

# GRANDE CACHE BUSINESS VISITATION STUDY



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Presented by:  
Community Futures West Yellowhead

Community Futures West Yellowhead  
221 Pembina Avenue  
Hinton, AB, T7V 2 B3  
[www.westyellowhead.albertacf.com](http://www.westyellowhead.albertacf.com)

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**Grande Cache RABC Advisory Committee:**

|                  |                      |                  |
|------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Johannes Zwart   | Lisa Houle           | Erin Hambleton   |
| Rob Staples      | Sue Feddema- Leonard | Wally McNeil     |
| Shawn Moulun     | Lisa Steciuk         | David McPhee     |
| Gordon McIntoish | Gingie Welsh         | Gerry Verstraten |

Steven Novak, RABC  
Tara Zeller, Town of Grande Cache  
Loretta Thompson, Town of Grande Cache  
Grande Cache Tourism Information Centre Staff  
Councilors and Mayor of the Town of Grande Cache  
Helen Kelleher- Empey, Director, Community Futures West Yellowhead  
The Board and staff of Community Futures West Yellowhead  
Kimberley Worthington, Town of Hinton  
Nancy Robbins, Community Futures West Yellowhead  
Morgan Roberts, Community Futures West Yellowhead  
Business owners in the community of Grande Cache  
The Province of Alberta, Enterprise and Advanced Education  
Western Economic Diversification  
Tammy Powell, RABC Program Manager

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## Executive Summary

Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) is a community economic development tool used to encourage growth and stability for existing businesses. BRE incorporates structured information gathering that serves as a mechanism to build dialogue with local business with the aim to identify issues, goals and potential opportunities. The data collected is crucial to the sustainability and viability of rural communities. BRE is used to determine the needs and opportunities for business growth in a community through a systematic approach.

After receiving funding for the project the study was named the Grande Cache Business Visitation Study. The Grande Cache Business Visitation Study determines the needs and opportunities for business growth in the community through a systematic approach. It creates research and information that partners with community engagement to address community needs and opportunities.

This Business Visitation program incorporated the principles of Business Retention and Expansion. Through consultation with the Town of Grande Cache and the Grande Cache Rural Alberta Business Centre (RABC) a project proposal and work plan were developed. In collaboration with the RABC it was determined that a set of 5 questions should be developed to gain feedback from local businesses in Grande Cache.

CFWY consulted with the Municipality of Grande Cache and the Grande Cache Rural Alberta Business Centre (RABC) advisory committee in Grande Cache to vet the project's merit and gain ideas for the study. In collaboration with RABC small business advisor it was determined that a set of five questions should be developed to gain feedback from local businesses in Grande Cache.

The Grande Cache Business Visitation Study used a direct person to person interview system to collect information relevant to economic and business development. The study is meant to be a resource for the community that can be used to move forward in formation of business regulations, and economic development initiatives within the community of Grande Cache.

The Grande Cache Business Visitation Study was distributed across the business community of Grande Cache by members of the CFWY team. The opportunity to connect with local business is an important step in establishing a link between economic development partners and the business community.

This study is an asset to the community, brought forth by a third party regional non-profit organization. It provided business owners with the confidence to speak freely that they may not feel when dealing directly with a municipality employee or a local resident. The study offered the utmost in confidentiality and feedback was not accredited back to the source. Findings are shared by sector to ensure confidentiality within the business community.

Taking part in the interview session was optional, and generally lasted under 15 minutes. Interviews took place primarily in person, at the participant's place of business. It was felt that this method of one-on-one information gathering produced the most accurate and informative results. The response rate was high (82%) and the process feedback was very positive, with the majority of business welcoming the chance to speak freely. Several businesses sought out our study to specifically provide feedback and interview sessions were offered by appointment, drop in, telephone or email. All businesses interviewed have day to day operations in the physical proximity of the community of Grande Cache. CFWY staff undertook extensive pre-planning measures so that interviews were as efficient as possible to minimize the impact on the business owners' busy schedules.

The following seven key themes were identified from the study:

**Key themes of the study feedback include:**

**1. Community Pride**

- Business owners in Grande Cache identified the community as the most important thing to their overall quality of life
- Several business owners have noticed and appreciated an increase in social media from the Town of Grande Cache. The Tourism and Information Center was also praised for highlighting the community as a whole through their use of social media.
- Many Grande Cache business owners continue to do business in the community because of their passion for their geography and their residents

**2. Business Licences for Home-Based Businesses**

- The cost of home based business licences was identified as a barrier for small business growth

**3. Communication from the Town is Mixed**

- Increased signage and more transparent communications from the Town of Grande Cache were identified as priorities for most businesses

- Businesses commented that they were often passed around to various departments before being led to the Town website that didn't feature the initial requested information

#### **4. Need for Resources for Businesses on Local Level**

- Business owners identified a need for an increase in clear, concise information from the Town of Grande Cache. They asked for more interactive feedback sessions with town councillors
- More than half of business owners commented that the municipality should take a stronger role in advocating for the Northern Living Allowance.
- Business owners spoke about attracting new families and that overall business advocacy should be increased in the community

#### **5. Shop Local Initiatives**

- Most business owners feel that the average Grande Cache resident makes the majority of their purchases out of town.
- Over the past two years Grande Cache business owners experienced a 43% decline in the number of customers, most businesses felt that this decline was due to the number of residents shopping out of town.
- 36% of participants reported that their profits had decreased over the past two years.
- Some business owners felt bombarded by fundraising groups looking for donations, then those same groups shop out of town
- When asked, business owners said that they would participate and welcome a shop local campaign in the community.

#### **6. Oil and Gas Growth and Impact on Community**

- Most businesses categorized the state of their business as maintaining, with the only sector reporting growth overall to be oil and gas and transportation.
- Many companies in the oil and gas sector talked about wanting to give back to the community and expressed their pride in where they work, live and play.
- Many oil and gas owners expressed their frustrations with retail and grocery store hours closing before 7:00pm, stating that most of their workers don't finish their shifts until after that time.

#### **7. Need to diversify local business community**

- Many businesses stated that the community needs to diversify their tourism and economic dollars

- Maximizing the attraction of new families and professionals to the area by better utilization of events such as the death race.
- Increase the community dialogue regarding large events such as the death race to maximize spin off economic benefits for the community.

The primary data for this study was collected by CFWY staff during the summer months of 2014 and these findings are meant to be used as a snapshot in time. Contained in this study are a list of recommendations based on the statistical data collected in Grande Cache during the months of June to September 2014. This study should be used as an informational tool, and a starting point to encourage dialog between stakeholders and business owners. The document was designed to be used as a community document that any stakeholder or community partner could access. The full study can be accessed on the CFWY web page, [www.westyellowhead.albertacf.com](http://www.westyellowhead.albertacf.com) or in print at the Hinton CFWY office.

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Grande Cache is a town in West-Central Alberta located 145 kilometers northwest of Hinton and 435 kilometres west of Edmonton. It is located in the Municipal District of Greenview No 16, between Highway 40 and the Smoky River, at the northern border of Alberta's Rockies adjacent to The Jasper National Park and the Willmore Wilderness Area.

Grande Cache received town status on September 1, 1983. According to the 2011 Census, the Town of Grande Cache has a population of 4,319, and the median family income is \$79,923. The Town has historically suffered a boom – bust cycle due to the strong dependency on a single employer that depends on the coal market. In an attempt to diversify the economy, additional industries over the past 10 years have been encouraged to develop in the area.

According to the most recent government stats available (Census 2011) the largest employers in the community are mining and oil and gas (670 workers), public administration (300 workers), retail trade (240 workers) and healthcare, including social assistance (215 workers).

Key industries in Grande Cache are oil and gas exploration and development, forestry, coal production, tourism, thermal-electricity generation, and a federal correctional institution. There is a varied retail sector servicing residents and visitors, and a growing service sector supporting expanding resource industries in the area. Below is a brief summary of the larger industries represented in Grande Cache:

**Oil and Gas Exploration:** There has been expansion of the oil and gas sector in the area. Jupiter Energy has approximately 40 employees and retained contractors in Grande Cache. Conoco Phillips has approximately 30 contract operators and employees locally. Numerous other oil and gas companies are working in the area, supporting a number of service companies located in Grande Cache.

**Coal Production:** Grande Cache Coal employs approximately 450 people with hopes to be sitting at 475 by the end of 2015. Depending on the global demand for metallurgical coal the number will fluctuate with contractors and permanent staff.

**Thermal-Electricity Generation:** Milner Power's power plant employs approximately 100 people. Milner Power's plant uses coal to produce electricity.

**Forestry** - Forestry continues throughout the region with timber harvesting and the lumber mill by Foothills Forest Products, which employs approximately 50



people. There are plans to expand the wood pellet production, as well as potential expansion for power generation and the value-added forest products operation.

**Federal Correctional Institution** - The Grande Cache Correctional Institution is immediately adjacent to the town. This medium security operation employs approximately 275 staff.

**Tourism** - The tourism economy continues to grow to help diversify Grande Cache's economic base. Companies focusing on wilderness touring, horseback adventures, white water rafting, helicopter adventures and ATV tours are some of the many tourism related business in the community.

**Retail Industry**- According to the 2011 Census the retail sector of Grande Cache employs approximately 240 people in the community. This number has likely decreased with several larger retail businesses closing since that information was collected.

