

Canada's new government invests \$750,000 in the establishment in Montréal of the World Center of Excellence for tourist Destinations

Montréal, Quebec, February 19, 2007 – Acting on behalf of the Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, the Honourable Michael M Fortier, Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada and Minister responsible of the Montréal Region, today announced the awarding of \$750,000 in non-repayable funding over the next three years to support the establishment in Montréal of the World Center of Excellence for tourist Destinations.

A member of the world network of centers of excellence, the Montréal Center will operate under the aegis of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a specialized agency of the United Nations. The Center's mission will be to extend the action of the UNWTO Destinations Council by developing and building on expertise on tourist destinations and transferring that knowledge to UNWTO member states and affiliate and associate members.

"Canada's new government is delighted to welcome the arrival of the World Center of Excellence for tourist Destinations, the only center of its kind that will be operating in this sphere of activity and one whose contribution will reach throughout the world. Its presence here will help the Montréal region gain recognition for its research facilities and capabilities. Ultimately, the Center will operate at the junction of knowledge building and tourism development," commented Minister Blackburn.

Minister Blackburn took the opportunity to underscore the leadership of *Tourisme Montréal* and collaborative role of the *Université du Québec à Montréal* in bringing this project to fruition.

The decision to base this Center of Excellence in Montréal rested, in part, on the expertise the city has acquired in the area of tourism and destination research. Through its work, the Center will pave the way for the development of a new model of world-class knowledge facility in Montréal. Its presence is also expected to generate positive spin-offs, particularly for tourism firms whose success hinges on the performance of tourist destinations.

“The project we are announcing today will have a beneficial impact on the Montréal regional economy. The Center’s annual operating budget, along with the tourism spending generated by the many foreign visitors it will draw to the region, should result in more than \$10 million in economic spin-offs over the next three years. Canada’s new government is proud to lend its concrete support to a project that, like this one, promises to help make Montréal a major tourism hub,” Minister Fortier concluded.

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