

Ellen Walker-Matthews
Sr VP, Acting President and CEO
Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association

March 2, 2021

Re: Support for Training for Thompson Okanagan Tourism Industry

On behalf of the Salmon Arm & District Chamber of Commerce, I am pleased to provide this letter of support for Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association's (TOTA) proposal to the Employment and Social Development Canada's **Sectoral Initiatives Program**. We support TOTA's proposal to deliver a program for the hospitality and tourism sector that will help tourism business operators to respond to and recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

We have heard from Chamber Members in the Thompson Okanagan tourism industry that hiring skilled and knowledgeable employees has been an ongoing challenge each year. Businesses can provide training on their business operations but require employees with general knowledge of the local tourism industry, an understanding of provincial and regional sustainable tourism goals, and hospitality service soft skills.

COVID-19 brings new challenges for businesses, including the hiring of new employees during a time of great uncertainty and constant change. The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association recognizes the tourism sector has been significantly impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Information from the January 2021 BC Labour Market Report (LabourMarketOnline.com) speaks to the severe impact of the pandemic on the tourism and hospitality sector and reports that 2020 saw a 22.2% employment decrease from 2019 in the tourism sector. Employers in the industry are trying to find ways to maintain staffing to offer tourism services when possible, while dealing with the challenges COVID-19 has created. For example, employers are creating new roles focused on a wider range of duties, which require the ability of employees to address new, time-sensitive challenges on a regular basis.

As we understand, the objectives of this project include:

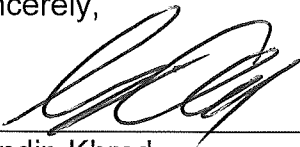
- Increasing the resiliency and ability of the sector to recover from the negative impact of COVID-19. Upgrading workforce skill sets provides enhanced opportunity for entry-level workers to take on multiple roles in organizations in the short term.
- Increasing the employability long term by providing skill sets that allows employees to extend employability if they were seasonally employed. This increased training will also support the retention and engagement of employees and allow them to grow their careers within the industry.

We will support the success of this program by:

- Promoting the project throughout our area with partners and colleagues in the industry.
- Referring other industry employers or job seekers to the project.

With this letter, we are indicating our willingness to work with the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association to support this program and promote this training to employers and program candidates. We believe the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, and its training partner Okanagan College, have the necessary experience to work with employers, industry organizations, and the government to deliver an effective training curriculum that will provide participants with the tools for successful employment in the Thompson Okanagan hospitality and tourism industry.

Sincerely,



Sandip Khrod
Vice-President
Salmon Arm & District Chamber of Commerce