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Nanaimo, BC

Vancouver Island Delegation Travels to Beijing

For immediate release: Dave Petryk, President & CEO of Tourism Vancouver Island is pleased to be joining the Comox Valley Beijing Delegation to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China from August 13-19. The Province of British Columbia recognizes the opportunities surrounding the 2010 Winter Games at every level. The growth in tourism in British Columbia following Expo 86 and the spike in international visitation to Alberta post 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics are two examples of the unprecedented opportunities presented to the Tourism Industry. Tourism Vancouver Island envisions a leading strategy that will increase visitation and visitor expenditures in the Vancouver Island region by capitalizing on the incredible awareness created by the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games.

The incremental impact of the Olympic Games will rely primarily on Tourism. InterVISTAS Consulting Inc. indicates that *“Two thirds of the direct incremental impacts of hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games accrue to the Tourism Sector”*. In addition, the Auditor General of British Columbia reports, *“Obtaining the predicted economic impacts will require extensive tourism marketing”* and *“These benefits will not materialize automatically. They must be earned by a focused, adequately funded and skillfully executed marketing program”*. After years of gaining modest increases in awareness with a limited annual marketing budget, the BC Tourism industry stands to see significant economic impact from this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

In January 2007, Tourism Vancouver Island struck a task force to identify a cohesive plan to ensure a coordinated approach to leverage the 2010 BC Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games and provide the leadership and strategy to deliver the plan. The task force identified the importance of avoiding possible duplication of efforts and ensuring a collective voice on behalf of the regions. The task force identified that the key area of opportunity rests with the international media's focus on the 2010 BC Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. It also identified the very real possibility that the Vancouver Island region could be obscured by the media's focus on the Vancouver/Whistler area unless there is a coordinated and strategic approach to this opportunity.

Tourism Vancouver Island in partnership with its communities has developed a focused strategy to highlight the Tourism opportunities of the Vancouver Island region leveraging the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. This strategy has been developed through a consultative approach by a Vancouver Island 2010 Winter Olympics Task Force. The task force included representation from various communities across the Vancouver Island and Sunshine Coast regions including Victoria, Cowichan, Nanaimo, Parksville, Qualicum, Comox Valley and North Vancouver Island. The strategy was developed over a 12 month period with the guidance of Tourism BC's Raymond Chan, Vice President, 2010 and Corporate Relations and included consultation with both Tourism BC's Media and Travel Trade departments.

The strategy focuses on a coordinated approach, leveraging the benefits of the 2010 efforts of Tourism BC, while avoiding duplication. The task force has identified that an interface with Tourism BC presents the greatest opportunity, primarily in the area of Media Relations. It is estimated that the 2010 BC Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games will draw in excess of 17,000 accredited and unaccredited media whose audience will include over three billion television viewers. The marketing strategies will include pre-, during and post-2010 Winter Olympics opportunities with a primary emphasis on unaccredited media focusing on destination stories surrounding the games.

Vancouver Island, nestled tightly along the lower south-western coast of British Columbia, Canada, is rich in history and ripe with opportunities for outdoor adventure. Roughly the size of Holland, Vancouver Island is home to the historic capital city of Victoria. Famous for both its historic buildings, accommodations and bustling inner harbour, no trip to the island is complete without visiting this jewel. The Vancouver Island region also encompasses the Gulf Islands. These diverse, small islands are known for their rich artisan wares, wine and culinary adventures and scenic outdoor activities. Vancouver Island is an exciting region rich in First Nations history and culture, wine and agritourism, wildlife watching and a plethora of outdoor activities including fishing, whale watching and golf. Whether visitors come for a short vacation or plan on staying...Island, the wilderness, culture and heritage of this dynamic maritime region is well worth the visit.

Vancouver Island continues to be recognized as a premier vacation destination. For the eighth year in a row Vancouver Island has been rated as the Best Island, North America by the readers of Conde Nast Traveler. This prestigious travel magazine with a per issue readership of 2 million has been conducting a Readers' Choice award program for 18 years.

Tourism Vancouver Island is one of six regional destination marketing organizations in British Columbia that administers co-operative marketing and advertising projects for its stakeholders throughout the region. To access information about Tourism Vancouver Island and marketing initiatives, please visit www.tourismvi.ca. For general travel information on Vancouver Island, Victoria and the Gulf Islands, please visit www.vancouverisland.travel.

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Tourism accounts for more than 117,900 direct jobs in British Columbia, representing approximately one in every 20 jobs in the province. BC's tourism industry generated approximately \$9.8 billion in revenues in 2005 and over \$5.8 billion in GDP in 2004, making tourism one of the largest resource industries in the province. (source: cotabc.com).

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