

2025 GOLDEN AREA LIVING WAGE

Temporary Seasonal Workers



Photos: Tourism Golden | Maur Mere Media
Kicking Horse Mountain Resort
Pursuit | Chris Amat



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INTRODUCTION



Photo: Tourism Golden / Jeff Bartlett

In partnership with Tourism Golden, Golden CED leaned on our years of experience with Living Wage research and calculations to deepen our understanding of what constitutes a living wage in the Golden area, and initiate a more informed conversation on the topic and its realities.

We contribute yearly to the existing provincial Living Wage calculations, which have historically been based on a family of four but now also includes single individuals and single-parent families. The Living Wage for Temporary Seasonal Workers project aimed to complement this provincial process by developing tailored calculations for more diverse and locally relevant worker profiles. These included individual Temporary Seasonal Workers, specifically within the Tourism Industry.

By creating an alternate calculation for Temporary Seasonal Workers, we sought to address a gap in the current methodology and provide more inclusive, evidence-based insights into the real cost of living for workers whose circumstances differ from the provincial standard. These insights support a more comprehensive view of economic realities across our workforce and help inform policy, advocacy, and employer practices.

This document is a summary snapshot of the Living Wage for Temporary Seasonal Workers that was developed through an analysis of engagement phases of the two distinct seasonal cohorts in summer and winter.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Definition

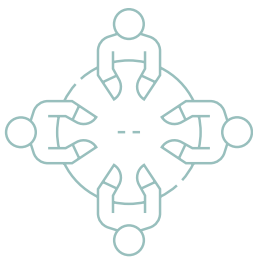
Temporary Seasonal Workers: people who come to the Golden area temporarily, usually for a season or two, and typically work in the Tourism Industry (within recreation and attractions, food and beverage, accommodation and related services, etc.). The Temporary Seasonal Worker is usually under 30, comes from international locations and works in the tourism industry.

Timeline

The project started in December 2024 and ended in December 2025, including two distinct phases that studied the winter and summer season Temporary Seasonal Workers. The calculation was extrapolated from these findings into a yearly budget.

Engagement

To gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Temporary Seasonal Workers, Golden CED carried out four phases of engagement in total as part of this project:



ROUNDTABLES

Winter
24 participants

Summer
22 participants

46
participants
total



PUBLIC SURVEYS

Winter
53 responses

Summer
83 responses

136
responses
total

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

In-person Roundtables

Involved a series of discussions with **46 Temporary Seasonal Workers** across 6 small-group sessions.

These sessions created space for open and candid conversations, enabling us to collect valuable qualitative insights into the challenges, needs, and realities faced by this demographic of the workforce.

Public Surveys

Built on what we learned during the roundtable discussions, to validate and expand our findings. The surveys received **136 responses in total** and provided us with quantitative data to support and strengthen the themes identified during the roundtables, helping us develop an informed criteria, strengthening the yearly calculation process.



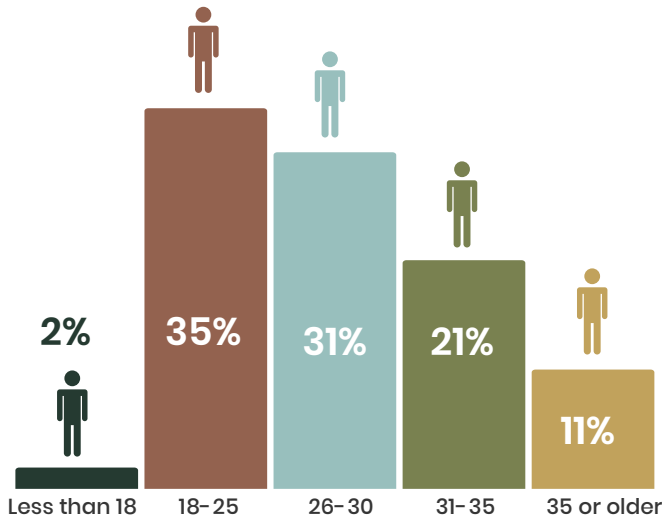
Together, these four phases of engagement offered a more comprehensive picture of the Temporary Seasonal Workers' realities in the Golden area and informed the development of the criteria for this alternate calculation.

