

**Whistler Housing Needs Assessment Survey
2003 Report**

**Prepared for:
Whistler Housing Authority**

**Prepared by:
Points of View Research & Consulting Ltd.**

August 18, 2003

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Executive Summary

- Since its inception in 1997, the Whistler Housing Authority (WHA) has been actively pursuing the production and preservation of resident employee restricted housing in Whistler. By the end of 2003, employee restricted housing within Whistler will total approximately 3,963 employee beds.
- The sixth annual housing needs assessment survey was carried out in May 2003. 266 representatives of businesses and organizations operating in the Whistler Municipality were interviewed by telephone. 216 were from the group of larger businesses and organizations with six or more employees, and 50 were smaller employers with fewer than six employees.
- Smaller employers of fewer than six employees were included in the survey for the second time, and, like the 2002 survey, employees were not surveyed.
- For the past three years, the winter workforce growth has leveled off at 1% - 2% per year. The 266 businesses and organizations surveyed in 2003 employed 11,627 people. Using the current survey data, 2002 and 2001 survey data for businesses included in previous surveys but not this year's survey, and adjusting for small employers not included in the current survey, the total 2002-2003 winter workforce in Whistler was estimated to be 14,500, about equal to the projection of 14,400 estimated from last year's survey data. These workforce statistics include full-time employees and full-time equivalents.
- One in seven large employers and small employers (both 14%) expect an increase in employees next winter season. There appears to be a decrease in the percentage of large employers who expect to have more employees next winter season as compared with the 2002-2003 winter season.

- Consistent with the finding of fewer employers expecting to hire an increased number of employees next winter season (2003- 2004), the number of employees projected for next winter season is down from last year. Whistler businesses expect to employ 14,100 workers next winter season in 2003-2004, comparable to the size of the workforce of the 2001-2002 winter season.
- One in ten large (11%) and smaller employers (10%) were not able to achieve full staffing levels. Shortages for the 2002-2003 winter season have been estimated at 182 employees, about a third fewer than last winter season. Employee shortages reached a peak in the winter of 1999-2000 when 150 businesses indicated that they were short over 600 employees. For the past three seasons, employee shortages during the winter season have been far less significant than in earlier years and continue to be on a downward trend.
- According to employers, the unavailability of affordable housing continues to be the main reason for employee shortages in Whistler.
- Similar to the last two annual surveys, about three in ten employers (28%) provide some type of housing for their employees.
- The lower price of real estate relative to Whistler's housing market coupled with a continuously improving transportation link are a few reasons that have made living in Pemberton and Squamish a more viable option for some Whistler employees. The current survey indicates that the trend over the past several years of larger percentages of employees who live outside of municipal boundaries is continuing. Employers reported that approximately 10,521 employees lived within Municipal boundaries during the 2003-2004 winter season. Thus, about 27% of all Whistler employees lived outside of municipal boundaries this past winter season.

- The WHA will continue to track these statistics to ensure that as a community we remain cognizant and committed to meeting Whistler's residents' housing needs.

Introduction

Whistler's long-term success as a vibrant resort community is, in part, contingent upon retaining a stable resident workforce.

We will partner with the resort community to sustain a range and supply of housing options for Whistler's active and retired workforce.

WHA Mission Statement

Purpose. The Whistler Housing Authority conducted its sixth Housing Needs Assessment Survey during the summer of 2003. The purpose of this annual survey is to assess the housing needs of Whistler's employers and employees.

Approach. In previous surveys, questionnaires for self-completion were distributed to both employers and employees. This year and in 2002, only employers were surveyed, and they were interviewed by telephone. Consistent with the previous two surveys, the target population for the survey was businesses registered in the Resort Municipality of Whistler, which had six or more employees. A random sample of employers with fewer than six employees were included in the survey to allow a projection of workforce statistics for this important group of smaller businesses and, therefore, an accurate estimate of the total workforce for the Municipality.

A total of 266 employers were included in the survey. Of these, 216 were from the group of larger businesses and organizations with six or more employees and represented 78% of approximately 277 larger businesses in Whistler. The random sample of 50 smaller employers represented 7% of approximately 762 smaller businesses in Whistler.

Methodology

Questionnaire. The employer questionnaire used in the 2001 survey was adapted for telephone administration in 2002. A few of the questions asked in the 2002 survey were dropped for the current survey, and a few new questions were added. The new questions were 7a and 7b on leasing studio apartments, and question 4 that asks how many employees are 55 or older. The final questionnaire was approved by the Whistler Housing Authority and may be found in Appendix II.

Survey Population and Respondents. The sampling frame consisted of a database of all registered businesses in the Municipality of Whistler. Whistler Housing Authority provided Points of View Research with the database of contact information for the survey. Most of the respondents were business owners or managers. For some large organizations, the Human Resources manager was interviewed, and, in a few cases, the interviewer was referred to some other employee who was said to have the necessary information on employees.

