# 2012 Business Visitation Report Pincher Creek

James Tessier, CED Coordinator, CFABSW

1/30/2012

---

The following is a summary report based on information gathered over a two-month business visitation project conducted in Pincher Creek, Alberta from October through December, 2011.

## Introduction

From October to December 2011 Community Futures Alberta Southwest (CFABSW), in cooperation with the Town of Pincher Creek Economic Development Committee and the Pincher Creek & District Chamber of Commerce conducted a Business Visitation Project (BVP). The project was designed to gather information that will allow Community Futures, the Town, The Chamber, and other community leaders to more fully understand the needs of local businesses.

With the understanding that small and medium-sized enterprises are catalysts in our communities (between 50 and 80 percent of all new jobs are generated by these businesses), it is Important to identify their needs and support their retention and growth in our community.

The objective of the project was to be comprehensive by contacting as many Pincher Creek businesses as possible in order gain an accurate picture of what the community requires to grow and where the potential for growth lies; gauging the pulse of the business community and equipping leaders with the information they need to make informed decisions about what affects our business community.

In addition the three organizations participating in the project wished to communicate to the business community their interest in understanding business concerns and assisting in their resolution where possible.

The Pincher Creek Project was the second of several similar projects designed to extend through communities in the Community Futures Alberta Southwest region. The results of these initiatives and the information that CFABSW gathers will be used internally, and shared with our stakeholders, to assist in capacity building, entrepreneurial development and technical assistance.

## Methodology

The Town of Pincher Creek provided CFABSW with a list of businesses in the community based on their listing of licensed businesses. This list was enhanced by further research conducted by CFABSW staff. Advance promotion of the program was conducted through local newspaper ads and articles beginning two weeks in advance of the project start date. Email, with attached letters introducing the project, was sent out to approximately 72 businesses.

Three hundred and ninety-five businesses were enumerated in the community of Pincher Creek according to the list of businesses provided to CFABSW by the Town of Pincher Creek.

Excluding 75 businesses licensed in Pincher Creek, but with no physical presence, the remaining of these businesses included: 14 companies no longer in business in Pincher Creek, 22 businesses owned/operated by the same individual or group (cutting back on an additional 13 businesses to interview), and 31 out of town businesses. This left the total potential number of businesses at 262. Of this number 79 businesses were home-based.

Businesses were contacted to participate in a brief sit down meeting, interview format, with Community Futures staff to provide their feedback on a number of issues related to their business. Owners and managers were asked to address issues that ranged from basic business activities, to market conditions and the company's primary market base, to labour force requirements, and the community's strengths and weaknesses as a place to do business.

Each visitation, conducted as a survey, took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete; all information collected is to be kept in strict confidence and released only in summarized form. The design of the survey consisted of 39 questions (several with multiple parts) divided into six sections: Primary Business Data, About the Business, Market Conditions, Future Plans, Community Services, and Entrepreneur Support Services.

Initially businesses were contacted utilizing a cold call approach. This was an effective method in the downtown core, the industrial park area, and any location where businesses had a storefront presence. A high percentage of surveys were completed during these initial contacts, and arrangements were also made for follow-up with businesses at more convenient times.

After exhausting the process of cold calling businesses, phone call contact and follow-up was used as the primary tool to arrange meetings. A small number of respondents, 13%, chose to complete the survey on their own time for convenience and forward the form back to the CFABSW office. A survey was left for these individuals or emailed to them.

Upon completion of the project **contact had been attempted with two hundred and forty-seven businesses and 164 interviews were completed**. Twenty-three owner/operators declined to participate for one reason or another. Twenty-seven owner/operators were unable to complete the survey or arrange a compatible time to meet with the project coordinator. This left thirty-three businesses for which no contact could be made.

All information, statistics, and other data contained in this report will be based on the 164 interviews completed, 63% of 262 businesses available to survey.

The service and retail sectors dominate the businesses surveyed at 27% and 24% respectively. This probably paints a fair representation of the Pincher Creek business community. It should be noted that retail, service, food and beverage, professional services, trades and construction are well represented. Of the 79 home-based businesses enumerated, 30% were interviewed successfully for the study. These businesses included general contractors, tradespersons, and various personal and professional occupations.

Business and professional services accounted for 14% of the businesses surveyed. The construction, food and beverage, and finance, insurance and real estate sectors each contribute seven percent to the total interviewed. The manufacturing and energy sectors each account for three percent, while the remaining eight percent, or 13 responses, came from wholesale/distribution, agriculture, transportation, non-profit, tourism/recreation, and other sectors.

A blank copy of the survey has been included at the end of this report as **Appendix A**.

## General Observations

- Fifty-five percent of owner/operators have over 16 years experience (the average: 20 years);
- Thirty-three percent of owner/operators have over 16 years business experience in the specific sector they now work in, the average being slightly lower at 13 years;
- Forty-five percent of businesses were started before 1994; 44% started in the last 10 years;
- 65% of owners own a 100% stake of their business vs. 21% of operators who own no share;
- 81% percent of businesses feel word-of-mouth is their most effective form of promotion;
- Though 37% of businesses feel the pressure of increased competition, 44% feel their market share in the region is increasing;
- Strong interest was indicated by respondents in courses on marketing & market research (48%), business planning & plan updating (42%), customer service (41%), and social media (40%);
- Twenty percent of businesses indicated staffing as one of the major challenges they face operating their business in Pincher Creek
- Trends in the questions on future plans for the business all seem positive with high percentages in the **likely** and **very likely** responses for all questions with the exception of expanding current facilities, redesigning current facilities, seeking additional financial capital, Redesign operating activities, and adding unskilled labour;
- Though only 23% of businesses show job vacancies at present time, 61% of businesses expect to add new positions over the next five years (Average number of vacancies per business: 1.8). However, 43% of businesses expressed difficulty in obtaining employees for their needs.

## Report Findings

### Section 1 – Primary Business Data

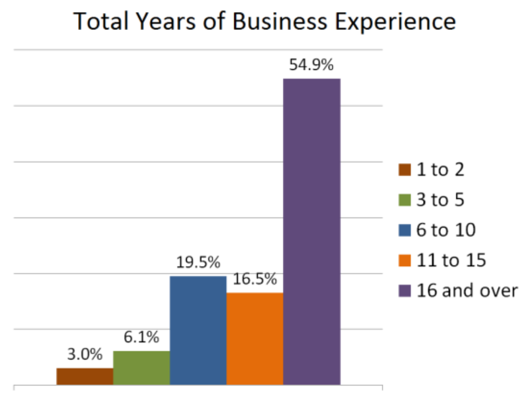
The only relevant observation to be made in section one is on the regular hours of business operation the respondents observe. All other data in this section identifies the business, its owners, and contact information – all which is being kept confidential. Normal business operations for most respondents were based on a five day work week Monday through Friday.

- Forty-five percent of businesses open their doors between 8.00 and 9.00 AM and operate through the day until 5.00 PM – 6.00 PM. A small percentage of these close earlier or have slightly expanded business hours;
- Twelve percent of businesses open their doors between 9.30 and 10.00 AM and operate through the day until 5.00 PM. Again a small percentage of these close earlier or have slightly expanded business hours;
- Eleven percent of businesses open between 6.00 and 7.30 AM. Eight percent of businesses also have 24 hour service;
- Fourteen percent of owner/operators have varying hours of business operation. The remaining ten percent of businesses offer their services at other times throughout the day and week.

The figures above indicate that a solid 76% of enterprises surveyed are engaged in business activity full-time during the week. An additional 42% of businesses (69 respondents) have varying hours of evening and weekend operation.

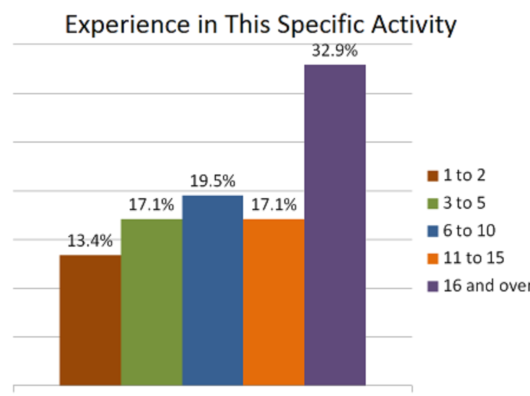
## Section 2 – About the Business

Sixteen questions relating to business operations are analyzed in this section. The purpose of these questions is to define such factors as business history, organization, and business sector information. It also evaluates owner/operator experience and the reasons for establishing the business in Pincher Creek.




Seventy-one percent of all respondents have at least eleven or more years of business experience. While 29% are business owners or operators that have 10 or less year's experience.

This illustrates the existence of an established, experienced business-base in the community with a strong number of new, more recently established owner/operators entering the Pincher Creek business community. Much of the growth in new business may be due to the economic surge in the region from 2006 on. The average number of years of business experience from all respondents was just over 20 years.




Of those same respondents, 50% indicated that they have been operating in this specific business activity for at least 11 years. Fifty percent of those surveyed indicated that they were undertaking the specific activity for 10 years or less. This again would seem to signify that there is a lot of new business activity being undertaken, a strong indicator of entrepreneurial activity. Fifty-six percent of the businesses themselves, or 92 enterprises, have been in operation for eleven years or more, with 43%, or 72 businesses starting operations in Pincher Creek over the last 10 years.

