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YUKON'S TOURISM INDUSTRY TAKES ACTION ON PARKS CANADA CUTS

Whitehorse: The Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon (TIA Yukon) is taking decisive steps to create more dialogue on the issue of the Parks Canada cuts, stressing the need for urgent action.

“These cuts were announced at the end of March, but there is still no plan in place to ensure that the large amount of product that Parks Canada manages in the Yukon doesn’t fall through the cracks”, said TIA Yukon Chair Neil Hartling. “Federal representatives have said that ‘this will be a great opportunity for the private sector’, but so far, we’ve received no communication from the federal government detailing how this would happen, nor has anyone stated which members of the private sector, if any, would want to take advantage of such an opportunity. Time is slipping by – we’re less than five months away from the 2013 peak season. This is now in an emergency mode. Normally a transition like this would take 2 years or more.”

To take the issue to the next level, TIA Yukon has decided to proceed with its own request for an Expression of Interest from the Yukon business community. This request will gauge the private sector’s interest in assuming management of available Parks Canada product, should the opportunity arise. This survey will begin December 11th and go until January 10th. TIA Yukon will share its findings with the federal government in an effort to help speed along the process for a possible transition of product.

Since May, TIA Yukon has been vocal about the importance of Parks Canada product to tourism in the territory, and the ramifications that the decision to cut this product will have for Yukon’s economy and many of the Yukon’s communities if alternative plans are not in place soon. This has been diligently reiterated to federal officials, through numerous meetings that TIA Yukon has requested. Hartling says that he appreciates the efforts of the Yukon’s federal representatives who have joined the large chorus of Yukoners that recognize the cultural significance and the deep economic impact that the Parks Canada sites in the Yukon have on the territory’s tourism industry.

“The federal government made a mistake when they cut Parks Canada in our region as drastically as it did with no alternative plan in place”, says Hartling. “Governments, like people, can make mistakes. But it’s about how they deal with those mistakes that defines them. TIA Yukon understands the passion and the sense of urgency Yukoners have expressed in regards to the Parks Canada situation and we commend everyone who has brought attention to this issue. These are sites and services that are important to Yukoners and the situation has now become an emergency for the industry. We will continue to work with all key stakeholders to resolve this issue.”

Hartling says that what is now needed is an emergency discussion session of key stakeholders, including federal representatives, so that all key players can be at the same table, be privy to the same

information and have a chance to jointly discuss viable options. TIA plans to organize such a discussion in early January.

“This is an issue that directly affects a number of communities, businesses and organizations so it’s vital to get everyone talking and on the same page,” says Hartling. This issue has reached a critical juncture and we now require all hands on deck if we’re going to have a chance of resolving this matter before it has major consequences for the tourism industry.”

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