Reliability of Results. With a sample of 266 and a population of 1,039 registered businesses, the results of this survey can be expected to be accurate plus or minus 5.2 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

Data Collection, Coding and Analysis. Owners and managers were contacted at their place of work during business hours and were interviewed by professional call center staff using computer-assisted telephone interviewing software. All interviewing took place in the supervised Central Telephone Facility of Points of View Research & Consulting Ltd. in downtown Vancouver.

Appointments for interviews were made as necessary to ensure convenient participation. Some respondents received numerous callbacks to make sure that a large a percentage of employers from the group of larger businesses would be included in the survey. At the

request of some employers, a few questionnaires were faxed or emailed for self-administration and returned to Points of View. Data collection took place during May 2003.

Verbatim responses to any open-ended questions were listed to determine aggregate categories for coding and analysis. An experienced researcher identified the thematic categories and coded the statements. The data were cleaned and analyzed using the Survey System™ data analysis program. Cross-tabulations were run by large and small employers.

The results of the survey are reported in the next section of this report. Appendix I contains a summary of the survey data for each question.

Winter Workforce

Questions 1a and 1b. Employers were asked how many total employees, including management/owners their business had during the past winter season, 2002-2003. If an employer had part-time employees, they were asked how many hours each worked so that full-time equivalent could be calculated by dividing the number of hours per week that a part-time employee works by 40 (40 hours being a standard work week). Full-time equivalent was designed to safeguard against the error of “double counting” those part-time employees who had two part-time jobs.

2003 Results. The 266 businesses and organizations surveyed in 2003 employed 11,627 people. Using the 2003 survey data and the survey data from the 2002 and 2001 surveys for businesses included in those surveys that were unreachable or unresponsive in this year’s survey, and a projection for smaller employers who were not surveyed, the total 2002-2003 winter workforce in Whistler was estimated to be 14,500. These workforce statistics include full-time employees and full-time equivalents.

2002 Results. The 270 businesses and organizations surveyed in 2002 employed 12,414 people. Using the 2002 survey data and 2001 survey data for businesses included in last year’s survey but not this year’s survey, the total 2001-2002 winter workforce in Whistler was estimated to be 14,200. These workforce statistics include full-time employees and full-time equivalents.

2001 Results. The 300 businesses surveyed in 2001 employed 12,032 full-time winter employees during the 2000-2001 winter season (includes full-time and full-time equivalents). When the number of 2000-2001 full-time winter employees was factored up to adjust for the 15% of employers not surveyed, the number of full-time and full-time equivalent winter employees was estimated at 13,800.

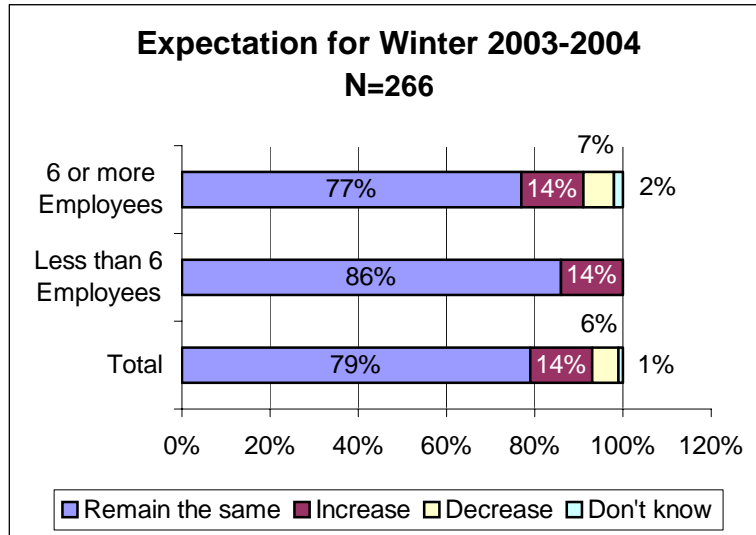
Summary. The estimated winter workforce of about 14,500 employees in 2002-2003 exceeded the previous winter season's estimated workforce by about 300 employees and continued the recent trend of small annual increases. This figure was very similar to the 14,400 estimate derived from last year's survey question asking employers how many employees they expected to have in 2002-2003.

Question 2a. Employers were asked if they expected the number of full-time and part-time employees to remain the same, increase or decrease next winter season 2003-2004. Again, if an employer had part-time employees, they were asked how many hours each worked so that full-time equivalents could be calculated.

2003 Results. Eight in ten employers (79%) expect the number of employees to remain the same next winter season, 2003-2004, while 14% said the number will increase and 6% said the number will decrease. One in seven large and small employers (both 14%) expect an increase next winter season.

2002 Results. Three-quarters of employers (77%) expected the number of employees to remain the same next winter season (2002-2003), while 17% said the number will increase and 4% said the number will decrease. One in five large employers (19%) and one in ten small employers (11%) expected an increase next winter season.

Summary. In comparison with the 2002 survey results, there appears to be a decrease in the percentage of large employers who expect to have more employees next winter season as compared with the last winter season.