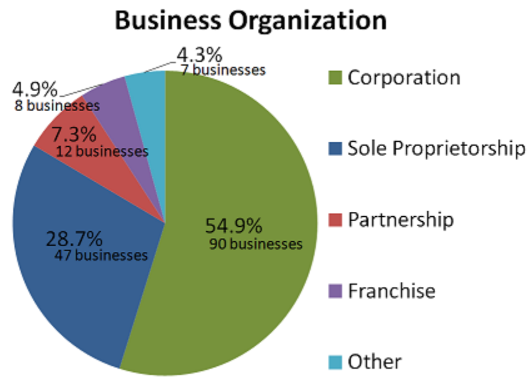
Sixty-five percent of businesses (107) are 100% owned by the respondents surveyed. Twenty-three respondents (14.0%) indicated they owned a portion of the business with other investors, while 21% had no ownership stake in the business. These respondents generally account for the managers, administrators and executive officers hired to operate the business.

This data compares to another question which queried respondents on the number of years they have operated the business. The responses indicate an upward trend in ownership or operation of businesses surveyed over the last 10 years as follows:

| Years | Percentage | Number of respondents |
|---|---|---|
| **2011 to 2005** | 51.8% | 85 |
| **2004 to 1995** | 29.9% | 49 |
| **1994 and before** | 18.3% | 30 |

The reasons given for establishing business operations in Pincher Creek were relatively balanced between the "proximity to home" at 30.5%, or 50 respondents, and the "proximity to the market" at 28.7%, or 47 respondents. "Pursuing a business opportunity" and "serving a need in the community came in similarly at 19.5% (32) and 17.1% (28) respectively. The remaining seven owner/operators indicated location, a general interest, and the need for a change as factors in their decision.

Fifty owners, 30%, purchased their businesses, while 79 owners, 48%, started their businesses. Twenty-two percent of businesses, 35 businesses operated in a different capacity utilizing management or executive staff. Thirteen were hired internally; twenty-two were hired externally.




Businesses in the community are organized predominantly through incorporation (54.9%), with a smaller percent of businesses being operated as sole proprietorships (28.7%). Twelve businesses are organized as partnerships and eight as franchises. The remaining seven businesses consist of four cooperatives and three non-profits.

Only forty-five businesses, 27.6%, have investment from family members in addition to the owner

Questions relating to the business premises solicited the following responses:

- Forty-four percent of business premises (71) are owned;
- Forty-one percent of business space (67) is leased;
- Fifteen percent of businesses (24) are home-based.

- One hundred and twenty-two owner/operators (74%) found their business location accessible;
- Thirty-one owner/operators (19%) found their business location adequate;
- Eleven owner/operators (7%) found their business location out-of-the-way.

- 128 owner/operators (78%) found their business facility size adequate;
- Thirty-three owner/operators (20%) found their business location too small;
- Only three owner/operators (2%) found their business location too large.

Several observations may be made based on this information. In regard to ownership of the business premises, the split between business premises owned vs. premises leased may indicated a shortage of adequate properties to suit business needs in the community, an opportunity for development to meet these needs. Alternatively it may also indicate caution, reflected in new businesses, towards expanding too fast given the present economic climate. An investigation into the availability of commercial and industrial space to lease and purchase and the costs associated with each would clarify this further.

The sixty-seven businesses that lease space do potentially represent an opportunity for developers to invest in new space for businesses to purchase. When you consider that 33 owner/operators find their facilities too small, it is possible that a portion of these businesses are also the businesses that presently lease facilities.

While it appears most businesses are satisfied with where they are situated in relation to the customers they service, 122 businesses find their present location accessible, a level of dissatisfaction is evident in the 26% of businesses that find their location out of the way or only adequate.

Looked at together, these responses to facility size and facility location may provide further evidence for the consideration of capacity building.

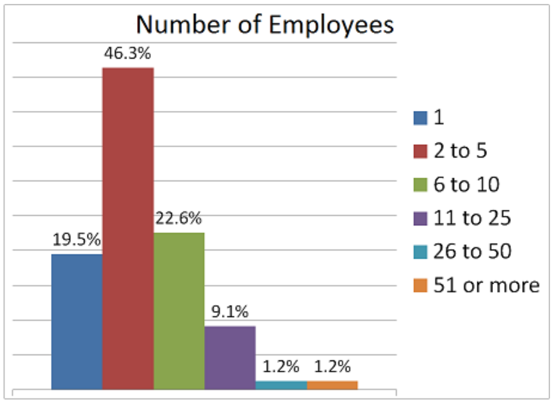
Worth noting is the high percentage number of owner/operators who devote in excess of 40 hours to their business per week. This is typical with small and medium sized enterprises. Sixty-nine percent, or over two-thirds of all respondents indicated they spend over 40 hours a week with their business; twenty-four percent devote over 61 hours to operations. All respondents averaged just over 51 hours per week.

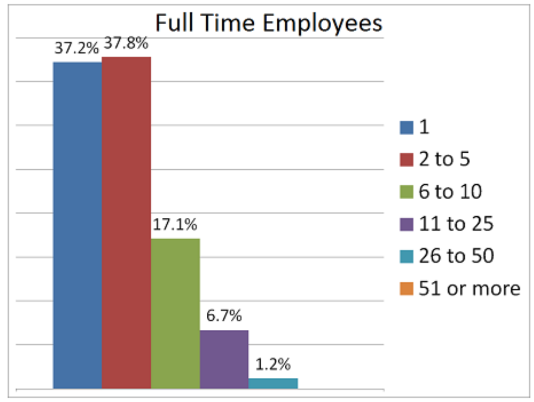
| Hours Devoted to Business | Percentage | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| 1 to 20 | 8.5% | 14 |
| 21 to 40 | 22.6% | 37 |
| 41 to 60 | 44.5% | 73 |
| 61 and over | 24.4% | 40 |

The size of operations can often be reflected in the number of staff employed by a business. Of the businesses interviewed, including single operator businesses, 88.4% (145 enterprises) operate with ten or less staff. The largest segment, 46.3%, of these businesses employ between two and five employees. These figures illustrate the importance of small business to employment in the community. Of the organizations interviewed each business averaged 6.5 employees.

Of those businesses employing fewer than ten staff, 92.1% employ the majority of their staff full time. There was a virtual equal split between businesses with one staff member (representing a large number of single operator enterprises), and businesses with two to five employees, at 37.2% (61 businesses) and 37.8% (62 businesses) respectively. Twenty-eight businesses (17.1%) hire between 6 and 10 staff. Eleven businesses (6.7%) also hire between 11 and 25 staff fulltime, while two businesses (1.2%) employ between 26 and 50 staff fulltime. No businesses employ over 51 staff fulltime. Of the organizations interviewed each business averaged 4.5 fulltime employees.

Compared to fulltime positions, businesses hired a smaller percentage of their workforce as part-time staff. Fifty-two percent, 85 businesses, hired no part-time staff at all. Eighteen percent, 30 businesses, employ only one part-time staff, while 21%, or 34 businesses, hire between two to five part-time staff. Eleven businesses (6.7%) hire between six to ten part-time staff. That represents 97.5%, or 160 businesses interviewed that employ ten or less part-time staff. The number of part-time employees averaged just below two employees per business.




The strength of full time employment is very good for the community of Pincher Creek. Full time employment indicates a degree of economic health and stability in the business community, and business confidence in its workers. It reflects well on the businesses themselves, and also provides an attractive employment incentive to workers and job seekers.

## Section 3 – Market Conditions

The market conditions section looks at a series of questions relating to the environment business owners and operators work within.

Business owners and operators defined their primary market area the following way:

- Eighty-one businesses (49.4%) saw their market as regional, occasionally including areas reaching into the cities within the province and inter-provincial markets (BC and Saskatchewan);
- Seventy-six businesses (46.3%) defined their market as local;
- Two owner/operators (1.2%) viewed their market as national in scope;
- Five owner/operators (3.0%) viewed their market as international in scope.

Queried as to where they felt their greatest market competition came from, fifty-one percent, or 84 businesses, felt they are competing locally for work. Forty-two-percent, or 68 businesses responded that they competed in the regional market. Five businesses (3.0%) defined their competition as the national or international marketplace. Seven businesses, or four percent, felt they had no competition in their market at all. These businesses tend to provide a unique service or product to the market. Support for businesses such as these, and possible attraction strategies for businesses which complement existing regional strengths should be encouraged.

The fact that 49% of businesses define their primary market as regional is a strong indicator of the interest and potential to grow this market. Though only three to four percent of organizations identify their business with national and international markets, a question later on in the survey did elicit eleven requests for information on developing import/export strategies. A combined sixteen businesses already do, or are planning in the future, to export products they produce. Consideration of business retention and attraction strategies which foster development of these markets should also be investigated further.

Asked what they felt their businesses' greatest competitive advantages were, and allowed to provide more than one response, owners and operators responded accordingly:

| What are Your Businesses Greatest Competitive Advantages | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Percent | Responses |
| Customer Service | 76.8% | 126 |
| Product/Service | 67.1% | 110 |
| Loyalty to the business | 56.7% | 93 |
| Location | 46.3% | 76 |
| Other (please specify) | 18.8% | 24 |

Customer Service emerged as the main advantage business owner/operators feel they are providing their patrons. Product/service and loyalty to the business trailed, however both were close to or above 50.0%. Included in the other advantages were experience, reputation, name recognition at 7.3% competitive pricing at 3.0%, mobile services, product uniqueness, and flexibility with time, product and service.

