
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts

NEARLY \$1 MILLION FOR NORTHERN TOURISM

VANCOUVER – A one-time investment worth \$900,000 will ensure visitors are aware of all the diverse travel experiences available to them in the north coast and northern B.C., Tourism, Sport and the Arts Minister Olga Ilich announced today.

In addition to stunning scenery and one-of-a-kind attractions, over 100 festivals and events await potential travellers to the communities and tourism destinations of the north coast, northern Vancouver Island and northern B.C. The “Best Summer Ever” tourism marketing initiative will further build tourism demand through programs targeted towards increased awareness, special offers and other integrated marketing activities.

“This funding is aimed at building on the many opportunities identified by northern and north coast communities and tourism operators to attract even more visitors to their destinations this summer and in the years to come,” said Ilich.

The new funding of \$900,000 will support major components of tourism activity in the area – industry development and advertising and promotion. The funds will be targeted directly to community-led development initiatives to increase tourism capacity through local projects, with communities deciding how best to utilize funds to maximize tourism in their areas. Priorities will include local way-finding/signage, visitor servicing, event development and other investments geared to enhancing the visitor experience.

Funding will be managed by three regional destination marketing organizations – Northern BC Tourism Association, Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association and the Tourism Association of Vancouver Island in conjunction with local destination marketing organizations.

The marketing initiative could involve multi-media advertising including newspapers and radio and will feature incentive-based promotions that will further encourage travellers to choose north coast destinations in their vacation plans. Offerings could include value-priced “fly/drive” or getaway packages that encourage potential visitors to opt for a northern holiday. Marketing will highlight the region’s outdoor adventures such as hiking, wildlife viewing, kayaking and sport fishing among many others, or cultural activities such as Aboriginal tourism experiences or visiting galleries and museums.

A recent survey conducted by Tourism BC revealed that communities and operators already offer visitors unique experiences and events such as Prince Rupert’s Seafest in June, July’s Edge of the World Music Festival in Haida Gwaii, or even the Coho run from July to September. Communities are currently working with local and regional tourism organizations to identify potential incentives to be offered in the campaign, and some of the ideas under consideration include:

- a sweepstakes promotion;
- gas coupons;
- discounts for major events and festivals;
- “passports” for local museums and attractions; and
- contesting through Visitor Centres

“We want to help get the word out and to offer a variety of incentives through special value offers, contests, and promotional campaigns to encourage more tourists to include the north and north coast in their summer vacation plans,” added Ilich. “I am impressed with the creativity of the communities and tourism operators in identifying potential activities. Clearly, no one knows their business better than they do.”

Government has been very active in supporting the provincial tourism industry in a number of strategic ways. In addition to the increased funding for Tourism BC and UBCM announced in 2004, a government-funded tourism advertising campaign aimed at getting more B.C. residents to travel throughout the province this summer is set to launch at the beginning of June. As well, government is working to improve transportation infrastructure through projects like the recently announced \$1.4-million runway extension at the Smithers airport.

“By emphasizing the attractions of the region, providing up-to-date travel information, developing unique and creative incentives and focusing advertising on encouraging British Columbians to explore within their home province, we can help northern and north coast tourism operators gain a greater share of the tourism revenues generated by domestic tourism,” said Ilich. “These regions can really use this additional investment to highlight what they have to offer visitors in the best place on earth, our home province.”

Currently in- province domestic tourism accounts for nearly 28 per cent of the province’s \$9.8 billion annual tourism revenues. To find out more about events and festivals in the northern and north coastal regions, go to www.HelloBC.com for more information.

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