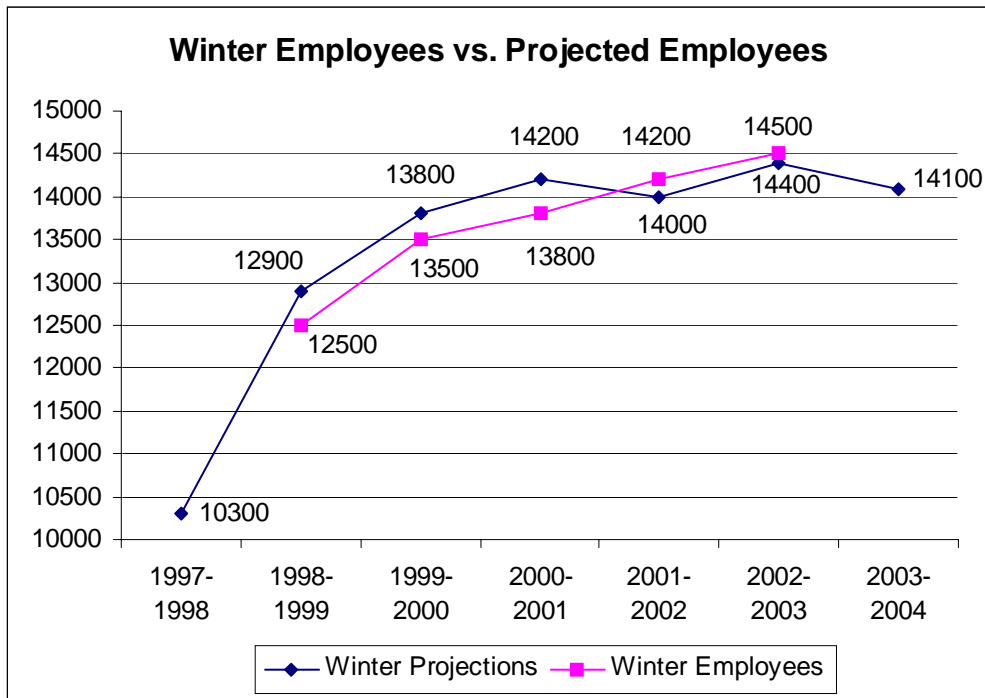
Question 2b. Employers were asked how many total employees, including management/owners they expected to have next winter season, 2003-2004.

2003 Results. Whistler businesses expect to have 14,070 employees next winter season, 2003-2004. This figure includes a projection derived from survey data to account for all businesses operating in Whistler.

2002 Results. Whistler businesses expected to have 14,400 employees next winter season, 2002-2003. This figure included a projection derived from survey data to account for all businesses operating in Whistler.

2001 Results. In the 2000 survey, employers only expected a small increase of 1% in their staffing needs, which resulted in a projected 2001-2002 winter workforce of about 14,000 employees.

Summary. The last three housing needs assessments have identified a recent trend of a 1% to 2% growth rate in the annual winter workforce. Contrary to previous surveys, next winter season, 2003-2004 may see a small decrease in the size of the winter workforce. The size of the workforce is expected to be comparable to the 2001-2002 winter season.



Note employee numbers on chart have been rounded to the nearest 100

Employees Who Live in Whistler

Question 3. Employers were asked how many of their total employees, including management/owners, lived in Whistler during this past winter season.

2003 Results. The employers interviewed in the 2002-2003 survey indicated that approximately 9,473 of their employees lived in Whistler during this past winter season. Projecting from the survey data to account for all businesses operating in Whistler, 10,521 employees lived within Municipal boundaries. Thus, about 27% of all Whistler employees lived outside of municipal boundaries last winter season.

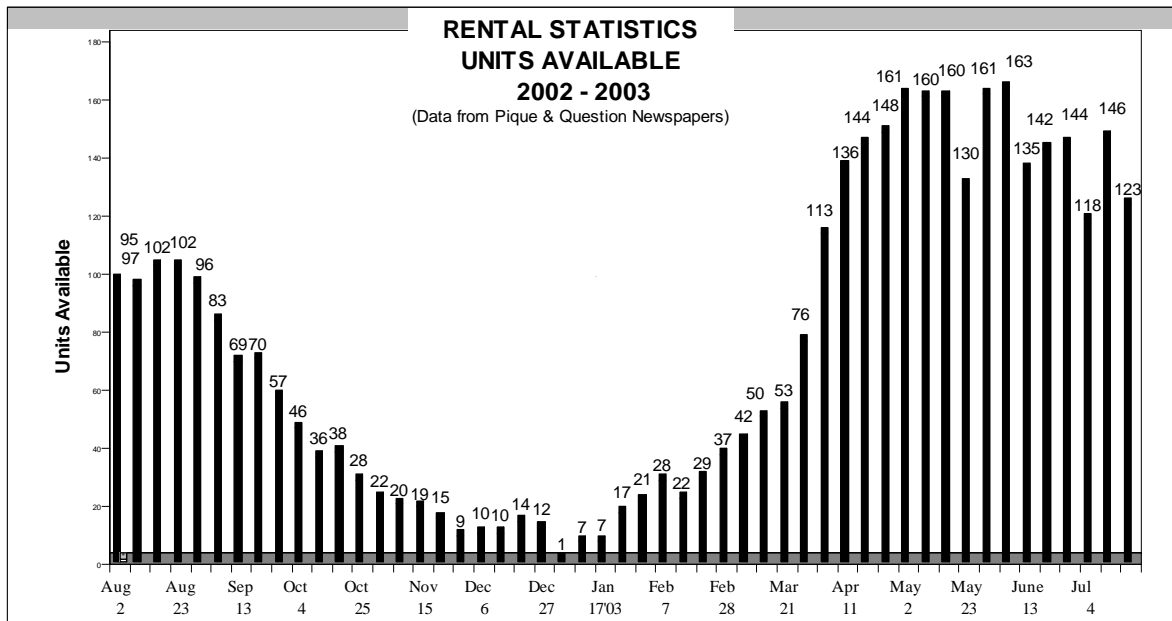
2002 Results. The employers interviewed in the 2001-2002 survey indicated that approximately 9,593 of their employees lived in Whistler during this past winter season. Projecting from the survey data to account for all businesses operating in Whistler,