Questioned as to which target markets were essential to the success of their business, owners and operators identified their markets in a number of ways. Some specified a target market or audience, others associated with a particular sector, others identified a particular age demographic, and finally many saw their market as local, regional, or open to all clientele. The following table illustrated the responses given:

| Target Markets | Percentage | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| All Markets (Local & Regional) | 19.6% | 32 |
| Specific Age Demographic | 19.6% | 32 |
| Specific Audience | 15.8% | 26 |
| Business to Business | 12.8% | 21 |
| Local Market Only | 10.4% | 17 |
| Oil, Gas & Other Energy | 6.7% | 11 |
| Agriculture | 5.5% | 9 |
| Families | 4.2% | 7 |
| Tourism | 3.0% | 5 |
| Other Industries | 2.4% | 4 |
| **Total:** | **100.0%** | **164** |

The fact that businesses can readily define their target market speaks to the strength of owner/operator understanding of their clientele.

At 19.6%%, local and regional markets and specific age demographics have been established as key audiences. Specific target audiences are recognized by twenty-six businesses (15.8%), while twenty-one companies (12.8%) define business to business sales as their primary market.

Sector specific markets, looked at as a whole, make up the market for twenty-nine businesses (17.6%). However these numbers taken individually, where they are low, essentially reflect the composition of the Pincher Creek business community.  Finally sales to the local market alone (10.4%) contribute importantly to seventeen businesses in the community; families define the market for seven businesses (4.2%).

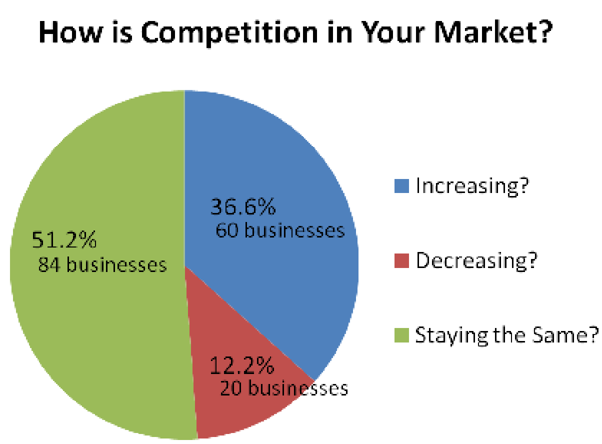
A follow-up question for owner/operators asked what aspect of their business offered the greatest potential for growth.  The question solicited a wide range of responses given the variety of opportunities available to the businesses surveyed.  Several themes did emerge as illustrated in the table below.

| Opportunities For Business Growth | Percentage | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Adding or Expanding Services | 39.7% | 65 |
| Business-to-Business and Industry Sector Services | 16.5% | 27 |
| Adding or Expanding Product Line | 15.9% | 26 |
| Taking Advantage of Growth in the Community & Region | 10.4% | 17 |
| Increased Marketing of Business Locally & Regionally | 7.3% | 12 |
| Adding or Expanding Facility Size | 3.0% | 5 |

Consideration of these themes should be taken by the municipality and other economic development stakeholders as areas to focus on when seeking to assist the business community.

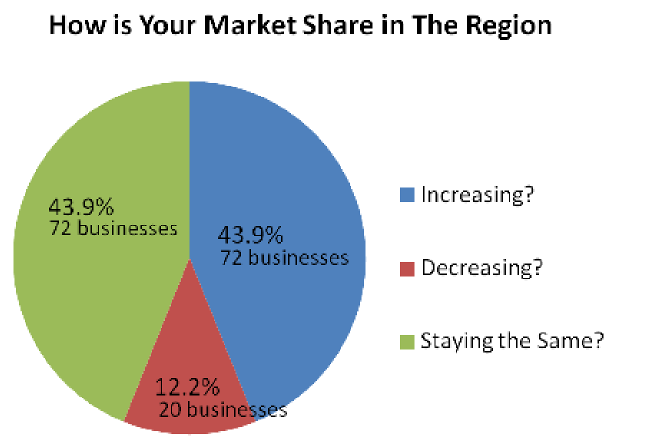
Asked whether competition in their market was increasing, decreasing or staying the same businesses responded with the following:

An overwhelming number (87.8%) of businesses felt competition was either increasing or staying the same. Common reasons given for this were:




- New businesses, often larger, creating price competition, entering the market;
- The entry of many unqualified/unskilled individuals, often run as home-based businesses, into several sectors notably in construction, the trades, and health and wellness;
- Too many similar businesses in the market, leading to market saturation;
- Effects of the economic slowdown; more businesses competing for a smaller piece of the pie and businesses often expanding into existing markets by adding new services and products not always consistent with their business model.

While the numbers above indicate consistent or increasing competition for businesses this second chart illustrates the confidence that business owner/operators have in their market share.

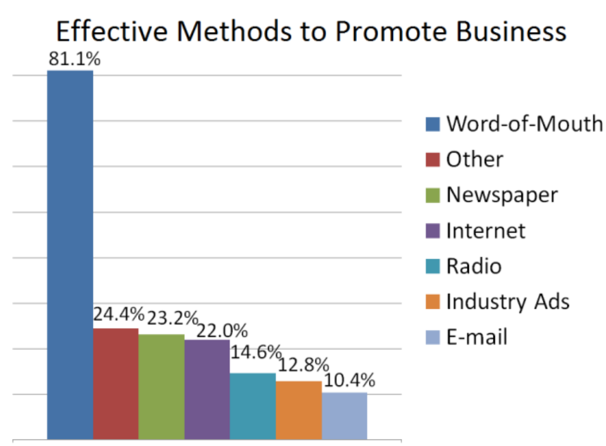



Eighty-eight percent of businesses felt that their market share is increasing or staying the same, 43.9% of that number, or 72 respondents, indicating their market share was increasing.

Common reasons given for this were:

- Visibility in the community and word of mouth referrals;
- Constant or superior customer service with a strong reputation;
- Delivering quality services and product to their market;
- Lack of strong competition in the region, or lack of any competition at all.

When asked what methods of business promotion are most effective for their enterprise, business owners, given the opportunity to select more than one answer, responded accordingly:




Word-of-Mouth was easily the most frequent response given with over 133 owner/operators suggesting this as the most effective, often the only method of promotion used. This is understandable in a rural environment where word travels fast and effectively around the community and region, and where businesses often have a small or non-existent budget for promotion. Word of mouth and a good reputation go hand-in-hand.

Three additional methods of advertising and promotion are worth noting. First a traditional method, the newspaper; 38 respondents utilize this form of advertising. This may reflect the aggressiveness with which newspaper staff pursues placements, placement effectiveness, and customer loyalty. The second is the Internet; 36 businesses use the Internet for promotional purposes. As more businesses become accustomed to the utility of using this technology to promote their operation, its products and services, the Internet is gradually being adopted as an effective way to market and promote. Finally, 24 businesses find radio an effective way of reaching their audience in the region.

Forty businesses found various other methods of promoting their products and services useful. Some of the methods mentioned include direct mail flyers, networking and direct contact, signage, television, magazines and publications, the yellow pages, and event or team sponsorship.

Asked whether they utilize the airport for any services, only 4 respondents answered yes. Most businesses were not aware that the airport had services they may be able to utilize. Many also felt that if regularly scheduled flights could be set up to Calgary or perhaps Fort MacMurray, it would enhance the economic utility of the airport for businesses and may also attract new residents to the community.

Two questions were asked to assess business training needs in the community. The first queried business owners as to whether they or their staff had taken courses on any of eight different topics. One hundred and eleven respondents answered this question:

| Have you or your staff taken any courses/programs on? | Percentage | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Customer Service | 72.1% | 80 |
| Accounting | 55.0% | 61 |
| Financing | 52.3% | 58 |
| Business Planning and Plan Updating | 52.3% | 58 |
| Marketing and Market Research | 49.5% | 55 |
| Social Media | 21.6% | 24 |
| Business Transition Planning | 14.4% | 16 |
| Bidding on Government Contracts | 9.9% | 11 |

Customer service was covered by 72% of businesses, however only about 50% of owner/operators and their staff had training in accounting, financing, business planning and plan updating, marketing and market research. Training in social media, business transition planning and bidding on government contracts each came in at 20% or below.

When asked whether they or their staff would be interested in taking any of the above listed courses if they were offered locally or regionally the respondents replied the following way:

| Would you or your staff attend one of the following courses? | Percentage | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Marketing and Market Research | 48.1% | 50 |
| Business Planning and Plan Updating | 42.3% | 44 |
| Customer Service | 41.3% | 43 |
| Social Media | 40.4% | 42 |
| Accounting | 34.6% | 36 |
| Financing | 29.8% | 31 |
| Business Transition Planning | 26.0% | 27 |
| Bidding on Government Contracts | 26.0% | 27 |

One hundred and four businesses responded to this question. The demand for marketing, business planning, customer service, and social media training all appears high at between 40% and 50% for each. The need for training in the other four categories was also identified by businesses with the demand for each course surpassing 25%. This data will assist local and regional stakeholders in evaluating which courses or program offerings will be of most benefit to the community.

