

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTLOOK

LAKE LOUISE BANFF CANMORE MD OF BIGHORN KANANASKIS STONEY NAKODA

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 2025

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KEEPER OF THE CUP

Day in Canada celebrations.

Gary Hapke, left, Bradley Campbell, centre, and Krista Campbell take pictures with the Stanley Cup at Canmore Creekside Hall on Friday (Jan. 17) during the Scotiabank Hockey Day in Canada celebrations. JUNGMIN HAM RMO PHOTO

Changes coming to visitor access in Lake Louise to deal with overcrowding, congestion

CATHY ELLIS

LAKE LOUISE – The way visitors access the iconic Lake Louise area is likely to change in order to protect the environment and treasured wildlife, and improve the experiences visitors and residents are having in Canada's flagship national park.

According to survey results that formed a what-we-heard report, which was released by Parks Canada on Thursday (Jan. 16) at the conclusion of the first phase of consultation about visitor use management in the busy area of Banff National Park, most people are telling Parks Canada to deal with overcrowding and congestion in Lake Louise and Moraine Lake.

Parks Canada has previously said limits or quotas for some types of use, in some areas, at certain times, may be necessary in the face of exploding visitation, which hit about 4.3 million park-wide in Banff National Park last year – the busiest year on record – with proposed tactics expected to come before the public in spring as part of the next round of consultation.

Officials say some of the 1,000-plus survey respondents suggested limiting or reducing the number of daily visitors, while others felt that changes could be

made to infrastructure and services to improve access and better disperse visitors in the region.

Dwight Bourdin, visitor experience manager for Lake Louise, Yoho and Kootenay field unit, said 62 per cent of survey respondents mentioned overcrowding as a barrier to visiting and enjoying the Lake Louise and Moraine Lake area.

"Most people told us that they wanted to see changes in the way visitors access the Lake Louise area," he said.

Between 2013 and 2023, visitation to Banff National Park grew by 31 per cent; however, the rise is even greater at some of the park's main attractions. At Lake Louise, there has been a 70 per cent increase in traffic volume over the past decade, leading to significant congestion.

Traffic congestion on Lake Louise Drive can hinder quick emergency response times, as ambulances and fire trucks struggle to get in and out of busy areas, and Parks has said traffic back-ups would also make the safe and efficient evacuation of visitors, in the case of an emergency such as wildfire, more challenging.

Wildlife are forced to weave their way in and out of development and avoid throngs of people. The

increasing number of visitors is also putting strain on Parks Canada's search and rescue team, which has seen a growing number of calls over the past decade.

Once finalized, the Lake Louise Area Visitor Use Management Plan aims to provide Parks Canada with a long-term approach to managing visitor use in a way that protects nature and wildlife, is safe for visitors and staff, and provides a positive experience for people.

Last year, Parks Canada spoke with staff and local stakeholders to create a set of so-called draft desired conditions, or goals, associated with visitor experience, natural and cultural resources, facilities and operations, and staff and visitor safety.

Some of those goals include continued support for the large number of visitors during daytime hours at Upper Lake Louise and Moraine Lake. Visitation to the region would be managed and remain within sustainable levels, but would vary depending on location, season, and time of day.

In addition, day use in the popular Paradise Valley would not increase from historic levels. Managed access to Paradise Valley would remain easy and convenient for visitors.

LAKE LOUISE

CONTINUED ON A4

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CANMORE'S HOCKEY DAY IN CANADA

