

## For Immediate Release

### Toronto Tourism Industry Announces Community Coalition

*Toronto Tourism Industry Community Coalition brings together industry, business, labour and government to address economic impacts of SARS and industry challenges*

**Toronto, April 23, 2003** – Leaders from Toronto's tourism industry announced today the formation of the Toronto Tourism Industry Community Coalition, to address the tourism business impacts of SARS and to develop a short-to medium-term industry response campaign. The action group, chaired by Tourism Toronto, is comprised of senior leaders from industry, labour and the business community through the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, Local 75 of the Hotel Employees, Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE), the Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre, the Toronto Board of Trade, the City of Toronto, the Government of Ontario – Ministry of Recreation and Tourism and the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership.

Tourism, as Toronto's second largest industry, is a major driver of the local, provincial and national economy, supporting some 95,000 jobs in the GTA alone. The tourism industry, hit hard by recent global events such as 9/11 and the war in Iraq, is now rallying, with its community and government partners, to aggressively respond to the economic and social impacts of the SARS outbreak.

"Our first and over-riding concern remains the health and safety of the public," said Bruce MacMillan, President and CEO of Tourism Toronto. "It is critical that we bring all stakeholders together to address the impacts of SARS on tourism and on the local economy. We are looking beyond this public health emergency to shaping Toronto's recovery. This coalition will develop a broad-based, multi-faceted marketing and communications plan for the tourism industry that we will set in motion when it is clear the public health emergency is subsiding."

All members of the coalition have been working hard in recent weeks with convention organizers, tour operators and visitors to disseminate the most relevant and accurate public health information to clients, stakeholders and visitors around the world

"The SARS outbreak is creating not just a public health crisis, it has become a jobs crisis in Toronto's hospitality industry" says Paul Clifford, President-Administrator, HERE Local 75. "The impact on hotel workers is worse than September 11, 2001. The perception is that Toronto is an unsafe destination for travellers, so they cancel their visit or meeting. Our members lose work – and that is now the new reality. No jobs."

Tourism Toronto anticipates that the Coalition working group will have a discussion document available for the first week of May. The recovery plan will be a concerted marketing initiative designed to sell Toronto locally, nationally and internationally – as a great place to live, work, play and visit.

.../more

“We will be calling on all three levels of government to make a financial investment and commitment to Toronto’s tourism industry in this time of need, including relief for the front-line service workers who have seen layoffs, cuts in hours and diminished family incomes,” Mr. MacMillan added. “When we get through the SARS outbreak, and we will get through it, our community-based, international tourism marketing and communications plan will continue to position Toronto as one of North America’s most desirable destinations. And that is critical not just for Toronto’s economy, but for Ontario and Canada as well.”

Mr. MacMillan also added that the industry has been hard at work, focused primarily on ensuring that tour operators and convention organizers remain committed to Toronto. The industry has tried to alleviate concerns about travel to Toronto, by facilitating discussions between Toronto Public Health officials and conference organizers and keeping them apprised of any new developments.

A number of very large and high-profile events continue to take place as scheduled:

- Blue Jays regular season games continue to attract baseball fans
- Two high-profile conferences, the US National Association of School Psychologists and the Industrial Accident Prevention Association, held their conferences as scheduled in April with tremendous success’
- The 20<sup>th</sup> year of the Toronto Wine Show (April 11-13) had one of its biggest turn-outs ever;
- World Stage continues at Harbourfront drawing artists from around the world for drama, musical and dance performances as well as seminars and workshops (until April 27)
- Sprockets International Film Festival for Children April 24 – May 4
- Paramount Canada’s Wonderland opens for weekends May 17<sup>th</sup>
- The International Milk Festival of the Arts for children at Harbourfront May 18-25
- Doors Open Toronto May 24-25
- The Distillery Jazz Festival May 22 – June 1

Tourism Toronto is the official destination-marketing agency for Toronto’s tourism industry. As the City’s sales and marketing agency, Tourism Toronto focuses on promoting and selling the City as a destination for tourists, convention delegates, and business travellers. Officially operating as a not-for-profit agency, Tourism Toronto has more than 700 members and is a partnership of public and private sectors.

- 30 -

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

Tricia Hosking  
Media Relations Manager  
Tourism Toronto  
416-203-3803