

**For immediate release
February 11, 2009**

**Toronto's Black Heritage Draws Recognition and Visitors
Two major U.S. professional associations choose Toronto for upcoming conventions**

Toronto, ON - Tourism Toronto and Toronto City Councillor Michael Thompson brought together community leaders at a special Black History Month event yesterday to build momentum for Toronto as a leading global destination.

"This is an important visitor market that represents a growth opportunity for Toronto, particularly through the professional associations that are choosing to bring their international conventions here," said David Whitaker, President and CEO of Tourism Toronto.

Tourism and community leaders came together at the opening of a special exhibition: "Many Rivers to Cross: The Toronto Journey, 1900-1950." The exhibition is curated by Toronto historian, Dr. Sheldon Taylor, and runs from February 11 through 16, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., at the landmark St. Lawrence Hall, 157 King Street East. The show includes 55 period photos and artifacts including a rare copy of a book of poetry, *Songs in the Shadows*, written in the 1940s, and a reproduction of the 1930s Free Lance newspaper detailing the response of Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia.

Tourism Toronto is providing bus transportation for several school groups who will visit the exhibition this week, as well as sponsoring a visitor guide to Black History Month events that is being distributed around the city and also online.

"Our exciting city and strong community leaders are the things that make our city attractive to so many," said City Councillor Michael Thompson. "Community leaders are the ambassadors who help spread the word to a variety of people who then consider Toronto a great place to visit."

Convention wins for Toronto

Tourism Toronto also announced last evening that Toronto has won two significant bids to host prominent associations' future conventions. The National Medical Association has chosen Toronto for its convention in July 2013, and will confirm that choice at its upcoming House of Delegates meeting in March. With more than 5,000 delegates and over 9,000 hotel room nights, this meeting is projected to generate \$8.9 million in direct spending in Toronto.

"Toronto embodies many of the values of our organization: its diversity and the economic opportunities it affords African-Americans – particularly medical professionals and others in the science fields – is what compelled NMA to select Toronto," said Dr. Mohammad N. Akhter, Executive Director of the National Medical Association. "We're excited to come to such a welcoming, vibrant city."

The Black Nurses' Association has also confirmed it will hold its 2009 Annual Meeting in Toronto, bringing more than 1,000 delegates this July.

Queen's Quay Terminal at Harbourfront

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Website: www.seetorontonow.com

In addition, Toronto will welcome more than 10,000 delegates of the National Society of Black Engineers in 2010 – a meeting projected to generate approximately \$15 million in direct spending.

“Toronto’s story is being heard by professionals like doctors, nurses and engineers,” said David Whitaker. “And we are rightly recognized as a place that celebrates diversity and unlimited opportunity.”

About Tourism Toronto

Tourism Toronto, Toronto’s Convention and Visitors Association, is an industry association of more than 1,200 members established to strategically sell and market the Greater Toronto Region as a remarkable destination for tourists, convention delegates and business travellers around the globe.

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