The 2014 Grande Cache Business Visitation study, was developed in consultation with the Town of Grande Cache, the Grande Cache Rural Alberta Business Centre and Community Futures West Yellowhead. It is intended for CFWY to conduct BRE studies in each of its five communities in the region. In 2014, a Business Visitation Program was initiated in Jasper and Grande Cache. It was established that a locally tailored survey would be the best fit for Grande Cache area.

The concept of Business Retention and Expansion is not new to the business community of Grande Cache. A predating study in March 2008 entitled "Grande Cache Economic Development" by the Town of Grande Cache was based on a BRE survey conducted by Santec Consulting Ltd. Out of this study, four business retention and expansion strategies were developed based on:

1. Human Capital- Improving Grande Cache's Local Availability and Productivity
2. Physical Capital- Improving Grande Cache's Physical Environmental
3. Enhancing Grande Cache's Marketing to Tourists, New Business and Developers
4. Enhancing Grande Cache's Existing Firms through Technical and Developmental Assistance

This study can be made available through the Town of Grande Cache and CFWY.

## 1.2 Purpose of Study

The main goals of this Business Visitation Program are:

- Identify major regional and community themes that are impacting Grande Cache's business community
- Contribute to the local economy by developing data that is current and relevant to community economic development goals
- increase communication between business support organizations and the business community
- Facilitate the gathering of data that can lead to effective strategic planning for community economic development and new businesses
- Act as a business attraction study
- Recommendations for future implementation in Grande Cache
- Understand and address urgent business issues through action

A set of five questions were developed to gain feedback from local businesses in Grande Cache. These questions focused on topics including opportunities and challenges of running a business in Grande Cache and overall community improvements that will encourage new business in the area. Information was also gathered from business owners and general managers on distinct changes over the past two years (2012-2014) regarding number of customers, total revenue and staffing.

The information collected is intended to build dialogue with local business with the aim to identify issues, goals and potential opportunities. The Grande Cache Business Visitation Study findings are available to the community and should be treated as a community document.

## 1.3 Community Futures West Yellowhead

Community Futures West Yellowhead is an independently operated, non-profit organization funded by the federal government's department of Western Economic Diversification. Currently, there are 268 Community Futures offices in Canada, including 27 offices in Alberta that support rural economic development by providing new or existing businesses the tools and resources they need to succeed. Established in 1985, Community Futures has helped over 114,000 entrepreneurs and invested over \$3.9 billion into the rural economy of Canada.

Community Futures is the only organization throughout rural Alberta with a mandate for business and community economic development. In 2013, 27 offices in Alberta made over 500 loans totaling \$26 million dollars, leveraging a further \$25 million which helped create or maintain nearly 1,600 jobs. Community Futures has a proven track record that shows that business clients grow faster and last longer than businesses started with other traditional source financing.

Community Futures West Yellowhead works in the communities of Jasper, Hinton, Edson, Grande Cache and Yellowhead County. Governed by a board of 10 directors with two representatives from each municipality, the main office is located in Hinton, Alberta. It is intended for CFWY to conduct BRE studies in each of its five communities in the region. In 2014, a Business Visitation Study was initiated in Jasper and Grande Cache. For more information regarding Community Futures West Yellowhead please visit [www.westyellowhead.albertacf.com](http://www.westyellowhead.albertacf.com).

## 1.4 Methodology

The Grande Cache Business Visitation Study consisted of a 5-15 minute interview based on five questions. Business owners were encouraged to be honest and forthcoming with their feedback and were asked for potential solutions to any identified challenges that they may have. Detailed notes were taken on each interview session, and all main themes recorded. Comments were encouraged by the interviewer, and all feedback from the study is represented under the individual questions in this document.

Participants were asked the following five questions:

1. How would you categorize the state of your business?
2. In your opinion what could be done to improve Grande Cache's business environment
3. What one change would make your business more successful?
4. What do you like about doing business in Grande Cache?
5. A) Over the past two years have the following business factors increased, stayed the same or declined:
  - Number of customers
  - Sales total revenue
  - Profits
  - Number of full-time employees
  - Number of part-time employeesB) If any of those business factors increased or decreased what was the principle reason for the change?

Full Survey Documents are provided in Appendix A.

An active business licence list was initially provided from the Town of Grande Cache in June 2014, and cited 76 active business within the community. Through further research and consultation with the Town of Grande Cache Communications Manager, as well as the Tourism Information Centre, a larger list of active businesses were developed. It was determined that only businesses with day to day operations in the physical proximity of the community would be interviewed, and CFWY would speak to a selection of businesses in each industry sector, including home-based business. A more extensive business licence list was provided by the town in October 2014 and featured 180 businesses. This new list includes all regional and provincial contractors that are permitted to operate within the municipality and surrounding area. A total of 148 businesses are represented in the interview sessions resulting in an 82% response rate for the study.

Several consultations took place with members of the community and the GC Tourism Information Centre to ensure that the Grande Cache Business Visitation Study captured

an accurate cross sample of each of the major industries. The majority of businesses interviewed were locally-owned operations with 10 or fewer employees. This number is reflected with Alberta's trend in small business owners. Larger business (50-100, or 100+ employees) did participate in the study, but do not make up the majority of business in the community.

The Grande Cache Business Visitation Study has produced a snapshot into doing business in the community of Grande Cache through the eyes of local business people. It has been produced to be shared as a resource for members of the community and in January 2014 made available on our website and the Town of Grande Cache's website. The preliminary findings were presented during Small Business Week, in the October 23<sup>rd</sup> Grande Cache Municipal Council Meeting. Information was also displayed during an event partnered by CFWY and Council entitled 'Business after Business – Coffee with Council' that took place prior to the presentation. Members of the public and business owners were personally invited by CFWY the Mayor and GC Council to attend. Approximately 30 people came to the drop-in event providing feedback and gaining a better understanding of the initial findings of the study.

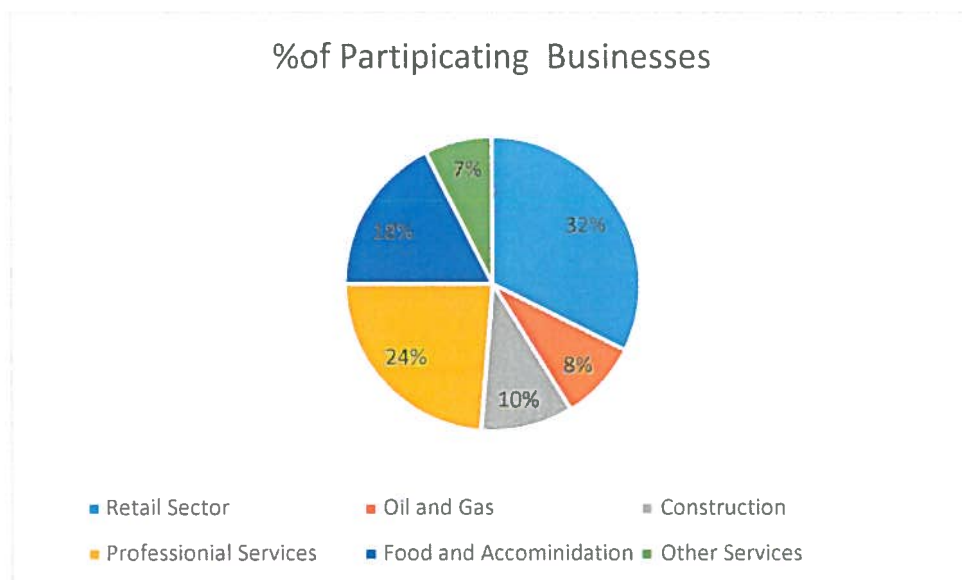
## 1.5 Study Timeline

| <b>Elements:</b>   | <b>Action:</b>   | <b>Resources:</b>  | <b>Time Frame:</b>            |
|--|--|--|-------------------------------|
| -Met with key partners<br>-Determined sample size  | -Engaged stakeholders<br>-Identified opportunities through discussion and presentation feedback  | -RABC advisory committee (including members of the Chamber of Commerce, town counselors, Western Diversification, Communications Manager and CAO of GC, etc.)                                  | April 2014 - May 2014         |
| -Developed marketing for the Grande Cache Business Visitation Study<br>-Started discussions with key stakeholders  | -Trained staff on Executive Pulse<br>-Developed information package for distribution<br>-Distributed to local business community                                   | -CFWY programming resources<br>-RABC<br>-Town of GC Active Business Licence list   | May 2014 – June 2014          |
| -Developed informational interview gathering tool, BRE survey<br>-5 basic questions, open ended etc.   | -Acquired points of interest from partnerships<br>-Compiled industry specific questions<br>-Formatted Grande Cache's specific information                          | -Economic Development Association of Alberta<br>-RABC  | May 2014 – June 2014          |
| -Interviewed participating businesses  | -Completed information gathering   | -CFWY<br>-RABC   | June 2014 - September 2014    |
| -Recorded results<br>-Analyzed findings of surveys   | -Provided accurate data input into various required sources to fulfil contract and reporting requirements  | -Executive Pulse software<br>-Town of Grande Cache revised Active Business Licences List<br>-Economic Development Association of Alberta   | September 2014-October 2014   |
| -Developed slideshow presentation and preliminary findings<br>-Facilitated 'Business after Business-Coffee with Council' to highlight preliminary findings<br>-Presented findings to GC Town Council | -Created executive summary and information package based on study preliminary findings<br>-Created slideshow information and tools to aid in various presentations | -Town of GC Council and administration<br>-Approximately 30 stakeholders and community members attended 'Business after Business' to provide feedback and comments<br>-CFWY Board of directors | October 2014                  |
| -Constructed full study based on findings  | -Constructed final study document and distribute to the GC community   | -CFWY board of directors<br>-General Manager CFWY  | November 2014 - December 2014 |

## 1.6 Survey Participation

The majority of participants in the Grande Cache Business Visitation Study were local retail operators, with strong participation from professional services, as well as construction, accommodation and food sectors. Other services represented businesses that did not logically fall within the five NAICS codes. The study did not graph these businesses specifically. However, their responses are included in the 'all industry' graphs. Home-Based Businesses were included in the study and are represented under the most appropriate NAICS code. A total of 148 businesses out of 180 participated in the study, resulting in an 82% overall response rate for the study.