Finally business respondents were asked what their greatest challenges and greatest advantages or opportunities were with regards to operating their enterprises in Pincher Creek. Again a range of responses were given:

**Advantages/Opportunities –** One hundred and forty-nine advantages and opportunities were provided by the businesses surveyed. They offered these responses:

- Twenty-seven owner/operators, or 18.1%, feel their main advantage to being established in Pincher Creek is the community support they receive by having a strong network of loyal customers, a good reputation and word-of-mouth referrals. This accounts for both new and return business;
- Twenty-six businesses, or 17.4%, feel lifestyle for themselves, their employees and their customers is not only an attraction, but an advantage for their business;
- Twenty-three businesses indicated the central location they have to the markets they serve, their suppliers, and raw materials as their primary advantage;
- Inherently related to lifestyle, the community itself was indicated by 15 businesses (10.1%) as an advantage. Size, pace, and atmosphere were specifically cited;
- Twelve businesses (8.1%) mentioned customer service as a major strength and advantage;
- Ten businesses (6.7%) see growth in the community as a major opportunity. Respondents feel a focus on economic development is an area that they and the municipality should consider;
- Eight businesses (5.4%) noted the cost of business operation and low overhead as an advantage;
- Tourism and growth in this sector was highlighted by seven businesses (4.7%) as a major opportunity for their business;
- Twenty-one respondents (14.1%) could identify no immediate advantages or opportunities.

**Challenges** – One hundred and forty-five businesses responded to the question on challenges:

- Thirty owner/operators, or 20.0%; stated finding and retaining good staff as their major challenge;
- Nineteen owner/operators, or 13.1%, mentioned the size of the town and its market as a major challenge;
- Sixteen businesses (11.0%) suggested location and distance from the market, and local and regional competition, were considerable challenges;
- Sixteen respondents indicated difficulty working with the municipality, council and/or the EDC on permits, licensing, and other obstacles, citing unfair treatment and lack of focus on the business community which prevented their business from thriving or expanding. Specific issues of vagrancy enforcement and reviewing signage bylaws were mentioned by 16 businesses;
- Eleven businesses (7.6%) mentioned the challenge of remaining cost competitive as their primary challenge;
- Nine businesses (6.7%) cited accessibility to services and supplies as their main challenge;
- Six owner/operators (4.1%) noted the slump in the economy as a challenge to their company and the whole business community;
- Twenty-two respondents (15.2%) could identify no immediate challenges.

## Section 4 – Future Plans for the Business

The future plans section asks respondents the simple question "How likely is your business to do each of the following in the next two years?"

The question was broken up into several sub-components designed to evaluate whether the business was in a growth, stagnant, or declining stage in its life cycle. Respondents were asked to rate 19 questions on a scale of one to five as to how likely or unlikely they were to undertake certain activities over the next two years;

- One - Very Unlikely
- Two – Unlikely
- Three - An Idea not Considered
- Four - Likely
- Five - Very Likely

| How likely is it that your business will do each of the following over the next two years? | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Answer Options | Very Unlikely | Unlikely | Haven't Considered | Likely | Very Likely |
| Add a new product or service | 18 | 31 | 15 | 36 | 64 |
| Sell to a new market | 25 | 31 | 22 | 53 | 33 |
| Research new markets | 23 | 33 | 30 | 49 | 29 |
| Expand distribution channels | 22 | 42 | 19 | 55 | 26 |
| Expand advertising and promotion | 21 | 33 | 21 | 52 | 37 |
| Invest in new equipment | 20 | 27 | 9 | 55 | 53 |
| Replace current equipment | 19 | 21 | 12 | 57 | 55 |
| Expand or relocate current facilities | 76 | 35 | 7 | 31 | 15 |
| Redesign current facilities | 58 | 33 | 8 | 40 | 25 |
| Seek additional financial capital | 70 | 27 | 15 | 34 | 18 |
| Computerize current operations | 19 | 8 | 6 | 18 | 113 |
| Upgrade computer systems | 36 | 18 | 8 | 48 | 54 |
| Redesign operating activities | 32 | 44 | 21 | 42 | 25 |
| Expand the scope of operating activities | 26 | 35 | 16 | 60 | 27 |
| Seek professional or technical advice | 30 | 25 | 12 | 59 | 38 |
| Add unskilled labour | 72 | 26 | 10 | 39 | 17 |
| Add skilled labour | 35 | 29 | 8 | 55 | 37 |
| Invest in onsite training for employees | 27 | 11 | 10 | 52 | 64 |
| Invest in off-site training for employees | 30 | 16 | 11 | 40 | 67 |

The table above reflects solid numbers in most **likely** and **very likely** responses to most questions. These results would appear to indicate a stable business community and faith in its future growth. At a minimum it speaks to an environment which has the potential for growth. When this is considered with information gathered in section one regarding the existing longevity and experience within, and the growth in new business over the last decade, these are strengths and motivations that should be engaged and fostered.

Over the next two years:

- Sixty-one percent  (100) of respondents indicate that it is **likely** or **very likely** they will add a new product or service to their business, 39% consider this **very likely**;
- Fifty-four percent (86) of businesses feel it is **likely** or **very likely** they will sell to a new market, 20.0% consider this **very likely**;
- Forty-eight percent(78) of businesses consider it **likely** or **very likely** they will research new markets, 17.7% stated this a **very likely** activity;
- Forty-nine percent (81) of owner/operators indicate they are **likely** or **very likely** to expand their distribution channels; 15.9% feel this is **very likely**;
- Fifty-four percent(89) of businesses consider it **likely** or **very likely** they will expand advertising and promotional activities, 22.6% consider this **very likely**;
- Sixty-six percent (108) of businesses will **likely** or **very likely** invest in new equipment, 32.3% said this was **very likely**;
- Sixty-eight percent (112) of businesses will **likely** or **very likely** replace existing equipment, 33.5% consider this **very likely**;
- Eighty percent (131) of operations are already computerized or it is **likely** or **very likely** they will computerize, 68.9% of businesses consider this essential under **very likely** category;
- Sixty-two percent (102) of owner/operators are **likely** or **very likely** to upgrade their computer systems; 32.9% are **very likely** to do so;
- Fifty-three percent (87) of owner/operators are **likely** or **very likely** to expand the scope of their business operations, 16.5% consider this **very likely**;
- Fifty-nine percent (97) of businesses are **likely** or **very likely** to seek professional or technical advice, 23.2% are **very likely** to do so;
- Fifty-six percent (92) of owner/operators are **likely** or **very likely** to add skilled labour to their organization, 22.6% of these respondents indicated this was **very likely**;
- Seventy-one percent (116) of owner/operators will **likely** or **very likely** invest in onsite training for employees, 39.0% of businesses said this was already happening or was **very likely** to occur;
- Sixty-five percent (107) of owner/operators will **likely** or **very likely** invest in off-site training for employees, 40.9% of businesses said this was already happening or was **very likely** to occur.

There were only five questions which elicited negative-toned responses in the unlikely or very unlikely options.  However certain information can be deduced from these responses:

- Sixty-eight percent of businesses (111) are **unlikely** or **very unlikely** to expand their current facilities, 46.3% of owner/operators stated this was **very unlikely**;
- Fifty-six percent of owner/operators (91) are **unlikely** or **very unlikely** to redesign their current facilities; 46.3% considered this **very unlikely**;
- Fifty-nine percent of owner/operators (97) are **unlikely** or **very unlikely** to seek additional financial capital, 42.7% considered this **very unlikely;**
- Forty-six percent of businesses (61) are **unlikely** or **very unlikely** to redesign their daily operating activities, 26.8% considered this **very unlikely;**
- Sixty percent (98) are **unlikely** or **very unlikely** to add unskilled labour to their workforce, 43.9% of owner/operators considered this activity **very unlikely**.

The inferences that can be drawn from this information may include the following:

- A percentage of the businesses unlikely or very unlikely to expand their current facilities may include businesses that cannot find appropriate facilities in Pincher Creek – an opportunity for developers and contractors. Alternatively, it may also indicate caution. If however, they are not expanding they will likely not require capital.
- It may also indicate that several businesses are restricted from expanding due to development obstacles, bylaws etc. which impede, and delay or inhibit expansion. Several comments were made concerning consistency in municipal government decisions, open regular communication on Town policies and programs, and the necessity of developing a strategic development plan which continues from one administration to another This is an issue The Town will have to address;
- Similar conclusions may be drawn for the percentage of owner/operators that state it is unlikely or very unlikely they will redesign their current facilities. Redesigning facilities that are leased or where the business is uncertain about its future location or existence impedes decision making in this area. This is a situation where improved communication with the business community can address an issue. It also illustrates another potential opportunity for developers to evaluate;
- Finally, businesses owner/operators are more interested in hiring, and often require, skilled staff as opposed to unskilled staff for their organizations. Engendering a climate and developing a community with a desirable quality of life is important to attracting this demographic. The ground work for this already appears to exist as evidenced by the high number of respondents, forty-one, that identified the town and its lifestyle as primary advantages to their business.

