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HELP WANTED: YUKON'S TOURISM INDUSTRY STRUGGLES WITH GROWING STAFFING SHORTAGES

WHITEHORSE: The Yukon's tourism industry has identified staffing shortages as one of the biggest challenges it's currently facing, says TIA Yukon.

"Most tourism operators are upbeat about how business has been this summer, but when asked about challenges, one of the most common concerns is staffing," says TIA Yukon Executive Director Blake Rogers. "This isn't a new issue for the tourism industry, but the frequency and level of urgency with which it's being raised has been increasing."

Rogers says that the issue of tourism labour shortages goes beyond the Yukon: it's a global problem. In Canada, Tourism HR Canada estimates that from 2010 to 2018 the number of tourism jobs left vacant rose to 100,000, resulting in \$11 billion in lost revenue. Current projections show that if nothing is done to increase the supply of labour, that the number of unfilled tourism jobs in Canada is expected to climb to 240,000 by 2035.

The Yukon's unemployment rate as of July has been 2.3%, the lowest in the country. This is good news for the Yukon overall, but it has made it more challenging for tourism operators to find staff in the territory.

In 2017 approximately 46% of the Yukon's job vacancies were in the sales and services sector (Yukon Business Survey), which aligns with a 2016 Tourism HR Canada study in which 48% of the Yukon's tourism industry reported staffing difficulties. The tourism industry is the Yukon's largest private sector employer; while this is good for Yukon workers, it can have ramifications for businesses when there are more jobs than people to fill them.

"Businesses need a full complement of qualified employees in order to operate effectively," says Sherry Blake, General Manager of Westmark Whitehorse and Chair of TIA Yukon's Tourism Recruitment Retention and Training Committee (TRRTC). "Programs like the Yukon Nominee Program are a help but they aren't a fit for every employer and they aren't a complete solution. This is a complex problem that'll require a coordinated, multi-faceted approach to fully address."

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