

Gay Toronto Tourism Guild

and

Ontario Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce

**Branding Toronto
for
Gay and Lesbian Travel & Tourism**

OVERVIEW

The international Gay and Lesbian community spends over \$54 billion in the travel and hospitality market annually. An initiative put into action several years ago, "Travel Gay Friendly Toronto" is attracting more gay tourism to Toronto than ever before. Now, however, the Gay Community of business professionals has the opportunity to dramatically increase their market share and the direct benefit to our community. The creation of the Gay Toronto Tourism Guild (in 2002) and their subsequent alliance with the Ontario Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce has resulted in a multi-level initiative to brand Toronto as the greatest Gay and Lesbian destination in the world. In order for The Gay Toronto Tourism Guild (THE GUILD) and the Ontario Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (THE CHAMBER) to work in the best interest of the gay owned businesses in Toronto, we must all work together to reap the vast and varied rewards that business and leisure travel to Toronto represents. **GUILD and CHAMBER membership will directly increase the reach of your advertising dollars, extend membership benefits (such as health care) to you and your employees, and directly increase your business revenue.** YOUR support and participation is not only vital but necessary to capitalize upon the unique opportunity presently before us:

- **Toronto will be positioned as, and benefit from, the finest gay and lesbian destination in the world**
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- **Your advertising and marketing dollars will reach a greater audience with substantial savings**
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- **You will realize a solid return on your investment and participation as your business improves by the Guild's efforts**

THE GUILD is modeled after one of the most successful Gay travel tourism initiatives ever launched: the Key West Business Guild. Our GUILD, however, allows for equal representation no matter what the size of the business or sponsor, while keeping the initiative for and about promoting the Toronto gay community. It is estimated over 650,000 gays and lesbians live in Toronto representing 14% of Toronto's population. We are the third largest gay/lesbian population in the world. THE GUILD, working in concert with THE CHAMBER, will represent a powerful marketing force capable of branding "Toronto the destination" to the gay and lesbian traveler.

HISTORY

For the past four years, a group of individual gay and lesbian business owners in Toronto have been working with Tourism Toronto to develop a strong marketing program that would educate world travelers about Toronto and our community. During that time we traveled to various Travel Trade Shows and Conferences outside of Canada, and got a first-hand view of what other municipalities do to promote themselves to the world. We also heard how well Toronto is regarded, but of what a “carefully guarded secret” Toronto as a gay destination, remains.

Through these efforts, we hosted several gay junkets (bringing gay and lesbian writers and critics to our host city); initiated publication of an official “Toronto” marketing piece directed to the gay community; and lobbied with straight counterparts at Tourism Toronto for “gay” imagery and content to be added to their existing marketing materials. Central to our initiative, we attempted to get Tourism Toronto to initiate and run a strong marketing program to sell it’s Gay community. Our lasting impression from this effort was, that this program about “us”, must be by and for the gay community.

With this thought in mind, and using Tourism Toronto as the lead ad buyer, we established the first Toronto Co-op Marketing program in 2002. We negotiated advertising purchases of full page ads in major international publications, and split the cost amongst the 17 local business-owner members. This grass roots marketing initiative, supported financially by Toronto Tourism, has proven to be incredibly effective. It is now, however, in jeopardy due to major funding cuts (58%) at Tourism Toronto!

The budget cuts resulted in the elimination of several key personnel, and Cathy Smart, who had proven a powerful advocate for our initiatives left the city administration. Reacting quickly to the void, we called for meetings with senior parties of Tourism Toronto, the City Tourism Dept, and city councilor Kyle Rae. In those meetings, it became apparent that the upper management of Tourism Toronto was unaware of the size of the community we represented; had little or no idea of what we had done to promote our community: or the impact we had created through our own individual efforts in partnership with the city. We were informed, however, that funding is available to “existing” programs, both on the Provincial and City levels, but each must be approached by an appropriate provincially or city mandated body. We were invited to create a comprehensive proposal outlining what was necessary to promote Toronto as the ultimate Gay and Lesbian destination; and what infrastructure was required to facilitate that initiative; based upon the experience and fore-knowledge gathered in our previous endeavors.

PROPOSITION

The proposal outlines necessary elements of a marketing program based on our four year involvement and study with the international gay travel community, and suggested a ***community based*** initiative that works with Tourism Toronto and the City of Toronto.

Tourism Toronto has suggested to us that a “partnership” program that effectively hands the marketing of gay Toronto over to the gay and lesbian community would achieve the greatest financial rewards while maintaining the strongest gay and lesbian voice to any marketing initiative. Through the Ontario Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce we look to the Ontario Provincial Government for funding, and through the Gay Toronto Tourism Guild that was recently chartered, we will access Toronto municipal bodies for funding.

How this works!

