

For Immediate Release

Thompson Okanagan region poised for tourism job growth with more than 12,000 new job openings

Labour shortages predicted in food & beverage and accommodation sectors

Nov 6, 2013, Vancouver, BC – Regional studies of labour demand and supply by go2hr, BC tourism industry's human resource association, indicate that 12,334 job openings are expected in the Thompson Okanagan region by 2020, but the region could face labour shortages as early as 2014.

"The Thompson Okanagan faces specific pressures within our industry," says Arlene Keis, CEO of go2hr. "The region has one of the most severe levels of seasonality in the province, which prevents many tourism employers from being able to retain workers on a permanent basis."

The average annual growth for the region will be 1.6%, on par with the provincial rate for the tourism industry. By 2020, the region is expected to face labour shortages of more than 1,600, which accounts for 12% of the province's anticipated labour shortages. The food & beverage and accommodation sectors will be the hardest hit.

"We are definitely feeling the effects of the labour shortage in Kelowna," says Heather Schroeter, General Manager at Manteo Resort. "We recruit new team members year round at our resort and it is difficult to meet our needs for the summer season as we require an additional 80 seasonal team members each spring. Qualified cooks, room attendants and stewards are the most challenging positions to fill."

Schroeter adds that "University and college students are a great addition to our summer team, but in the Okanagan, high season runs from the May long weekend to Thanksgiving, which unfortunately doesn't coincide with school schedules."

Tourism businesses and destination management and marketing organizations are being encouraged to make labour recruitment, retention and training a priority. Last fall, go2hr launched the *BC Tourism Labour Market Strategy* (TLMS) to help address critical labour needs across the province's six tourism regions.

The five industry groups that were selected for study within the tourism sector include: transportation, accommodation, food and beverage services, recreation and entertainment services, and travel services. Further research was undertaken this year to better understand each region's unique needs.

Through the TLMS, go2hr is working with industry, government and other stakeholders to take strong, proactive steps to leverage tourism's increasing economic importance and address impending labour shortages. The strategy identifies opportunities to:

- Develop career awareness and recruitment campaigns that will highlight job opportunities in an exciting and diverse industry.
- Tap into under-represented talent pools such older workers, aboriginal people, new immigrants, and persons with disabilities.
- Extend recruitment reach nationally and internationally.
- Help industry operators stay current with best practices in human resources in order to improve staff retention.
- Address the need for accessible and affordable training options in remote and rural areas of the province.

To help the tourism industry align workforce, training and education strategies, go2hr is presenting at industry gatherings, hosting meetings and workshops and providing up to date information to destination management organizations to pass onto their members and stakeholders. go2hr also offers a comprehensive website that includes a free tourism niche job board and multiple informational resources.

This research was funded in part through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement.

The regional labour studies are available for download at www.go2hr.ca/regions.

About go2hr

go2hr is BC's tourism and hospitality human resource association responsible for coordinating the BC Tourism Labour Market Strategy, a key component of the industry's growth strategy. Tourism is one of the largest resource industries in BC comprising 18,000 mostly small to medium-sized businesses, which provides sector employment of nearly 260,000. For more information, visit www.go2hr.ca.

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