Figure 1: Participating Businesses n=148



Most of the participating businesses were concentrated in the town shopping area, with most oil and gas and construction-based businesses being located in the industrial section of Grande Cache.

The majority of the retail sector is located in the town site shopping area. Grande Cache has a small mall locally called the Acorn Mall which houses a number of retail businesses including a home decor store, a coffee house, a spa / hair salon and a hardware store. The mall also includes a financial institution and a restaurant.

Near the Acorn Mall, in an area attached by a parking lot, there are two series of strip malls containing restaurants, the local newspaper, grocery store, professional services as well as an underground Zumba / gym facility. The Chamber of Commerce office is located inside a local non-profit office in this area as well.

In the industrial park lies a mixture of oil and gas related business, automotive and construction operations.

Continued on the next few pages you will be able to see how each sector answered the study questions. This information is useful when looking at priorities for different business sectors of the community.



## 2.0 Key Findings

For each key item, CFWY suggests a community dialogue with stakeholders in Grande Cache to create the framework for an action plan. Each priority should be given a project lead from within the town as there is no current Economic Developer within the Town of Grande Cache. Discussions on implementation, required resources and potential community and regional partnerships would benefit the success of local economic development.

### Key findings of the study include:

#### 1. Community Pride:

- Business owners in Grande Cache identified that community is the most important thing to their overall quality of life. Community is where they all live, it is where their children will hopefully live, and it is where their daily interactions define their lives. But community is not strictly about geography; community is shaped and defines the way individuals live. It is shaped by the experiences that are with our neighbors, the business community and the municipality working together to make Grande Cache a great place to call home.
- General feedback was positive and prove that although there have been recent community set-backs including layoffs and closures, the community remains hopeful that the economy will bounce back. Most businesses categorized their business state as 'maintaining', but were unsure how long they could continue at that level. The only sectors that showed growth overall were oil and gas and transportation. 28% of participants stated that they were 'declining' or 'considering closing'. CFWY staff has learned that two of these businesses have since closed in the community.

#### 2. Business Licences for Home Based Businesses:

- Several home-based businesses commented that the cost of a home-based business licence needs to be reviewed. Several home-based business owners stated that they didn't see a value in having a business licence with the Town of Grande Cache and had concerns on where the fee was going.

#### 3. Communication from the Town is Mixed:

- Many business owners cited that communication between the municipality and the general resident population must continue to improve. Many businesses felt that they were 'being kept in the dark' on a number of issues and that information sharing from the municipality needs to be improved.

- When business owners were asked how the community could improve on identified challenges, some ideas came forth. Some wanted an inclusive document or fact sheet that provided step by step, whom to speak to, and information on operating a business in Grande Cache. Several residents made comments about being passed from different departments and ultimately being led to the town website that they felt did not have the information they required. Some commented that regular website updates and more detailed council meeting minutes would be useful to showcase council transparency.
- Business signage was also identified as an ongoing problem. Business felt that the signage attracting travelers off of the highway corridor should be improved.
- Some business owners recommended visual advertisement or contact between councilors and business owners to occur on a regular basis. Recently CFWY partnered with council to have an open house drop in information session entitled 'Business after Business -Coffee with Council'. This event featured information on services that CFWY offers as well as the preliminary results of the Grande Cache Business Visitation Study. Council members made themselves available to the public to vet ideas and gather feedback on the study and local happenings. Approximately 30 people came out to the information session, several business owners, local non-profit leaders, teachers and informed citizens provided feedback and direct conversation on topics that are facing residents of Grande Cache.
- Several business owners have noticed and appreciated an increase in social media from the Town of Grande Cache. The Tourism and Information Center was also praised for highlighting the community as a whole through their use of social media.

#### **4. Need for Resources for Businesses on a Local Level:**

- More than half of the business owners commented that the municipality should take a stronger role in advocating for the Northern Living Allowance. They spoke about creating a general draw to the community and that a stronger push needs to happen to bring in new families. Many owners also stated that lower operating costs, with respect to land and store front property, could be subsidized for new business as an incentive. They felt that overall business advocacy should be increased in the community.
- Grande Cache business owners are a hardy bunch. They feel passionately about their geography and their residents. Most sectors stated that the people of Grande Cache and the scenic location play a large role in why they continue to do business in the community.

## **5. Shop Local Initiatives:**

- A shop local campaign was identified as a need as most business owners feel that the average Grande Cache resident makes the majority of their purchases out of town.
- 36% of GC businesses reported that their profits had decreased over the past two years. Residents purchasing goods and services outside of the community has affected the local entrepreneurs at an alarming rate. Many businesses believe that there is a general attitude among residents to purchase most of their services outside the community.
- Some business owners said that they are being bombarded by local non-profits and fundraising groups looking for donations, but then the same people are commuting to shop elsewhere. When asked, many Grande Cache business owners said that they would participate and welcome a shop local campaign in the community. They stated that a mind-set had to be changed by local consumers or business would continue to decline in Grande Cache.

## **6. Oil and Gas Growth and Impact on Community:**

- The oil and gas sector in Grande Cache has experienced growth within the community, despite several of the larger oil and gas companies cutting back on permanent staff. However, due to the construction of larger camp bases within the vicinity of the area providing all food and lodging, some business owners feel that this growth does not appear to be increasing the local economy. Many oil and gas owners expressed their frustrations with retail and grocery store hours, stating that most of their workers will be unavailable during current posted business hours, which primarily have things shutting down at 7 pm or before.

## **7. Need to Diversify Local Business Community:**

- Several owners talked about the 'boom / bust' tendencies of the mining and oil and gas sector locally. It was apparent that the business owners want to see the community succeed. Many companies in the oil and gas sector talked about wanting to give back to the community and expressed their pride in where they work, live and played.

- Over the last two years Grande Cache business owners experienced a 43% decline in the number of customers, and declines in their sales total revenue, with the exception being the oil and gas sector, which experienced growth in the area. Most businesses felt that the profit margin will continue to decline in the next two years due to number of residents shopping out of town.
- Business expressed that the changes in the local mining sector have caused uncertainty for a lot of local entrepreneurs. Many stating that as a community they need to diversify their tourism and economic dollars. There were many comments regarding the Death Race and maximizing the attraction of new families and professionals to relocate to this area. On the other hand, there were a couple of businesses that stated that the stress on the community for such a small timeframe was very difficult on staffing and planning for their business. Both sides agreed that more dialogue needs to happen on the Death Race and spin-off economic benefits, in order to maximize the benefits for the town.

## 2.1 State of Business

The first of five questions that was asked of business owners was to categorize the state of their business. Business owners were asked to select whether they felt their current business was growing, maintaining, declining, or if they were considering closing. As you will see in the figure below, 61% of participants categorized their business as maintaining.

**Figure 2.** How would you categorize the state of your business? (All Industry) n= 148

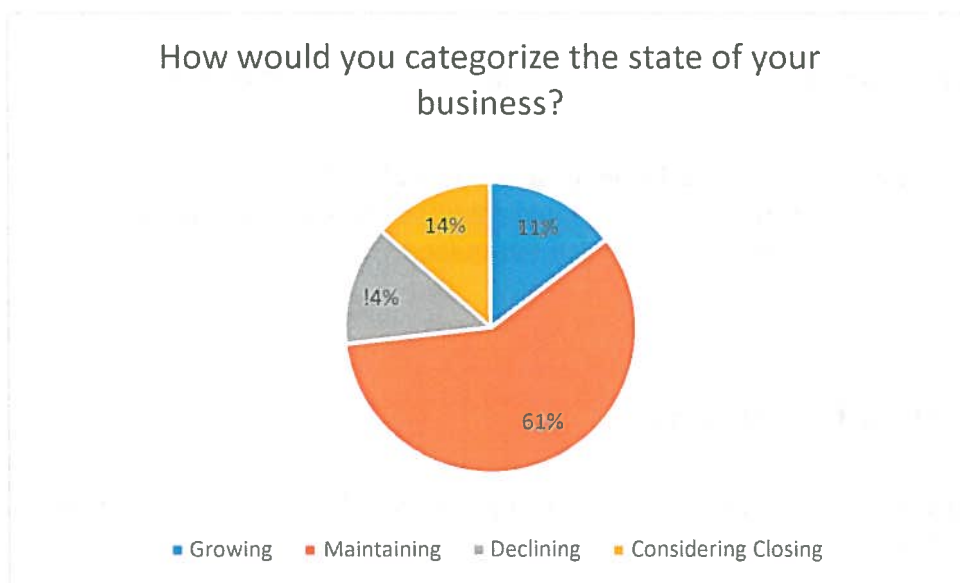


Figure 2. Represents the business community as a whole. 61% of businesses categorized their business state as 'maintaining', but were unsure how long they could continue at that level. The only sectors that showed growth overall were oil and gas and transportation (11%). 28% of businesses interviewed stated that they were declining or considering closing at the time of the interview.

