

For Immediate Release

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Gay Toronto Tourism Guild Completes Successful Marketing Campaign

January 15, 2005 - Toronto, Ontario, Canada - Last February, the website for the Gay Toronto Tourism Guild (GTTG) was averaging just 1,200 site visits per month. "We were not overly surprised that we didn't have much traffic," commented Ric Tremaine, GTTG President, and owner of the Gloucester Square Inns of Toronto. "We'd set the site up but had not really done much to market it."

That all changed when Tremaine and the Guild launched a new marketing campaign, funded in part by their members, and in part by the Province of Ontario. The campaign, which was developed and implemented by MasterMind Communication Strategies of Palm Springs, CA, began building momentum quickly with ad placements, publicity, travel and trade show participation, and both print and online direct marketing tactics. By May of 2004, the website was seeing unprecedented traffic - almost 150,000 visitors, and by July, when the campaign was in full swing, site visits peaked at over 300,000!

"Everything we did was designed to drive traffic to the Guild's website, torontoprnto.com," said Jill L. Pentrack of MasterMind Communication Strategies. "We figured we needed a single funnel through which we could direct inquiries, and the website was the most logical choice. GTTG members have links on the site, and travel partners have packages that folks can browse through. There is also general information about Toronto as a Gay destination - Church Street - the gay village - that sort of thing"

One thrust of the marketing campaign specifically promoted gay marriage in Toronto, and included a photo of a couple of happy couples, a set of wedding rings and a wedding cake. The headline read: "We Do. You Can Too." with body copy that let consumers know that both residents AND visitors could get married in Toronto. No muss. No Fuss. Just a simple, legal, wedding.

This particular segment of the marketing strategy led to the campaign's crowning achievement when it attracted the attention of **In The Life**, the U.S. national television series that reports on gay and lesbian issues and culture. **In the Life** elected to come to Toronto and produce a segment which ran as part of its episode on Gay Marriage. That episode, which was first broadcast in September 2004, featured interviews with openly gay Toronto City Councilor Kyle Rae, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bill Graham, and R. Douglas Elliott, the lawyer who argued the case for gay marriage before the Canadian Supreme Court. It appeared on over 130 public television stations throughout the U.S. and Canada, including all of the top 20 U.S. viewer markets, and exposed the GTTG and Gay Toronto to over one million viewers each time it aired.

"We were thrilled to be able to work with **In The Life**," said Michael C. Green, also of MasterMind Communication Strategies. "We even got an added bonus when the episode that featured Toronto and the Guild ended up being so popular that PBS decided to air it again throughout the month of December."

"The great success we had with this campaign really shows what you can do with a group of motivated business owners and some help from government agencies," said Tremaine. "We got a ton of exposure on a shoe-string in 2004, and we hope to expand the campaign in 2005. We really believe the successes we've had to date will help us convince the city of Toronto and Toronto Tourism to support us as well. We made great strides with limited funds and a strong marketing company working for us. Imagine what we can do if we have all of Toronto behind us!"

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