

REQUEST FOR DECISION

Subject: 2025 Community Conversations Interim Report
From: Bill Given, Chief Administrative Officer
Prepared by: Lisa Riddell, Community Development Manager
Reviewed by: Emma Acorn, Legislative Services Manager
Date: July 15, 2025



Recommendation:
That Committee receive the Community Conversations Interim Report for January to June 2025 for information.

Alternatives:
That Committee direct Administration to bring forward additional information on any items of interest in the Community Conversations report to a future Committee meeting.

Background:
On September 21, 2021 Council approved the [Community Conversations Policy \(A-105\)](#) which outlines Council’s commitment to meaningful resident engagement to ensure that municipal services and programs remain responsive to changing community needs. In February 2023, a revised Policy A-105 was adopted by Council, directing Administration to narrow the scope of conversations to focus on the life-stage focused conversations.

From January to June 2025, 17 life-stage focused Community Conversations took place
Here is a breakdown of attendance in 2025 compared to 2024 numbers.

	Year	Breakdown by quarter and type of participant								
		Jan. to March 2025			April to June 2025			Oct. to Dec. 2024		
		MOJ	Non MOJ	Total	MOJ	Non MOJ	Total	MOJ	Non MOJ	Total
Adults	2024	12	16	28	8	11	19	9	19	28
	2025	10	19	29	8	15	23			
Seniors	2024	10	20	30	11	14	25	10	24	34
	2025	6	22	28	10	17	27			
Early Childhood & School Age	2024	15	13	28	12	12	24	13	26	39
	2025	11	15	26	10	11	21			

Discussion:
At the time of this report, there are 35 groups, agencies, organizations represented at Community Conversations with 67 unique participants in total (many agencies have more than one representative). Participants at community conversations discussed many items impacting the community – when grouped into thematic areas, the below priority areas emerge:

- 1. Housing
- 2. Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing

3. Community Belonging & Rebuilding Connections
4. Food Insecurity
5. Employment, Income Support and Economic Recovery
6. Youth Mental Health & School Engagement
7. Seniors' Needs
8. Transportation and Accessibility
9. Disaster Preparedness
10. Displaced Residents

Strategic Relevance:

- Take proactive steps to reduce the risk of people becoming vulnerable and respond when they are vulnerable.
- Promote and enhance recreational and cultural opportunities and spaces
- Enable and facilitate events that provide opportunities to increase community connections.
- Embrace our growing diversity
- Leverage and create opportunities for greater inclusion.
- Communicate and engage with residents
- Welcome the expertise, innovation, creativity and commitment of community members, groups, and associations
- Entrust our staff to develop healthy relationships with the people they serve.

Inclusion Considerations: Community Conversations is a forum to discuss the changing needs of Jasperites with particular focus on groups who may be at risk of exclusion. Many participants at Community Conversations are organization and agency leaders who serve, in part, groups at risk of exclusion. To complement this insight, the annual Social Assessment provides the grassroots perspective that serve as a check-in with community members themselves.

Relevant Legislation:

- [Policy – A-105 – Community Conversations Policy](#)

Financial: The costs to carry out the Community Conversations are within the 2025 operating budget.

Attachments: The Community Conversations Interim Report is attached.

Community Conversations Interim Report

January to June 2025

Prepared and submitted by: Lisa Riddell

Introduction

The first six months of Community Conversations in 2025 continue to play a key role in ensuring collaboration across sectors in the aftermath of the wildfire that impacted the community in July 2024. Just as we saw in the post-pandemic years, Community Conversations is a place for agency and organization leaders to discuss the dynamic needs of the people they serve. Creative programs, services and initiatives are co-created at Community Conversations. The regular, ongoing dialogue ensures that these services are coordinated, leveraging and expanding upon the strengths of our community. Jasper is a rural, remote community with unique challenges and unique advantages. Using a community-focused and person-centered approach ensures that collaborative initiatives are fine-tuned to the residents they are intended to be for.

Since the 1990s, Community Conversation participants from the public, private and non-profit sectors have worked together to create the conditions in Jasper where residents of all backgrounds, abilities and orientations can thrive and achieve wellbeing and resilience across the lifespan.

Membership:

Here is a revised member list as of April 2025. There are 35 member organizations/agencies and 67 individual participants:

- Alberta Health Services - Homecare
- Alpine Summit Seniors' Lodge
- Brain Care Centre
- Community Futures West Yellowhead
- Crisis Team Society Jasper
- Ecole Jasper Elementary School
- Ecole Desrochers
- Friends of Jasper National Park
- Grande Yellowhead Public School Division
- Government of Alberta - Alberta Supports
- Hinton Wellness Program
- Jasper Community Habitat for The Arts
- Jasper Community Team Society
- Jasper Employment Centre
- Jasper Minor Sports
- Jasper Municipal Library
- Jasper Museum
- Jasper Recovery Coordination Centre
- Service Canada
- Jasper Seniors' Society
- L'Association Canadienne Française de l'Alberta, Régionale de Jasper
- Mettra Pharmacy
- Municipality of Jasper – CAO office
- Municipal Council
- Municipality of Jasper – Community Development
- Municipality of Jasper – Fitness and Aquatic Centre
- Municipality of Jasper – Outreach Services
- Municipality of Jasper – Settlement Services
- Parks Canada – Engagement Officer
- Parks Canada - Indigenous Relations
- Pursuit Jasper Banff Collection
- Recovery Alberta – Addictions & Mental Health
- Red Cross
- Western Alberta Regional Victim Serving Society
- Yellowhead Emergency Shelter for Women
- Individual Jasperites x 4