Note: Since the initial research in summer 2014 CFWY staff has been informed that two of the businesses that had stated they were maintaining have closed their doors permanently. At the time of publication of this study CFWY staff were unable to receive feedback on the reason for closure. Two other businesses that stated they were considering closing have now ceased operations. One of these businesses stated that they were closing due to a family member passing, the second stated that due to declining

profits they were leaving the community. At this point they were unsure if they would reopen in another West Yellowhead community.

#### **State of Business Retail Sector:**

- 85% of interviewed retail businesses stated that they were maintaining, many mentioned that they were unsure how long they could continue at that level.
- 10% of business stated that they were declining or considering closing at the time of the interview session.
- Since our interview session two of these businesses have closed their doors.
- Retail businesses in Grande Cache are positive overall and feel that the economy will improve. Many businesses have implemented changes to adapt to current conditions and to improve work flow and minimize expenses.

#### **State of Business Oil and Gas Sector:**

- 57% of businesses interviewed in the oil and gas sector classified themselves as currently growing
- This is the only sector to report itself as experiencing growth. According to the 2011 Census oilfield and mining workers in Grande Cache represent 27 % of the Grande Cache workforce. However CFWY has spoken with major employers in both the oil and gas sector and the local mining sector in summer 2014, and have been told that overall employee numbers in both of these areas have likely declined since the time of the last Census.

### **State of Business Construction:**

- 56% of construction businesses indicated that they were maintaining
- Overall construction workers make up 23% of the Grande Cache workforce.
- Due to the size of the community many trade professionals operate on a regional basis.
- For our study, only businesses which have a physical operation in Grande Cache were interviewed

### **State of Business Professional Services:**

- 71 % of professional services and consultants said that they were maintaining
- 28% stated that they were in decline or considering closing
- Similar to the construction industry, given the size of the community, many professional services operate as a regional identity. For our study only professional services with day to day operations were included in the study.

### **State of Business Accommodation and Food Sector:**

- 45 % of surveyed business owners in the accommodation and food sector stated that they were maintaining
- 27% stated that they were considering closing
- Two businesses in this sector have closed since the initial interview
- In the 2011 Census 110 people stated that they were employed in the accommodation and food sector.
- Although not measured directly in this study several larger businesses in this study in the accommodation sector reported that in summer 2014 they were operating at a 20% occupancy rate. The exception to this being those businesses catering to the oil and gas sector.

## 2.2 Improvements to Grande Cache's Business Environment

The second question asked of all study participants dealt with potential improvements in Grande Cache's business environment. Interviewees provided business owners with a list of pre-determined improvements that they could select from, or provide additional ideas. This list was based upon information provided by the Economic Developers of Alberta Association in partnership with CFWY and RABC Grande Cache.

The following list was provided to business owners to select from:

- Availability of capital / financing
- Availability of qualified personnel
- Workforce training programs
- Post-Secondary institution
- Changes to K-12 Education
- Local tax structure
- Public service improvements
- Introduce high speed internet
- Improve local roads and highways
- Public transportation
- Healthcare
- Greenways / bike paths
- Workforce housing
- Reduced regulations
- Expedited permitting
- Food availability / choices
- Other: (Please Specify)

**Figure 3:** Potential improvements to the GC Business environment (All Industries)

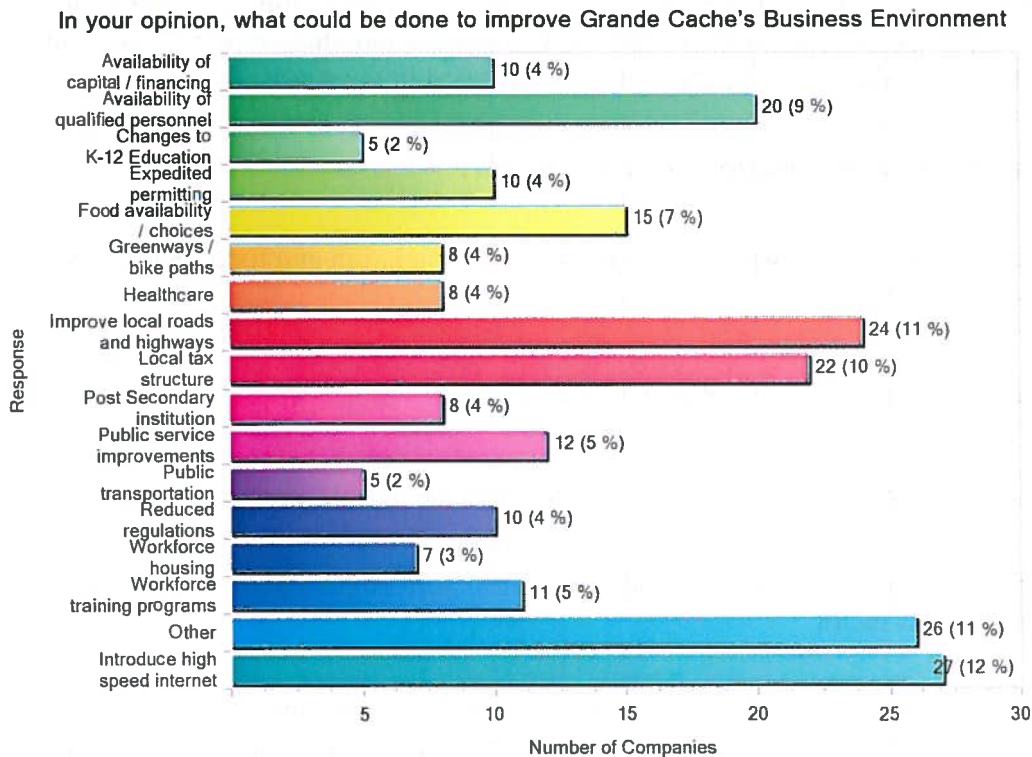




Figure 3 represents all industries in the business community. **Overall the business community identified their top 3 priorities to improve Grande Cache's business environment as:**

1. Introducing high speed internet (27%),
2. Improve local roads and highways (11%)
3. Other (11%)

Large portions of the community also identified the local tax structure (10%), shortages of qualified personnel (9%) and food availability and choices (7%). Other comments are listed under the specific industry that they are accredited with.

### **Retail Sector Priorities**

The top 3 priorities as identified by the retail sector:

1. Improve local roads and highways (15%)
2. Introduce high-speed internet (15%)
3. Other (15%)

Other comments in this section are as follows:

- Bring in more families to shop
- Shop local incentives
- Increased advocacy
- Northern living allowance
- Increased community signage and way finding

### **Oil and Gas Priorities**

The top 3 priorities as identified by the Oil and Gas sector:

1. Introduce high-speed internet (15%)
2. Other (15%)
3. Improve local roads and highways (15%)

Other comments in this section are as follows:

- Later grocery and shopping hours

## **Construction Industry Priorities**

The top 3 priorities as identified by the Construction Industry:

1. Other (16%)
2. Second and third priorities are tied :
  - Availability of qualified personnel (12%)
  - Food availability and choices (12%)
  - Public service improvements (12%)
  - Workforce training programs (12%)

Other comments in this section are as follows:

- Northern Living Allowance
- Later grocery and shopping hours

## **Professional Services Priorities**

The top three priorities as identified by the Professional Services Industry:

1. Improve local roads and highways (10%)
2. Public Service improvements (10%)
3. Reduced regulations (10%)

Other comments in this section are as follows:

- Increase community signage and way finding

## **Accommodation and Food Sectors Priorities**

The top three priorities identified by the Accommodation and Food Sectors:

1. Review local tax structure (17%)
2. Other (17%)
3. Availability of qualified personnel (13%)

Other comments in this section are as follows:

- Increase community signage and way finding
- Spend more on community tourism
- Encourage oil and gas growth within Grande Cache
- Increase transparency and community engagement with business owners