10,641 employees lived within Municipal boundaries. Thus, about 25% of all Whistler employees lived outside of municipal boundaries in the 2001-2002 winter season.

2001 Results. The 2000-2001 survey indicated that approximately 10,746 Whistler employees lived in Whistler during the winter season, and 23% of all Whistler employees lived outside of municipal boundaries. The proportion of summer employees who lived in Whistler during the summer of 2001 rose to 80%, no doubt because housing is more easily attainable in the summer.

Summary. The lower price of real estate relative to Whistler’s housing market coupled with a continuously improving transportation link are a few reasons that have made living in Pemberton and Squamish a more viable option for some Whistler employees. The current survey indicates that the trend continues of increasing percentages of employees living outside of municipal boundaries.

Rental Statistics. The Whistler Housing Authority tracks private sector units available for rent that are listed in the Pique Newsmagazine and the Whistler Question newspaper. A chart showing weekly availability for the past year is shown below.



Employee Shortages

Question 5a and 5b. Employers were asked if they were able to achieve full staffing levels this past winter season, 2001-2002. If they said no, they were asked how many employees were you short?

2003 Results. Nearly nine in ten employers (88%) said they were able to achieve full staffing levels this past winter season. One in ten large employers (11%) and smaller employers (10%) were not able to achieve full staffing levels. Of the 266 employers surveyed, 23 larger employers felt they were short an average of nearly 6 full-time employees, and 5 smaller employers felt they were short an average of 2 full-time employees per business in the winter. These shortages represented a total of 148 employees. Projected to the total number of businesses operating in Whistler, employee shortages for the 2002-2003 winter season have been estimated at 182 employees.

2002 Results. Four in five employers (83%) said they were able to achieve full staffing levels this past winter season, and 16% said no, they were not able to achieve full staffing levels. Nearly one in five large employers (18%) and one in ten smaller employers (9%) were not able to achieve full staffing levels.



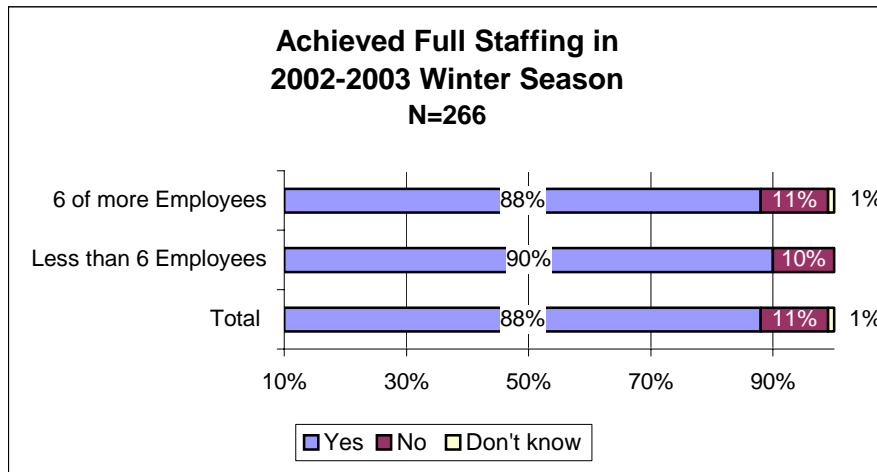
Of the 270 employers surveyed, 18% of larger employers (39) felt they were short an average of 5 full-time employees, and 9% of smaller employers (5) felt they were short an average of 2 full-time employees per business in the winter. These shortages

represented a total of 205 employees. Projected to the total number of businesses operating in Whistler, employee shortages for the 2001-2002 winter season have been estimated at 272 employees.

2001 Results. Of the 300 businesses surveyed last year, 30% (90) felt that they were short an average of 3.5 full-time employees per business in the winter, representing a total of 315 employees.

