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TIA YUKON ENCOURAGED BY YUKON GOVERNMENT'S FOCUS ON TOURISM

Whitehorse: The Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon (TIA Yukon) believes that the budget introduced by the Yukon Government on April 27 will help strengthen the Yukon's tourism industry and is a reflection of the government's commitment to helping the tourism and cultural sectors develop more capacity and access untapped potential.

"A few weeks ago, TIA Yukon met with Premier Silver and Tourism and Culture Minister Dendys to discuss the priorities of the Yukon's tourism industry", said TIA Yukon Chair Felix Geithner. "Our impression from this meeting was that the government valued tourism and culture as a key economic driver and area for potential growth. The government echoed this message during the budget speech when the Premier referenced the range of industries that Yukoners have built in the territory and specifically noted that 'tourism is one of the most promising of those industries'."

Geithner believes that the commitments to tourism and culture in the budget are strategic in that they will provide support in key areas that will help bolster the industry and promote sustainability for the long term. Some announcements require more details for TIA Yukon to fully understand their impact but overall, Geithner is optimistic. Investments that enhance essential tourism pillars such as marketing, access and product/experience development and promote innovation in these areas are crucial to the enduring success of the industry.

The commitment to Dawson City airport planning is also a step in the right direction. The paving of the runway continues to be a priority for the tourism industry; it has also been identified as a priority for the government. TIA Yukon concurs with the government that time should be taken 'to get it right'. As long as there is movement forward on this issue so that it can be addressed within a reasonable window of time so as to meet the needs of the tourism industry, TIA Yukon is supportive of this approach.

The government's interest in tourism research was also something that caught TIA Yukon's attention.

"The government's focus on tourism research and data collection in this budget is a good decision," said Geithner. "We need to make sure that the industry is working with accurate, up-to-date information so that results can be measured and so we'll be able to know what's working and what's not. In order to know how far we can go as an industry and how to get there, we need the best map available."

Some of the key announcements in the budget speech that stand to benefit the tourism industry:

- \$60,000 for Single Track to Success for the creation of mountain bike trails
- \$500,000 for a digital development tool that will engage a global audience
- \$250,000 for Dawson City Airport Planning
- \$150,000 for a tourism strategy focused on measurable results
- \$300,000 to support Canada 150 celebrations
- \$33.4 million for highway maintenance and repairs

- \$200,000 for part of a two-year effort to conduct a comprehensive visitor survey
- \$75,000 to the Yukon Arts Centre to host an arts summit
- \$145,000 to operational and activity funding related to the cultural component of the CTFN Learning Centre
- \$50,000 to explore ways to share more information online with Yukon tourism operators
- Yukon Liquor Corporation to review its pricing policies to ensure that the growth of local brewers and distillers is supported
- \$130,000 to develop a heritage management plan for historic sites in Yukon First Nations Final Agreements

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