

## Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – January 30, 2024

Southern Alberta Tourism Partners Launch National Initiative to Boost the Tourism Industry in the Region

Tourism Lethbridge, in collaboration with SouthGrow Regional Initiative and the Alberta SouthWest Regional Alliance, is pleased to announce the launch of an innovative national tourism initiative aimed at bolstering the tourism industry in Southern Alberta.

The initiative is made possible thanks in part to federal funding through the Government of Canada's Tourism Relief Fund, which is administered in Alberta by PrairiesCan. Additional support has been provided through the Government of Alberta's Northern and Regional Economic Development Program to implement a Market Readiness Program specifically designed to support tourism businesses in the region.

The objective of this ambitious project is to ensure businesses in the region are ready to support tourism growth as we market the region as a desirable destination and elevate the overall visitor experience. By leveraging the combined expertise and resources of the organizations involved, businesses will be included on a national registry and invited to participate in unique opportunities to promote their tourism business to different markets.

"The Sustainable Journeys Prairies to Pacific Corridor being developed by Destination Canada will highlight this region and it is important that our tourism businesses are ready to capture the opportunities this initiative will bring" said Erin Crane, CEO Tourism Lethbridge.

Jon Mamela, Chief Commercial Officer with Travel Alberta said that "Lethbridge has been identified as a region of significant potential under our Tourism Development Zone project, and the Market Readiness Program will ensure operators in the region are ready to meet the demand of a growing tourism sector in Southern Alberta."

15 businesses in Southern Alberta will be subsidized to participate as early adopters of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's READI program for Export and Market READiness. The program includes specialized training and the READI Stamp certification, administered by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC), which signifies a commitment to excellence within the tourism sector.

"The program is designed to acknowledge tourism operators and stakeholders who have demonstrated a dedication to continuous learning, development, and adherence to industry best practices," said Jennifer Taylor, Vice-President Business Development & Member Relations of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC).

Assisting with this project to connect with tourism businesses in the region are the Community Futures and Destination Management Organizations in the region along with Travel Alberta. Troy Grainger from Community Futures Lethbridge Region stated that, "connecting regional business to supplemental resources is a big part of the service. This program provides the opportunity to help tourism businesses and the visitor economy in southern Alberta itself scale and grow, which is one of our goals."

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