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**DOWNTOWN HISTORIC FIRE HALL FIRED UP FOR SUMMER USE**

WHITEHORSE – Tourism and Culture Minister Elaine Taylor announced that the Old Fire Hall, owned by the Yukon government, will be leased to the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce for cultural presentations and other activities during the summer months in 2007.

“The Chamber approached the Yukon government and requested support for a pilot project that will focus on animating the Whitehorse waterfront, using the Old Fire Hall as a point of attraction.” Taylor said. “By supporting this partnership, government is acting upon key recommendations made during last year’s public consultations on the Whitehorse waterfront. These included making better use of existing heritage buildings and making them more accessible for the enjoyment of everyone.”

The Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce will lease the building for a nominal fee of \$1 and will work with the Yukon Arts Centre to manage activities in the building. Space within the Old Fire Hall will be made available for community cultural activities in accordance with the Yukon Arts Centre rental policy. Discounted rates will be available for not-for-profit groups and fair market rates for commercial cultural activities.

“The chamber is very pleased to be leasing the Old Fire Hall,” Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Chair André Roothman said. “This pilot project will help to preserve the vibrancy of our downtown and Main Street, and make the waterfront a place to visit. I would like to congratulate and thank the Department of Tourism and Culture for their support of the business and arts communities. We expect the Old Fire Hall to be a beehive of activity this summer as it showcases art and culture.”

The lease for the pilot project will run from May 15 to September 15, 2007. The Yukon government will contribute up to \$25,000 from the Department of Tourism and Culture’s “On Yukon Time” program to help offset the operating costs of the summer pilot project.

Main Street Yukon Society expressed their enthusiastic support for the pilot project. Speaking on behalf of the society, President Chris Sorg said, “This is an important first step in making these waterfront heritage buildings more accessible to both Yukoners and visitors to the territory. It also helps further our goal of using local arts, heritage and cultural activities to draw more people to the downtown and waterfront areas.”

The Yukon government will provide an independent evaluation of the pilot project upon its completion that will help define longer-term uses for heritage buildings on the Whitehorse waterfront.

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