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From: RTO4.ca - Regional Tourism Organization Four Inc., Waterloo Wellington Perth Huron

## **RTO4 Director of Media Technology accepts the prestigious North American Innovation Award**

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In New Orleans, Louisiana at the international symposium on social media in tourism, SoMeT, on Thursday last week Ontario Regional Tourism Organization Four Inc. (RTO4) Director of Media Technology, Zac Gribble received the prestigious North American award for Innovation for RTO4's work as a tourism development incubator.

RTO4 is one of 13 regional tourism offices in Ontario established by the Ontario Government in 2011 as part of the strategy to grow the province's overall tourism economy and international competitiveness. Independent, industry-led boards of directors were established in each region and charged with developing the strategies and best practices for growing that particular region's tourism economy.

David Peacock, CEO of RTO4, delivered the keynote presentation at the conference on the topic of leading a destination in the connected economy. Zac Gribble also led a concurrent session on growing digital sophistication for tourism operators, and participated on a panel about leadership for change in the tourism industry.

Peacock says, "Zac is part of a great team of smart young tourism professionals that are pushing the boundaries of tourism development. RTO4 was built around a framework of Goal – Strategy – Measurement, to incubate tourism economic growth in Waterloo, Wellington, Perth and Huron." He goes on to point out that the team operates on five guiding principles:

- Enabling Engagement - working with stakeholders to strengthen their ability to engage consumers
- Hygiene First - a critical focus on working with stakeholders to identify and fix those things that impede tourism growth
- Destinations not just Destination Marketing - a holistic view of travel destinations that engages multiple stakeholders in shaping a community's collective tourism future
- Redefining brand in the modern media world as the sum total of shared stories and experiences about a given destination or experience
- A relentless focus on the visitor experience.

Over the past four years, RTO4 has had numerous successes in the province including but not limited to: generating over six million dollars in direct-to-operator sales through a regional reservation and measurement system, four ongoing destination development projects with the mayors, city councils, tourism boards and owner operators of Elora/Fergus, Guelph, Stratford and Bayfield and the establishment of a cooperative regional sport tourism office across Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and Guelph.

Commenting on RTO4's model, Rob Taylor, Vice President of Public and Industry Affairs for the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC), tweeted from the conference, "(RTO4's)... leadership is a breath of fresh air... challenge convention, embrace disruption and empower your young innovators."

RTO4 Board of Directors President and Chair Marc Armstrong said, "The Board of RTO4 would like to specifically thank the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Michael Coteau and the Ministry for giving us the operating room to develop an innovative and unconventional solution to tourism development that is proving to be both highly effective and well-embraced by stakeholders across the region.

### **For more information**

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**SoMeT** is the premiere global conference for destination marketers who want to learn from world-class leaders and innovate within their industry.  
Contact Rodney Payne CEO, Destination Think! - (604) 681-9030, <http://destinationthink.com/>

**The Minister of Tourism Culture and Sport** is the Honourable Michael Coteau  
Contact The Office of the Minister - 416-326-9326, [www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/home.shtml](http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/home.shtml)

**TIAC, The Tourism Industry Association of Canada** serves today as the national private-sector advocate for the \$88.5 billion Canadian tourism sector.  
Contact Robert Taylor V.P. Public and Industry Affairs - 613-238-6251, [www.tiac.travel](http://www.tiac.travel)

**RSTO** is the regional sport tourism office of Kitchener Waterloo Cambridge and Guelph  
Contact Sherry Doiron, Manager Sport Tourism - 519-271-7000 x 201, [sporttourismoffice.com](http://sporttourismoffice.com)

**RTO4** is one of 13 Ontario Tourism regions established by the Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport in 2011. Its territory covers Waterloo, Wellington, Perth and Huron counties.  
Contact David Peacock, CEO - 519-271-7000, [RTO4.ca](http://RTO4.ca)