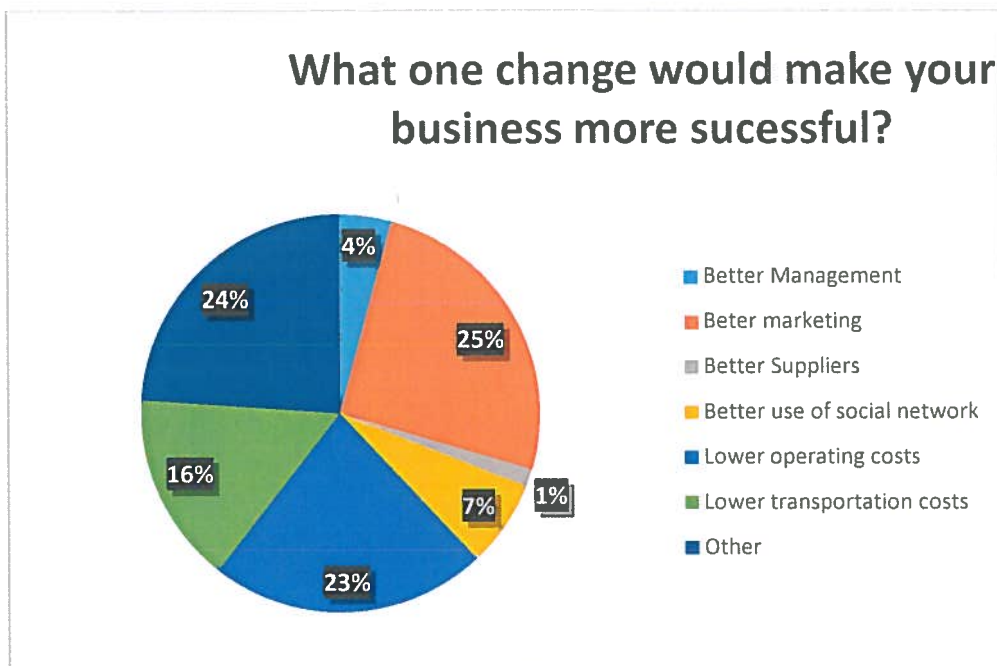
## 2.3 Successful Change

Businesses were asked ‘what one change would make your business more successful’, and provided a list to generate dialogue or supply their own feedback. This list was based upon information provided by the Rural Economic Developers of Alberta Association in partnership with CFWY and RABC Grande Cache.

The following list was provided to business owners to select from:

- Better marketing
- Better suppliers
- Better use of social networking
- Lower operating costs
- Lower transportation costs
- Better management
- Other: (Please Specify)

Figure 4: Successful change: All Industry



- 25% of Grande Cache businesses felt that increased or improved community marketing would be the most impactful change.
- 24% felt that lower operating costs, including but not limited to store front costs, taxes and cost of living, would provide the biggest benefit to their business.

- Not far behind, 23% felt that other changes different from the current list would make the biggest difference in their operations. Other comments are listed under their designated sector.

### **Successful Changes: Retail Sector**

- The retail sector has two top priorities, better marketing of the community (26%) and lower operating costs for businesses (26%).
- This response is typical of the sector in rural Alberta overall, a larger community would produce a larger consumer base.
- Retail business participants also mentioned the recent closure of a larger discount chain. This change in the market has produced higher sales numbers in the interim, due to consumers having less local options. However many studies show that by reducing the number of businesses in a sector, more consumers are likely to leave the community to shop, spending disposable income out of town instead of in the local economy.
- Other comments in this section include:
  - Northern Living Allowance
  - Business advocacy and resources
  - More local shopping

### **Successful Changes: Oil and Gas Sector**

- 60% of oil and gas respondents felt that Lower operating costs would make their business more successful.
- As most oil and gas companies do not rely on tourism activity this is an expected response, other than staffing expenses, transportation of their products is their highest expense.
- The majority of feedback from the oil and gas sector focused on the quality of life for their employees. Many stating that their workers would spend more in the local economy if business hours accommodated evening shopping.

## Successful Changes: Construction Sector

- The Construction sector feels that a selection of other factors would make their business more successful, with the second potential change being equally weighted between better community marketing and lower transportation costs.
- Increased marketing translates into potential increased populations, producing new growth in construction and development. The trickle down economic development model is well suited for smaller rural communities.
- Similar to the oil and gas sector, transportation represents, some of the highest expenditures in the construction industry.
- Other comments in this section include:
  - Northern Living Allowance
  - Lower taxes
  - Increased communication
  - Attracting and Retaining quality staff and trade people

## Successful Changes: Professional Services Sector

- 50 % of the professional services sector felt that increased community marketing would make their business more successful.
- By increasing targeted marketing of the community, the population will grow thus providing a larger consumer base for professional services. As we looked at in section 2.1, many professional service providers operate as regional businesses.
- By increasing the community marketing in a targeted fashion, the community could potentially attract professionals looking for a change in quality of life. Many professionals generally value a higher quality of life including outdoor and fitness experiences, in which Grande Cache excels.
- Other comments in this section include:
  - Attracting and retaining quality staff and professionals

## Successful Changes: Accommodation and Food Services Sector

- 30% of Accommodation and Food Sector businesses feel that lower operating costs would make them more successful. They also feel that several other factors would highly (30%) contribute to success.
- 30% felt that a combination of better social media networking and over all community marketing would increase success. This sector highly values social media and internet sites such as Trip Advisor, so the increase in social media would be on trend for their industry.
- Other comments in this sector include:
  - Less restriction from the town on large vehicle parking
  - Northern Living Allowance
  - Increased community signage

## 2.4 Doing Business in Grande Cache

Business owners were asked 'what they liked about doing business in Grande Cache'.

Figure 5: What do you like about doing business in Grande Cache? (All Industry)

### What do you like about doing bsuienss in Grande Cache?

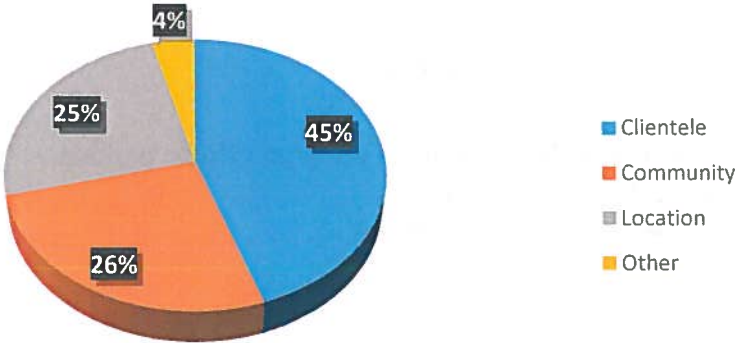


Figure 5 represents all industries in the business community as a whole. The following graphs look into each of the different business sectors.

Overwhelmingly Grande Cache business owners have a strong sense of community pride. With 72% of respondents claiming that they continue to operate and do business in Grande Cache due to the people and the community, it's not surprising that many commented that they wanted to raise their family there.



### **What do you like about doing business in Grande Cache? (Retail Sector)**

- 63% stated that what they liked most about doing business in Grande Cache was dealing with the local clientele.
- Comments included:
  - My family is here
  - It feels like a safe place to raise a family

### **What do you like about doing business in Grande Cache? (Oil and Gas)**

- 57% stated that what they liked most about doing business in Grande Cache was dealing with the local clientele.
- Comments included:
  - The town has a small town feel
  - It's beautiful here
  - My commute is shorter than if I lived in Grande Prairie

### **What do you like about doing business in Grande Cache? (Construction)**

- 56% stated that what they liked most about doing business in Grande Cache was working in the location of Grande Cache.
- Comments included:
  - There's work here for me
  - I love the mountains
  - Fishing and hunting are very important to me
  - I have too much invested to pull out now

**What do you like about doing business in Grande Cache? (Professional Services)**

- 50% stated that what they liked most about doing business in Grande Cache was working in the community.
- Comments Included:
  - It has a small town feel
  - My family is here
  - I don't want to live in the city

**What do you like about doing business in Grande Cache? (Accommodation and Food Sector)**

Accommodation and Food Sector:

- 50% stated that what they liked most about doing business in Grande Cache was dealing with the local clientele.
- Comments included:
  - My family is here
  - I feel safe in the community

## 2.5 Distinct Changes 2012-2014

Business owners were asked about specific business factors, and whether they had increased, stayed the same or declined in the past two year period. This list was based upon information provided by the Economic Developers of Alberta Association in partner with CFWY and RABC Grande Cache.

### Number of customers

**Figure 6:** Have your number of customers changed in the past two years? (All Industry)  
n=148



Figure 6 represents the business community as a whole. 43% of interviewed business started that over the past two years their number of customers have declined. 16% reported that they had an increase in customers over the past two years. This increase is mostly due to companies in the oil and gas sector.

### **Have your number of customers changed in the past two years? (Retail Sector)**

- 75% of businesses owners in the retail sector stated that they experienced no growth in the number of customers in the past two years. 35% saw a decline in the number of customers for that time period.

### **Have your number of customers changed in the past two years? (Oil and Gas)**

- 43% of oil and gas companies experienced growth in terms of numbers of customers in the past two years. 58% reported no new customers for the same time period.

### **Have your number of customers changed in the past two years? (Construction)**

- 70% of the construction industry experienced no new customers in the past two years. 30% of construction companies reported that they maintained their number of customers over the same time period.

### **Have your number of customers changed in the past two years? (Professional Services)**

- 71% of the professional service sector did not experience any growth in the past two years. 57% stated that they saw a decrease in the number of customers overall in that time frame.

### **Have your number of customers changed in the past two years? (Accommodation and Food Service)**

- 84% of accommodation and food service saw no increase in numbers of customers over the past two years. 59% reported that they saw a decrease in the same time period.

