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BUSINESS TRAVEL REBOUNDING IN CANADA ACCORDING TO BEST WESTERN, GLOBAL BUSINESS TRAVEL ASSOCIATION AND HOTEL ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

Value Remains Crucial to Travellers, Best Western Product Descriptor Strategy Outlined at Annual Business Travel Summit

TORONTO (February 17, 2011) – The collective sentiment from travel industry executives from Best Western International, the Global Travel Association (GBTA) of Canada and The Hotel Association of Canada (HAC) who recently gathered at the fifth annual Business Travel Summit is that the Canadian business travel market is rebounding and will continue to improve in 2011.

This annual panel discussion, moderated by YouMustBeTrippin.com travel blogger and Canadian travel expert Bryson Forbes, covered themes including 2011 travel trends, the importance of value for business travellers and corporations, the high cost of airfare in Canada and Best Western's new descriptor program.

"The business traveller is back on the road, and the steady increase in hotel bookings we're tracking is a positive indicator for heavier spring and summer travel," said Dorothy Dowling, senior vice president of marketing and sales for Best Western International. "Revenue at our hotels in Canada was up 21 percent in the fourth quarter in 2010 compared to the same period in 2009 and, looking to March and early April, advance bookings are up more than 20 percent for all provinces," she added. According to Dowling, 60 percent of guests that stay at Best Western's 186 hotels in Canada are business travellers.

Tanya Racz, president of the Global Business Travel Association of Canada, echoed the optimism for a business travel rebound in 2011. "The business travel future is bright – flight loads are up, hotel rates are remaining constant or showing moderate increases – all indications that point to signs of recovery," said Racz. "The importance of face-to-face meetings is still there, and we're seeing some recovery in the meetings segment too," she added.

Tony Pollard, president of the HAC, cited the group's recently released annual survey that 76 percent of Canadians who do travel for business said they'll be travelling this year.

In addition to an uptick in business travel in 2011, another key theme throughout the panel discussion was the continued importance of value amongst travellers and corporations. "Even though we are moving out of the recession, value remains king, especially in the managed travel space," said

Dowling. “Corporate travel buyers are more discerning than ever before and have come to expect complimentary high speed Internet, breakfast and parking – all of which Best Western offers.”

Pollard seconds the importance of value saying, “Value is the number one thing people are looking for when booking travel.”

Another key theme discussed at the Summit was the increasing number of Canadians crossing the border into the U.S. to secure less expensive flights for U.S. and foreign travel. In fact, the HAC found that 21 percent of Canadians would cross the border by car for a cheaper airline ticket.

“There is the potential for almost one third of Canadian travellers to spend money on foreign airline tickets, as Canadian air carriers are at a distinct disadvantage and cannot offer the airfare prices to match those in the U.S.,” said Pollard. “This growing trend has serious consequences for the Canadian travel industry and needs to be addressed via the reduction of airport fees, travel security costs and airline surcharges.”

Rounding out the topics, Dowling spoke to Best Western’s official launch of its descriptor program, which gives its member hoteliers the option to identify their properties as BEST WESTERN®, BEST WESTERN PLUS® or BEST WESTERN PREMIER®. Approved in April 2010, the program was implemented to help guests find the right Best Western hotel for each trip, to increase guest satisfaction, and to drive superior revenue to all Best Western hotels.

“Because Best Western is the most diverse hotel brand, it’s important that we make it clear to our guests what they can expect in terms of amenities and services at each of our hotels, before they check-in,” said Dowling.

Additionally, a new advertising campaign highlighting descriptors and a new tagline – the World’s Biggest Hotel FamilySM – was previewed, prior to its February 6 launch.

To receive an audio recording of the panel discussion, please send your name, organization and return email address to Meghan@allisonpr.com.

ABOUT BEST WESTERN INTERNATIONAL

Best Western International, Inc. is THE WORLD’S BIGGEST HOTEL FAMILYSM, providing marketing, reservations and operational support to over 4,000* BEST WESTERN®, BEST WESTERN PLUS® and BEST WESTERN PREMIER® hotels in 80* countries and territories worldwide. Each Best Western-branded hotel is independently owned and operated. Now celebrating 65 years of hospitality, Best Western has grown into an iconic brand that hosts 400,000* worldwide guests each night. Equally committed to the business and leisure traveler, Best Western recently embarked on a mission to lead the hotel industry in customer care. World Vision is the charity of choice for Best Western in building the world's biggest family, with our hotels and staff sponsoring children in need around the globe.

Our partnerships with AAA/CAA, Michael Waltrip Racing™ and Harley-Davidson® help guests make the most of every trip. For the fastest way to a free night globally, join Best Western Rewards®. For more information or to make a reservation, please visit www.bestwestern.com.

*Numbers are approximate and can fluctuate.

ABOUT GBTA

The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) is the world's premier business travel and meetings organization. Collectively, GBTA's 5,000-plus members manage over \$340 billion of global business travel and meetings expenditures annually. GBTA provides its network of 17,000 business and government travel and meetings managers, as well as travel service providers, with networking events, news, education & professional development, research, and advocacy. For more information, visit gbta.org.

ABOUT HAC

The Hotel Association of Canada (HAC) is a professional industry association representing the lodging industry in Canada. Its membership encompasses the provincial and territorial hotel associations, the corporate hotel chains, independent hotels, motels and resorts and the many suppliers to the hotel industry. HAC's objective is to assist both its national and international members as they endeavour to enhance their competitiveness and achieve their bottom line. The HAC accomplishes this through advocacy, the collection and dissemination of information, research, education, and operational support services designed to assist its members. The Hotel Association of Canada represents more than 8,400 hotels, motels and resorts across Canada www.hotelassociation.ca.

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