RESPONDENTS SNAPSHOT

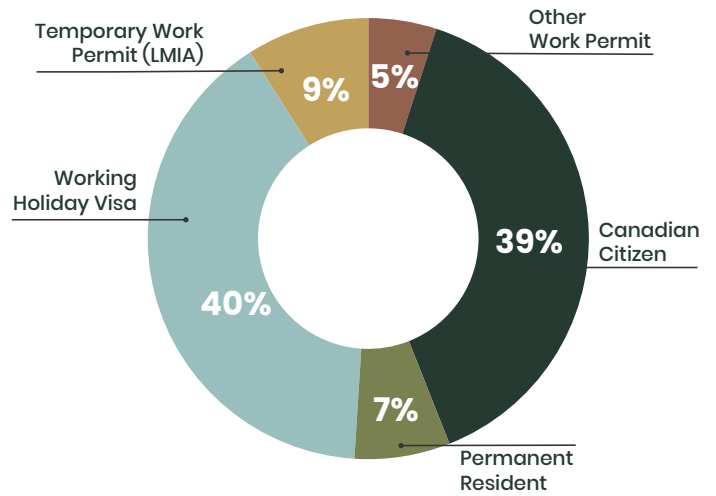


For this calculation, a Temporary Seasonal Worker is between 18 and 30 years old, from an international location, has a Working Holiday Visa and works in the tourism industry.

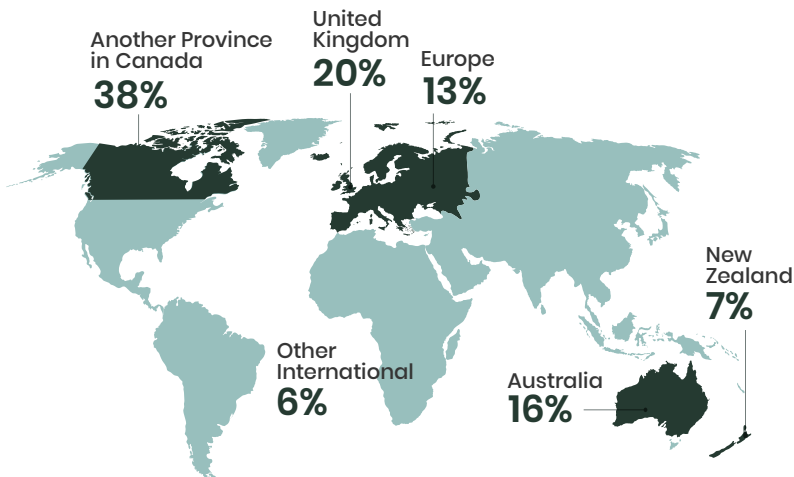
66% Most respondents are between the ages of 18 and 30.



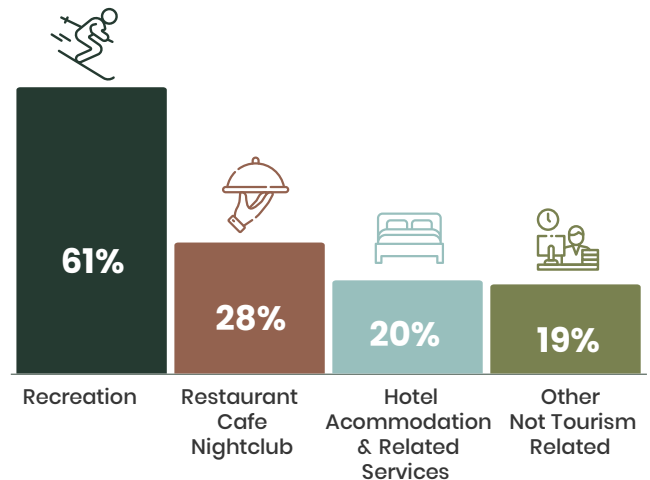
54% Most of respondents don't have a long term resident status.



