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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Workers' Compensation: Average Assessment Rate for 2017**

The Yukon Chamber of Commerce (YCC) is pleased with the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board (YWCHSB) announcement that the average workers' compensation assessment rate for employers is virtually unchanged from last year's rate. The average rate for 2017 will be \$1.87 per \$100 of payroll, an insignificant increase of about 1%.

For seven years in a row, up to 2016, the average assessment rate dropped from the previous year's rate. For all of those years, the rates were subsidised to a significant degree by the gradual reduction of a substantial surplus in the compensation fund. This surplus derived from highly favourable returns on the investment of fund's assets.

Last year YCC approached YWCHSB and proposed they deliver some of the surplus in a timelier manner than a gradual subsidy on rates. After lengthy discussions, YWCHSB agreed and late last year sent rebate cheques to almost every Yukon employer. The total amount of the rebates was \$10 million. YCC is monitoring the situation on an ongoing basis and we will approach YWCHSB again if we judge that additional rebates are called for.

The reason for the slight increase in the average assessment rate is that although the subsidy continues, it is based on a surplus reduced substantially by the rebates of last year. To put this in perspective, the rate in 2009 was \$3.00. These are average rates; the actual rates to be paid next year in specific industry groups will be determined over the next several months.

We note some other changes between the outcomes for 2014 and those of 2015:

- The lost-time injury rate per 100 covered workers fell slightly from 2.1 to 2.0
- The number of lost-time claims fell slightly from 446 to 434
- Most importantly, there were no deaths at work in 2015. This is down from five in 2014.

Investment-fund market returns were positive for the seventh year in a row.

YCC Board Chair Michael Pealow said, "All of us, including YWCHSB, employers, workers and everyone else want every Yukon worker to be safe on the job and to go home at the end of the day healthy and whole. We all recognise the importance of safe and healthy workplaces. And of course, safe workplaces lead to lower workers-compensation assessment rates. When employers save money on assessments, they can use those savings to invest resources in ways that grow the economy and create wealth. And we cannot forget the devastating impact workplace injuries can have on workers and their families."

YCC President Peter Turner added, "Employers are benefitting from lower rates due at least partially to good rates of return on YWCHSB's investments. We cannot control that. But we can all work to ensure safe workplaces. That reduces injury rates and claims costs, and ultimately assessment rates. We are delighted that there were zero workplace fatalities last year."

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The Chamber encourages all employers, managers, supervisors and workers to work together to ensure everyone is safe at work.

Incorporated in 1985, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce is the collective voice of Yukon's business community, working to create a climate conducive to a strong private-sector economy by providing leadership and representation on issues and projects affecting business. The Chamber works with over 700 Yukon businesses, through either direct or Community Chamber membership, as well as the five Community Chambers of Dawson City, Silver Trail, St. Elias Region, Watson Lake and Whitehorse.

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