

December 30th, 2020

The Honourable Ravi Kahlon  
Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness  
Legislative Assembly of British Columbia  
620 Superior Street  
Victoria, BC  
V8V 1V2

Via Email: [JEDC.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:JEDC.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

**RE: BC Provincial Nominee Program (BCPNP) - Resume issuing invitations to applicants in tourism, hospitality, and retail occupations**

Dear Minister Kahlon,

The Whistler Chamber of Commerce represents over 600 member businesses in the Whistler area and has worked closely with all levels of government for many years to recommend solutions to solve the serious issue of understaffing that affects almost all Whistler businesses.

Pre pandemic, the community of Whistler drove 25% of the tourism export revenue for the province and generated \$1.4 million in daily tax revenue for the federal, provincial and municipal government. Whistler's economic growth depends on having enough skilled and qualified people to meet labour market needs. We need to plan today so that Whistler is resourced during and through the economic recovery.

The Whistler Chamber of Commerce conducted a Labour Survey that collected responses in September 2020 to measure the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the business community's labour needs.

The Chamber is an avid supporter of hiring Canadians first. According to the survey results, businesses report that 55% of the workforce is Canadian citizens or Permanent Residents. This has been driven by:

- Increase in resort Employee Housing inventory
- Participation in Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada based recruitment fairs
- Partnering with Canadian College and University graduate placement programs and work experience programs
- Partnering with local high schools on work experience programs
- Recruitment efforts targeting local First Nations communities

Unfortunately, this has not been sufficient to fill labour gaps and Whistler's labour shortage has persisted through the COVID-19 pandemic. The labour shortage will continue into the foreseeable future as employers increase their staffing needs back to the pre-pandemic levels. Our survey results indicate that 68% of Whistler businesses with 50 or more employees reporting they did not have enough staff in summer 2020 and do not think they will have adequate staffing for winter 2020/21.

The BC Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP) supports Whistler employers' ability to retain needed talent. 73% of businesses feel that foreign worker programs are important or very important to their ability to be successful. The BC PNP acts as a critical tool to meet Whistler's labour market and economic development needs and priorities.

Whistler employers most often hire foreign workers in tourism, hospitality and food service occupations. In fact, the most frequent occupations identified by survey respondents include cooks/chefs, servers, restaurant host, guest service reception, bartender, food counter attendants, baristas, cleaners and supervisors of these occupations.

On March 30, 2020, the BC PNP announced that it would cease issuing invitations to applicants with job offers in tourism, hospitality and retail-related occupations. On August 31<sup>st</sup>, the BC PNP announced that these restrictions are expected to continue throughout the remainder of the year. These occupations are critical to the successful operation of many Whistler businesses and their ability to recover from the current pandemic and invest in their future. The changes made on March 30<sup>th</sup> have proven detrimental to many Whistler businesses, some of which have had to replace experienced, skilled workers as PNP applications have stalled and impacted working visa status. This has exacerbated the impacts of labour shortages and compromises the ability of these businesses to weather and recover from this pandemic.

The BC PNP can take the following action to support these businesses and help address the issue of chronic labour shortages:

- Resume issuing invitations to applicants in tourism, hospitality, and retail occupations
- Encourage the Government of Canada to expand the Provincial Nominee Program and negotiate a higher allocation of nominations to help employers attract and retain employees with the skills, experience and qualifications required to fill current and future job openings;

The Chamber identified this challenge and has been working for many years on solutions. We look forward to working with you to implement rapid solutions to the issue outlined above.

Kind Regards,



Melissa Pace  
CEO  
Whistler Chamber of Commerce

CC:

- The Honourable Jordan Sturdy, MP, West Vancouver – Sea to Sky Country - [Jordan.Sturdy.MLA@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Jordan.Sturdy.MLA@leg.bc.ca)
- Dan Baxter, Interim President & CEO, BC Chamber of Commerce - [dbaxter@bccchamber.org](mailto:dbaxter@bccchamber.org)