Summary. In past years, many businesses in Whistler reported employee shortages and attributed these shortages to inadequate housing. This trend reached a peak in the winter of 1999-2000 when 150 businesses indicated that they were short over 600 employees.

For the past three seasons, employee shortages during the winter season have been far less significant than in earlier years and continue to be on a downward trend.



Question 5c. Employers were asked what they thought were the main reasons for their company having unfilled positions.

2003 Results. Similar to last year's survey results, the lack of available housing, the high cost of housing, or the lack of affordable housing was most frequently cited reason for having employee shortages. A lack of qualified workers was the other main reason mentioned by employers with unfilled positions.

Summary. According to employers who have difficulty filling positions, the unavailability of affordable housing continues to be the main reason for employee shortages in Whistler.

Employer-provided Accommodation

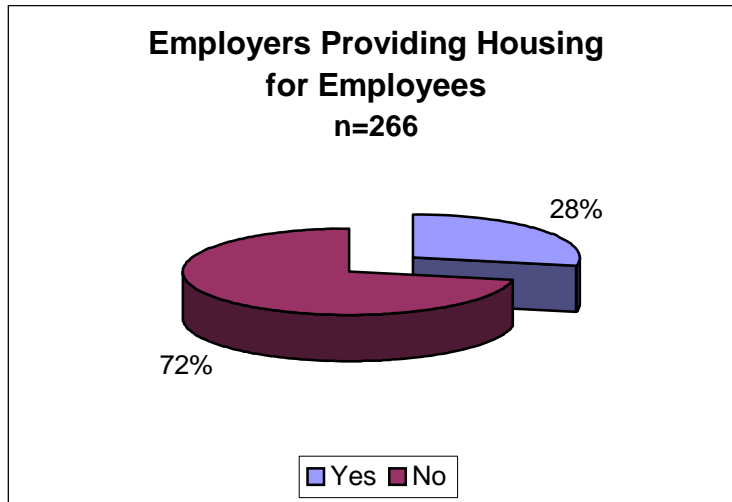
Question 6. Employers were asked if their company provides any housing for their employees.

2003 Results. Nearly three in ten employers (28%) assist their employees in some way by providing housing. Three in ten large employers (29%) and 22% of small employers provide some type of housing.

2002 Results. Three in ten employers (30%) assist their employees in some way by providing housing. Almost a third of large employers (32%) and a quarter of small employers (23%) provide some type of housing.

2001 Results. The 2001 survey also found that three in ten employers provided some type of housing for employees.

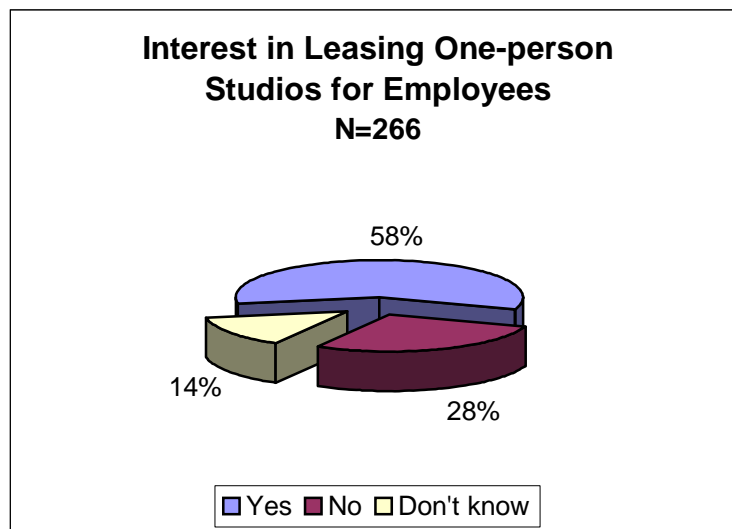
Summary. In comparison with the previous two surveys, no increase was found in the proportion of employers who provide accommodation to their employees. In fact, a slight decrease was found, although not statistically significant.



Questions 7a and 7b. Employers were asked if a small self-sufficient one-person studio was available for their employees on a one-year lease for approximately \$350 per month, would their business be interested in leasing. If they said yes, they were asked how many of these studios they would be willing to lease for at least one year. (This question was not asked in previous surveys.)

2003 Results. About three in five employers (58%) indicated a willingness to lease one-person studio apartments for their employees, including 59% of large employers and 54% of small employers.

The average number of units that employers were willing to lease was 4. The average number for large employers willing to lease was 4, and the average number for small employers was 3. Projected to all employers in Whistler, the total number of units employers would be willing to lease, if available, is 1,091 units.



Question 4. Employers were asked how many of their employees are 55 years of age or older. (This question was not asked in previous surveys.)

