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TIA YUKON DECLARES 2017 A ‘TOURISM BOOM’ IN THE YUKON, 2018 OPTIMISTIC

Whitehorse: The Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon (TIA Yukon) is reflecting on an outstanding year for the Yukon’s tourism industry, with almost all feedback on visitor numbers and spending in 2017 from tourism operators being positive.

“This past year has been incredibly successful for tourism in the Yukon – some have even gone so far to say that 2017 was a record year”, says Neil Hartling, who was recently elected Chair of TIA Yukon. “Based on its discussions with the industry, TIA Yukon asserts that visitor numbers and spending will continue to be strong in 2018.”

As tourism in the territory continues to thrive, Hartling says it is crucial that government and industry keep working together to maximize its potential. He is buoyed by the support he has seen the federal and territorial governments provide to the Yukon’s tourism industry this year. This includes the renewal of a joint federal-territorial funding initiative of \$1.8 million per year for the Yukon Now marketing campaign to better promote the Yukon through digital and TV campaigns, and a commitment from the Yukon Government to make this funding permanent; funding from both governments to support the development of Indigenous Tourism in the territory; and an investment in tourism research by the Yukon Government.

In the budget speech in April, the Premier listed a number of key industries in the Yukon and noted that ‘tourism is one of the most promising of those industries’. Hartling concurs. He believes that while factors in 2017 such as the Canada 150 celebrations, helped encourage more people to see more of Canada this year, the Yukon is ultimately attracting more people each year due to increased investments in marketing and promotion; increased access, due in large part to Air North’s competitive pricing and added gateway cities in recent years; and the introduction of new products and experiences that align with travel trends – in particular, Hartling points to the rise of winter tourism in the Yukon: a tourism segment that has become so successful, the Yukon Government is organizing a Winter Tourism Summit on December 8th to facilitate a discussion about the opportunities it can offer. Hartling also references the anticipated boost that experiences such as the newly developed road to Tuktoyaktuk and Air North’s aurora flights will have on Yukon tourism in 2018. Meanwhile, growth of the arts and culture sector continues to drive more travel within and to the Yukon and is key to enhancing the visitor experience, which encourages greater visitor spend and length of stay.

“The Yukon’s tourism industry has a lot to celebrate”, says Hartling. “Good reports on visitation from operators, a strong UNESCO bid by the Tr’ondek Hwech’in First Nation to have the Klondike designated as a World Heritage Site, Air North and Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre recognized on the national stage during the TIA Canada awards, and last week’s Supreme Court decision on the Peel combined with a commitment from the Yukon Liberal Government that provides certainty in the Peel Watershed – these are just some of the things that have given the Yukon’s tourism industry a shot in the arm over the past few months. As 2017 comes to a close, things are looking bright for 2018.”

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