

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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KOOTENAY ROCKIES REGION FACES A 20% DEFICIT OF TOURISM WORKERS

VANCOUVER – A new report released today by go2, the BC tourism industry’s human resources association, on behalf of the Kootenay Rockies Tourism HR Strategy Steering Committee confirms that labour shortages being felt in this region will worsen over the next decade.

The report identified key factors contributing to the labour shortages in the region including increased tourism growth and resort development, competition for workers from Alberta and other sectors, an aging demographic, and the seasonal nature of tourism employment.

A key finding from the report identified year-to-year job growth could reach a 20% plus deficit in the capacity to meet tourism employers’ needs in this region. It was found that employment in core tourism occupations is expected to rise from 8550 in 2007 to 12,000 by 2015 – a 40% increase. The report also pointed out that seasonal employment shifts dominate the tourism labour market picture, and in addition to the growth occurring on an annualized basis, 1,400 more tourism workers are needed each summer and 550 during the winter peak to meet demand.

“The Kootenay Rockies is showing a faster growth rate of employment than the rest of BC, especially in the Eastern part of the region,” said John Leschyson, Director, Industry Human Resource Development, go2. “With a declining youth population, and many of them being lured to work in Alberta’s hot economy, this region will need to look at some innovative ways to recruit and retain workers.”

Coordinated by go2 and funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), the project mandate is to develop a long-term, comprehensive human resources strategic plan for the Kootenay Rockies region that will include recruitment, retention and training strategies to address the labour market gaps and other human resource challenges in this region. The plan is slated to be completed by the fall of 2007.

The project is guided by a steering committee comprised of local business leaders and tourism operators, Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association, Ktunaxa Nation, go2, College of the Rockies, and Unite Here Canada Local 40 union. It is chaired by Heather Stewart, Sage Transitions. Stewart has extensive experience in project management, facilitating the development of strategic plans, and working with labour market information.

“We are already feeling the pinch of a tight labour market and we know it is not going to get better any time soon,” said Heidi Romich, owner/operator of Heidi’s restaurant in Cranbrook. “There are a lot of exciting opportunities opening up in tourism in the region. The challenge will be in finding and keeping enough people to get the work done”.

Kootenay Rockies is the second region where this type of initiative has been undertaken. The first project was completed in the Sea-to-Sky (Whistler) region; details of this initiative can be found at seatosky.go2hr.ca. Moving forward, go2 is planning to complete regional labour market research for the remaining regions of BC (Vancouver Island, Lower Mainland, Thompson/Okanagan, Northern BC, and Cariboo-Chilcotin).

About go2

Established by the BC tourism industry in April 2003, go2 is an independent, non-profit industry association with a mission to assist BC's tourism operators to attract, recruit, and retain employees to support industry growth. For more information on go2, visit www.go2hr.ca. To obtain a copy of the complete Kootenay Rockies report, please [contact us](#).

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Media Contact:

Lynne Henshaw, go2
(604) 633-9787 ext. 234 or (778) 995-7701
lhenshaw@go2hr.ca