

TOURISM SKILLSNET ONTARIO

For Immediate Release

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OTEC LAUNCHES TOURISM SKILLSNET ONTARIO

OTEC and industry partners, including RTO4 and WRTMC, collaborate to create a new partnership network to tackle critical labour and skills shortages across Waterloo Region

Tourism SkillsNet Ontario is collaborating for workforce competitiveness

Tourism SkillsNet Ontario is a new provincial industry-led workforce development initiative focused on workforce planning, partnership building, talent pool development and skills training for the Tourism, Hospitality and Food Service sectors. This initiative is led by the Ontario Tourism Education Corporation (OTEC) with key industry partners such as the Ontario Restaurant Hotel Motel Association (ORHMA), Restaurants Canada, Magnet, ALiGN, the Discover Ability Network and a host of regional partners.

Over the past four years, the Regional Tourism Office of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport for Huron Perth Waterloo and Wellington, RTO4, has been working on Tourism workforce development. With multiple stakeholders and key players in the hospitality industry in Waterloo Region, they have identified tourism employment priorities and developed a tailored solution to address the specific needs of industry partners in Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge.

In 2017, OTEC in partnership with ORHMA consulted employers and sector stakeholders across Ontario to identify innovative business-focused solutions to this workforce challenge. Four strategic priorities emerged as critical to enhance the competitiveness of businesses in the sector.

- i. Foster an Environment of Focused Collaboration & Coordination;
- ii. Develop a Reliable Talent Pipeline for Employers;
- iii. Secure Opportunities for Jobseekers Lacking Transferable Skills and Experience;
- iv. Enhance the Industry Image.

In November 2017, OTEC and The Waterloo Region Working Group led by RTO4 merged their efforts in a joint initiative that will see the Tourism SkillsNet Ontario resources aligned with the work already underway in Waterloo Region. The initiative enables stakeholders including employers, industry associations, regional tourism organizations, educational institutes, employment service providers and workforce planning partners to develop collaborative strategies at the local level that align recruitment and training models with the skills needed by business.

OTEC is working with the Ministry of Training Colleges, and Universities (MTCU), RTO4, and a growing network of industry and community investors, to support new ways of connecting jobseekers at all skill levels, to the training they need to access jobs, improve workplace performance, reduce turnover, and to enable the tourism and hospitality sector to grow and compete in the new economy. Utilizing the new talent identification system, ALiGN, Tourism SkillsNet Ontario also leverages sophisticated psychometric assessment and matching methodologies, providing small and medium sized businesses with HR technology typically only available to the largest corporate brands in the sector.

Adam Morrison, OTEC's V.P. Projects and Partnerships says, "The existing models of connecting workers with skills and jobs is not currently effective, while Tourism SkillsNet Ontario is focused on leveraging technology for workforce innovation and systems change. Deploying cutting edge technology to bring the latest labour market information and research to improve planning is a game changer."

Designed to foster focused collaboration, Tourism SkillsNet Ontario is a strong provincial tourism workforce development network with industry-community working groups in each of 10 destinations from North, East, Central and West. It represents a systems based approach to workforce development. The network will cascade from a Provincial Advisory Council to regional coordination partners (RTO's and DMO's) and, finally, community-level Working Groups in each destination composed of employers and training partners, industry intermediaries, referral networks and municipal stakeholders.

This strategic partnership will allow the *Waterloo Regional Workforce Group* to leverage its own investment with the existing OTEC programs, training modules, and provincial funding to tailor a uniquely regional solution.

Waterloo Regional Workforce Group project leader Sean Billings notes, "this a great opportunity to align the resources and investment of the Regional Tourism Office, RTO4, Conestoga College and WRTMC (Waterloo Regional Tourism Marketing Corp) with OTEC to deliver an exceptional, targeted workforce solution in the Waterloo Region."

"The challenges these sectors face in recruiting and retaining talent will be addressed by delivering skills training for industry competitiveness. The difference is that local capacity will be built to deliver skills and competency-based workplace training, which will be customized to the needs of local industry. Many attempts in the past have not been successful as these have not met the needs of the hospitality sector," states Tony Elenis, President and CEO, ORHMA.

Programming delivered by pan provincial partners listed below will provide jobseekers with the necessary employability, soft skills and compliance certifications necessary to secure a job in the sector. Additionally, employers will access training to improve leadership and enhance their performance and retention.

"We had a very specific set of workforce development objectives in Waterloo Region that focused on creating a sustainable and effective model for identifying, recruiting and training front-line hospitality workers," says RTO4 CEO David Peacock. "OTEC's willingness to align the Tourism SkillsNet resources with the effort already underway was a very welcome addition to the project."

"Most importantly," Victoria Behune, OTEC President and CEO reinforces, "Tourism SkillsNet Ontario is giving small and medium sized businesses access to the same HR recruiting technology resources enjoyed by any of the largest corporate partners. OTEC is proud to be a leading workforce solutions organization helping to solve the labour and skills needs of the future, to ultimately create a stronger tourism, hospitality and food service industry."

TOURISM SKILLSNET ONTARIO PARTNERS



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For more information, please contact: Adam Morrison, V.P. Projects & Partnerships, amorrison@otec.org; 416-622-1975 ext. 236, www.otec.org



About OTEC

OTEC is an Ontario-based independent, not-for-profit training, consulting & workforce development organization that delivers high quality, creative and branded solutions for the development and growth of a professional, skilled workforce. It is the leading source support for communities to build workforce capacity and for companies to attract, retain, and develop high performing employees and become Employer of Choice organizations. OTEC is the premier source for Customer Service and Leadership training and strategy development, Tourism Ambassador training, and certifications and education products and services for tourism, hospitality and service oriented organizations in a wide range of industry sectors both nationally and internationally.



About ORHMA

The Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association (ORHMA) is the largest provincial hospitality association in Canada. With over 4,000 members, representing more than 11,000 establishments across the province, ORHMA is uniquely positioned to represent the issues that most impact your business.

ORHMA represents the industry's interests at both the Provincial and Municipal levels of government. Through our specialized in-house government relations experts, our provincial Board of Directors and our local Regional Boards, the Association provides pertinent and timely advice on industry-specific issues to politicians across the province. The Association's dedicated and professional Membership Team provides ORHMA members with meaningful cost-saving programs and unique educational services.

ORHMA is dedicated to fostering a positive business climate for Ontario's hospitality industry, while providing value-added services to its members.