



MEDIA RELEASE

New Event for Welland International Flatwater Centre Receives Financial Boost from Ontario Ministry of Tourism

For Immediate Release – Thursday, April 23, 2009

Welland – The Province of Ontario, through the Ministry of Tourism's Celebrate Ontario 2009 Funding Initiative, has confirmed today they are providing the Welland Recreational Canal Corp (WRCC) \$32,250 towards adding a new annual dragon boat event in the City of Welland. The new event, Paddle By Fire ~ the Welland Dragon Boat Challenge, is slated for later in the tourism season and will see participants compete on the Welland International Flatwater Centre's North Course over two days.

In a grant application made to the Ministry of Tourism, WRCC Business & Operations Manager, Stephen Fischer, laid out a plan for evening races combined with the ceremonial "Dotting of the Eye" all of which will be set to a very unique backdrop of the floating firepods of IlluminAqua, live local entertainment, with a full second day race card for competitors. "Receiving this grant allows us to create a new local event that attracts visitors to the City from a very large and wide range of markets. We will be working with the South Niagara Canoe Club to deliver the event and be able to provide assets and improvements back to the community club through this undertaking," stated Mr. Fischer.

"Interest has been very high," suggested Rick Morris, SNCC Commodore. "I've been at numerous meetings in the paddle community telling people about the event and there seems to be a real buzz, both about the uniqueness of the event itself and simple competing in Welland, the best place to race in Canada." The event is expected to attract crews from across Canada and into the US. The WRCC will be working with Dragon Boat Canada to pick the most appropriate date within the dragon boat calendar.

The purchase of dragon boats is part of the event application and it will mean that the canoe club can offer dragon boating as part of their local club curriculum this coming season. The WRCC and SNCC are also working with the local Welland Dragon Boat Festival taking place June 13, 2009 by offering a training package for local festival crews. "It's a great year for local dragon boat enthusiasts," continued Mr. Morris, "we really look forward to seeing people out on the water learning the sport." The WRCC has been in discussions with local administrators and teachers from both elementary level and high schools about introducing paddle programs in local schools. "The purchase of dragon boats means that we can now take the next steps to offering dragon boating to elementary and high school physical education programs," stated Mr. Fischer. "We want to give every kid a chance to experience a flatwater sport in the City of Welland. This takes us one step closer."

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For more information, contact

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