At Community Conversations, participants identify the changing needs of residents as well as opportunities to take action in response to those needs. A review of all trends and opportunities identified in Conversations thus far in 2025 reveals the below thematic areas:

1. Housing

- Interim housing is in high demand. Waitlists are long, especially among seniors and vulnerable populations. Many displaced residents—especially those with lower incomes—remain in precarious or temporary arrangements.
- There's a desire for clarity around the “right to reside” and how displaced renters will be accommodated in the rebuild.
- There are continued concerns about housing availability and affordability, exacerbated by the impact of the Wildfire. The permitting process for rebuilding homes has been longer and there remain unknowns with the soil testing for some home owners. Residents have expressed frustration over the lengthy debris removal process.
- Calls for creative housing solutions, including tiny homes, secondary suites, and co-living models are being discussed.
- Opportunities to build back better are being raised, particularly to meet the needs of groups at risk of exclusion such low income or those with diverse physical or cognitive abilities.

2. Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing

- Many residents are accessing services for the first time post-fire. Strengthening welcoming systems, and fire specific outreach visibility is playing a key role in fostering wellbeing.
- Consistent reports of anxiety, burnout, and stress, especially six months post-wildfire - a known tipping point in disaster recovery.
- Mental health remains a priority. There are continued efforts to provide mental health services, as well as offering programs aimed at reducing anxiety.
- Noticing that there is a persistent stigma around mental health services.
- Youth, seniors, and newcomers are especially vulnerable.
- Programs like the Community Development's *Recovery Outreach Services*, the Jasper Recovery Coordination Centre's *Pathfinders*, Recovery Alberta's *Adult Wellness Course*, and the Red Cross's *friendly calls* are well-received.
- There is the continued need for low-barrier, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed supports.

3. Community Belonging & Rebuilding Connections

- Low-cost community events such as plant sales and Coffee Connections are very popular, indicating a desire for informal social interaction and routine gatherings.
- Community dinners, cooking circles, wellness fairs, and volunteer programs are rebuilding social ties.
- Newcomers, youth, and seniors have specific programming needs.
- People value intergenerational programming and space for creativity, healing, and cultural exchange.

4. Food Insecurity

- The food bank is seeing persistently high usage (e.g., 65+ households/week).
- Concerns over cost of living, inflation, and the inadequacy of grocery vouchers or gift cards.
- Ongoing need to separate food recovery from food bank.

5. Employment, Income Support and Economic Recovery

- The job market is active but many roles are tied to housing availability and hours fluctuate significantly with tourism levels. Staffing challenges are prevalent, particularly due to burnout, unfilled positions, and high turnover rates.
- Folks of all ages are looking for job opportunities linked to secure housing. The Jasper Employment and Education Centre has re-launched their seniors' employment initiative.
- Private sector participants reported economic instability, including lower-than-expected profits during peak tourism periods (specifically the May long weekend), and uneven staffing in local businesses.

6. Youth Mental Health & School Engagement

- Programs like SWAT (Student Wellness Action Team) and Wellness Navigator's Dungeons & Dragons are supporting social skill building.
- Summer and school-based programming focused on hope, coping, creativity, and play are in high demand.

7. Seniors' Needs

- There is strong demand for senior housing, social support, and physical wellness programs (e.g., aquafit, seated yoga).
- Seniors returning to the community after displacement need help rebuilding social and caregiving networks.
- Programs with intergenerational contact are especially meaningful.
- The Men's Shed new location is taking shape at a critical time to foster men's mental health and wellbeing.

8. Transportation and Accessibility:

- Transportation continues to be a challenge, especially for shift workers, and families in interim housing. School transportation policies are also creating challenges for families around the community, highlighting a need for more flexible options.
- Additionally, there is a focus on safety and accessibility, particularly for seniors and folks with physical disabilities. Challenges related to curb height and wheelchair accessibility could be better understood.

9. Disaster Preparedness:

- Programs around wildfire preparedness and recovery continue to be a priority, with emphasis on educating the public on fire ecology, trail safety in fire-affected areas, and post-disaster recovery.
- Additionally, there has been discussion around the approaching 1-year mark since the fire. Efforts to mark the 1-year across the community are being tracked by the Jasper Recovery Coordination Centre.

10. Displaced Residents

- The Jasper Recovery Coordination Centre gathered data on the number of Jasperites displaced outside of the community by the fire and who still wish to stay in touch.
- Some displaced seniors, particularly those who were renters, are expressing concern about how their *Right to Reside* may be affected when they wish to return to community in a few years. Currently, the development team from Parks Canada can speak with individuals on a case-by-case basis to address their concerns. That said, there is an opportunity to provide clear communication about eligibility for interim and rebuilt housing, especially for displaced senior renters.