



**Zincton Expression of Interest (EOI)
Summary of Engagement**

“What We Heard”

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Zincton is a new resort proposal located near New Denver, British Columbia and is currently at the Expression of Interest (EOI) stage under the *All-Seasons Resort Policy* (ASRP). For more details visit the Mountain Resorts Branch (MRB) website:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/resort-development/proposed-approved-resort-master-plans/list-of-proposed-plans>.

The EOI is the initial stage of a multistage process that is preliminary in nature and intended to identify values, land use conflicts and interests that will inform the requirements for proceeding to the next stage in the process. This document is a summary of input and feedback received by MRB, within the Integrated Resource Operations Division of the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (MFLNORD; the Ministry), from members of the public and stakeholder organizations during the formal 30-day public review and comment period for the Zincton EOI All-Seasons Resort proposal. Please note that First Nations, Agency and Stakeholder referrals were also conducted within the same time frame between May 21, 2020 to June 22, 2020 and these comments are reflected in this document. Also note that the proponent engaged with the public during the same period, but these comments are not reflected in this document.

The Zincton EOI project planning and public engagement was guided by the ASRP and associated guidelines (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/resort-development>). During the public review and comment period, the Zincton EOI was advertised in several newspapers (The Valley Voice, Arrow Lakes News and Nelson Star), the provincial Gazette and on the MRB website. It was also posted on several local community bulletin boards and the work was profiled in articles and letters to the editor in several news outlets. A total of 3,392 submissions were received during the public review period. Most comments were received through email submissions, with smaller amounts of comments received via telephone, fax and letters.

This “What We Heard” document identifies and summarizes the most common comments, concerns, questions and suggestions that were received during the EOI public comment period. The input received will ensure that all values and expressed interests are considered in project planning, process review steps and decision-making.

Based on responses and formal submissions, the “What We Heard” document summarizes the engagement into six common themes/categories that emerged from submissions:

- Proposed Development
- Public Access/Recreation
- Environment
- Public Health and Safety
- Local Community
- General and Cumulative Effects

For the sake of brevity due to the number of comments received this document contains paraphrased wording (*italics*) summarizing the comments, concerns, questions and suggestions received.

Public review and comment by the numbers (# of comments received):

- Direct email: 1822
- Letter/fax: 64
- Phone calls: 2
- Electronic form letter: 1504
- # of comments received after deadline: 35 (not included in this report)

Feedback Themes:

1. Proposed Development

Comments in this theme were in relation to the concept, area and size of the development. In many instances, respondents expressed their views simply as either for or against the proposal without providing a specific reason for their view.

Some respondents regarded the project as a balanced proposal that takes into consideration sustainability of the area and environment while providing the opportunity to enhance or improve social and economic conditions locally and in the region:

- *Proposed, low density, controlled activities are sensitive to environmental impacts (takes into consideration the area capacity to sustain level of activities) while providing safe and unique visitor experience*
- *Unique concept of lift access to backcountry with a limited number of groomed ski runs compared with other well-known destination ski resorts*
- *Environmentally sensitive proposal as an example of responsible environmental stewardship*
- *The proposal could bring benefits to local economy and services*

Some respondents expressed several concerns in this theme, including:

- *The proposed project development area is too large*
- *An increase in recreational use of the area will result in environmental degradation*
- *The project area overlaps with other recreation tenures issued under Adventure Tourism or Commercial Recreation*
- *Questions on the need for the project and market saturation (no more resorts are needed in the area)*
- *The area should be left for locals and free of motorized public access to backcountry*
- *The EOI does not provide enough details, and lacks information on proposed lodge, parking lots, restaurants, cabins and amenities*

2. Public Access / Recreation

MRB notes that the area surrounding Highway 31A between New Denver and Kaslo has been experiencing steady growth in outdoor recreation in terms of public and commercial, motorized and non-motorized recreational activities.

