will not cover unless within one mile of fire.	1
i don't rely on tourists, i rely on locals.	1
i have no other finances	1
im employed	1
likely none	1
nothing : my insurance company said they will not cover anything.	1
pension	1
the revenue loss at the busiest time of the year is so significant it is devastating for us. our business will have to try to figure out how to deal with it.	1
unfortunately our savings . this was a bit like covid. shutdown with no end in sight or reliable opening of the highways.	1
already used everything when covid	1
we are not eligible for business interruption insurance even though we have it	1

When asked whether current financial supports and resources they had would be sufficient to help their business remain viable until a return to normal operations, 70% of respondents said no.

A follow-up question of “If no, please explain why” received the following responses.

We have just come out of covid 19, repayed government loans by means of another loan. This summer was truly our rebound year. The end result of this summer will yet again be loss of money. Carrying the business another 4 seasons until tourism rebounds is simply not visable.
May have to use our savings to support us until next season
Insurance company does not compensate
Not available
This is a Federal response
Nothing available
Already used everything when covid
I don't have any other financial supports
Business Interruption Insurance does not cover a hwy closure.
It will barely cover our expenses
Loss of sales means loss of product. Too late to sign up for new facilities to sell from elsewhere.
It is out of province insurance will not cover it.

We don't anticipate normal operations to return until next summer...that's only if people come to still see the national park. If not, Tourism Valemount and Tourism BC need to get out of town and start advertising globally and stop relying on Jasper for tourists.
I have no other finances available
Explained above
Not enough in reserve funds after Covid
This will last a short amount of time. But having funded myself fully thru COVID due to being unable to qualify for any funding and having to personally take from savings and lines of credit, we will not continue to drain our reserves any further in order to simply satisfy others and will just cease operations until further notice if required.
I have no financial supports available.
With no assistance losses will be to high
I use my campground money to pay for my animals feed. I am going to have to get another job to pay for animals feed.
We don't have any current support, and getting an other "help package" from the government under terms like the covid one will not be feasible for us.
We don't have any other supports
Summer is the season that produces the income to help carry us through the rest of the year.
Already used when covid
We are having to dip into our savings to keep the campground going.
Being viable in long term but short term this is a huge blow to some already very bad year in the Robson Valley going back to 2020 with Covid closures and lost revenues.
Insurance doesn't cover us as we are not directly affected by the closure according to the insurance company.
These funds are what carries us thru the winter months. After having the worst winter on our books in 23/24 we depend on our summer funds. I don't expect normal operations to return completely this year.
No financial supports
We won't see our sales come back In then summer until Jasper is able to accommodate visitors again. This will take years. We don't have that kid of finacials support
I have no support.
COVID business interruption and debt that incurred from government assistance that we are paying back.
We are a new business with very little funds in reserve.
We are an own business and we rely on all our revenue to pay (Staff) fix equipment, etc. etc. with no money coming in. We must cut our costs and that means close the park till next year.
do not have any supports available

When asked what type of assistance would be most valuable, respondents replied with the following:

1	Connections with Destination BC and TOTA to promote travel to the region and a new circuit route.
2	Tourism interruption loan.
3	Financial assistance
4	insurance company government compensation
5	Respect all involved and impacted , parks people are bullies
6	Forgivable business loan similar to CEBA
7	Payment for cancellations which are ongoing into September and if 93 doesn't open, I'll have the rest of my bookings cancelled
8	Money
9	Financial
10	Govt funding or grants for disasters
11	Financial stimulus, Information about highway status and planned re-opening, fast rebuilding of infrastructure for re-opening.
12	Marketing boosts.
13	Community futures forgiving loan payments. Government funds to support our business
14	financial compensation for lost revenue
15	The best type of assistance is an election and a new government. A government that actually cares about Canadians, small business and Western Canada!
16	Low interest loan or business grant
17	Grants that recognize the impact of the closure. Further loans are not acceptable at this time.
18	Honestly n emergency relief non payback , loans We can't afford to pay back because of the Tourism drop we're all struggling, All the money that has went to Jasper to help accommodate them people we need payments the same as this most Jasper people after one week they can go to their insurance, We do not have this option we pay dearly for our insurance such as our circumstances are insurance is almost \$14,000 a year for the property alone not including another 400 a month for vehicles, etc..
19	Improvements to the Valemount Airport. We are seriously considering this as our preferred transportation route for guests next summer.
20	Tax free government loan repayable in two years. The loan would need to apply for smaller businesses which don't have staff, don't pay into CPP and owner/operators don't take wages such as independently owned/operated BnB's
21	Increased marketing funds to local tourism, and DMO for next year. And some business support, to offset some of the lost earnings.
22	I believe a grant for impacted businesses would be helpful if that is at all possible.
23	Financial assistance to help make up for losses Marketing to turn Valemount into more of a destination itself More events in shoulder season
24	Low interest loans
25	Highway 93 reopen asap Of course any financial support would be great
26	Finances assistance
27	Financial

