



# The voice of business.

February 28, 2025

## **Backgrounder and Frequently Asked Questions**

The Port Alberni Visitor Information Centre, operated by the Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce, serves as a gateway for visitors to explore Port Alberni and surrounding regions. Located along a key travel corridor, the Centre provides essential visitor services.

### **About the Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Services**

The Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1965 through the amalgamation of the Alberni Board of Trade (1931–1965) and the Port Alberni and District Chamber of Commerce (1912–1965).

In 1982, the community initiated a Tourism Bureau, and the Chamber has provided Visitor Services at the junction of Alberni Hwy and Port Alberni Hwy since July 1, 1983.

The current Visitor Information Centre (VIC) was rebuilt in 2011, and the Chamber owns both the land and the building, ensuring long-term stability and control of this key community asset.

### **The Role of the Visitor Centre**

The Visitor Centre is a key economic driver in the Alberni Valley, serving over 9,400 visitors in 2024, including tourists, residents, and potential new community members. As part of Destination BC's Visitor Services Network, it plays a vital role in:

- Promoting all local businesses – not just Chamber members – by directing visitors to shops, restaurants, attractions, and services.
- Boosting visitor spending – Visitors who engage with a Visitor Centre spend 2.5 times more in a community.
- Enhancing visitor experiences – Personalized, in-person recommendations encourage longer stays and return visits.
- Providing real-time information during crises – The VIC has been a trusted resource for updates on wildfires, road closures, and other emergencies affecting travel.

## **The Funding Challenge**

The Chamber's contract for visitor services with the City of Port Alberni concluded on January 19, 2025, and no new agreement has been reached. Without a formal contract or secured financial support, the Chamber is unable to continue funding and operating the Visitor Centre independently.

The Visitor Centre relies on a combination of public funding, partnerships, and Chamber resources to operate. However, without stable financial commitments, maintaining year-round service has become a challenge this year.

In March 2025, the Centre will temporarily close due to insufficient funding, highlighting the need for a predictable and sustainable financial model to continue operations.

## **Our Call to Action**

- The Chamber is seeking government, business, and community support to establish long-term funding.
- The impact of tourism in Port Alberni is significant, and visitor services are an essential part of economic development.
- We encourage all stakeholders to support advocacy efforts and explore funding solutions to keep the Visitor Centre operational year-round.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **General Questions**

#### **Q: Why is the Visitor Centre closing?**

A: The closure is due to a lack of sufficient funding to sustain operations for March 2025. We are actively working on solutions to ensure a sustainable future for the Centre.

#### **Q: When will the Visitor Centre reopen?**

A: We anticipate reopening ahead of the summer season pending financial solutions. Updates will be provided as we work toward a resolution.

#### **Q: Who funds the Visitor Centre?**

A: The Visitor Centre is supported through a mix of government contributions (City of Port Alberni and Destination BC), Chamber resources, grants, and business partnerships. However, current funding levels are not enough to maintain uninterrupted service.

**Q: How many visitors does the Centre serve annually?**

A: The Centre welcomes thousands of visitors each year, providing essential tourism information and referrals that directly benefit local businesses. In 2024, 9,400 visitors stopped by the Visitor Centre.

**Q: What is the Chamber doing to address this issue?**

A: The Chamber is actively engaging government stakeholders, local businesses, and tourism partners to develop a long-term funding solution.

**Impact on Businesses & Community**

**Q: How will the closure affect local businesses?**

A: Businesses will experience no direct referrals from the Visitor Centre in March as in-person and online support will be suspended. We encourage businesses to enhance their online presence and share their information through the Chamber's digital platforms.

**Q: Will there be alternative visitor services available?**

A: During the closure, visitors will be directed to online resources, including the Chamber's website and social media for tourism information. Alberni Valley Tourism Association's website is also an available resource.

**Q: How can businesses and community members help?**

A: Community support is crucial. Businesses and individuals can help by advocating for sustainable funding, providing financial support where possible, and ensuring tourism-related services remain visible online.

For further inquiries, please contact:  
Jolleen Dick  
Chief Executive Officer  
Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce  
[jolleen@albernichamber.ca](mailto:jolleen@albernichamber.ca)  
250-724-6535