Individual businesses in our community, are already expensing in excess of \$320,000 per year into international marketing. Were they not acting individually, matching funds would have been available from the Province and the city. Through the formation of THE GUILD Toronto’s gay community body would have formalized representation which qualifies for the funding assistance. In essence, THE GUILD in partnership with THE CHAMBER , will more than double the marketing budget of Toronto’s gay and lesbian businesses; will ensure consistent implementation of a focused marketing program; and enable the opportunity for provincial funding to work in tandem with City funding of this travel tourism initiative for the first time in history.

In doing this, THE GUILD’s mandate is to increase Toronto’s share of an ever-increasing international gay and lesbian business travel and tourism market.

In March 2003 Tourism Toronto announced their partnership with THE GUILD and THE CHAMBER.

Since that time THE GUILD has attended several g/l trade shows, Pride events, and has invited to Toronto several key marketing organizations for the purpose of setting up strategies for marketing. An exciting opportunity to work with the Key West Business Guild in their sponsorship of the documentary on the rainbow flag is in process. Further, we have created and presented a strong proposal to the various levels of government for funding.

FACTS & FIGURES

- Toronto's gay pride now rivals NYC in size and is the 2nd largest annual event in Toronto in terms of visiting tourists and \$\$\$ pumped into the local economy
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- representing some **10%** of the total population (more in large gay urban centers), the gay buying power represents **30%** of the total buying power in any major city.
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- **90%** of gay adults take an annual holiday every year
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- **23%** take holidays three times a year or more
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- **58%** purchase only gay holiday packages
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- **60%** (of g/l Americans) took a foreign trip in the last 3 years
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- **61%** plan to travel to Canada (from U.S.)
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- **78%** are more likely to use and buy from a gay or gay friendly business
- are twice as likely to have household income over \$60,000 than general US population (U.S. figures)
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- are twice as likely to have household income over \$250,000 than general US population (based upon recently published U.S. figures)

CALL TO ACTION

Pooling our resources to market our destination, we will achieve our true potential as the best gay and lesbian destination in the world, and do so with the full support of multiple levels of government without giving up the control or the vision that our collective voice shares.

Sustaining this effort with an outgoing communication, both nationally and internationally, requires the GTTG's careful management and the collaboration of Tourism Toronto, City of Toronto, Province of Ontario and the Toronto Gay and Lesbian Community. In recent years the fledgling efforts of individual businesses in the GUILD have attracted the attention of international gay marketers, such as Tom Roth (Community Marketing), Jill Pentrack (MyGayWorld), Matt Skallerude (Hyperion Interactive), Alan Beck (Columbia Fun Maps), Out / Advocate and many more. Responding to our past initiatives, these individuals and their organizations are extremely supportive of the "destination marketing initiative opportunity" that THE GUILD presents to it's members .

Seizing upon these remarkable opportunities, THE GUILD must consolidate its member base and expand upon it's marketing mandate.

Tourism Toronto requires the participation of the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario to achieve tangible results. With the creation of the Guild, and expansion of it's member base, we are poised to unite heretofore disparate voices in the effort to promote Toronto as the best gay and lesbian destination in the world. With the enrollment of all four parties, Toronto can truly be successfully presented on the International Stage, and the resulting tourism and increased commerce will greatly benefit our community, Tourism Toronto's members, and the city as a whole.

Getting the word out is a necessity. This will be achieved by:

- attending select International g/l Trade Travel shows
- attending select Pride and other large functions throughout the USA
- hosting gay focused junkets/FAM trips
- maintaining a local community location where visitors can get information
- attracting the participation of our community leaders, and inviting key international marketing to participate

Our goal is to brand Toronto as the multi-faceted gay and level travel destination that it truly is. This ensures our global position at the top of travel destinations for Gays and Lesbians.

MEMBERSHIP

By joining THE GUILD and THE CHAMBER you will become responsible for directly marketing the city and by association – your business. With the two organizations receiving funding from the city and the province and increased funding opportunities, the newly formed guild is ready to take it to the next step necessary to ensure that Toronto is finally put on the world travel map as the destination it truly is. Ensure you get the most for your membership \$\$\$ and maximize the return on your advertising budget, by joining both the local and provincial organization.

Combined membership benefits include:

- comprehensive medical benefits plan through THE CHAMBER
- ability to enter co-op campaigns in national media at approx 1/3 normal cost
- presence on THE GUILD website, the community authority, where our entire community will ultimately be listed equally
- presence in a local published guide book and map
- representation at Pride fairs and Travel Shows internationally
- ability to help shape marketing campaigns
- double or triple exposure after the above, relative to government funding achieved.

I welcome your application to join our Guild, and your subsequent involvement.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ric Tremaine". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "R".

Ric Tremaine
President