Some respondents noted that lift access will make the proposed (and popular) area more accessible, potentially enabling a larger segment of population to participate in backcountry recreation:

- *(foot-power or ski-up) elevational gain to access backcountry in this area is perceived as an impediment for many, making a day trip unattainable and not realistic*

Many respondents expressed concern with the possibility of “losing” access to land that is currently regarded as an area with easy and free public access to backcountry recreation (skiing, mountain biking, hiking, snowmobiling); specifically, for London and Whitewater Ridge:

- *The backcountry should be for everyone to enjoy*
- *The Province should not “Privatize” one of the most easily accessible ski touring areas*
- *There was concern about potential cost/admission to areas previously accessible free of charge and loss of public parking along the Highway 31A. Many residents have concern about affordability of access fees given current economic conditions*
- *The proposal should include provisions for free public access and parking*
- *Certain areas should be protected for public use only*
- *The area has seen already a loss of public areas to commercial tenures*
 - *Some areas should be left untenured*
- *The potential loss of established hiking trails (designated recreation trails)*
- *There may be conflict between commercial and recreational users*

3. Environmental Considerations

The environmental theme provided/generated significant comments, concerns, questions and suggestions from respondents. They were broken down in the following subcategories:

Wildlife

Many respondents expressed concern that the proposed development would be detrimental to wildlife and wildlife habitat:

- *Proposed development would have negative impacts (threatened species) to caribou, grizzly bears, mountain goats, mule deer, wolverines, western toad and white bark pine*
- *The preservation of wildlife and their habitat should take precedence over development*

Goat Range Provincial Park

Proximity of development to the Goat Range Provincial Park may lead to increased access into the backcountry part of the park:

- *Greater clarity and information sought on how park values and environmental disturbance would be managed*

Wildlife-Human Encounters

Some respondents noted that the increase in users of the area may increase the probability of wildlife-human encounters:

- *The increased presence of humans in the area will lead to more human-wildlife conflicts and will result in loss of wildlife and wildlife habitat*
- *The increased traffic on highway will lead to a higher wildlife mortality rate as a result of traffic incidents*

Water Concerns

Concerns expressed by respondents included how the development would affect water quality and quantity:

- *Questions were raised as to the effect on surrounding water due to the area's many contaminated mining sites*
- *The creeks, riparian areas and small alpine lakes in and around this proposed resort are sensitive to additions of nutrient and important as they are relatively undisturbed habitat*

Vegetation / Floral-Fauna Life

Some respondents stated that the development area has sensitive Sub Alpine/Alpine plant communities:

- *The area should have restricted summer use*

Environmental Recommendations

Some respondents suggested requirements to address environmental issues. These included:

- *Remove sensitive areas from proposal (e.g. Whitewater Canyon)*
- *An Environmental Assessment should be conducted*
 - *Environmental, ecological and wildlife impact studies*
 - *A detailed site species surveys at all proposed construction sites*
- *Wildlife Management Plan should be developed*

4. Public Health & Safety

Respondents who expressed support for the project felt the proposal would:

- *Provide residents and visitors with safe access to backcountry environment*
- *Promote a healthy lifestyle while respecting the environment*
- *Make a positive contribution to maintaining or enhancing a desired level of health services in the area*

There were also a variety of comments, concerns and questions captured in the following areas:

Health

- *If the development goes ahead the local Emergency Room and Hospital needs to be resourced and may require additional funding to accommodate increased population without overwhelming current medical system*
- *The resort staff should be trained in First Aid/CPR and Health & Safety protocols and policies should be in place at the resort*

Search and Rescue / Emergency Response (Fire/Rescue)

- *As the local search and rescue team is already working at capacity, questions were raised as to how the resort would provide support*
- *There is the possibility of inexperienced visitors getting lost or caught in avalanches*
- *Questions were raised on whether there is enough local emergency capacity to cope with the potential increased population*
- *Concerns with Highway 31A safety due to increased traffic and winter use*
 - *Increase in accidents due to vehicles or wildlife*

