



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Golden, B.C. Canyon closure echoes around the world

Battle brewing: Town rallies supporters as CP Rail delivers blow to community's tourism

GOLDEN, B.C., April 5, 2016 — Following extensive discussions in March, CP Rail has notified six rafting companies that operate guided rafting tours on the Kicking Horse River that they will no longer allow them to access the river's Lower Canyon via a walk over the tracks (owned by CP Rail). This decision follows 40 years of allowing the rafting operators access to the Lower Canyon without incident. While the Upper and Middle Canyons remain open, closure of the Lower Canyon has sparked global interest and the online petition has generated more than 5,000 signatures.

Internationally renowned for its whitewater rafting, 40,000 people raft the Kicking Horse River every year. It is one of Golden's major tourist attractions during the summer months. The Lower Canyon is well-respected for its long stretch of continuous whitewater. Loss of access to the Lower Canyon is detrimental to the Town and the local rafting companies that guide guests down the Kicking Horse River every year. The estimated potential impact to the community is in the millions of dollars.

"Letters of support are flooding in from all over the world. This is a stretch of an iconic heritage river that attracts international visitors to check off a bucket list activity. Closure of the canyon by CP Rail damages Canada's reputation as a wilderness destination where citizens have access to public lands," says Joanne Sweeting, executive director, Tourism Golden. "The decision impacts our local community and its effects are rippling across the world."

"We have faith that CP Rail will do the right thing and assure access to the Lower Canyon in time for the Golden Mountain Festival during May Long Weekend, which is dedicated to celebrating our rivers and wetlands this year," says Sweeting.

In attendance at the meetings on March 24 and 31 were several local political representatives including Golden Mayor Ron Oszust, local MP and MLA, CSRD Area A Director, and representatives from the Kicking Horse River (KHR) Outfitters Association and Tourism Golden.

CP Rail reaffirmed at the second meeting that access was denied and that it was not willing to seek a solution. According to public statements, CP Rail has cited safety concerns as being too great to find a viable solution. The area that accesses the river put-in is CP Rail property and the crossing was not meeting their legal, risk and regulatory requirements.

Carmen Narancsik of KHR Outfitters Association says, "Safety is really important to us too. There's been 40 years of rafting companies crossing there without an incident."

CP Rail granted permission to the KHR Outfitters Association to use the crossing from 2003-2006. The KHR Outfitters Association has legal evidence of the agreement that was made between CP Rail and rafting operators. It outlines the terms, including a fee that the rafting companies paid to CP Rail to use the crossing.

The Lower Canyon put-in grants rafters access to the lower section of Kicking Horse River that flows into the town of Golden. Between the Middle and Lower Canyon there are two kilometres of rapids where it is not possible to raft. Rafters navigating both the Middle and Lower sections remove rafts from the river two kilometres upstream from the Lower Canyon put-in point. This take-out point does not cross the railway line. The Lower Canyon put-in is where they re-enter the river. Due to the steepness of the canyon, this is the only existing access point to the Lower Canyon. The Upper and Middle River sections remain accessible to tour operators and rafters.

The online petition "Save The Lower Canyon Of The Kicking Horse River" is at:
<https://www.change.org/p/cp-rail-save-the-lower-canyon>.



Image caption: Golden's Kicking Horse River attracts whitewater enthusiasts from around the world
Image credit: Tourism Golden

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About Tourism Golden: <http://www.tourismgolden.com>

Tourism Golden is a non-profit, tourism industry-led Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) representing the Town of Golden and surrounding area known as Kicking Horse Country in British Columbia, Canada. Tourism Golden is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors representing accommodations, tourism operators, attractions and local businesses.