28	Money
29	If we were able to qualify for some kind of government grant so we wouldn't have to go into debt that would be ideal.
30	Some staff wage supports as I kept on many of my staff at a huge cost.
31	Government grants. Some type of assistance from local or federal govt
32	Some kind of relief grant. An exemption from paying the Ceba Loan.
33	Open highway 16 and highway 93 permanently and make it very well known that there will be no more closures last minute.
34	Unsure
35	Assurance the road will remain open.
36	A forgivable government grant.
37	Financial
38	Send us campers or money.
39	not sure - I doubt the government can support subsidies whenever businesses are affected. We have permit dues that could be waived for the year, but otherwise we just need the revenue from August and won't be getting it.
40	There is none. The town is saturated with struggling businesses in the same or similar market. Stop allowing new businesses to open as competitors and support the one you have!
41	Monetary
42	Tax breaks
43	Securing work crews from Jasper for the winter season and funding to support all the evacuees we housed and fed which cost Terracana Ranch Resort over \$90000.
44	small business government funding / grants to help us keep our doors open, or we will see more and more business in our town have to close their doors.
45	The 8400.00 dollars lost in revenue
46	Financial and marketing
47	If government can postpone the return of PST, MRDT, etc., we can probably save up some operating funds for now. It would be also be good if we could get a short-term loan for emergency operating funds.
48	Getting organizations like BC Destination to recognize the value of Valemount and areas while Jasper rebuilds. I have always felt that our mountains and area are much more spectacular than Jasper's, it's time to promote our beauty. Government loan, interest free would help a great number of businesses.
49	Maybe a tourism push in Banff or European travel venues for what is beyond Jasper as many guest don't know about Mt. Robson or all the wonderful hikes we have around us here.
50	I hope the government can provide interest-free loans of more than 50,000 yuan for three years and reduce some property taxes.

And finally, in response to the question "Do you have any other comments or requests that were not captured in the questions?" the following 20 responses were received.

1	Thank you for the survey.
2	Not really
3	You can ask for government subsidies for these two months of losses.

4	Business has dropped to 15% of normal
5	I was about to start searching for a way to get compensation for the total destruction of my business ie asking Dannielle RDFFG for direction,,,
6	Want to know when 93 road reopen. Everyday is HELL. Need help.
7	It is to be expected that we have annual events that adversely affect our local economy (fires, flooding, erosion...). Businesses need to plan for these conditions in advance to create a financial buffer. Especially if layoffs should be avoided. It is hard enough to find qualified staff in Valemount already.
8	It was made acutely aware that the lack of cell service from Jasper to Prince George is dangerous - especially in an emergency.
9	This will have lasting impacts on our community for a long time.
10	We are a cheaper version for many visitors that come for Jasper National Park. Mount Robson is a bonus, but not the main reason people come here. Not sure, what that will mean for the next few year. A bit worried.
11	Tourism Valemount needs to head to Germany to the trade shows and start selling Valemount. We can't be reliable on Jasper which is controlled by the Federal Government. This is an opportunity to expand advertising but not just from a desk, we need to send tourism Valemount overseas!!
12	Again, our summer traffic in the taproom in Valemount is our largest source of revenue throughout the year, but when local sales slow, we rely upon out outside sales to restaurants and liquor stores. The impact of this closure affects all of our accounts in McBride, Valemount, all the way down Hwy 5 to Kamloops and beyond. The loss of this traffic significantly affects our distribution as well. Not to mention our sales in Jasper throughout the summer.
13	This region needs help immediately we've been struggling on just getting by highway 16 has opened, but it technically doesn't help us because our customers are international travellers and they are all coming across the 93 zone until 93 from the ice fields to Jasper is open. There is very little hope of relief, it was just enough money to buy groceries and put fuel in our vehicles and make the interest payments on our creditors. If We are lucky
14	Our hearts go out to those who have been most seriously affected by the fire.
15	This survey is mostly targeted to businesses that operate with staff and really doesn't encompass a small small business such as BnB's or Airbnb's.
16	Willing to work with tourism valemount for advertising for September. Fuzzy buddy ranch booking on Hipcamp. Will do free advertising campaign with my horses. When will 93 be open again? Facebook instagram and tictoc profile
17	No
18	We went from 98% booked to 26% with no new bookings coming in.
19	No the questions asked were relevant to me.