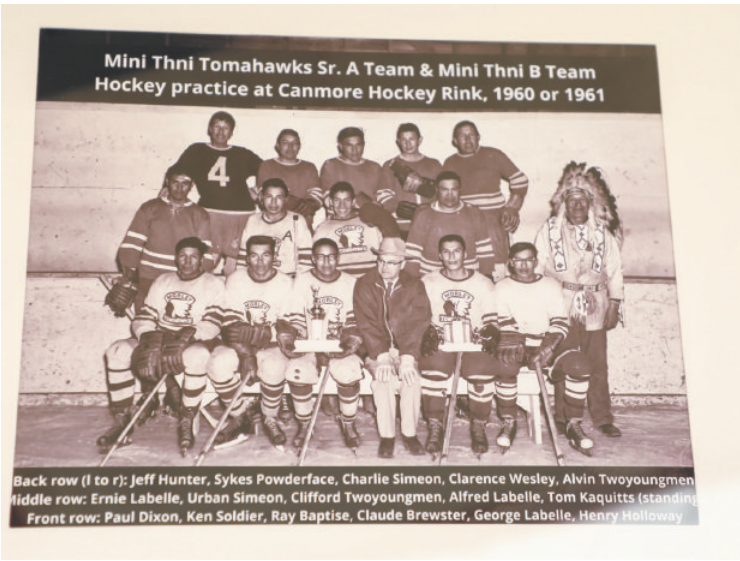
Clockwise from top left: Calgary Flames mascot Harvey the Hound visits with students; Sportsnet broadcaster Evanka Osmak introduces NHL alumni and the Stanley Cup; Grade 3 and Grade 4 students sing "The Hockey Song" by Stompin' Tom Connors; Stanley Cup champion Jay Bouwmeester brings an iconic piece of the sport's history, the Stanley Cup, onto the stage at Elizabeth Rummel School as part of the Scotiabank Hockey Day in Canada celebrations in Canmore on Thursday (Jan. 16); Stan Williams, left, and Niz Williams take a picture of the Stanley Cup; Toby Weigum, left, and Iver McPherson pose with the Stanley Cup at Canmore Creekside Hall on Friday (Jan. 17).

JUNGMIN HAM RMO PHOTOS



Clockwise from top left: Players battle it out with some ball hockey action at Hockey Day in Canada Ball Hockey Tournament; Mabel Hobbs, left, and Sam Hobbs enjoy playing with mini hockey sticks; Spencer Castle, left, and Alyssa Weber play a putting game with mini sticks at Scotiabank's Hockey Day in Canada Fan Festival on Saturday (Jan. 18); Team Red's Kevin Bieksa goes to the net with Team White's Chad Brownlee defending; Team White's Bryan Arneson blasts a shot at the Scotiabank Hockey Day in Canada Alumni and Celebrity Classic at the Canmore Recreation Centre on Friday (Jan. 17); Mount Royal University Cougars mascot, Calvin the Cougar, dances during intermission at the Scotiabank Hockey Day in Canada Women's U-Sports game at the Canmore Recreation Centre on Saturday (Jan. 18).

JUNGMIN HAM RMO PHOTOS



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LEGEND OF MÎNÎ THNÎ

Clockwise from A22: The former Mîni Thni Tomahawks players and elders chat about their playing days in the Bow Valley; The former Mîni Thni Tomahawks player Jeff Hunter, centre, recalls his playing days; The former Mini Thni Tomahawks players group photo; Goodstoney First Nation Chief Clifford Poucette, right, and Rod Hunter laugh as they talk about Mini Thni Tomahawks game days. On A23: The former Mini Thni Tomahawks players, elders and Town of Canmore Coun. Jeff Mah pose in front of a teepee at Scotiabank's Hockey Day in Canada Fan Festival on Saturday (Jan. 18).

JUNGMIN HAM RMO PHOTOS

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Lake Louise to Banff



LOPPET RELAY

Sunday, January 19, 2025

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And a very special thanks to our Volunteers!

The Loppet organizers and participants would like to thank the 70+ volunteers for their enthusiasm in setting track, recording times, handing out drinks, shovelling snow, and cheering on racers! You are the heartbeat of the event!

BALL HOCKEY BATTLE

From left: Dominic Marinelli carries the ball to the front of the net; John Szado runs hard toward the ball in a game at Hockey Day in Canada Ball Hockey Tournament in Canmore on Saturday (Jan. 18). With 118 participants, 18 teams took centre stage at the fan fest area. Winning the U9 was Banff Bear Cubs; taking first in the U15 was the Utah Yetis; and winning the 16+ was the Soul of Miistaki.

JUNGMIN HAM RMO PHOTOS



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