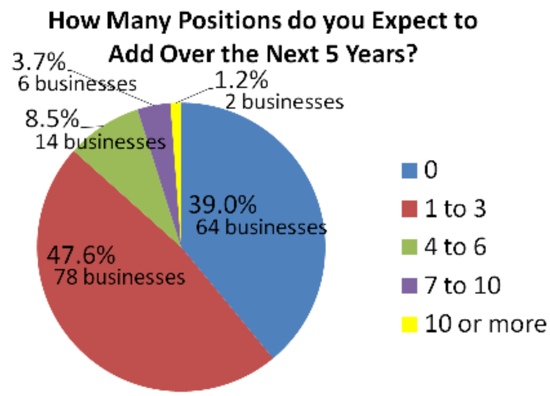
Businesses were also asked several specific questions about their staff:

1. **Describe the positions required or for which you regularly seek staff.**

   One hundred and fifty-one businesses (92.1.9%) required skilled staff of one kind or another. A majority of these positions often required post-secondary training or certification. These included positions in the construction and the trades (30 positions or 18.3%) and technicians in different industries and persons with unique skill sets (also 18.3%). The need for truck drivers and heavy equipment operators is felt by 19 businesses (11.6%). Four percent of businesses (7) require professionals to fill positions; eight percent (11) require managerial or administrative staff, while nine percent (14) regularly fill assistant/support staff positions.

   Fifty-nine businesses (35.9.4%) indicated they utilize unskilled, untrained, or less experienced labour that normally did not require a post-secondary background. Many of these positions are temporary, seasonal, or casual in nature. Thirty businesses (18.3%) require retail sales inventory and stock staff. Eighteen businesses, (10.9%) require casual or general labourers for a variety of tasks. Eleven businesses (6.7%) require food services staff, and hotel/motel staff for various duties including housekeeping and front desk management. **A list of all these jobs is provided in Appendix B**

2. **How many positions are presently vacant?**
   - Seventy-seven percent of all businesses (125) interviewed, indicated they had no vacancies;
   - Twenty-three percent or 39 businesses presently have between one and five positions to fill;
   - No businesses presently have over five vacancies;
   - Of the thirty-nine businesses presently looking for staff, the average number of vacancies is just below two persons.
3. **What is the number of new positions you expect to add over the next five years?**
   - Forty-seven percent, 78 businesses, plan on adding new staff to their operations over the next five years. The challenge in many instances is, as was noted above, locating and retaining the staff with the qualification they require;
   - Thirty-nine percent, or 64 businesses, expect to add no new positions over the next five years. While this does not include employees they will replace through loss, retirement, etc., it still represents a high number and may signify that these employers have little intention to grow or expand;




   - Fourteen businesses (8.5%)plan to add between four and six positions;
   - Six businesses (3.7%) plan to add between seven and ten new positions;
   - Only two businesses (1.2%) anticipate adding over 10 staff in the next five years;
   - Of the 78 businesses planning to add new staff, the average number of positions is just over two persons per business.
4. **Are you currently able to attract the required workers for your business?**
   Ninety-four owner/operators (57.3%) answered yes to this question, while only 70 respondents (42.7%) answered no. This ratio is tight and draws attention to the challenge employers are presently facing attracting the staff they require for their business both from within the community and from outside. The challenge of filling these present vacancies and preparing for future economic growth requires an affirmative commitment be made to employee attraction and retention both by the business community and community development stakeholders.
5. **If you have unfilled positions, what are the types of skills you are currently unable to obtain?**
   Seventy-four businesses responded with details on the positions they were seeking to fill. Fifty-seven businesses (77.0%) required some type of skilled labour, while 17 businesses (23.0%) were looking for unskilled labour.

| Skills/Position Required | Number Responding |
|---|---|
| Sector Specific Skills | 30 |
| Construction & Trades | 14 |
| General Experience, Skill and Quality | 13 |
| Retail | 7 |
| Food Services | 6 |
| Hotel/Motel | 4 |
| Total | 74 |

6. **How many current employees do you anticipate will retire or leave over the next five years?**
   Eighty-two businesses (50.0%) expected no staff turnover. Seventy businesses (42.7%) anticipated losses of one to five employees. Only five businesses (3.0%) forecast losses of six to ten employees. One business projects losses of eleven to twenty staff, while six businesses (3.7%) expect to lose over 20 staff over the next five years. The fact that fifty percent of these businesses expect staff loss over this period should again indicate the importance of addressing this issue.

   Of the eighty-businesses anticipating staff turnover, the average number of positions lost is calculated to be approximately six employees per business. When seasonal employment is averaged in this number is estimated at just over three and one half employees per business, still a significant figure.

Owners and operators were asked four questions regarding importing and exporting:

1. **Do you export or plan to export to markets outside the region?**
   One-hundred and forty-eight businesses (90.2%) responded that they did not export nor did they have plans to export. Sixteen businesses (9.8%) interviewed confirmed they do export or plan to export.

2. **Do you import or plan to import to markets outside the region?**
   One-hundred and thirty businesses (79.3%) responded that they did not import nor did they have plans to import. Thirty-four businesses (21.7%) interviewed confirmed they do import or plan to import.

3. **Do you require further assistance or information on export strategies?**
   One-hundred and fifty-three businesses (93.3%) also responded that they did not need assistance or information on export strategies. Eleven businesses (6.7%) interviewed indicated they would appreciate information on export strategies. These businesses will be assisted directly.

   A potential opportunity to provide training, a course or seminar in the region, not only to the businesses requesting the information, but to a potential broader audience may exist.

4. **What obstacles do you face in attempting to export?**
   Seventeen obstacles were listed. Nine dealt with lack of information or request for information on how to proceed and can be addressed directly. The remaining eight dealt with legal issues; permits, duties, legalities, time delays, and the paperwork required to get items accross the border or export to international markets.

## Section 5 – Community Services

The objective of the community services section was to query owners and operators on their perception and satisfaction with 19 community services located within Pincher Creek. Several of these services are provided by the municipality, others by the province and still others by organizations within the community. This section, in addition to evaluating the satisfaction level that business owner/operators have with these services, is designed to gauge these services in terms of quality of life provided in the community.

Respondents were asked to provide a rating from one to five for each service. A one “did not apply”, two was “very unsatisfied”, three “slightly satisfied”, four “satisfied”, and five “very satisfied”:

- Nineteen of the 20 services listed **satisfied** or **very satisfied** responses first. The only area which ranked **slightly satisfied** or **very unsatisfied** first was local transportation;
- Sixteen of the 19 services which rank **satisfied** or **very satisfied** first in their category, ranked **satisfied** higher than the **very satisfied** option, possibly indicating there is always room for improvement;
- Ranked according to the largest number of responses in each option, traffic signs and lights, gas services, highways, electric services, water, other quality of life factors, education (K to 12), local roads, sewer, and local recreation and leisure facilities were first by order in the **satisfied** option. Health care, ambulance services, other quality of life factors, water, sewer, gas services, local recreation and leisure facilities ranked first by order in the **very satisfied** option;
- The four services which rank highest are traffic signs, gas, highways and electrical services in that order;
- Post-secondary training and industry training ranked highest in the **does not apply** option;
- Other quality of life factors, gas services, water, electric services, health care, highways, ambulance services, sewer, traffic signs and lights all received responses of 130 or more in the **satisfied** or **very satisfied** options. That correlates to a total satisfaction rating of 80.0% for the provision of these services;
- Six services – business and municipal signage, adequate/appropriate housing, local roads, locally supplied services and products, local transportation, business support services, police services, though not ranking first in the **slightly satisfied** or **very unsatisfied** options, do capture a degree of dissatisfaction being expressed each holding between a 25.0% to 50.0% **slightly satisfied** or **very unsatisfied** ranking.

| Please Rate Your Satisfaction With the Following Community Services | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Does not apply | Very Unsatisfied | Slightly Satisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |
| Police Services | 5 | 14 | 28 | **79** | 38 |
| Ambulance Services | 18 | 1 | 9 | 65 | **71** |
| Health Care | 6 | 1 | 18 | 58 | **81** |
| Electric Services | 1 | 4 | 15 | **97** | 47 |
| Gas Services | 5 | 5 | 8 | **98** | 48 |
| Sewer | 6 | 7 | 16 | **82** | 53 |
| Water | 2 | 2 | 14 | **89** | 57 |
| Local Roads | 0 | 24 | 41 | **83** | 16 |
| Traffic Signs and Lights | 2 | 9 | 22 | **99** | 32 |
| Business and Municipal Signage | 1 | 39 | 37 | **73** | 14 |
| Highways | 1 | 8 | 17 | **98** | 40 |
| Adequate/Appropriate Housing | 7 | 29 | 44 | **71** | 13 |
| Local Transportation | 43 | 33 | 28 | **55** | 5 |
| Education (K to 12) | 20 | 12 | 14 | **84** | 34 |
| Education (Post-Secondary) | **65** | 17 | 19 | 57 | 6 |
| Industry Training | **63** | 9 | 23 | 61 | 8 |
| Locally Supplied Services and Products | 10 | 20 | 43 | **68** | 23 |
| Business Support Services | 18 | 17 | 38 | **77** | 14 |
| Local Recreation & Leisure Facilities | 4 | 10 | 20 | **82** | 48 |
| Other Quality of Life Factors | 0 | 2 | 12 | **88** | 62 |

In addition to the rating chart comments were captured on these services where offered:

