

# Putting Canadians **1<sup>ST</sup>**

& Supporting Access to Workers in Tight Labour Markets

## Preamble

Canada boasts numerous destination mountain resorts that attract visitors from around the globe – and Whistler consistently ranks as one of the world’s top ski destinations. The Whistler resort alone drives 22.5% of the tourism export revenue for the province and generates \$1.2 million in daily tax revenue for the federal, provincial and municipal government.

A tight labour market continues to challenge our ongoing viability and competitiveness as a tourist destination (the June unemployment rate for Mainland Southwest was 5.7% and Whistler was measured at 2% in 2013 by the Resort Municipality of Whistler’s Community Life Tracking Survey). Industry reports project a 14,000-person labour deficit for tourism and hospitality positions in BC by 2020 (Labour Market Study by go2hr). The seasonal nature of the tourism economy (ie: the ski industry), in particular for more remote locations – much like in agriculture – makes it very difficult to obtain, train and retain talent. Along with Canadians, temporary foreign workers (TFWs) are a valued and vital piece of our labour force. Without these workers Whistler cannot deliver an exceptional customer experience.

## The Ask

That the federal government consider allowances for destination mountain resorts across Canada where seasonal workers are essential to serving an international clientele and driving tourism.

We view the Temporary Foreign Worker Program as just one tool – but an essential one – in our kit to recruit workers as a limited and last resort.

## The Whistler Economy: A Tax Revenue Driver\*



## Temporary Foreign Workers: An Essential Part of the Whistler Workforce\*\*



(Reference: whistler.ca/EPI, Economic Partnership Initiative report released October 2013)\*  
(Reference: Whistler Chamber of Commerce – Temporary Foreign Workers Program Survey to members, June ‘14)\*\*

## Policy Considerations to Improve Access to Workers

WE RESPECTFULLY ASK THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FOR CANADIAN, DESTINATION MOUNTAIN RESORTS:

- Commit to working with industry to mitigate the impact the LMIA fee increase will have on the destination mountain resort sector
- Consider exemptions regarding the cap on low-wage workers in regions that require seasonal positions
- Track more specific regional unemployment rates to better reflect market labour conditions
- Ensure transition plans do not add unnecessary regulatory burden and costs to business



# Putting Canadians First & Strategies to Reduce Dependency on TFWP.

The following outlines the breadth of initiatives already in place within the Whistler resort:

## Attracting First Nations workers

Whistler businesses are putting special efforts into recruiting, training and hiring First Nations workers in the Sea to Sky corridor. For example, The Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre has modified its business model to operate a shuttle that brings in First Nations workers from the Mt. Currie Band daily, and offers extensive training programs to support employment of their staff

## Innovative Recruiting

Whistler businesses rigorously monitor the success of their recruiting channels and the strategies are getting more sophisticated. More costly, geographically targeted print and online ads (across Canadian provinces and territories) and worker-trades with other seasonal resorts (to load-balance supply and demand) are just two examples of non-traditional approaches being rolled out by Whistler businesses. Companies like Whistler Blackcomb travel across Canada each year to recruit Canadians – in 2014-15 Whistler Blackcomb will be in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Barrie, Kitchener-Waterloo, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver looking to place Canadians in key mountain positions.

## Offering World-Class Training

Whistler has a unique, community-wide service training program that ensures all workers in Whistler receive world-class training – a program that has been running for 27 years. Further developments will launch this Winter season: In partnership with the University of Victoria, the Whistler Chamber of Commerce has leveraged skill and scale to offer affordable training to all Whistler businesses – our hope is Canadians will be attracted to careers in the resort because of this exceptional training. Our programs graduate 4000-5000 people each year.

## Apprenticeships Programs

Whistler businesses are running exceptional apprenticeship programs – especially when it comes to culinary careers – featuring extensive training and development programs. Whistler has developed close relationships with colleges and universities to hire Canadian talent from institutions like Selkirk College, Vancouver Community College Georgian College and Capilano University.

## Competitive Wages & Attractive Benefits

In key Whistler sectors, like accommodation, wage surveys reveal Whistler is paying either on par or above market rates for equivalent positions in larger markets like Vancouver. Additionally, as a resort we have built exceptional employment packages that include, depending on the business: lifestyle allowances, housing benefits and discounted ski passes to incentivize Canadians to work in Whistler.

## Not Just Relying On TFWP

(& BOOSTING THE INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY PROGRAM)

Whistler businesses work hard to put Canadians first in our recruitment strategies but struggle to find enough to fill our business needs. The TFWP and the Working Holiday Visa programs have proved effective in obtaining more seasonal workers, however, even these programs have not filled all current vacancies. Our members would welcome more robust bilateral agreements with participating countries in an effort to increase the available labour pool.