## Sales –total revenue

Figure 7 How has your Sales-Total Revenue changed in the past two years? (All Industry) n=148

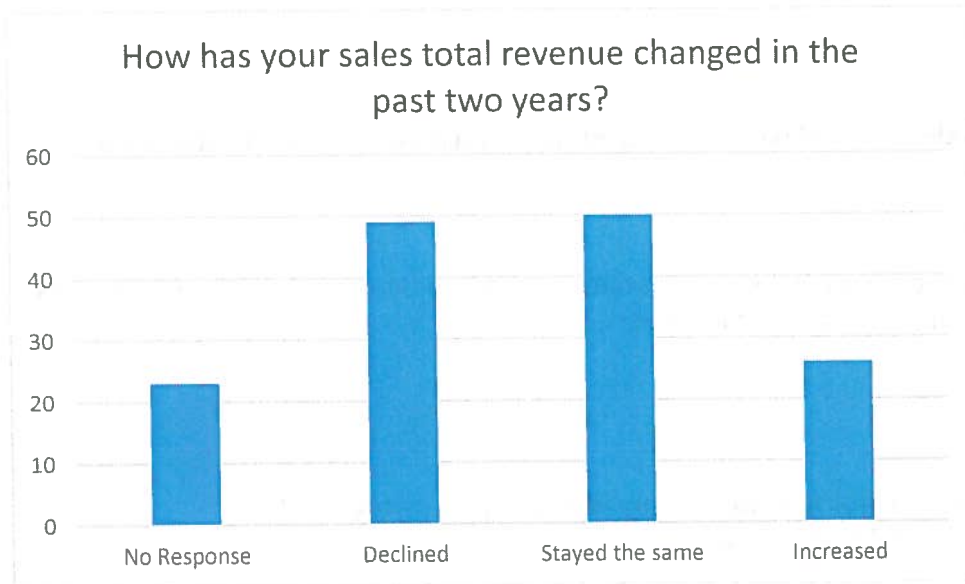


Figure 7 represents the business community as a whole. Only 16% of participants saw growth in the past 2 years. 35% of businesses stated that their sales total revenue had stayed the same. 34% of GC business stated that their sales total revenue had declined. While CFWY staff cannot be sure, with 16% not answering this question, one would wonder if participants did not want to discuss the fact that their sales total revenue was declining.

### How has your Sales-Total Revenue changed in the past two years? (Retail Sector)

- 70% of retail businesses reported no growth in their sales total revenue over the past two years. 45% stated that they did not decline, but maintained the same sales total revenue for the same time period. 25% reported that they experienced a decline in the past two years. The response rate on this question was low.

### How has your Sales-Total Revenue changed in the past two years? (Oil and Gas)

- 43% of the oil and gas sector reported growth in sales total revenue for the past two years.

**How has your Sales-Total Revenue changed in the past two years? (Construction)**

- 40% of the construction industry maintained their sales total revenue over the past two years.

**How has your Sales-Total Revenue changed in the past two years? (Professional Services)**

- 58% of the professional services sector experienced no new growth in their sales total revenue over the past two years.

**How has your Sales-Total Revenue changed in the past two years? (Accommodation and Food Sector)**

- 75% of businesses in the accommodation and food sector showed no growth in the past two years. 42% experienced a decline while 33% stated that they maintained current levels over the past two years.

## Profits

Figure 8: How have your profits changed in the past two years? (All Industry) n=148



Figure 8 represents the business community as a whole. 36% of participating businesses said that their profits declined over the past two years. 19% reported a profit increase, again this is mostly attributed to the oil and gas sector.

### How have your profits changed in the past two years? (Retail Sector)

- 10% of retail businesses experienced an increase in profits over the past two years. 45% stated that their profit level has been consistent over the past two years.

### How have your profits changed in the past two years? (Oil and Gas)

- 57% of the oil and gas sector experienced a growth in profits over the past two years.

### **How have your profits changed in the past two years? (Construction)**

- 30% of the construction industry increased their profits over the past two years, while 50% also stated that they did not experience any growth to their profit margin over the same time period.

### **How have your profits changed in the past two years? (Professional Services)**

- 58% reported no growth in profits over the past two years. 20% of the sector declined to answer this question.

### **How have your profits changed in the past two years? (Accommodation and Food Services)**

- 50% of the accommodation and food sector experienced a decline in profits over the past two years.



## Number of full time employees

Figure 9 How have your number of full time employees changed in the past two years?  
(All Industry) n=148

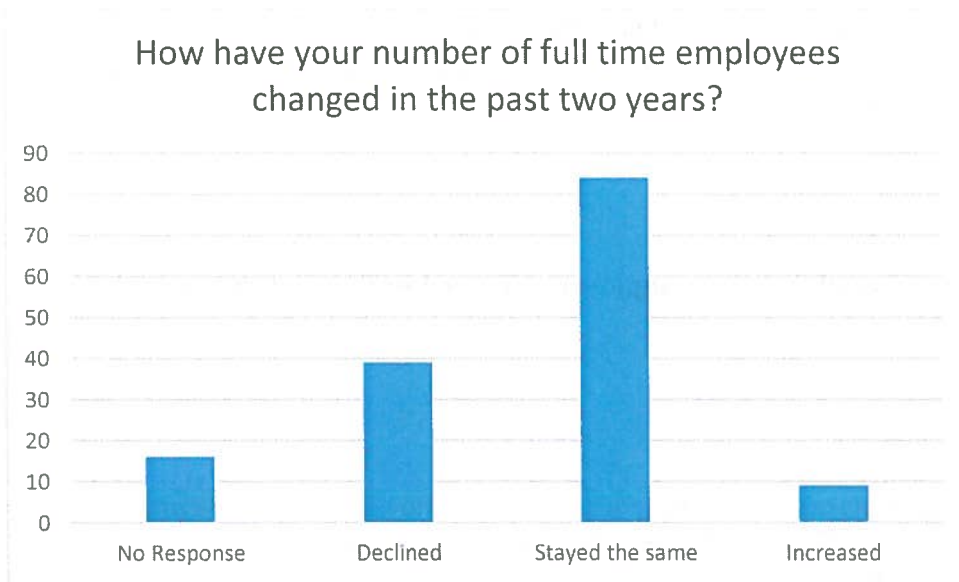


Figure 9 represents all industries in the business community. Most Grande Cache employers are expecting the local economy to level out and have kept staff on without cutbacks. 59% of participating businesses have stated that their number of full-time staff has stayed the same. As most of the businesses in Grande Cache are small businesses with 10 or less employees, often the full-time staff members are the owners themselves, or key employees.

**How have your number of full-time employees changed in the past two years?  
(Retail Sector)**

- 65% of retail businesses have kept their full-time staff consistent over the past two years.
- 15% of local retailers saw an increase, this is mostly due to the closure of a prominent discount retail store. Most of their misplaced employees are now working in other local retail stores.

**How have your number of full-time employees changed in the past two years? (Oil and Gas)**

- 61% of oil and gas operations have had to reduce the number of full-time staff in the past two years. Some of the feedback that accompanied this question was a real change in the dynamics of the local oil field. Many oil and gas companies have started hiring smaller contractors to complete larger operations. This appears to be a change in the industry overall and not just the community of Grande Cache.

**How have your number of full-time employees changed in the past two years?  
(Construction)**

- The construction sector has maintained the same level of full time staff over all with 80% stating that their number of full time staff has not changed in the last two years. Some of the feedback that was received for this question mentioned that most construction companies are only employing key staff members, and business owners are on average working at the company themselves. This is reflected throughout Alberta and Grande Cache is no exception.

**How have your number of full-time employees changed in the past two years?  
(Professional Services)**

- 43% of the professional services sector had to reduce the number of full-time staff in the past two years. 29% stated that they maintained full time staff over the past two years.

**How have your number of full-time-employees changed in the past two years?  
(Accommodation and Food Services)**

- 58% of the accommodation and food sector maintained their full-time staff. 33% stated that they had to decrease the number of full-time staff over the past two years.

## Number of part time employees

**Figure 10** How have your number of part-time employees changed in the last two years?  
(All industry) n=148

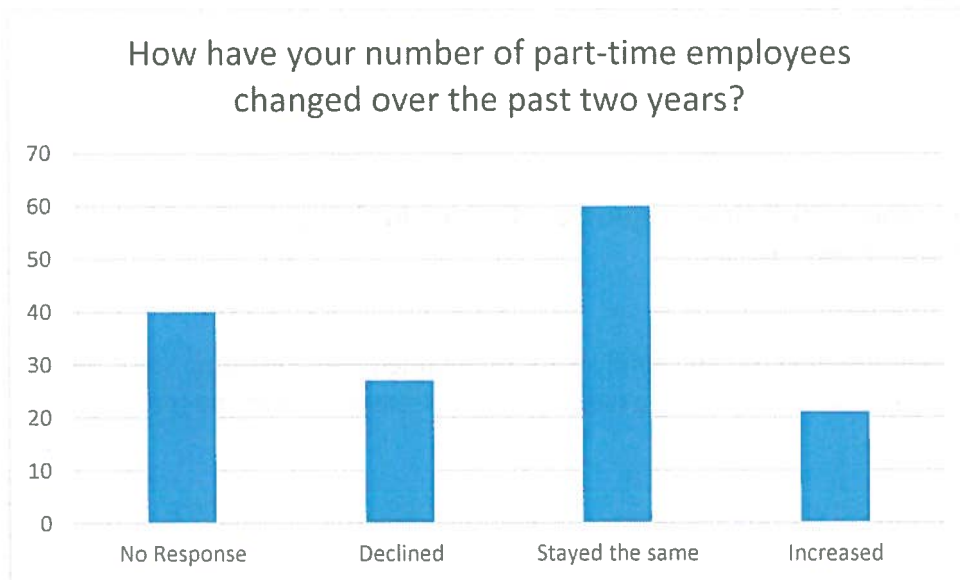


Figure 10 represents the business community as a whole. While full-time jobs saw little to no growth, part-time positions grew by 15% over the past two years. This is largely due to structural changes in staffing models and employers moving towards part time, casual and contract positions to decrease staffing overhead.

