



Niagara Region's Tourism Strategy wins Excellence in Planning Award

September 12, 2008 – The Ontario Professional Planners Institute has awarded the Niagara Economic Development Corporation and peter j. smith & company an Excellence in Planning Award for “**Energizing Niagara's Wine Country Communities.**”

The Niagara Region is home to 70 wineries, with 6,500 hectares of land cultivated as vineyards. The success of the wine industry has generated an equally successful tourism industry. The Niagara Economic Development Corporation, with the help of local municipalities, the province, the region, and wine industry representatives, carried out a study to develop a long-term strategy for tourism. The strategy includes promoting cultural and heritage tourism in addition to culinary tourism; developing key destinations for tourists; creating customer service hubs in the urbanized areas; and enhancing the travel experience through design, wayfinding, and the integration of cultural attractions with the Wine Route. The strategy was completed in 2007 and is now being implemented.

The Excellence in Planning Award recognizes innovation, creativity, professionalism, problem-solving, and communications in four categories: urban and community design, planning studies or reports, research/new directions, and public education. This year's winners were chosen from 30 entries. The other winners are:

- Regions of York, Halton, Peel and Durham and the cities of Toronto, Mississauga and Hamilton for the Smart Commute initiative
- City of Ottawa for Urban Design Guidelines for the Development Review Process
- City of Toronto for Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines
- Town of Markham for Markham Small Streams Study
- City of Brampton and MMM Group for the Incineration and Waste Processing Transfer and Disposal Study

The awards ceremony will take place on the evening of Thursday, September 18, 2008, Clarion Pinewood Park Resort in North Bay. The ceremony is part of the 2008 symposium of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute.

The Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) is the recognized voice of the Province's planning profession. Its more than 3,000 members work in government, private practice, universities, and non-profit agencies in the fields of urban and rural development, urban design, environmental planning, transportation, health and social services, heritage conservation, housing, and economic development. For further information, go to: www.ontarioplanners.on.ca

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