- Under **Police Services**, ten comments were made concerning poor bylaw enforcement, especially in the area of vagrancy; eight businesses mentioned the lack of a visible police presence in the community, while six noted slow response times by law enforcement authorities to complaints or requests for assistance;
- Eleven comments were made concerning **Healthcare and Ambulance Services**. Five comments discussed poor service and long wait times, four discussed understaffing issues both with doctors and other medical staff. The remaining three comments mentioned the issue of provincial downloading, the necessity to be open to doctors from other countries and expedite their licensing, and to be open to alternative forms of healthcare and medical practitioners;
- Ten comments were captured on **Electrical and Gas Services**. Six concerned the high cost of these services, while the remaining four comments concerned poor local capacity, poor reliability and service, and sporadic power outages leading to loss of office and business productivity;
- Twelve comments were made about **Water and Sewer Services**. Ten of these concerned issues with poor drainage, sewer back-ups and the need to replace an old system in certain areas of the town. The two comments made about water services concerned expense and inefficient billing practices;
- Feedback on **Local Roads** was provided by 51 businesses. Twenty-five respondents commented on the general poor repair of roads in the community from potholes to unattended repairs and

inadequate resurfacing. The necessity to address the quality of road surfacing, especially in the industrial park was mentioned by twelve businesses. Ten comments were made regarding poor snow plowing and snow removal. Finally the issues of poor planning, no place to park in front of businesses, roads not accommodating large machinery, alleyways requiring attention, fixing ruts and grading were raised by four business respondents ;

- Eleven respondents commented on **Traffic Signage**. Five comments referred to the lack of appropriate and directional signage, or the confusion some signs create. Three respondents mention the need for additional signage, while three suggest a reduction in traffic signs could reduce congestion and confusion;
- Sixty-three respondents commented on **Business and Municipal Signage**. Twenty-four indicated that there is presently not enough signage and what does exist is small, obscured, or does not provide direction to businesses, especially those in the downtown area. Eighteen businesses felt that existing signage bylaw and legislation are too restrictive and need to be reviewed. Twelve businesses commented on the inconsistency and poor condition of certain signage. Five businesses suggested the highways passing through the community are an untapped resource for drawing more traffic into Pincher Creek with additional signage. Four respondents indicated there is a need to improve municipal signage to provide direction to community facilities and services;
- Response to **Highways** evoked ten responses. Five concerned general comments of poor repair, grading, and the need for repaving. Three discussed safety concerns; driving on highway 22, and the Crow's Nest corridor, the need for a rumble strip on highway 507, and poor road clearing for winter drivers. The last two addressed the need for highway widening and twinning;
- Seventy-four comments were received concerning **Adequate & Appropriate Housing**. Twenty-six respondents pointed out the difficulty of finding adequate and reasonably priced rental accommodations, houses and apartments. Twenty respondents noted the shortage of low-income housing in the community. Related to this, seven comments were made concerning the lack of affordable housing. Twelve respondents commented that the market prices are presently out of sync with affordability. Five additional issues were raised concerning housing. Retirement community needs are not sufficiently being met, there are no middle-aged condominiums, there is a need to address male homelessness, and there are challenges housing aboriginal population, and barriers (prejudice?) to cultural groups and housing;
- **Local Transportation** was commented on by 32 respondents. Thirteen owner/operators felt that the present services do not sufficiently meet the community's needs. Ten respondents indicated the local taxi services are insufficient and often unreliable, while seven businesses feel bus services to and from the community are insufficient and require improvement. Two respondents specifically mentioned bussing students to school as a issue that has emerged with recent changes to the bussing system;
- Seventeen responses were provided regarding **Education (K-12)**. Seven comments concerned the quality of education and the fact that standards and expectations were not as high for students as they should be. Five responses addressed the lack of access to, and the availability of, optional courses and classes to students in the community. Two comments were made concerning the impact of budget cuts on school funding courses and activities. Finally, it was noted that changes in

bussing system were confusing for parents and children in town who now often have to walk great distances, or be driven, support for extracurricular activities is very expensive, and aboriginal students do not seem to get their share of transfer payments reflected in the quality of education they receive;

- Feedback on **Post-Secondary Education** was provided by 26 businesses. Fourteen respondents feel that there is a shortage of post-secondary course offerings locally and that improvements could be made. Six respondents acknowledge the benefit of having The Consortium in Pincher Creek for the opportunities it provides individuals to begin their studies. Three comments suggested that additional course or program offerings would enhance local opportunities, especially if it were offered as web-based training, while another three expressed the perspective that it was necessary to leave the community to pursue any substantive post-secondary studies;
- Responses to **Industry Training** reflected a similar trend as post-secondary education. Ten comments were offered. Though some industry training is offered locally and one respondent indicated that safety training was more than adequate, eight respondents noted they had to go outside the community to pursue industry training courses required for work in their sector. One respondent suggested additional web-based training would be an asset;
- Thirty-seven businesses commented on the **Supply of Local Products and Services**. Twenty-six indicated that local businesses could not meet any or all of the demand for business to business products and services and that it was necessary to shop outside the community for many items. Six businesses mentioned competitive pricing as an issue and that in order for them to provide competitive rates to their customers they needed to seek outside suppliers.

  Of the remaining five businesses, one mentioned most items can be found locally; another commented on good working relationship with local businesses and felt they had reasonable rates. There was a wish for more selection to enhance downtown shopping core with niche shops, and a note that the downtown could use some addition businesses and services to prevent people from shopping outside of community. Finally a suggestion was made that business owners need to do a better job practicing what they preach – shop local;

- Eleven comments were made regarding **Business Support Services**. Four respondents suggested The Town must become more involved in supporting business growth; they need to develop a long-term strategic plan rather than work on a two year cycle. Three businesses mentioned a lack of communication between the Town and the business community as an issue, two businesses also mentioned lack of communication and contact with Pincher Creek & District Chamber of Commerce as a concern. Two respondents acknowledged that recent improvements were being made by The Chamber;
- Twenty-two responses were received regarding **Local Recreation & Leisure Facilities**. Five comments mention the need for a functional curling facility as important to the community, while another five acknowledge the existence of some good facilities, but suggest The Town needs to do a better job administrating and managing them. Four comments pointed to the poor quality of several facilities and for upgrades to these facilities. Four respondents also mention the lack of programming or the lack of access at certain times as an issue. Two comments extolled the quality

of these facilities in the community, while one mentioned the need for additional green space and trails within the town, and another suggested the need for an off-leash dog park;

- **Quality of Life** was commented on by eight respondents. Three praised the high quality of life mentioning accessibility to mountains, the great small town atmosphere, and the number of available activities. Two indicated vagrancy in the community was an issue that affected the quality of life negatively. Finally it was mentioned that celebrations and events are lacking, the town could use additional restaurants, and a non-denominational/spiritual wellness centre would be an asset.

## Section 6 – Entrepreneur Support Services

This section of the survey was included to gauge respondent's awareness of and satisfaction with business and entrepreneurial support services provided to the community by various organizations. It included six questions:

1. **Are you aware of Community Futures Alberta South West (CFABSW) and the services they provide?**
   One hundred and fifteen respondents (70.1%) confirmed they are aware of Community Futures and the services they provide.

   Though this is a good percentage, CFABSW is always working to increase the visibility of the organization, its goals and programs for rural entrepreneurs. Information is available by contacting the CFABSW office at 403-627-3020 or checking out our website at www.cfabsw.com.

2. **Have you utilized the services of Community Futures Alberta South West?**
   Forty-one respondents (25.0%) of the 164 interviewed had utilized the services of CFABSW or its predecessor South West Alberta Business Development Institute in Pincher Creek. This indicates a strong working partnership with businesses in the community. With increased awareness of the organization's programs and information about the assistance we can provide to entrepreneurs, a secondary goal of this project, this number can increase.

3. **Do you presently require any additional information on CFABSW services?**
   Forty-one respondents (25.0%) indicated they would like further information about Community Futures Alberta Southwest programs. Information packages will be forwarded to these businesses.

4. **Are you a member of the Pincher Creek & District Chamber of Commerce?**
   Seventy-five respondents (45.7%) indicated they were Chamber members, while 89 respondents (54.3%) indicated they were not members of the Chamber.

5. **Are you receiving value from your Chamber membership?**
   Of the 75 owner/operators that indicated they were Chamber members, fifty-seven (76.0%) felt they were receiving value, while eighteen (24.0%) indicated they were not presently receiving value from their membership.

   This reflects a high satisfaction level for the Chamber among its members. Some of this is due to recent improvements businesses have witnessed with the organization, though many businesses stated that they are new members and need to give The Chamber time to prove its value.

Many of the responses found in question six below may hint to why a certain segment of businesses do not have a Chamber membership, or do not feel they are receiving value for the membership they have.

6. **List any additional comments you have or information you would like to receive from the Community Futures Alberta Southwest, The Pincher Creek & District Chamber of Commerce or the Town of Pincher Creek.**

   **CFABSW** – One hundred and seventeen respondents (71.3%) indicated they did not require any further information at this time from CFABSW. Thirty-three owner/operators (21.3%) requested a basic information package. Four businesses requested specific information on loan products, while two requested information on business start-up and business coaching.
   Seven respondents suggested that the organization could work more effectively in the area of communication with the community and collaboration with other economic development stakeholders; one noted that this was the first time CFABSW had shown any interest in their business.

