

MICROSOFT CHOOSES TORONTO FOR 2012 WORLDWIDE PARTNER CONFERENCE

15,000 people from 130 countries expected for prestigious conference in Toronto

TORONTO (July 13, 2011) – One of the world’s most prestigious and advanced conferences will come to Toronto next July as Microsoft Corporation announced today that its Worldwide Partner Conference will meet in Toronto in 2012.

More than 15,000 people are expected to attend the Toronto conference, representing technology companies in 130 countries. While the main hubs of the action will be the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and the Air Canada Centre, many other venues will be involved as 500+ events take place during the conference and at least 32 hotels across the Toronto region will host delegates.

“Winning a prestigious meeting, for such a widely admired company, is not only a boost to the local economy but a testament to Toronto’s ability to host major events,” said David Whitaker, President and CEO of Tourism Toronto, which submitted the winning bid along with provincial and local partners.

“Microsoft Corporation’s annual Worldwide Partner Conference attracts more than 15,000 delegates,” said Eric Gales, General Manager, Microsoft Canada. “The four-day event celebrates the accomplishments of the company’s 640,000 global technology partners. Microsoft Canada is thrilled that next year’s event will be hosted in the city of Toronto and excited by the opportunity for the city to showcase its diverse culture, entertainment, and world-renowned hospitality.”

From July 9 through 13, 2012, Worldwide Partner Conference is a must-attend conference for the technology industry that attracts delegates, vendors and suppliers from around the world. It is an opportunity to showcase Toronto as a destination as well as Toronto and Ontario’s innovative information technology businesses.

“Our government is thrilled that Toronto has been chosen to host next year’s Microsoft Worldwide Partner Conference and we’re proud of our support to help bring it here,” said Laura Albanese, MPP York South-Weston. “This is a major win for the GTA and Ontario – it will put us front and centre on the world map, while boosting support for jobs, the economy and increased tourism.”

Tourism Toronto has committed to create a scholarship program to assist international students participating in the 2012 conference, with more details on this initiative to be shared in the coming months. Tourism Toronto will also provide opportunities for students in Ontario’s tourism and hospitality programs to gain valuable experience in event management through a marquee international conference.

“We are confident this will prove to be the most inspiring and technically advanced Worldwide Partner Conference ever for Microsoft, and will highlight our ability to come together as a tourism community to host large and sophisticated global corporate events,” said Mr. Whitaker.

Meetings in Toronto

The meeting and convention industry is a lucrative and competitive one that is a vital part of the tourism economy in the Toronto Region. Conventions generate spending on a range of services and businesses including meeting facilities, hotels, restaurants, retail, attractions and taxis. In 2010, meetings and conventions injected \$495 million into the local economy. Overall, there are 224,000 people employed in tourism and hospitality in the Toronto region.

Toronto has been building a reputation among meeting planners as a desirable place to hold important meetings and was ranked #1 out of 46 North American cities in several key categories in the most recent survey of meeting planners by Watkins Research. This year some of the top global meetings will take place in Toronto:

- American Bar Association – August 2011 (20,000 attendees)
- SWIFT/SIBOS (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications) – September 2011 (7,000 attendees)
- U.S. Green Building Council – October 2011 (25,000 attendees)

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 travellers around the globe. Tourism Toronto operates in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture as Regional Tourism Organization 5, representing the cities of Toronto, Mississauga and Brampton. For more information please visit www.seetorontonow.com.

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