

## Go digital with the Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization at their 1<sup>st</sup> annual Tourism Conference

Pembroke, ON (September 22, 2011) – The Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO) is holding their first annual Tourism Conference at the River's Edge Golf and Country Club in Bancroft on Wednesday, October 26, 2011. This landmark event marks the first anniversary of the OHTO, and will focus on using digital assets to increase tourism. The Conference begins with an information session about the successful initiatives that have been achieved in the areas of product development and marketing followed by the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the board and members. Seminars designed to help local businesses improve their online presence through Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and online packaging will be delivered in the afternoon. The day will also include the launch of the innovative new Ontario's Highlands regional travel website at <http://ontarioshighlands.ca>, and a draw for one lucky attendee to win an iPad 2 will take place at the end of the day.

"In our first year, we have been able to truly establish ourselves as a leader in the tourism marketplace," says Nicole Whiting, OHTO Manager. "We have been able to look at cutting edge technology, find opportunities, and respond quickly to take advantage of them. We were the first Regional Tourism Organization (RTO) in Ontario to launch a mobile app, we are the only one to offer a regional landing page on TripAdvisor, and we have run a successful online campaign (Tourism Starts with You) that encouraged residents and visitors to share their favourite local attractions. We're glad to have this venue to share these accomplishments with the public, and we continue to bring these kinds of opportunities to the region."

Beyond the opportunities to learn about how tourism businesses can benefit from OHTO programing, two seminars will be offered free to attendees. The SEO seminar, *Demystifying Google: Practical Tips for Better Rankings*, will be presented by Jeff Quipp, CEO of Search Engine People (SEP), Canada's largest search marketing firm, which has been the recipient of Profit Magazine's 100 Fastest Growing Companies in Canada awards in 2009, 2010, and 2011. This seminar will explain how search fits into the marketing mix, how Google determines which sites to rank highest, and more specifically, how businesses can dramatically improve their own rankings. The objective of this session is to educate business owners with practical strategies they can take back to their offices, and start to apply their learning immediately for improved rankings.

The packaging seminar, *Packaging for Today's Customer: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, will be presented by Jill Vandal, Partner at The Tourism Company, a Canadian-based management consulting firm working with private, public and non-governmental (NGO) organizations to achieve success in the tourism industry since 1994. This seminar will answer commonly asked questions related to packaging: "Who buys packages anyway?", "What does it take to build and

sell packages?”, and “How do I move my packaging ideas from an idea to reality?” The answers will provide businesses with the tools to take advantage of the OHTO’s online packaging feature that will be available on the new Ontario’s Highlands regional tourism website at <http://ontarioshighlands.ca>.

Attendance at the Tourism Conference is free and open to the general public. Those who are interested in attending must register in advance at <http://guestlistapp.com/events/68313> or by calling the OHTO at 855-629-6486, as space is limited. Full schedule, location, and details are available at <http://ohto.ca>

The OHTO is a not-for-profit organization mandated by the Province of Ontario to increase tourism within the counties of Haliburton, Lanark, and Renfrew and portions of Frontenac, Hastings, and Lennox and Addington. The OHTO works in collaboration with eight sub-regional marketing organizations, tourism agencies and authorities including: Algonquin Nation, Bancroft & District Chamber of Commerce, ComfortCountry.ca, Haliburton Highlands, Lanark County Tourism, Land O' Lakes Tourist Association, Ottawa Valley Tourist Association, and the Rideau Heritage Route Tourism Association. Find out more about the OHTO at <http://www.ohto.ca>

For more information, please contact the Ontario’s Highlands Tourism Organization at 613-629-6486 or [info@ohto.ca](mailto:info@ohto.ca)

