



For immediate release

March 5, 2013

WINTER TOURISM UP IN 2012/2013

WHITEHORSE – Over the course of the last three winters, tourism has seen tremendous growth in what has traditionally been considered the Yukon’s off-season. Some businesses are reporting as much as 300% growth over this period.

“The Yukon is in an envious position when it comes to winter tourism”, says Neil Hartling, Chair of the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon (TIA Yukon). “The Tourism Yukon and Yukon Wild winter marketing strategies have reached their potential and are paying dividends. The industry currently generates approximately \$200 million each year for the territory; all signs point to this number continuing to rise as we move forward.”

Winter tourism has been a success due to Yukon brand positioning and the unique Yukon experiences that northern winters can offer. The winter product that has been seeing the biggest draw is aurora borealis viewing. Operators have packaged this with dog sledding, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, ice fishing, and Arctic Circle tours to create a memorable trip that differs from the tradition summer products. Other contributing factors include the long standing winter events such as Rendezvous, Frostbite and the Yukon Quest which continue to draw visitors at this time of the year; the increased number of meetings and conventions being drawn to the territory throughout the year; Air North, Yukon’s airline helping to attract more visitors by offering affordable and regularly scheduled flights to and from gateway cities; and the amazing collaboration between Yukon Tourism, Yukon municipalities, Yukon First Nations, tourism NGOs, tourism operators, and the incredibly passionate and hardworking volunteers from the community. All of this has culminated to create an economic tide that is allowing all boats to rise, creating a noticeable spike in business for hotels, restaurants, retailers and tour operators. In addition to this, the visitor experience has also been increased significantly by the fact that operators are working cohesively to ensure that businesses remain open to accommodate tours.

The European market continues to be strong for the Yukon during the summer; the Asian (especially Japanese) and Canadian gateway city markets have been instrumental to winter tourism’s growth. Winter travelers are looking for a different type of trip, seeking shorter trips, where they do multiple activities, a major difference from the typical summer visitor. Large group bookings are also becoming part of the winter norm.

“It has become more successful than we ever would have dreamed. The winter operator’s season is really starting in late August and is continuing to spring,” says Hartling, “With this success it is no surprise we have seen a growth in the number of businesses taking advantage of the aurora’s potential over this same three year period.” Even with greater competition in the market, the Yukon continues to excel.

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