Avalanche Safety Concerns

- *Highway 31A is at high risk for avalanches*
 - *Avalanches can go all the way to valley bottom and onto highway*
- *London Ridge and surrounding mountains are at high risk for avalanches*
- *Questions related to support and control of backcountry users that may not have appropriate basic snow/avalanche safety knowledge*

Mining Safety

- *There are many abandoned mine shafts in the area that pose a safety risk*

Overlapping Tenures & Recreational users

- *There is potential for conflicts between users of this area which could create potential safety issues*

Wildfire

- *Increased population in the area could lead to higher risk of human caused wildfires*

5. Impacts on Local Community and Economy

Some commented that the area and region is going through a period of economic and social transition which will see the tourism sector play a much larger role in diversifying the region's economy.

The project could expand economic and local employment opportunities for residents/tourists by providing direct employment during construction and operation of resort. The area will benefit from an increase in local economic growth and diversification:

- *Possible employment opportunities outside of resort (direct and indirect jobs)*
- *There is potential to bring in new businesses to New Denver and Kaslo*
- *There is potential to boost resources/services/infrastructure in community*
- *The development will bring in more tourists and visitors to area and region*
- *The development will provide more activities for people to enjoy*

Conversely, some respondents felt that the broader community may not benefit and expressed concern with only immediate stakeholders experiencing financial benefit:

- *The project as proposed will have negative economic impact as the concern was expressed that visitors will spend majority of money at the resort and not in local towns/villages.*
- *The proposed development will put additional pressure on already scarce resources and services (e.g. it will create housing crisis, grocery and gas shortages due to influx of visitors)*
- *The local hospital is already operating at capacity due to severe cuts to hospitals in recent years. The area has had issues retaining and maintaining medical and emergency services*
- *There is concern that the tourism sector only creates low paying jobs as well as the loss of affordable and available housing (both for sale and rental)*

6. General and Cumulative Effects

General

Many respondents expressed views that options for this type of recreation already exist in the area.

- *Major All-Season Resorts within 200km distance – Red Mountain and Whitewater Resort*
- *Summit Lake Ski Hill*
- *Adjacent Adventure Tourism Operators (Retallack and Selkirk Snowcat Skiing, Stellar Heliskiing)*

There was also concern that this resort would create competition with existing operators for recreational opportunities and that the population is insufficient to support an additional resort.

Some respondents also commented that they live/visit the area because it is quiet, not heavily populated and that introducing a resort would have a huge impact.

Cumulative Effects

We also heard, due to heightened tourism sector interests expressed through multiple applications for land use in the Highway 31A corridor, that cumulative effects/land use planning should be a part of the planning and permitting process and considered in decision making:

- *There are significant concerns over the scale and pace of proposed developments, considering this area is already under high pressure from existing commercial recreation tenures (heli-skiing and cat-skiing) and subject to intensive public use. The cumulative impacts of a high-density use combined with resource extraction activities could have detrimental impact on wildlife and wildlife habitats*
- *The impacts to First Nations interests and incorporating traditional use knowledge into the planning process.*

Next Steps:

- MRB will determine the feasibility of the Zincton EOI based on all comments received and through the identification of any land-use conflicts.
- If the EOI is found to be feasible, the proponent will be invited to submit a Formal Proposal. If accepted the Ministry would initiate a more intensive and detailed review and planning process consistent with the *All-Seasons Resort Policy* (ASRP) and the *All-Seasons Resort Guidelines* (ASRG).
- MRB will continue to engage with Indigenous Peoples, Communities and stakeholders to understand their interests and how they may be impacted by this proposal.
- For more details on the planning process and information requirements for All-Seasons resort development in British Columbia please visit: [/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/resort-development/applying-to-develop-a-resort](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/resort-development/applying-to-develop-a-resort)
- For a visual presentation of the entire process from an EOI to the final project approval please refer to the [All-Seasons Resort Application Process Flowchart](#).