   **Pincher Creek & District Chamber of Commerce** – Ninety-four respondents (57.3%) indicated they did not require any further information at this time from The Chamber at this time. Fifteen businesses (9.0%) suggest that communication with membership and the business community is something the Chamber must address to be more effective. Thirteen businesses feel the Chamber is not effective as an organization that can meet its needs; several suggested local value-added proposition was needed. Eleven businesses (6.7%) feel the organization is beginning to change and become more effective in the community. Four businesses felt the "Shop Local" promotion is a good program. Nine respondents (5.5%) are looking for The Chamber to offer more networking opportunities. Five businesses are looking for The Town and The Chamber to work more closely on addressing business issues in the community.

   **Town of Pincher Creek** – Ninety-four respondents (48.2%) indicated they did not require any further information at this time from The Town at this time. Twenty respondents (12.2%) suggested that The Town needs to expend more effort on organization and developing a long-term strategic plan. Seventeen businesses (10.4%) indicated The Town must improve its communication and transparency with the business community. Fourteen respondents (8.5%) feel The Town must improve its efforts to promote the business community. Thirteen businesses (7.9%) feel that The Town should focus on bylaw review, particularly with business signage, and bylaw enforcement, especially in terms of vagrancy. Six business owner/operators see high business taxes as an issue; several comments were made regarding the value received for the taxes paid. Four comments discussed the benefit and detriment of box stores in the community, while another four comments were made regarding The Town making an investment and advocating tourism in the community. Finally three businesses commented on the need to improve the condition of Town facilities.

## Conclusion

The results of the project provide an honest representation of The Town of Pincher Creek's business owners' and operators' impressions on issues from basic business activities, to market conditions and the established primary market bases, to future plans and potential needs, labour force requirements, and the community's strengths and weaknesses as a place to do business.

Sixty-three percent, or 164 businesses responded to the survey over a two and one half month period. The project had good representation from all the primary sectors in the community of Pincher Creek. Home-based businesses were the only under represented sector. Of the 37% of businesses which were unreachable, or chose not to participate, home-based non-participation represents 49% of that total.

The feedback from and analysis of this study will provide input into what the community requires to grow and where the potential for growth lies. It will equip leaders with the information they need to make informed decisions about what affects our business community.

As expressed by many of the owners and operators interviewed, who made a commitment of time to participate in this project, this document provides valuable information and can be a useful resource if initiative is taken, and recommendations are considered and acted upon for the benefit of all stakeholders involved.

## Appendix A

# Business Visitation Survey

### SECTION I: Primary Business Data Date: ______________________

Survey Entry Number:- ________________________________
Business Name: -------- ________________________________
Owner/Primary Contact ________________________________
Mailing Address:-------- ________________________________
Street Address: --------- ________________________________
Phone: -------------------- ________________________________
Cell Phone: -------------- ________________________________
Fax:------------------------ ________________________________
Email: --------------------- ________________________________
Website: ------------------ ________________________________
Regular Business Hour ________________________________

### SECTION II: About the Business:

1. How many total years of personal business experience do you have?-------------------- __________
2. How many years of experience in this specific business activity do you have? ---------- __________
3. What year was this business originally started?------------------------------------------------ __________
4. What percent of the business do you own?------------------------------------------------------- __________
5. The business was established in Pincher Creek because of:
   proximity to market ________ proximity to home _________ other __________
6. What year did you become the owner/manager of this business?-------------------------- __________
7. Which best describes how you came to own/manage this business? __________
   a) Purchased the business ------------------------------------------------------------------ __________
   b) Started the business -------------------------------------------------------------------- __________
   c) Other----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------- __________
8. How is this business organized? __________
   a) Sole proprietorship ----------------------------------------------------------------------- __________
   b) Partnership----------------------------------------------------------------------------------- __________
   c) Corporation---------------------------------------------------------------------------------- __________
   d) Franchise ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------ __________
   e) Other (list) ---------------------------------------------------------------------------------- __________
9. How many family members are investors in this business? ---------------------------------- __________
10. Is the business premises? owned __________ leased __________ home-based __________
11. Is the business location? accessible ______ adequate _______ out-of-the-way __________
12. Is the business facility size? adequate _________ too small __________ too large __________
13. Which best describes this primary business activity? __________
    a) Service -------------------------------------------------------------------------------------- __________
    b) Retail --------------------------------------------------------------------------------------- __________
    c) Food and Beverage --------------------------------------------------------------------- __________
    d) Finance/insurance/real estate --------------------------------------------------------- __________
    e) Business and professional services---------------------------------------------------- __________
    f) Wholesale/distribution ----------------------------------------------------------------

g) Primary Sector Activity

i. Energy------------------------------------------------------------------------ ____________
ii. Agriculture-------------------------------------------------------------------- ____________
iii. Manufacturing ---------------------------------------------------------------- ____________
iv. Construction ------------------------------------------------------------------ ____________
v. Transportation---------------------------------------------------------------- ____________
vi. Tourism/Recreation --------------------------------------------------------- ____________
vii. Other------------------------------------------------------------------------- ____________

14. Describe your primary product or service ______________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

15. In an average week, how many hours do you devote to your business?------------------ ____________

16. How many employees do you have?---------------------------------------- ____________________

a. Full-time ____________________ b. Part-time __________________

## SECTION III: Market Conditions

17. Where is your greatest market competition from?

Local ______ Regional ______ National ______ International ______ No Competition ______

18. What are your business' greatest competitive advantages?

Location____ Product/Service____ Customer Service ____ Loyalty ____ Other (List)____________

19. What target markets or customers are essential for the success of your business?

______________________________________________________________________________

20. What aspect of your business offers the greatest potential for growth?

______________________________________________________________________________

21. What methods of business promotion are most effective for you?

Radio ___ Newsppr ___ Industry Ads ___ INet ___ E-mail ___ Word-of-M ___ Other (list)_________

22. Is the competition in your market: Why? ______________________________________________

Increasing? ___________ Decreasing? ___________ Staying the same? ___________

23. Is your market share in the region: Why? ____________________________________________

Increasing? ___________ Decreasing? ___________ Staying the same? ___________

24. Do you utilize local airline services for goods/travel? Yes ________ No________

25. Have you or your staff taken courses/programs on?

Marketing and Market Research ☐ Financing ☐ Accounting ☐ Business Planning and Plan Updating ☐ Customer Service ☐ Business Transition Planning ☐ Bidding on Government Contracts ☐ Social Media ☐

26. Would you or your staff attend one of the following if offered in the region?

Marketing and Market Research ☐ Financing ☐ Accounting ☐ Business Planning and Plan Updating ☐ Customer Service ☐ Business Transition Planning ☐ Bidding on Government Contracts ☐ Social Media ☐

COMMENT: What are your businesses' greatest challenges and its greatest advantages or opportunities in its present location?

## SECTION IV: Future Plans for the Business:

27. How likely is your business to do each of the following in the next two years?

Please use the following scale in answering these questions: Circle the Best Response.

| 1=very unlikely | 2=unlikely | 3=haven't considered this | 4=likely | 5=very likely |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Add a new product or service --------------------------------- | | | | | |
| b. Sell to a new market-------------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| c. Research new markets ---------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| d. Expand distribution channels---------------------------------- | | | | | |
| e. Expand advertising and promotion -------------------------- | | | | | |
| f. Invest in new equipment -------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| g. Replace current equipment------------------------------------ | | | | | |
| h. Expand or relocate current facilities ------------------------- | | | | | |
| i. Redesign current facilities ------------------------------------ | | | | | |
| j. Seek additional financial capital ------------------------------ | | | | | |
| k. Computerize or have presently computerized operations | | | | | |
| l. Upgrade computer systems ----------------------------------- | | | | | |
| m. Redesign daily operating activities--------------------------- | | | | | |
| n. Expand the scope of your operating activities ------------- | | | | | |
| o. Seek professional or technical advice ---------------------- | | | | | |
| p. Add unskilled labour-------------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| q. Add skilled labour ----------------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| r. Invest in onsite training for employees---------------------- | | | | | |
| s. Invest in offsite training for employees---------------------- | | | | | |

i. Description of positions you hire for ---------------------- ______________________________

ii. How many positions are presently vacant ---------------- ______________________________

iii. # of positions expected to add over next 5 years ------ ______________________________

iv. Are you currently able to attract the required workers for your business? Yes ________ No________

v. If no, what are the types of skills that you are currently unable to obtain? ______________________________

vi. How many current employees do you anticipate will retire or leave over the next five years? ______________________________

28. Is your businesses' primary market
Local? ________ Regional? _________ National? ________ International? ________

29. Do you export ( yes, no) or plan to export( yes, no), to markets outside the region?

30. Do you import ( yes, no) or plan to import ( yes, no) from markets outside the region?

31. Do you require assistance or information to develop an export/import strategy? Yes ____ No ____

32. What obstacles do you face in attempting to export? ________________________________________

## SECTION V: Community Services:

33. Rate your satisfaction with the following community services

Please use the following scale in answering these questions: Circle the Best Response.

| 1=does not apply | 2=very unsatisfied | 3=slightly satisfied | 4=satisfied | 5=very satisfied |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Police Services -------------------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| b. Ambulance Services -------------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| c. Health care ------------------------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| d. Electric Services-------------------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| e. Gas Services ------------------------------------------------------ | | | | | |
| f. Sewer ---------------------------------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| g. Water------------------------------------------------------------------ | | | | | |
| h. Local Roads ------------------------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| i. Traffic signs and lights ------------------------------------------ | | | | | |
| j. Signage – Business and Municipal --------------------------- | | | | | |
| k. Highways------------------------------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| l. Adequate/Appropriate Housing -------------------------------- | | | | | |
| m. Local transportation -------------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| n. Education (K to 12) ---------------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| o. Education (Post-Secondary) ---------------------------------- | | | | | |
| p. Industry Training ------------------------------------------------- | | | | | |
| q. Locally Supplied Services and products--------------------- | | | | | |
| r. Business Support Services ------------------------------------ | | | | | |
| s. Local Recreation & Leisure Facilities ------------------------ | | | | | |
| t. Other quality of Life Factors ----------------------------------- | | | | | |

## SECTION VI: Entrepreneur Support Services

34. Are you aware of Community Futures Alberta Southwest (CFABSW) and the services they provide? Yes ___________ No___________

35. Have you utilized the services of Community Futures Alberta Southwest? Yes _____ No____

36. Do you require further information on CFABSW services? Yes _____ No____

37. Are you a member of the Pincher Creek & District Chamber of Commerce? Yes ____ No____

38. Are you receiving value from your Chamber membership? Yes _____ No____

39. List any Comments you have, or additional services or information you would like from Community Futures Alberta South West, The Chamber of Commerce or the Town.