The no response rate for this question was high (27%), this is largely due to businesses leaving out the question because their operations did not have any part-time staff.

**How have your number of part-time employees changed in the last two years?  
(Retail Sector)**

- 50% of the retail sector retained their part-time staff. 25% of the retail sector chose not to answer the question or does not operate normally with part-time staff. 15% reported an increase in the number of part-time positions created over the past two years.

**How have your number of part-time employees changed in the last two years? (Oil and Gas)**

- A large number (29%) of the oil and gas sector chose not to respond to this question or do not operate a model that includes part-time staff. 29% stated that they reduced the number of part-time staff. Some of the feedback included that the part-time position or positions that were eliminated were often the administrative roles in the company. These roles are now being outsourced to the larger offices within the company, resulting in Grande Cache being more of a satellite office. Only 14% indicated that they hired additional part-time staff.

**How have your number of part-time employees changed in the last two years?  
(Construction)**

- 60% of construction companies maintained their part-time employees over the past two years.

**How have your number of part-time employees changed in the last two years?  
(Professional Services)**

- 71% of the professional services sector maintained the same number of part-time employees over the past two years.

**How have your number of part-time employees changed in the last two years?  
(Accommodation and Food Services)**

- 50% of the accommodation and food services sector maintained the same number of part time employees over the past two years. 25% stated that the number of part-time staff declined. This decline is reflected on their perceived growth overall.

### **3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on key findings and themes discovered through the Business Visitation Study. It is not the intention of CFWY to act on all action items and recommendations.

The Business Visitation Study is meant to be used as a community document and recommendations can be used by key community stakeholders to champion the goal for the community. This document has been made available for public use and all materials can be found on the CFWY webpage or the Town of Grande Cache webpage.

On the next few pages there are potential goals, action items and recommendations based on the Grande Cache Business Visitation Study findings. They are meant to be used a recommendation for further action in the community of Grande Cache. The action items are not directed at the Town of Grande Cache or any particular stakeholder. The information contained in this study is meant to be used as a bench mark and a snapshot in time for Grande Cache business owners, reflecting the time period of summer 2014.

### 3.1 Goals and Action Plans

#### Goal 1: Market and enhance local tourism opportunities (Community Pride)

| Action item   | Resources and partners   | Outcomes/ deliverables   | Short Term Goal   | Medium Term Goal  | Long term goal   | Target completion date                         | Progress |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|--|----------|
| -Conduct a market survey of tourists over a one-year season   | -Tourism operators, Alberta Northern Rockies Tourism Alliance, Travel Alberta, Chamber of Commerce Wilmore Wilderness Foundation, Town of Grande Cache (marketing department), Grande Cache town council | - An enhanced understanding of local tourism habits and expenditures<br>- A united group of tourism stakeholders working unitedly towards promoting Grande Cache<br>-Tourism market research completed | -Gather potential partners<br>-Start generating dialog through open forum sessions and group discussion   | -Develop focus groups based on key partners<br>-Develop and refine survey questions and distribution  | -Implement survey community wide<br>-Review and share results with identified stakeholders   | By 2016  | TBD      |
| -Complete a directed community marketing plan, focusing on consistent branding and targeted demographics. | -Tourism operators, Alberta Northern Rockies Tourism Alliance, Travel Alberta, Chamber of Commerce Wilmore Wilderness Foundation, town of Grande Cache marketing department, Grande Cache town council   | -Distribute consistent marketing plan to the region and province wide<br>-Target specific identified groups and Canadian regions based on 2016 tourism market survey and focus group results           | -Analyze data from the 2016 Tourism Market Survey<br>-Identify 5 main goals<br>-Identify most successful marketing distribution                 | -Reevaluate current marketing initiatives and effectiveness<br>-Develop a marketing plan<br>-Present and gain feedback from identified stakeholders | -Distribute marketing program developed by 2016, delivered by 2017   | After completion of 2016 tourism market survey | TBD      |
| -Promote Grande Cache as a place to live work and play through various multimedia sources                 | -Tourism operators, Alberta Northern Rockies Tourism Alliance, Travel Alberta, Chamber of Commerce Wilmore Wilderness Foundation, town of Grande Cache marketing department, Grande Cache town council   | -Create awareness of opportunities for growth in the community of Grande Cache   | -Identify current multimedia tourism tools in use<br>-Identify local stakeholders using multimedia successfully locally to promote Grande Cache | -Use current available tools to work towards 5 identified goals in the 2016 Tourism Market Survey   | -Distribute marketing program throughout Alberta and Canada<br>-Create awareness of opportunities and benefits of living in Grande Cache | ongoing  | TBD      |



## Goal 2: Review Home Based Business (HBB) Bylaws

| Action item   | Resources and partners   | Outcomes/ deliverables  | Short Term Goal                                    | Medium Term Goal   | Long term goal  | Target completion date | Progress |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|------------------------|----------|
| -Review current pricing structure for Home-Based Businesses                               | -Town administration, council                                    | -Keep HBB costs comparable throughout the region<br>-Increase knowledge base of local entrepreneurs   | - Review current bylaws                            | - Gain feedback from regional communities on pricing and communication | -Revise bylaws if necessary   | By 2016                | TBD      |
| -Provide resources for starting a business and growing a HBB into a store front operation | -Town administration, council, Community Futures West Yellowhead | - Keep current data on HBB's<br>-Tract growth and local stats<br>-Create information on proven effective growth techniques and how to succeed in GC<br>-Include a section in the online directory focusing on HBB | -Find out how many local HBB are operational in GC | -Develop marketing material and game plan to reach HBB                 | -Promote economic growth in GC<br>- Provide context for costs and benefits for obtaining a business license and operating legally | Ongoing                | TBD      |
| -Include Home Based Businesses in online business directory                               | -Town administration, Community Futures West Yellowhead          |   | -Find out basic information on HBB in GC           | - Compile data   | -Include data on online business directory  | By 2016                | TBD      |

### Goal 3: Community Signage (Communication)

| Action item  | Resources and partners   | Outcomes/ deliverables   | Short Term Goal  | Medium Term Goal   | Long term goal  | Target completion date | Progress |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|------------------------|----------|
| -Reevaluate current community signage                                | -Town administration, council  | -Develop an action plan for signage revitalization   | -Create an inventory existing signage  | -Identify problem areas and areas with room for improvement<br>- look at regional communities for proven success     | -Gather stakeholder feedback on signage opportunities<br>-Develop an action plan to plan for signage upgrades | By 2016                | TBD      |
| -Examine downtown core for ease and transition into the community    | -Town administration, marketing and council, chamber of commerce, Acorn mall, business community, CFWY | - Improve entrance to the downtown core<br>-Investigate down town core beautification initiatives program                      | -Gather stakeholders for public forum<br>-Identify challenges, and opportunities                             | -Look into strategic planning for upgrades and changes to infrastructure   | -Re design existing entrance / parking lot<br>-Investigate beautification initiatives                         | By 2016                | TBD      |
| -Look at community way finding and signage to key tourism priorities | -Town administration and marketing, council, Chamber of Commerce, Golf Course, campground              | -Increase visibility to community attractions<br>-Update / increase community signage including street and directional signage | -Develop an inventory list of current attractions<br>-Identify commonly used routes to permanent attractions | -Develop a priority list of main attractions<br>-Develop an action plan to increase accessibility to key attractions | -Implement identified actions<br>-Create community awareness for new tourism priorities                       | By 2017                | TBD      |

**Goal 4: Coordinate events for business to business mentoring (Business to Business Marketing)**

| Action item  | Resources and partners   | Outcomes/ deliverables  | Short Term Goal  | Medium Term Goal  | Long term goal   | Target completion date | Progress |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|------------------------|----------|
| -Establish mini seminars and community open forums for businesses on key topics                              | -Town administration, Marketing Department of GC, GC Chamber of Commerce, CFWY | -Increase constructive feedback from the business community<br>-Increase knowledge base of local entrepreneurs<br>-Create transparency, enforce that council has made business a priority | - Collect feedback on topics of interest from stakeholders                                 | -Market and plan a facilitating body or compile info for community engagement | -Schedule a series of community forums   | By 2016                | TBD      |
| -Encourage dialogue between key stakeholders and the business community                                      | -Town administration, Marketing Department of GC, GC Chamber of Commerce, CFWY | - Increased dialog between community stakeholders   | -compile a communication list of key organizations and community stakeholders              | -Create opportunities for engagement  | -Schedule regular feedback / meetings every 6 months to foster and grow the relationship | Ongoing                | TBD      |
| -Provide networking events and information fairs to inform GC residents of local opportunities and resources | -Town administration, Marketing Department of GC, GC Chamber of Commerce, CFWY | - Increased community engagement and communication  | - Identify a time of year that works best for administration, perhaps September or October | -Create a vision for the event, who, what, where etc                          | -Invite and market the event<br>-Follow up with participants for feedback                | By 2016                | TBD      |

