



KOOTENAY ROCKIES TOURISM
1905 Warren Avenue
Kimberley, BC V1A 1S2
CANADA

July 12, 2019

Honourable Melanie Joly
Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie
Constituency Office
225 Chabanel West, Suite 1109
Montréal, Quebec H2N 2C9

Dear Minister Joly,

As the Board of Directors of Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association, one of the five official Regional Destination Management offices in BC, we are writing to you with a request on behalf of our tourism operators and businesses in our region. At our June Board meeting, a major and recurring highlight of our discussion was specific to the rapidly increasing labour shortages which are impacting the competitiveness of our sector and how we are already outpacing the most recent labour shortage projections. Studies show that in 2016, the labour shortages in BC alone resulted in \$1B in lost revenue for tourism*.

In spite of the many initiatives that are being undertaken in the Kootenay Rockies, including a regional Tourism Career Awareness and labour attraction campaign** to address and mitigate the labour shortages, this issue is the single most alarming threat to the growth of our tourism economy and this is a major concern for all of us in this area.

As you know Minister Joly, many factors contribute to the complexity of this issue and we all know that this situation is impacting the entire country. The Tourism & Hospitality sector unfortunately continues to be perceived as offering only low-paying jobs and limited career opportunities for Canadian residents. We think there are some solutions that government could consider implementing at the federal, provincial, regional and local levels including the incorporation of tourism into the curriculum in our public-school systems and to introduce and promote tourism and hospitality as a viable career path. This is where we all need your help and advocacy at the federal level to enable the tourism industry to be recognized as a major economic driver and job creator.

There is no doubt that immigration offers the most promising solution to keeping pace with the economic growth our nation is facing. However, current federal policies related to immigration are putting rural tourism regions at a disadvantage in this highly competitive labour market.

Our region is highly reliant on young Australians visiting our country on a work-holiday visa. The recent changes in the number of times one can re-apply for this visa is leaving many of our resort towns in a difficult situation, where many businesses are losing valuable staff and forced to reduced hours and days of operations.

The Temporary Foreign Worker Program is a cumbersome, lengthy and costly process for the 900 small tourism businesses in the Kootenay Rockies. The lack of awareness of the many rural tourism regions as a great place to work among foreign nationals creates barriers in recruiting labour.

We understand that Immigration policies are the responsibility of the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, but it is critical that immigration policies support the sustainable growth of our industry.

During this period of consultation on proposed changes to the program in the form of the introduction of an occupation-specific work permit, we would like to strongly reiterate the recommendations made in *March 2018 by go2HR* – the provincial organization responsible for Tourism HR – in a report entitled “REVITALIZING the CANADIAN TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM: Perspectives of BC and Alberta Tourism, Hospitality and Related Business Stakeholders”. A copy of the full report is attached to this letter.

The BC and Alberta Tourism, Hospitality and Related Businesses recommend that the Federal Government:

1. Improve the Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) process:

- Introduce online application processing with streamlined forms;
- Provide employers with a clear rationale and explanation for decisions related to rejected LMIAs;
- Reconsider or amend the requirements around full-time employment for unique employment circumstances;
- Introduce and adhere to pre-defined service standards for processing timelines in order to provide employers with clarity and certainty regarding recruitment timelines;
- Reintroduce an Accelerated LMIA process or develop a Trusted Employer Program for employers that consistently demonstrate compliance with the Program;
- Enable minor TFW employment contract modifications related to job duties where the employer and employee both agree with the changes;

2. Consider reducing the \$1,000 application fee, and charge application fees on a per-occupation basis, not for individual (named) applicants;

3. Ensure more rigorous compliance, enforcement and sanctions for employers found to be in serious non-compliance with the program;

4. Maintain the cap on the percentage of TFWs as a proportion of total employees for an individual business;

5. Eliminate the Refusal to Process Policy.

We thank you, Minister Joly, for your continued support of the tourism industry and we ask that you advocate strongly for the changes that need to be implemented for our industry businesses to be able to survive, grow and continue to offer the incredible products and services that our visitors are seeking across our region, province and country.

Sincerely,

Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association Board of Directors

CC: Minister Ahmed Hussen, Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship
Minister Lisa Beare, Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture, British Columbia
Minister Bruce Ralston, Ministry of Jobs, Trade, and Technology, British Columbia
Marsha Walden, CEO Destination BC
Walt Judas, CEO, Tourism Industry Association of BC
Arlene Keis, CEO, go2 HR
Charlotte Bell, President & CEO, Tourism Industry Association of Canada

*go2HR, 2016 BC Tourism Labour Shortages Economic Impact Study, Grant Thornton & Econometric Research Limited

***The Love Life. Love Work. Campaign is a Kootenay Rockies Tourism Initiative: www.lovelifelovework.ca*