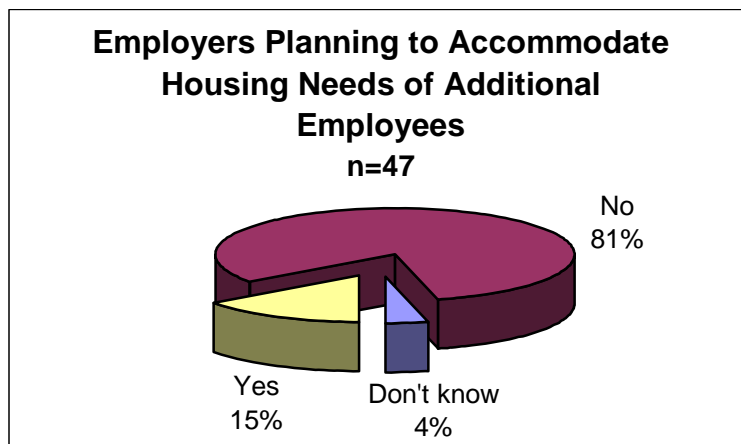
2003 Results. 86 employers, including 78 large employers and 8 small employers said they had one or more employees 55 or older. In other words, 36% of large employers

and 16% of small employers reported having older employees. These 86 employers identified a total of 378 employees 55 and older. Projected to the estimated winter workforce, older employees are estimated to comprise 3% of 14,500 employees, or 456 seniors in the Whistler workforce.

Results From Previous Surveys

In the 2002 survey, employers who said they were projecting an increase in staffing needed for next winter were asked if their company has plans to accommodate the housing needs for an increased number of employees. If they said yes, they were asked how they plan to do this.

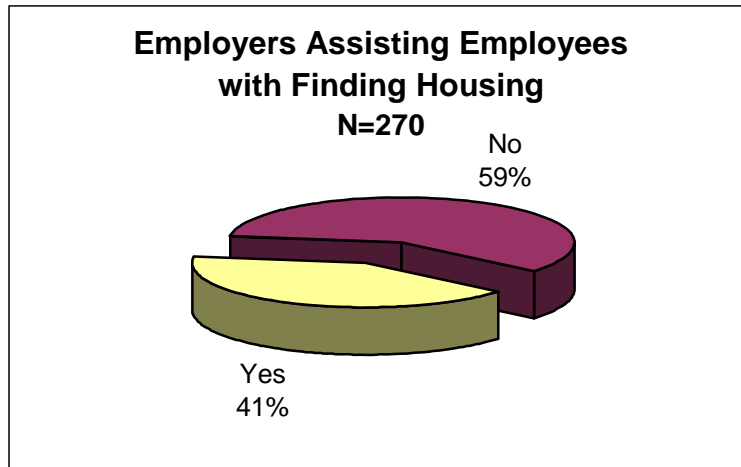
2002 Results. Of the 47 employers who expected staffing increases next winter, 15% had plans to accommodate the housing needs of an increased number of employees. This included 17% of larger employers and 15% of smaller employers who expected increased staffing levels next winter.



Employers who said they plan to accommodate the housing needs of additional employees said they will do this by asking Council to approve a company housing project, applying for extra staff housing, providing rental housing, helping employees search for housing and a few said they were not sure, at this time, how they would assist employees.

In the 2002 survey, employers were asked if they have assisted their employees with finding housing.

2002 Results. Four in ten employers (41%) have assisted their employees with finding housing. This included 42% of large employers and 36% of small employers.



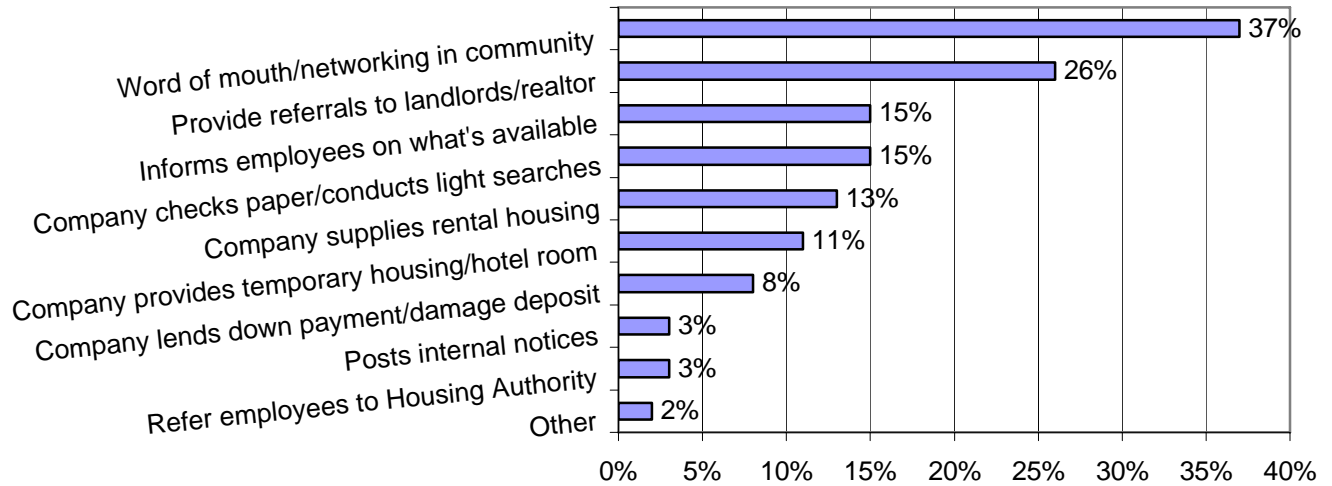
In the 2001 and 2002 surveys, employers who said they have assisted employees with finding housing were asked in what ways they have assisted their employees.

