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MEDIA RELEASE

Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce Recognized for Innovation

Kitchener, ON – On Saturday, May 3, 2008, the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce was awarded the 2008 Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) Chair’s Award for innovation, for its role in the development of the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN).

WRIEN works to effectively integrate internationally-trained workers into the community. According to numerous studies, there is an overwhelming number of educated immigrants in Ontario who are unable to find work. The Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce strives to connect these new immigrants with mentors and employers from within the region.

“WRIEN provides an innovative solution to a problem that is undermining the growth of our economy,” explains Len Crispino, President and CEO of the OCC. “Our inability to effectively and efficiently welcome internationally-trained immigrants into positions commensurate with their experience is a loss to these immigrants and our province. WRIEN has proven to be an innovative and creative solution to the problem.”

WRIEN connects business people from across the region with new immigrants through various initiatives including best practices forums, networking sessions, employer workshops, immigrant recruiting breakfasts and through it’s Mentorship Partnership program, funded in part by the OCC.

“It isn’t all about finding a job, but about finding a good fit for people,” explained Rob Dawson, a mentor in WRIEN’s Mentorship Partnership program. “The Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce has done a great job in promoting the program and using the network to connect people within the community.”

“This is an award that can be shared among many individuals and community groups in Waterloo region,” said WRIEN Chair, Todd Letts. “The strong spirit of collaboration in our region has made WRIEN possible.”

The Chair’s Award, among others, was presented at the OCC’s Annual General Meeting and Convention in Oshawa. The awards recognize new and innovative initiatives that have contributed to regional success over the past year.

With over 1900 members, the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce is the largest accredited chamber of commerce in Ontario. The Chamber is dedicated to enterprise productivity and regional prosperity. Since 1886, it has been the voice of business in greater Kitchener Waterloo.

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