

## **GT Hiring Solutions Moves 2944 Okanagan Residents to New Careers Has Helped More Than 21,000 British Columbians from Income Assistance**

**Kelowna, September 29, 2004:** Today, GT Hiring Solutions celebrated moving 2944 Okanagan citizens from income assistance into the workforce with job-ready skills they'll need to succeed in British Columbia's booming tourism industry.

They're just a handful of the more than 21,000 British Columbians the Council of Tourism Associations of BC (COTA) and GT Hiring Solutions have helped move from income assistance to meaningful employment through the Destinations and HardHats employment and training programs. Destinations and HardHats are funded by the Province of British Columbia.

"Destinations helped open doors for me," said Sharon Qually, a single mother struggling to make ends meet by taking seasonal and casual labour jobs, who after less than a month with Destinations found work with Tim Hortons. Initially hired as a counter server Sharon was recently trained as a baker. Today, Qually's success was rewarded with a \$300 GT Hiring Solutions scholarship. "My Destinations Employment Coordinator improved my situation, made sure I had the things I needed and was happy and doing well at my job. Now, I feel good about myself and can afford to start making plans for the future," said Qually.

At the breakfast ceremony, John Weisbeck, MLA for Kelowna – Lake Country presented Qually with her scholarship. "Congratulations to everyone who has completed Destinations' job placement program. You are all excellent examples of British Columbians taking steps away from income assistance and towards a brighter future, whether it's a trades apprenticeship in construction or employment in tourism," said Weisbeck.

"We're very proud of all our clients, but even after they've found employment, we're far from through with them," said Christine Stoneman, Chief Operating Officer for GT Hiring Solutions. "We keep working with them for up to 19 months after they've been hired to give them the support they need to overcome any challenges they may face."

"Tourism directly employs 117,500 British Columbians and over the next seven years, tourism alone will need to fill another 50,000 positions," said Mary Mahon Jones, CEO of the Council of Tourism Associations of BC and leading partner in Destinations. "That means there are tremendous opportunities for all British Columbians currently on income assistance."

Destinations is BC's first choice for jobs in tourism. With 28 offices throughout the province, Destinations is the British Columbia's largest placement organization for the tourism industry.

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### **Media Contacts:**

Carolyn Yeager  
GT Hiring Solutions Inc.  
T: 250 995 3369

Kathi Springer  
T: 250 888 8767