## Goal 5: Shop Local Initiatives

| Action item  | Resources and partners  | Outcomes/ deliverables  | Short Term Goal   | Medium Term Goal  | Long term goal  | Target completion date | Progress |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------|----------|
| -Develop and distribute a shop local program   | -Town administration, Marketing Department of GC, GC Chamber of Commerce, local business community, Alberta Northern Rockies Tourism Alliance | - A measurable increase in local shopping<br>-Potential 'Shop Local' incentives program   | -Gather key stakeholders<br>-Identify a project champion                  | -Develop focus groups based on key partners<br>-Develop a plan for moving forward   | -Create a tailored shop local program that has community support<br>-Reevaluate program at 12 month intervals | By 2016                | TBD      |
| - Create an up to date online business directory   | - Local community stakeholders, the business community, Council and GC town administration, CFWY  | - An online resource for the community that encourages local shopping and direct information sharing<br>-Increase awareness of local shifts and trends in the GC market | -Information gathering  | -Data entry and ease of visibility on local website(s)                              | - Easily accessible working document<br>-Current business listing with local stats                            | Ongoing                | TBD      |
| -Create a distinctive shop local brand for Grande Cache to create awareness and community buy in | -Town administration and marketing, GC Chamber of Commerce, CFWY, Alberta Northern Tourism Alliance, Local Business Community                 | -Create a consistent brand to distribute on all Shop local materials<br>-Distribute to the business community   | -Determine the goal of shop local branding, awareness, info graphic, etc. | -Develop a shop local graphic<br>-Gain feedback from stakeholders in a launch event | -Develop an action plan for distribution that fits with shop local program                                    | By 2016                | TBD      |

### Goal 6: Oil and Gas Impact on the Community

| Action item  | Resources and partners   | Outcomes/ deliverables   | Short Term Goal  | Medium Term Goal   | Long term goal  | Target completion date | Progress |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|------------------------|----------|
| -Create opportunities for more community involvement and relationship building | -Town administration, Marketing Department of GC, GC Chamber of Commerce     | -Foster an open relationship and encourage discussion between oil and gas business and the town of Grande Cache  | - Generate a specific list of current and past oil and gas companies working in the area | -Generate 5 questions specific to their experience working in Grande cache<br>- Contact list of companies to complete survey | - Create an action plan to implement potential changes to foster a healthy relationship                 | By 2016                | TBD      |
| -Review bylaws on parking large vehicles within the town boundaries            | -Town administration, Council  | -Revised by laws   | - Review current by laws   | - compare feedback generated in survey to current by laws  | -Revise if necessary  | Ongoing                | TBD      |
| -Encourage local businesses to accommodate oil and gas workers                 | -Town administration, Council, Chamber of Commerce, local business community | - Encourage business owners to try a different operating schedule as a pilot project<br>-Assist local business owners with direct marketing to oil and gas companies | - Engage the business community for feedback on hours of operation etc.                  | - Work with local owners to try different scheduling options for a specific time frame                                       | -Assist local owners with direct marketing to oil and gas companies to ensure a successful trial period | By 2016                | TBD      |

### Goal 7: Create a 0.5 Economic Development Position

| Action item  | Resources and partners  | Outcomes/ deliverables   | Short Term Goal  | Medium Term Goal  | Long term goal  | Target completion date | Progress |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|------------------------|----------|
| -Create a 0.5 position within town administration to directly supervise community economic development | -CAO Town of GC, Human Resources Town of GC, Council Members of GC  | - New or prioritized role of staff<br><br>- Accurate up to date information on the local business community<br><br>- Direct feedback and communication between council and the local business community<br><br>- Clear concise vision for growth in the community<br><br>-More understanding of relationship challenges between council and local business community | - Investigate costs or role sharing opportunities within administration<br><br>- Work with council to develop a list of priorities | -Develop focus groups based on key partners<br><br>-Develop a plan for moving forward<br><br>-Create opportunities and prioritize items put forth by council and administration | -New or re prioritized staff person<br><br>-Ongoing communication between the local business community, stakeholders and council<br><br>- Assign member of town administration to directly supervise the economic development of the community<br><br>-foster growth from within existing businesses<br><br>-Create a set of community properties and a potential action plan<br><br>-Increased transparency between the business community and council<br><br>-Encourage new business growth | By 2016                | TBD      |
| -Define and formalize a local economic development process   | - Local community stakeholders, the business community, Council and GC town administration, Community Futures West Yellowhead | - Create Fact sheets or informational documents to make communication ease communication between local stakeholders, the business community and council<br><br>- create a sub-committee under the town of GC that fosters local economic development as a town priority  | -Gather potential partners<br><br>-Start generating dialog through open forum sessions and group discussion                        | Create community forums to engage the business community and identify local issues and solutions  |   | By 2016                | TBD      |
| -Create a resource for local business owners assisting with communications                             | - Local stakeholders, the business community, communication officer town of GC, Council                                       | - Create insensitive to further develop the downtown core<br>-Attract new businesses, encourage local shopping   | -Encourage dialog between stakeholders<br><br>-Investigate potential partnerships and regional success stories                     | -Gain by-in from local retailers<br><br>-Develop and implement a plan to revitalize the down town core  | -Increase business in GC<br><br>-Revitalize and support existing businesses<br><br>-Increase quality of life for residents  | By 2017                | TBD      |
| -Create downtown revitalization and beautification initiatives   | - Local stakeholders, CFWY, Chamber of Commerce, Council, Business Community  |  |  |   |   |                        |          |

## 3.2 Follow-up

This Business Visitation Study is meant to represent a benchmark, or snapshot in time. The study is designed to be facilitated every two years and compared to the previous findings. Over this period a full snapshot into the economic state of the community of Grande Cache is visible.

CFWY recommends that a similar study be completed again in two years to gain feedback and watch for emerging trends in economic growth and stability.

For more information or to receive a copy of this study please contact:

Community Futures West Yellowhead  
221 Pembina Avenue  
Hinton, AB  
T7V 2B3

T: 780-865-1224

W: [westyellowhead.albertacf.com](http://westyellowhead.albertacf.com)

## **Appendix A:**



2014 Business Visitation Study- Grande Cache, Alberta

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Main Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Web address (URL): \_\_\_\_\_

|  |
|--|
| For office use only:<br>NAICS code: _____<br>Date of Meeting: _____<br>Visit Number: _____<br>Outreach Specialist: _____ |
|--|

This Business Visitation study is brought to you by :



**Disclaimer (Notice to Survey Respondents):**

- The Originator of this survey is solely responsible for its contents. **Your response to the survey is voluntary and all responses are confidential.** If you are asked in the survey to reveal your identity or the identity of the organization on whose behalf you are responding and do not wish to do so, please do not respond to the survey. Your response will be used by the survey Originator only for the purpose identified by the Originator.
- If you are given an opportunity to submit free-form responses to a survey, please provide relevant and responsible responses; refrain from disparaging, offensive, harassing or otherwise inappropriate language; and refrain from including any sensitive information of any kind (e.g., credit card or bank account information).

Please Initial: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How would you categorize the state of your business? (Circle)

- a) Growing
- b) Maintaining
- c) Declining
- d) Considering closing

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

2. In your opinion, what could be done to improve Grande Cache's Business Environment? (Circle)

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Availability of capital / financing</li> <li>b) Availability of qualified personnel</li> <li>c) Workforce training programs</li> <li>d) Post Secondary institution</li> <li>e) Changes to K-12 Education</li> <li>f) Local tax structure</li> <li>g) Public service improvements</li> <li>h) Introduce high speed internet</li> <li>i) Improve local roads and highways</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>j) Public transportation</li> <li>k) Healthcare</li> <li>l) Greenways / bike paths</li> <li>m) Workforce housing</li> <li>n) Reduced regulations</li> <li>o) Expedited permitting</li> <li>p) Food availability / choices</li> <li>q) Other: (Please Specify)<br/>_____</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

3. What one change would help make your business more successful? (Circle)

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Better marketing</li> <li>b) Better use of social networking</li> <li>c) Lower operating costs</li> <li>d) Lower transportation costs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e) Better suppliers</li> <li>f) Better management</li> <li>g) Other: _____</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

4. What do you like about doing business in Grande Cache? (Circle)

- a) Location
- b) Community
- c) Clientele
- d) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Over the last two years, did the following business factors increase, stay the same, or decline? (Circle)

|                      | Increased | Stayed the same | Declined |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------------|----------|
| Number of customers  | +         | same            | -        |
| Sales-total revenue  | +         | same            | -        |
| Profits              | +         | same            | -        |
| Employees- full time | +         | same            | -        |
| Employees- part time | +         | same            | -        |

a) If any of these business factors increased or decreased, what is the principal reason for the change?

Thank you for participating in the 2014 Grande Cache Business Visitation Study.

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