



NEWS RELEASE

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PARKS CANADA CUTS WILL HURT YUKON'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

The Tourism Industry Association of Yukon (TIA Yukon) is very concerned with the federal government's decision to cut 30 of the 110 Parks Canada employees in the Yukon – almost 28% of its presence in the territory. TIA Yukon strongly believes that this will have major consequences for Yukon's tourism industry and the Yukon economy.

"The Government of Canada may save a few dollars with these cuts, but by doing so the Yukon will lose millions in direct and indirect revenue that comes from visitor spending associated with Parks Canada sites", says TIA Yukon Chair Neil Hartling. "Think about the business owners who offer accommodations, retail and food services to visitors who go to and from these attractions. If the attractions become less attractive to tourists because there are less services provided, how can this not result in less visitor traffic, and ultimately, less business?"

According to a report compiled by the federal government last year, titled 'The Economic Impacts of Parks Canada', Parks Canada sites in the Yukon produced almost \$6.9 million in direct revenue in 2009. The same year, Parks Canada also contributed \$10.2 million to the Yukon's GDP, generated \$7.5 million in labour income, created the equivalent of 145 full time jobs and brought in \$600,000 in tax revenue to the territory.

Many tourism operators who own businesses near Parks Canada sites have expressed their concerns about the impending cuts and believe that the federal government should reconsider its decision.

"Our members have a right to be worried," says TIA Yukon Executive Director Blake Rogers. "Parks Canada handles a huge amount of tourism product in the territory and now all of a sudden, the funding it needs to function properly is being taken away. Who's going to fill this gap? Does the federal government expect the territorial government to pick up the pieces? Will it fall to the private sector? You can't just saw a leg off a table and expect it to stand up as well as it once did. What's the plan here?"

With the recent announcement from the Chamber of Mines that the Yukon can expect close to a 40% downturn in mining exploration from last year, many Yukoners have expressed the need to diversify the economy. As an economic driver, tourism has been proven to provide a strong return on investment, both territorially and nationally.

"In the past when commodity prices were low it was the tourism industry that kept the Yukon afloat", says Hartling. "Yukon's MP, has said that these cuts to Parks Canada won't impact tourism in the territory, but the report released by his government last year clearly proves that it does. When many of

TIA Yukon's members in communities like Dawson City and Haines Junction who've been operating in the area for years, tell us that they will be affected by the cuts to Parks Canada sites, our MP needs to listen to what they're saying. This is their lifeblood that we're talking about."

On top of the economic impact that the Parks Canada has on many of the Yukon's small businesses and communities, most Yukoners also recognize the cultural and historical significance of the artifacts and sites that Parks Canada oversees.

"How many families have learned about Yukon history and culture by taking a guided tour of Dredge #4 or the SS Klondike over the years?" says Rogers. "How many have had the chance to enjoy a hike in Kluane, knowing that the park would be well maintained and that search and rescue was only a call away if an accident happened? Parks Canada staff work hard to tell the story of the Yukon by preserving and showcasing many of the things that are part of our territory's identity, the things that make the Yukon special. Now many of these staff are being shown the door."

TIA Yukon is encouraging all Yukoners to visit a Parks Canada site over the long weekend, to see how the visitor experience can be enhanced through the services that Parks Canada provides. As things now stand, this will be the last summer for Yukoners and visitors to take part in guided tours of sites like Dredge #4 and the SS Klondike.

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