62% Most of respondents are from locations outside of Canada.



61% Most respondents are working in the recreation industry.



CALCULATION



Photo: Tourism Golden / Jeff Bartlett

Building on insights and data gathered through the winter and summer engagement phases, we were able to develop the criteria and calculation for the Temporary Seasonal Workers, consolidating into a yearly cost for each budget component established.

To ensure comparability with our local 2025 Living Wage calculated in the fall of 2025, which used the standard provincial methodology, we maintained the overall structure of the provincial model while developing the criteria for individual Temporary Seasonal Workers. Using this framework allowed us to stay aligned with established methods while tailoring the calculation to an alternative worker profile.

Temporary Seasonal Worker	Golden Living Wage 2025
\$25. ⁸⁷	\$27. ⁸⁰











CALCULATION



Final criteria for the 2025 Living Wage for Temporary Seasonal Workers

The final criteria is based on:

- ✓ 35 hour work week/52 weeks per year;
- ✓ Shared accommodation;
- ✓ No government credits that Canadian residents may be entitled to.

	Monthly Expenses	Share of the Hourly Wage	
	Shelter	\$850	\$6.73 26%
	Food	\$567	\$4.66 18%
	Clothing & Footwear	\$115	\$1.03 4%
	Phone & Internet	\$89	\$0.78 3%
	Health	\$115	\$1.03 4%
	Contingency Fund	\$302	\$2.33 9%
	Other Expenses	\$424	\$3.36 13%
	Transportation	\$487	\$3.88 15%
	Travel & Visa	\$169	\$1.29 5%
	Certification	\$90	\$0.78 3%

BUDGET ITEMS



Shelter

In line with the standard provincial Living Wage methodology, 2025 median local rental rates were used to define shelter cost.

Survey results indicated that the majority of Temporary Seasonal Workers live in shared accommodations within the Town, fully inclusive of utilities, the main reason for sharing being cost-related. Accordingly, the primary calculation is based on the cost of an individual renting a room in a shared accommodation fully inclusive of utilities.

When asked if their employer provides staff accommodation, 63% responded yes. Within that group of respondents, 45% are living in staff accommodation, which reduces their rental cost by \$190 per month on average. This type of arrangement is benefiting 28% of Temporary Seasonal Workers.

As per Living Wage BC policies, while providing staff accommodation can be a significant value to employees and should be clearly communicated as part of the total compensation package, it cannot be used to reduce a workers' wage for the following reasons:

- As housing is a human right, it's vital that a worker can choose where they live.
- If a worker leaves their job, they may also have to leave their home, which means that a worker may have to put up with poor working conditions or unsafe accommodation to keep a roof over their head.

An alternate shelter cost scenario was developed for workers renting their own one-bedroom accommodation without sharing. This alternate calculation demonstrated that a Temporary Seasonal Worker not sharing their accommodation, in line with an individual within the standard provincial calculation, needs a wage of \$35.34. Although not representing the majority of Temporary Seasonal Workers, this alternate wage could be considered for management positions.

BUDGET ITEMS



Food

The **National Nutritious Food Basket (NNFB)** was used in the food cost calculation. This standardized tool tracks the cost and affordability of healthy eating across Canada and includes a list of nutritious foods, along with the recommended quantities for individuals. The NNFB is a core component of the provincial Living Wage methodology and is supported by food price data collected by Statistics Canada.

To validate this standard against local realities, we compared it with findings from our public survey, which indicated that the average food costs reported by Temporary Seasonal Workers aligned closely with the NNFB-based standard.

