

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Resorts of Ontario Announces \$3K Bursary to Support Be Our Guest Co-op Program

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TOWNSHIP OF MONO, ON - Resorts of Ontario, in collaboration with industry leaders, is proud to announce a significant initiative to support the next generation of hospitality professionals. The organization has committed a \$3,000 bursary to bolster the Be Our Guest co-op program, emphasizing its dedication to fostering talent and addressing labour shortages within Ontario's resort industry.

In a speech delivered at a gathering of industry leaders during the 2024 Season Summit conference, Hani Roustom, CEO of Friday Harbour Resort and a Resorts of Ontario Board Member, expressed gratitude for the collective commitment to excellence, innovation, and sustainability in Ontario's resort industry. Recognizing the pivotal role of skilled professionals in shaping guest experiences and business success, Resorts of Ontario reaffirmed its dedication to nurturing talent and supporting educational initiatives.

"The Be Our Guest co-op program will provide high school students with invaluable real-world experience within the industry," explained Roustom. "By investing in this program, we aim to engage a demographic traditionally underrepresented in the hospitality sector, while providing essential training and insights into the exciting world of resort operations, hospitality, and tourism."

Roustom also highlighted additional initiatives, including preparations to welcome high school students for co-op placements within resorts. These efforts demonstrate Resorts of Ontario's commitment to addressing labour shortages and cultivating talent within the industry.

The bursary will be awarded in collaboration with the school boards, to graduating high school students who intend to enroll in hospitality and tourism programs.

"We applaud Resorts of Ontario for stepping up to support Ontario's future hospitality workforce through an annual bursary for the 'Be Our Guest' program, which develops a smoother school-to-work transition for tomorrow's employment," said Tony Elenis, CEO of ORHMA and OHI-We Are Hospitality.

"This bursary is just one of the many initiatives we are implementing to support the future of Ontario's resort industry. By working together and investing in education, we can ensure that our sector remains vibrant and continues to set the standard for hospitality excellence," shared Kerri King, Executive Director of Resorts of Ontario.

For more information about Resorts of Ontario and its initiatives, please visit www.resortsofontario.com.

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About Resorts of Ontario

Resorts of Ontario represents more than 100 Ontario resorts that are focused on all facets of the vacation and leisure experience. Resorts of Ontario member resorts, lodges, country inns, American Plan resort hotels and housekeeping cottage resorts offer four-season vacation opportunities and accommodations equated with quality and value. Learn more at www.resortsofontario.com or follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or LinkedIn.

About Be Our Guest

Be Our Guest is a cooperative education experiential learning program for secondary school students outside the classroom. The program was founded in 2017 by a group of innovative hospitality leaders with the aim of introducing high school students to the inspiring world of hospitality. Be Our Guest operates through the collaboration of Ontario school boards and hospitality organizations, and is supported by OHI – We Are Hospitality. The program was launched in Toronto, working with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) secondary schools. Currently, the Be Our Guest program includes programs in three different school boards, including North York and South Simcoe District School Board, with the intention to expand the reach and impact of the program through further collaborations. Hundreds of students are graduates of the program and many have become employed in the numerous career opportunities within the hospitality industry and developed transferrable skills to take them into varied occupations. To learn more, visit WeAreOHI.ca/BeOurGuest.