2002 Results. Word of mouth communication was the most frequently cited method of assisting employees. Employers provide referrals to landlords, check ads in the newspaper, and tell employees when they learn that rental housing is available. Just over one in ten companies provide rental housing and one in ten provide temporary housing such as hotel rooms or temporary accommodation with the business owner or with other employees. A few employers are providing financial assistance, mostly loans for damage deposits and down payments.

Summary. Much of the assistance given to employees in locating suitable accommodation consists of informal networking with people in the community and word of mouth communication. Some of the employer-provided housing is temporary only, while other employers rent or buy units and act as landlords for employees.

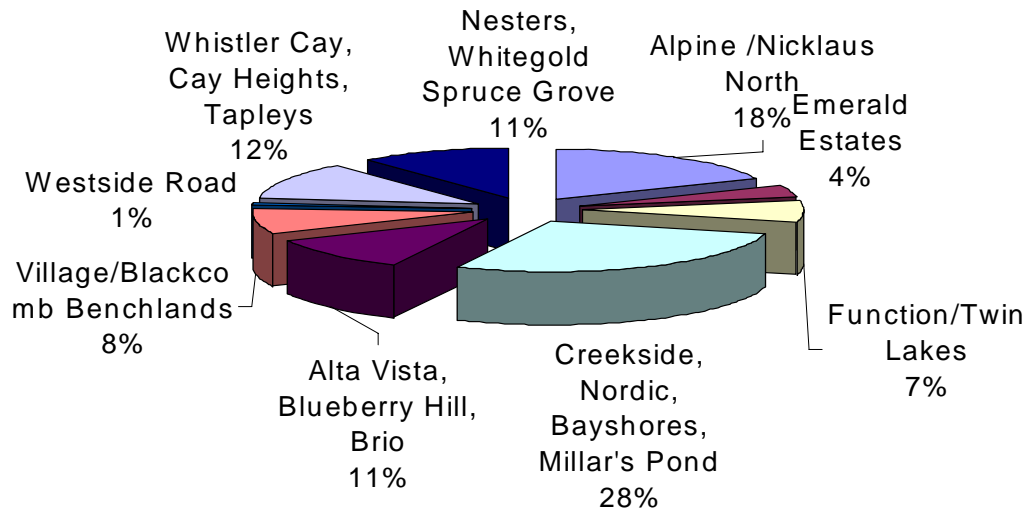
Ways that Employers Assist Employees in Finding Housing

n=110



2001 Results. The 2001 survey identified where in the Whistler area the workforce lives. This question was not asked in the 2002 or 2003 surveys, but the results of the 2001 survey are shown below.

Where We Live



Conclusion

Since its inception in 1997, the Whistler Housing Authority has been actively pursuing the production and preservation of resident employee restricted housing in Whistler. By the end of 2003, employee restricted accommodations within Whistler will total approximately 3,963 beds.

The past two surveys have identified a trend to a slower annual growth in the winter workforce. In the past, the winter employee population grew by about 5% every year, but for the past two years the annual increase has been 1% to 2%.

An outcome of this slower rate of growth is a recent trend of fewer unfilled positions. While businesses reported a shortage of over 600 employees during the 1999-2000 winter, in 2000-2001 the shortage was down to 315 employees, and in 2001-2002, the number of unfilled positions last winter season was 272. The current survey found that the trend of fewer unfilled positions continue downward with an estimated 182 unfilled positions for the 2002-2003 winter season.

The other important finding of the current survey is a continuation of the recent trend of decreasing proportions of employees living within municipal boundaries. During the winter of 1998-1999, employers reported that 80% of their employees lived in Whistler, and in the winter of 1999-2000 it was reported that 79% of employees lived in Whistler. The 2000-2001 survey indicated that an estimated 77% of employees were living within Whistler's municipal boundaries, and estimates for the winter of 2001-2002 indicate that the percentage of employees living in Whistler fell even further to 75%. This year's survey found that employees living within municipal boundaries continues to fall with 73% of employees living within Whistler.