When asked if their employer provides free or discounted meals, whether during their shifts or at any time, 53% responded yes. Overall, these workers experience a reduced food cost of \$69 monthly on average.

As per Living Wage BC policies, because food is considered a basic essential of life, and a worker should have the choice in where and what they purchase, employers cannot reduce an employee's wage by offering free or discounted meals. Free or discounted meals are considered perks or benefits rather than a direct, interchangeable part of the wage that covers essential costs included in the living wage calculation. In support of this guideline, while workers who have access to free or discounted meals through their work seem to appreciate having a reduced cost, some of the comments received in the survey related to this are:

“No variation and only vegetarian on certain days, so restricted.”

“It's all fried food, no healthy options.”

“Staff meals are 40% off but still more expensive than buying groceries and meal prepping.”

BUDGET ITEMS



Photo: Tourism Golden / Dave Best



Clothing and Footwear

To calculate clothing and footwear cost, the **Market Basket Measure (MBM)** developed by Statistics Canada was used, as in the provincial Living Wage methodology. It outlines the cost of a defined basket of goods required for a modest, basic standard of living.

Findings from our public survey revealed that 54% of Temporary Seasonal Workers spend a similar amount to the standard MBM allocation, while 31% spend more. The almost majority, 41%, reported having additional costs for work-related clothing and footwear. These additional costs ranged between \$50 to \$3,000 per year, with an average of \$866. To reflect this reality and its impact on the workers, the standard clothing and footwear budget is adjusted to include this extra cost.

During engagement, we found that Temporary Seasonal Workers:

“*Shop second hand, at the thrift store.*”
“*Use the clothes until they fall apart.*”



Phone & Internet

Survey responses showed that Temporary Seasonal Workers typically have a similar cost for their mobile phone plans as the amount included in the standard provincial Living Wage calculation.

For internet expenses, the standard internet rate was applied and divided between three people, aligning with the typical shared living arrangement reported in the survey.

BUDGET ITEMS



Non-MSP Health Expenses

Since the Temporary Seasonal Worker is normally a non-resident, and that the majority of the workers responded not being eligible for the free BC Medical Services Plan, the average cost of emergency travel insurance required for Temporary Seasonal Workers to enter and work in Canada is used in the calculation.



Contingency Fund

The provincial Living Wage calculation includes a contingency fund equivalent to two weeks' salary to account for job transitions and other unforeseen events. Temporary Seasonal Workers often face irregular hours due to fluctuations in tourism demand as well as a marked decrease in hours during shoulder seasons, as expressed by respondents during engagement:

“Very often work hours got cut, in both jobs, which makes it very unstable, uncertain and hard to make ends meet each month. Creates a lot of stress too.”

“Hours are inconsistent. Lots when it’s busy but very little to zero when the tourists leave.”

“I work as an instructor so sometimes I work plenty and other times there’s very little work.”

“We were initially at 40h but cut to 35h due to the lack of reservations.”

To reflect this reality, an additional two weeks was added to the contingency fund to cover some of these losses. This adjustment also considers that these workers normally receive holiday pay.

BUDGET ITEMS



Other Household and Social Participation

The standard provincial calculation for this cost is applied to this budget item and typically covers: toiletries and personal care, over-the-counter medication and expenses not fully covered by private health insurance, furniture, household supplies, bank fees, some reading materials, minimal recreation and entertainment outings (e.g., restaurant, cultural events), birthday presents, modest vacation, sports and arts activities.



Transportation

The majority of survey respondents, 75%, indicated that they own a vehicle. Based on this, the same annual cost for owning and operating a used car from the standard provincial Living Wage calculation is applied, which takes into account the fact that there is no public transit in the area that would allow them to commute to work as well as well as run errands and get to places of recreation on their days off. This approach ensures consistency with the established methodology while accurately reflecting the transportation realities of most Temporary Seasonal Workers.

