



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Distribution

BruceGreySimcoe UnConference to bridge gaps between tourism operators and students

Thornbury, ON (October 23)

On November 14, tourism operators from across Bruce, Grey and Simcoe Counties will spend the day trading ideas and information with local Grade 11 and 12 and Georgian College students at Blue Mountain Resort.

Aptly titled The Great Idea Exchange, this UnConference turns the traditional 'sage on the stage' conference approach on its head. In the past, tourism operators have come together annually to hear from industry speakers and discuss the challenges and success of the past year. With workforce shortages facing many local operators—tourism operators included—conference organizers decided it was time to try something new. Instead of discussing how to better communicate with future hires, they decided to invite the very students who they need to power future tourism success and kick start that communication.

The goal is to lay the groundwork for a new relationship between students and tourism operators. By getting everyone in the same room on a level playing field and working together to brainstorm, communicate, exchange ideas and have fun, the hope is that students will gain some insight into the exciting job opportunities that exist in the tourism segment. In turn, operators will learn what the students are looking for, how best to reach them and gain a better understanding of how to work together in the future.

"Solving workforce challenges in the tourism industry is a two-way street," explains BruceGreySimcoe's Kim Clarke. "We are hoping that the UnConference will open up new lines of communication between the students and the operators. We're also hoping the students will see how diverse and rewarding tourism careers can be. At the end of the day, we hope the students and the operators will leave with a better understanding of how they can work together in the future."

There's still time to register for the conference, which starts at 8:30 am with registration and runs until 3 pm. In addition, a pre-conference networking event is taking place at MJ Byrne's Irish Pub, 8 to 10 pm, on Monday, November 13th. Special accommodation rates are available for delegates require overnight accommodation. For more information and to register, visit RTO7.ca.

About Regional Tourism Organization 7:

RTO7 provides strategic and collaborative leadership to build, sustain and grow tourism in the region comprised of Bruce, Grey and Simcoe Counties (BruceGreySimcoe). We are one of 13 RTOs – independent, not-for-profit corporations – to which the Ontario government provides approximately \$40 million in annual funding to lead tourism planning, marketing and development in their respective regions.

Some quick facts about BruceGreySimcoe tourism:

- Tourism across the region accounts for over 34,000* jobs that deliver millions more in economic outputs
- BruceGreySimcoe has in excess of 25,000 accommodation rooms, including hotels, motels, camping and RV sites, commercial resorts, cabins and B&Bs**
- There are over 400 attractions across the region, and over 600 festival and event days each year**

*From OMAFRA EMSI Analyst query (2014) ** From the 2010 AECOM Region Strategic Destination Plan

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For more information:

Kim Clarke
Tourism Experience Development Specialist
RT07/BruceGreySimcoe
kclarke@rto7.ca
519-379-2506

On the web: www.BruceGreySimcoe.com
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