Appendix I

Results Summary Table

| Employer Survey | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|---|
| Number of Employees winter 1998-1999 | 12,500* | | |
| Winter 1999-2000 | 13,500* | | |
| Winter 2000-2001 | 13,800* | | |
| Winter 2001-2002 | 14,200* | | |
| Winter 2002-2003 (Current Survey) | 14,500* | | |
| Expected Winter 2002-2003 | 14,400* | | |
| Expected Winter 2003-2004 (Current Survey) | 14,100* | | |
| Lived in Whistler Winter 2000-2001 | 10,746 (9,196 + 1,550 employees from businesses not surveyed this year) | | |
| Lived in Whistler Winter 2001-2002 | 10,641 (9,593 + 1,048 employees from businesses not surveyed this year) | | |
| Lived in Whistler Winter 2002-2003 (Current Survey) | 10,521 (9,473 + 1,048 employees from businesses not surveyed this year) | | |
| Lived in Whistler Summer 2001 | 7,394 (6,329 + 1,065 employees from businesses not surveyed this year) | | |
| Were you able to achieve full staffing levels during 2000-2001 Winter season? | Yes: (209) 70% | No: (90) 30% | If no, how many employees were you short? 2000-2001 Winter - 315 employees |
| Were you able to achieve full staffing levels during 2001-2002 Winter season? | Yes: (225) 83% | No: (44) 16% | If no, how many employees were you short? 2001-2002 Winter - 272 employees |
| Were you able to achieve full staffing levels during 2002-2003 Winter season? (Current Survey) | Yes: (235) 88% | No: (28) 11% | If no, how many employees were you short? 2002-2003 Winter - 182 employees |
| 2000-2001 Summer Season? | Yes: (242) 81% | No: (52) 17% | If no, how many employees were you short? 2000-2001 Summer - 140 employees |
| 2000-2001 Does your company provide housing for employees? | Yes: (87) 29% | No: (203) 68% | |
| 2001-2002 Does your company provide housing for employees? | Yes: (81) 30% | No: (189) 70% | |
| 2002-2003 Does your company provide housing for employees? (Current Survey) | Yes: (73) 28% | No: (193) 72% | |
| 2001-2002 Has your company assisted employees with finding housing? | Yes: (81) 41% | No: (189) 59% | |

* Note employee numbers have been rounded to the nearest 100.

EMPLOYER QUESTIONNAIRE
2002-2003

Hello, my name is [NAME], and I'm calling from Points of View Research, on behalf of Whistler Housing Authority. It is time once again for the annual survey of Whistler employers on the housing needs Whistler's workforce. The survey will take about 3 minutes.

Is now a good time to ask you a few questions?

IF YES: PROCEED
IF NO: MAKE APPOINTMENT FOR CALLBACK

IF NECESSARY: The Housing Needs Assessments has been conducted annually for the past five years to gauge the housing needs of Whistler's workforce. Your input is vital to the work of the Housing Authority.

IF NECESSARY: As housing continues to be a concern for many Whistler residents, your participation in this year's survey will greatly assist in assessing the housing needs of local employees and providing solutions to the affordable resident housing issue.

IF NECESSARY: In the interests of time and convenience, the Whistler Housing Authority decided to have the survey conducted by telephone this year.

IF NECESSARY: The answers from all employers surveyed are combined for analysis.

1a. How many total employees, including management/owners, did your business have during the last winter season? **NOTE: 2002-2003 WINTER SEASON**

Full time _____

Part time _____

1b. IF PART-TIME, How many hours a week on average did each part-time employee work?

*Full time Equivalents _____

***FILL IN AFTER COMPLETING INTERVIEW:** Full time Equivalents = total part time employee hours per week divided by 40

2a. Do you expect the number of full-time and part-time employees to remain the same, increase or decrease next winter season? **NOTE: 2003-2004 WINTER SEASON**

- 1 Number will remain the same **GO to Q.3**
- 2 Number will increase
- 3 Number will decrease

2b. How many total employees, including management/owners, do you expect to have next winter season? **NOTE: 2003-2004 WINTER SEASON**

Projected for Next Winter 2003-2004

Full time_____

Part time_____

2c. **IF PART-TIME**, How many hours a week on average do you expect that each part-time employee will work next winter season?

*Full time Equivalents_____

***FILL IN AFTER COMPLETING INTERVIEW:** Full time Equivalents = total part time employee hours per week divided by 40

3. How many of your total employees, including management/owners, lived in Whistler during the past winter season? **NOTE: 2002-2003 WINTER SEASON**

_____ Full-time

_____ Part-time

4. How many of your total employees are 55 years of age or older?

_____# of employees 55 years of age or older

5a. Were you able to achieve full staffing levels this past winter season? **NOTE: 2002-2003 WINTER SEASON**

- 1 Yes **Go to Q.5**
- 2 No

5b. **IF NO:** How many employees were you short?

Full time_____ Part time_____

5c. What do you think were the main reasons for your company having unfilled positions? **PROBE FOR SPECIFIC REASONS**

6. Does your company provide any housing for your employees?

1 Yes 2 No

Q.7a If a small self-sufficient 1 person studio was available for your employees on a one year lease for approximately \$350 per month, would your business be interested in leasing?

1 Yes 2 No

Q.7b **If yes:** How many of these studios would you be willing to lease for at least one year?

_____ # of studios willing to lease.

Those are all the questions. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

IF EMPLOYER HAS ADDITIONAL REMARKS ON HOUSING IN WHISTLER, PLEASE RECORD VERBATIM.

IF EMPLOYER REQUESTS MORE INFORMATION, SAY: Why don't you call Whistler Housing Authority at 604-905-4688 or email Tim Wake at tim@whistlerhousing.ca