Yes 1. Drivebc.ca often had wording online that really was confusing to the public and we noted numerous times how the online wording would have impacted visitation and revenues. 2.Highway traffic signs had incorrect closure wording...so bad that MLA Shirley Bond had to try to advocate for area. 3.Signage in Clearwater was incorrect saying the Mount Robson area was closed. 4.Just today, August 14, CKPG news online had an outdated message from August 11th saying incorrectly that Hwy was still closed. We phoned in to ask them to please update their incorrect information 5.The dismal coverage and incorrect wording on so many venues is and for sure impacted visitation patterns to this area directly and other areas beyond the Valley. This was a huge issue and a big area of constant frustration.

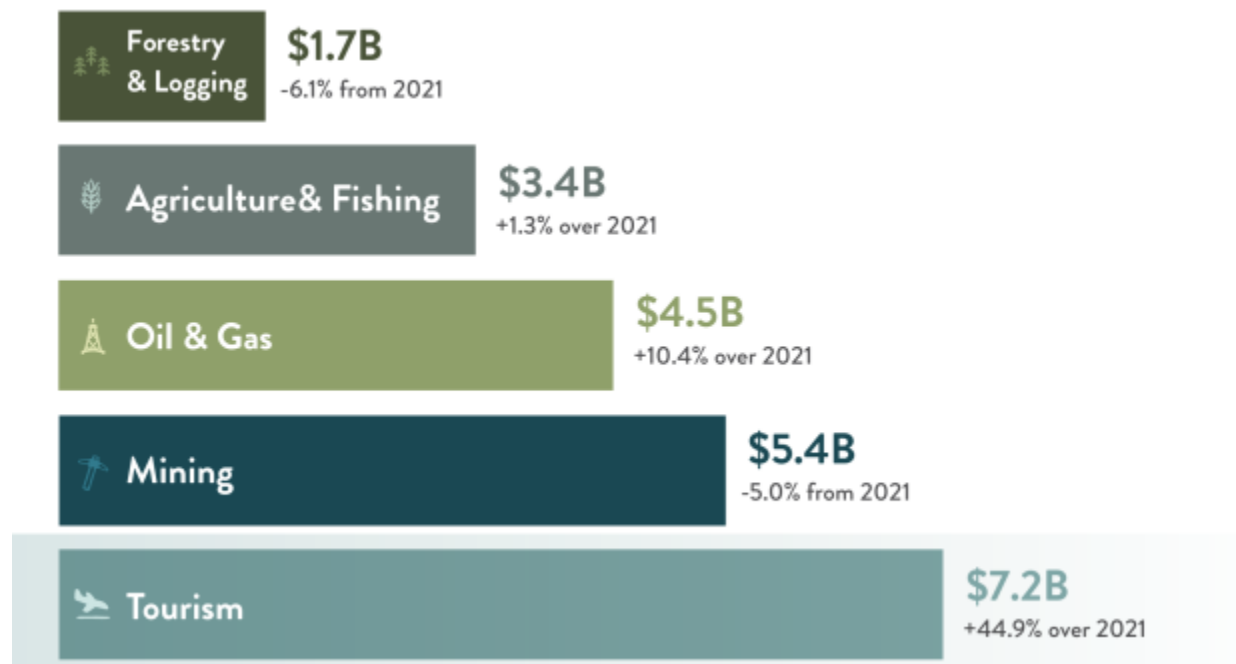
While both Highway 16 and Highway 93 have now opened, businesses continue to feel the effects of those closures.

Many businesses operate at a loss during the winter and count on the summer to carry them through. That opportunity was lost to them this year.

Additionally, when the highways closed, many businesses saw immediate cancellations of bookings, not only during the closures, but for the remainder of the year and into 2025.

It is hard to overstate the effect of this double impact to local business.

Tourism is deeply important, not only to Valemount, but to the province as a whole. The tourism industry is the largest contributor to the BC economy, contributing more than either Mining or Oil and Gas. See 2022 data in the chart below.



When events such as these highway closures occur, tourism is frequently the business first impacted, hardest hit and last to recover. It is crucial to the long term viability of Valemount, and important for the tourism industry in BC, that government supports be available.

Without supports, both the short and long term effects to the businesses, residents, community and local government will be severe.

While the Village is working closely with the provincial ministries of Tourism, Arts, Cultural and Sport (TACS), Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation (JEDI) and Emergency Management and Climate Resilience (EMCR), the Village has no resources to develop a recovery strategy and plan, nor to implement and deliver a recovery plan and recovery programs. The local government, as much as the businesses, is looking to the Province of BC for help in averting what could be a catastrophe for Valemount.