



File: 5403379; Mount
Timothy Recreation Resort

April 1, 2026

Information Sheet: Comparing Operating Agreements (OA) and Master Development Agreements (MDA)

Background:

Mount Timothy Recreation Resort has applied to the Province to convert its existing [Operating Agreement](#) (OA) to a [Master Development Agreement](#) (MDA). To support that request, the proponent has also submitted a draft [Resort Master Plan](#) for review. The Province is currently considering the application; however, no decisions have been made as of the date above. The Province retains discretion to approve or deny the application, or to require changes to the draft Resort Master Plan.

1. What is this Information Sheet about?

This information sheet explains:

- The types of agreements the Province uses with ski area and resort operators
- The proposed change to the Mount Timothy agreement
- What the proposed change would, and would not, allow

2. Why does the Province issue agreements for ski areas and resorts?

Most ski hills and mountain resorts in B.C. operate on [Crown land](#), which is public land owned by the Province. When a resort uses Crown land, it must have an agreement with the Province. These agreements:

- Set rules for how the land can be used
- Require environmental and safety standards
- Control when and how development can happen
- Protect public and government interests

3. What is an Operating Agreement (OA)?

An *Operating Agreement* (OA) is typically used for smaller or community ski areas. Under an OA:

- The resort can build and operate day-use recreational facilities
- Development must follow an approved Resort Master Plan
- Agreements usually last about 30 years
- Overnight accommodation is limited or not typical

- The land remains Crown land and cannot be privately owned

Mount Timothy currently operates under an Operating Agreement.

4. What is a Master Development Agreement (MDA)?

A Master Development Agreement (MDA) is generally used for larger, regional, or destination-type resorts. An MDA:

- Provides a long-term framework (usually about 60 years)
- Allows both recreation facilities and overnight accommodation
- Can support a wider range of infrastructure, if approved
- May allow small areas of land at the resort base to become private land (“[fee simple](#)”), subject to approval

Importantly, an MDA establishes a planning framework. It does not provide automatic permission to construct projects.

5. What is the main difference between an OA and an MDA?

The key differences are scale and duration. Neither authorization is ‘better’; they are designed for different types and scales of resorts.

Topic	Operating Agreement (OA)	Master Development Agreement (MDA)
Typical use	Community ski areas	Regional / destination resorts
Term length	~30 years	~60 years
Overnight accommodation	Limited, not typical	Expected, in balance with recreation
Land ownership	Crown land only	Limited private land possible

6. Why is Mount Timothy Seeking to Transition to an MDA?

Mount Timothy has been operating for many years and is planning for the future. Moving to an MDA would:

- Provide a longer planning timeframe
- Create a clear structure for considering future proposals
- Allow greater certainty in land-based investments

This change is about planning and anticipated recreation growth, not immediate construction. Development would be phased and controlled through subsequent authorization processes.

7. How are environmental and public interests protected?

Both Operating Agreements and Master Development Agreements:

- Require compliance with environmental standards
- Limit development to approved plans
- Provide tools for the Province to monitor and enforce conditions
- Must follow provincial laws, including the *Land Act*

8. Who makes decisions under an MDA?

The Province of British Columbia retains authority over:

- Whether to accept a Resort Master Plan
- Whether to approve an agreement
- Whether to authorize specific projects
- Ongoing compliance and monitoring

Key Terms:

Controlled Recreation Area or *CRA*: The area of Crown land encompassing recreation infrastructure and activity areas, the base area, and a reasonable buffer directly related to the safe and orderly development of the resort.

Crown Land: Public land owned by the Province of British Columbia, comprising approximately 94% of the provincial land base, including foreshore and land covered by water.

Fee Simple Land: The highest form of private land ownership in British Columbia (often referred to as “freehold”), representing absolute title to the land.

Master Development Agreement or *MDA*: An MDA is an agreement between the Province and the developer that is issued under the authority of the *Land Act* and the *Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing Act*. It sets out the terms and conditions governing the development of an all-seasons resort, including the rights to acquire MDA-tenures and fee simple grants. The MDA also acts as a licence of occupation under the *Land Act* for the purposes of the controlled recreation area. An MDA is used for all-seasons resorts where the development project involves the fee simple disposition of Crown land for real estate development and the non-fee simple disposition of Crown land for recreation improvements. An MDA may also be used where privately owned real estate development land is to be used as part of the all-seasons resort development and Province requires that the land be developed as part of the overall resort development project. The standard term of an MDA and for any Master Development Agreement-tenures is 60 years.

Operating Agreement or *OA*: An OA is an agreement between the Province and the developer that is issued under the authority of the *Land Act* or the *Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing Act*. It sets out the terms and conditions governing the development of all-seasons resorts including the rights to acquire tenures. The OA also acts as a licence of occupation under the *Land Act* for the purposes of the controlled recreation area. The OA is used where the all-seasons resort does not include the sale of Crown land for real estate development. The standard term of the OA and for any OA tenures for a community mountain resort is 30 years.

Resort Master Plan: A detailed plan outlining phased recreation and real estate development (if any) within the resort area. It provides the technical and management information needed

to support sustainable resort development and forms an integral part of an OA, MDA, or other Crown land authorization.