Based on the public survey we conducted, the main reasons listed by respondents for choosing to own a car are:

- ✓ Be able to explore the surroundings and recreate;
- ✓ Freedom;
- ✓ To run errands;
- ✓ Work commute;
- ✓ No public transportation.

The majority of respondents who choose to not own a vehicle expressed that they feel limited in what they can do. They mainly rely on active means of transportation like walking and biking, or friends with cars and transportation provided by their employer.

When asked if their employer provides free or subsidized transportation, 60% responded yes. Of those, 59% still choose to own a car, the main reasons being to be able to explore the surroundings and recreate, to have freedom and run errands.

BUDGET ITEMS

Photo: Kicking Horse Mountain Resort



Travel and Visa

Temporary Seasonal Workers, typically coming from international locations, incur travel and visa costs to come work in Canada. A category was added to the calculation to reflect these costs, at least minimally, covering a return flight ticket and Working Holiday visa cost.



Certification

37% of respondents reported a personal cost related to their certification required for their employment in the tourism and hospitality industry. The declared average yearly cost of these workers is \$1,083. Because it is a significant cost for the employees that incur it, it is included in the calculation.

The certification cost is \$70 less per year than the adult education amount included in the provincial standard calculation.



Tax considerations

The typical Temporary Seasonal Workers has to pay all deductions for earned income in Canada and is not be eligible for tax credits because they normally maintain a resident status in another country.

WORKERS' FEEDBACK



Photo: Tourism Golden / Dave Best

Hours and wages

When asked about their work hours, 63% of the summer seasonal workers survey respondents said they had enough hours with an average of 43 hours per week while 47% of the winter respondents said they didn't have enough hours with a weekly average of 31 hours.

“

The hours are okay but it's not enough to sustain myself.”

“

I need to work the extra hours in order to pay bills. Very little time and extra money for extra curricular.”

How they make it work

When asked how they're able to budget for the year working seasonally:

- 47% answered that they work enough year-round to sustain themselves;
- 42% said they work more in the summer to save for slower seasons;
- 17% work more in the winter to save for slower seasons;
- 60% rely on other financial support like credit (line of credit or credit card), family support or savings.

“

With jobs being seasonal in Golden, I have to work more and harder to suffice throughout the off season.”

“

I get just enough to make rent and bills but I scrape by paycheck-paycheck.”

CONSIDERATIONS



Photo: Tourism Golden / Abby Cooper

Suggestions to make the local tourism sector more sustainable for workers:

- More hours or higher wage;
- Staff accommodations;
- Year-round work;
- Local benefit program/reciprocal deals;
- Public transportation including a public bus to Field/Lake Louise/Banff;
- Better advertising of resources and services available to newcomers to town;
- A program that enables gear resale or donation to incoming cohorts, as participants often leave after completion.

Benefits and/or perks employers could offer that would make a difference in their budget:

- Health benefits or wellness stipend;
- Discounts within the company, sister companies and partner organizations;
- Season pass (Kicking Horse, Sky Bridge, etc.);
- Gym membership;
- Incentives, bonus;
- Free or discounted food;
- Shared vehicle, transportation assistance or gas vouchers;
- Gear budget;
- Professional membership fees or course fee supports.

CONCLUSION



Photo: Tourism Golden / Jeff Bartlett

Golden's tourism sector depends on Temporary Seasonal Workers who contribute significantly to visitor experience, business continuity, and economic stability. Understanding the true cost of living for these workers is essential for fostering a fair, competitive, and sustainable workforce environment.

Conducting this local process of engagement with Temporary Seasonal Workers helps understand these workers' realities. It highlights the fact that while some of their costs are lower than long term residents, some of these workers face other unique and sometimes higher living costs than those included in standard Living Wage models.

The Living Wage benchmark is intended to facilitate dialogue and understanding and serve as a resource to support informed employer decisions and workforce planning.

This report was developed by
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