

**For Immediate Release
May 15, 2008**

Russell Peters teams with Tourism Toronto as Global Ambassador for Toronto

Toronto, ON – Hometown comic Russell Peters is teaming up with Tourism Toronto to become Toronto's first Global Ambassador. Tourism Toronto today announced the new partnership with Mr. Peters, a Toronto native who plays to sold-out stadiums around the world.

Peters was introduced to more than 700 tourism business leaders at Tourism Toronto's annual meeting today, and pledged to help reveal more of Toronto's untold story.

"Toronto is one of the only cities a Black, an Asian, an Indian, gay, straight, Italian, Portuguese, a Jewish or Muslim person can walk into a bar without a punch line happening after . . . that's just what Toronto is," said Peters.

Mr. Peters will appear at major trade shows promoting Toronto to meeting and convention planners and other travel influencers.

"In our business we compete literally with the entire world. Russell can help us break through the noise and reveal the true personality of Toronto – the diverse, cosmopolitan experiences that make it such a tremendous place to live, work and visit," said David Whitaker, President and CEO of Tourism Toronto. "Russell has demonstrated that sometimes the best way to bring people together is by laughing."

"A city like Toronto needs many ambassadors. I'm proud to be the first to partner directly with Tourism Toronto and I take it as my personal duty to encourage more of our recognizable personalities to channel their Toronto pride as Global Ambassadors," said Mr. Peters.

Largest-ever convention win

Tourism Toronto announced today that Toronto has won the largest professional convention ever to come to Toronto - the American Institute of Architects Annual Meeting in June, 2017. The meeting will bring more than 25,000 delegates to Toronto and result in 55,000 hotel room nights and \$13 million in spending in the Toronto region.

Because of its size, the organizers of this meeting plan to use both the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and the Direct Energy Centre, and also expect delegates to stay at more than 35 hotels across the entire region.

"Toronto is on the radar more than ever among top meeting planners," said Mr. Whitaker. "In fact the recent survey of North America's top meeting planners showed Toronto to be the number-one convention city in Canada and in the top five in North America. Tourism Toronto was also rated the top convention bureau in Canada, reflecting our strong commitment to service."

Queen's Quay Terminal at Harbourfront

207 Queens Quay West, Suite 405, Toronto, ON, CANADA M5J 1A7

Tel: 416-203-2600 • Fax: 416-203-6753

Visitor Info: 416-203-2500 • Toll-Free Visitor Info: 1-800-363-1990

Website: www.seetorontonow.com

Toronto's tourism momentum

Toronto set a record in 2007 with more than 10,600,000 visitors who stayed at least one night. The growth was led by Canadian travelers as well as some rapidly growing international markets like Mexico and China. Across the Toronto region, hotel occupancy rose to 68.3 per cent, the highest level since 2000. Toronto moved up to 13th place among the top 30 North American destinations in hotel occupancy rates, up from 16th a year earlier.

"Toronto is showing its resilience as a global destination. In a year when the forecasts started out rather dire, more tourists came to Toronto than ever before, hotel occupancy rose and our convention business took another step forward," said Mr. Whitaker.

Salute to local leaders

Tourism Toronto and the Greater Toronto Hotel Association also presented a new annual Presidents' Award today, recognizing an individual or organization outside the traditional tourism industry that has helped raise Toronto's visitor appeal and profile. This year the award was given to CTV television for its ambitious sponsorship of many of Toronto's signature festivals and events as well as its "My Toronto is" campaign that is elevating civic pride.

"CTV is helping reveal some of Toronto's untold stories, which are often the most compelling, magical experiences for visitors," said Mr. Whitaker.

About Tourism Toronto

Tourism Toronto, Toronto's Convention and Visitors Association, is an industry association of more than 1,200 members established to sell and market the Greater Toronto Region as a remarkable destination for tourists, convention delegates and business travelers around the globe. For more information please visit www.torontotourism.com.

-30-

For information contact:

Andrew Weir
Vice President, Communications
Tourism Toronto
(416) 987-1741
aweir@torcvb.com

Sonya Bhatia
Publicist, CPI Management Ltd.
(416) 580-2361
sadharana@gmail.com