## Appendix B

| Positions Requiring Post-secondary Training, Certification, Skilled Labour | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Skilled Construction/Trades** | | |
| Apprentice cabinet maker, skilled labourer | | |
| Apprentice mechanic | | |
| Certified Journeyman Welder, Labourer | | |
| Crane operators, mechanics | | |
| Electricians, millwrights, mechanics, administration | | |
| Electricians, millwrights, mechanics, administration | | |
| installers - flooring mechanics, sales staff | | |
| Journeyman carpenters | | |
| Journeyman carpenters, apprentices | | |
| Journeyman electricians | | |
| Journeyman heating/cooling technician | | |
| Journeyman installers | | |
| Journeyman mechanic | | |
| Journeyman mechanic | | |
| Journeyman plumber | | |
| Journeymen, apprentices, labourers | | |
| Labourers, shinglers, torchers (skilled) | | |
| Mechanic, Heavy equipment operator | | |
| Mechanic, tire technician, service technician | | |
| Mechanically inclined labourer | | |
| Mechanics, Sales staff | | |
| Office management, electrical technician | | |
| Sales person, apprentice electrician | | |
| Shipper/receiver, front desk, mechanic, sales staff, accountant | | |
| Skilled assistant with computer ability and accounting | | |
| Skilled data processor | | |
| Skilled helper, change person | | |
| Trades in plumbing, gas fitting, and refrigeration | | |
| Truck drivers, mechanics | | |
| Welding | **Subtotal:** | **30** |
| | | |
| **Professionals** | | |
| Bookkeeper/accountant | | |
| Funeral director, funeral assistant | | |
| lawyers, legal aides, assistants | | |
| Legal assistant, Lawyer | | |
| Management, accountant | | |
| Pharmacist, pharmacist's assistant, trained surgical device fitters | | |
| Veterinarians, Vet technicians, receptionists | **Subtotal:** | **7** |

## Positions Requiring Post-secondary Training, Certification, Skilled Labour

### Management/Administration

**Administrative**

Cashier, stocking staff, **manager**

Clerk (cashier, stocking, cleaning), **administration** staff

**Administration, managers**, drivers, specialty positions (butchers etc)

Creative, personable, people-skilled assistants and **administration**

Customer service staff, Bank **Management**

Electricians, millwrights, mechanics, **administration**

**Management**, accountant

**Management**, housekeeping

Office **management**, electrical technician

Pharmacist, pharmacist's assistant, front store **manager**

Sandwich artist, **manager** **Subtotal:** 11

### Assistants/Support Personal

**Assistant** Carpenter

**Assistant** Clerk

**Assistant**, acupuncturist, therapist

Creative, personable, people-skilled **assistants** and administration

Customer service, sales **assistant**

Funeral **assistants**

Funeral director, funeral **assistant**

House staff, chef, **front office clerks**, servers, maintenance

Hygienist, Dental assistant, **Receptionist**

Hygienists, therapists, dental assistants, **front desk**

lawyers, legal aides, **assistants**

Legal **assistant**, Lawyer

Pharmacist's **assistant**, cashiers, front store manager

Skilled **assistant** with computer ability and accounting **Subtotal:** 14

### Truck Drivers/Heavy Equipment Operators

Cashiers, service counter staff (experienced/ex contractor), drivers, yard staff

Cement finishers, carpenters, labourers, equipment operators

Clerks, attendants, administration, managers, drivers

Cooks, waitresses, dishwashers, catering personnel, drivers

Crane operators, mechanics

Driver/Operator

Driver/Operator

Drivers and dock workers

Drivers, agronomists, equipment operators

Drivers, agronomists, equipment operators

Experienced operators, drivers and field technicians

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Experienced operators, drivers and field technicians | | |
| Mechanic, Heavy equipment operator | | |
| Truck drivers | | |
| Truck drivers | | |
| Truck drivers | | |
| Truck drivers | | |
| Truck drivers, mechanics | | |
| Truck drivers, mechanics | **Subtotal:** | 19 |
| **Technicians/Unique Skill Sets** | | |
| Accounting **technician** | | |
| Agronomists, equipment operators, drivers, | | |
| Agronomists, equipment operators, drivers, | | |
| Apprentices, hair stylists, aesthetics **technicians,** receptionists | | |
| Assistant, acupuncturist, therapist | | |
| Bookkeeper/accountant, accounting **technician** | | |
| Bookkeeping and accounting **technician** | | |
| Bookkeeping and accounting **technician** | | |
| Clerk, **technician** | | |
| Experienced operators, drivers and field **technicians** | | |
| Hygienists, therapists, dental assistants, front desk | | |
| Journeyman heating/cooling **technician** | | |
| Management, accountant, accounting **technician** | | |
| Manufacturing **technicians** | | |
| Massage therapist | | |
| Mechanic, tire **technician**, service **technician** | | |
| Office management, electrical **technician** | | |
| Pharmacist, trained surgical device fitters | | |
| Reception, certified nail **technician** | | |
| Safety **technicians**, general labourers | | |
| sales associate, web design **technician** | | |
| Service **technicians** | | |
| Shipper/receiver, front desk, mechanic, sales staff, accounting **technician** | | |
| Skilled assistant with computer ability and accounting **technician** | | |
| stylists, **technicians**, aestheticians, front desk | | |
| Technical skills to mount insects in a quality way, computer literacy | | |
| **Technicians** | | |
| Tire **Technicians**, Auto **Technicians**, Parts persons | | |
| Veterinarians, Vet **technicians**, receptionists | | |
| Young field **technicians** | **Subtotal:** | 30 |
| **Positions Requiring Post-secondary Training/Certification/Skilled Labour** | **Total** | **111** |

## General Labour, Unskilled, or Staff to be Trained On-site

### General Labour

Apprentice cabinet maker, skilled labourer
Basic labour
Cement finishers, carpenters, labourers, equipment operators
Certified Journeyman Welder, Labourer
Floral artist, general labourer (to be trained)
General Labour
General labour, Front Desk
General labourer
General Labourer
general labourer
Janitorial staff, Labourers
Journeymen, apprentices, labourers
Labourer, Welding
Labourers
Labourers, shinglers, torchers (skilled
Mechanically inclined labourer
Safety technicians, general labourers
Unskilled labour

**Subtotal: 18**

### Retail Sector

Assistant Clerk
clerk
Clerk (cashier, stocking, cleaning), administration staff
Clerk, stock person
Clerk, technician
Clerks, attendants, administration, managers, drivers
Clerks, attendants
House staff, chef, front office clerks, servers, maintenance
Kill floor processors, meat cutters, deli clerks
Retail clerk, fashion consultant
Store clerk
Customer service, sales assistant
Editorial staff, sales, office staff
Engaging sales staff
Experienced sales staff in western wear
installers - flooring mechanics, sales staff
Mechanics, Sales staff
prompt stocking staff, night shift sales
Sales
Sales

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sales | | |
| Sales and service associate, reception | | |
| Sales and warehousing | | |
| sales associate, web design technician | | |
| Sales Associates | | |
| Sales person, apprentice electrician | | |
| Sales, display and stock personnel, yard service personnel | | |
| Sales, Marketing | | |
| Shipper/receiver, front desk, mechanic, sales staff, accountant | | |
| Tellers, sales staff, financial services staff | Subtotal: | 30 |
| | | |
| **Food Services/Hotel & Motel** | | |
| Cleaning | | |
| Cleaning | | |
| Clerk (cashier, stocking, cleaning), administration staff | | |
| Front desk, housekeeping | | |
| Front Desk, Housekeeping, Maintenance | | |
| House staff, chef, front office clerks, servers, maintenance | | |
| Housekeeping and laundry | | |
| housekeeping, front desk | | |
| Management, housekeeping | | |
| Server, bartender, cleaners | | |
| Servers who are prompt and clean | Subtotal | 11 |
| **General Labour, Unskilled, or Staff to be Trained On-site** | **Total** | **59** |

Community Futures

Growing communities one idea at a time.

www.cfabsw.com

Western Economic Diversification Canada

Diversification de l'économie de l'Ouest Canada