

FOR RELEASE

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**GERMAN SPEED SKATING GOLD MEDALIST CHOOSES YUKON FOR TRAINING**

WHITEHORSE – Tourism and Culture Minister Elaine Taylor is pleased to announce that Yukon can add ‘sport tourism destination’ to the growing list of opportunities available in the territory.

Building on the success of the Canada Winter Games, Whitehorse is hosting a long-track speed skating dry-land training camp with Germany’s Olympic champion Gunda Niemann-Stirnemann.

“This opportunity developed in conjunction with the Yukon Convention Bureau, the Yukon Amateur Speed Skating Association and the City of Whitehorse shows what successful partnerships can accomplish in the promotion of Yukon as a sport tourism destination,” Taylor said. “Not only does our local sport community benefit from such a distinctive visit, but also Yukon is emerging as a welcome location for training and test events in advance of the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver.”

Niemann-Stirnemann, one of the most successful speed skaters in history, is bringing six athletes to Whitehorse from Germany. The three male and three female athletes, aged 17, will be in Whitehorse from July 19 to 31 to participate in summer endurance training.

The training will include in-line skating, mountain biking, jogging, as well as swimming and weight training at the Canada Games Centre. Yukon skaters, of equivalent age and ability, are invited to take part in the dry-land training program as well.

In January 2007, Niemann-Stirnemann visited Yukon during the Fulda Extreme Challenge and saw Yukon’s potential as a training destination.

“When I visited in the winter with the Fulda Extreme Challenge, I really enjoyed the natural beauty of the Yukon, and the people,” Niemann-Stirnemann said. “I thought it would be an extremely valuable experience for my young athletes to experience Yukon, and to be given an opportunity to train here during the summer months.”

Niemann-Stirnemann dominated women’s speed skating for several years and is one of the most successful speed skaters in history. She competed in four Olympics from 1988 to 1998 and won eight Olympic medals: three gold; four silver; and one bronze. Over the course of her career she skated 18 world records.

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