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**Minister Françoise Gauthier Announces the Creation in Montréal
of the Head Office of the World Tourism Organization's
World Centre of Excellence on Tourist Destinations**

Montréal, February 19, 2007 – Minister of Tourism, Ms. Françoise Gauthier, today announced the creation in Montréal of the head office of the World Tourism Organization's World Centre of Excellence on Tourist Destinations as well as the allocation of \$750,000 in financial assistance by the Québec Government, to facilitate its establishment in the metropolis. The announcement was made in the presence of many dignitaries including the Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization, Mr. Francesco Frangiali.

Minister Gauthier indicated that she was extremely proud that the World Centre of Excellence on Tourist Destinations was being established in Montréal. "This choice shows that Québec has managed to stand out as a leader in terms of research in the tourism sector and destination management. I especially welcome the fact that this project will contribute to promoting and increasing the recognition of Québec's expertise in tourism and to the growth of Québec and its regions as a tourist destination," she stated.

The Ministère du Tourisme and the Ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions will contribute equally to this three-year government support. In addition to the financial assistance, the Minister of Tourism also made a commitment to house the centre in her Montréal office free of charge.

"I would like to praise the close partnership between public and private institutions of the tourism sector that made it possible to establish the organization's head office in Montréal. Establishing the World Centre of Excellence on Tourist Destinations in Montréal will enhance the reputation of the metropolis internationally," pointed out Minister of Municipal Affairs and Regions, Ms. Nathalie Normandeau.

The mission of the World Centre of Excellence on Tourist Destinations is to extend the action of the World Tourism Organization's Destinations Council by enhancing and developing expertise on destinations. It acts as a catalyst for partnerships and cooperation with public and private stakeholders whose expertise could improve the performance of tourist destinations. For further information, visit www.cifort.uqam.ca/ced/.

The World Tourism Organization is a United Nations agency specializing in the field of tourism. Its membership includes 150 countries, including Canada, and about 300 affiliated or associated members: businesses, nonprofit organizations, associations and educational institutions active in tourism.

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