

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Toronto's New NORR Designed Conference Centre Breaks Ground at Exhibition Place

TORONTO, April 23, 2008 - Mayor David Miller presided over the ground breaking ceremony today at The Automotive Building, Exhibition Place, for a new conference centre designed by the Toronto architectural and engineering firm of NORR Limited within the footprint of the existing Automotive Building.

“As Chair of the Board of Governors of Exhibition Place, I am excited about this redevelopment as yet another element in the ongoing rejuvenation of Exhibition Place. This results in Canada’s largest and most modern convention and exhibition centre in the Direct Energy Centre/Conference Centre Complex, with over one million square feet of space under one roof, and supports the City’s important tourism industry,” said Deputy Mayor Joe Pantalone.

On schedule for completion in May 2009, the project, which includes restoration of the historic facade, will convert what is now a ‘bare-bones’ exhibition hall into a state-of-the-art conference and exhibition facility.

“We believe that this exciting initiative will enhance Toronto’s position as a key destination for the convention and conference industry,” said Bob Gallant, NORR Project Executive. “Behind the 1929 Art Deco façade that is so familiar to Torontonians, we are creating a world class venue that will demonstrate leadership in functionality and sustainability as well as in design excellence.”

The project is targeted for LEED® Silver certification. Water use reduction will be among its many environmentally conscious features. Just south of the building, an underground 12,000 gallon cistern will store rainwater collected from the building roof and redirect it for use in water closets. Rainwater harvesting lessens the amount of storm water runoff that contributes to erosion, flooding and waterway contamination.

“Environmental responsibility is a driving force for this project and rainwater harvesting is just one of the many steps we are taking to provide a whole-building approach to sustainability at the conference centre,” said Gallant.

NORR’s expertise in sustainable building design became known as a result of the award-winning, light- and fresh-air filled SAS headquarters building on King Street East, one of Toronto’s first LEED® certified buildings.

NORR was chosen as the redevelopment designers because of their unique combination of LEED® expertise, and a strong track record in the design of convention, conference and special event buildings around the world, from the programming of the Ottawa Congress Centre through the current phased renovation and expansion of the Toronto Congress Centre, Oshawa’s General Motors Centre, the 257,000 sf South Okanagan Event Centre in British Columbia, to the MotorCity Casino entertainment complex, hotel and convention centre in Detroit.

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The importance of the new centre is significant. A 2006 Tourism Toronto study found that the existing trade and consumer shows located in the Direct Energy Centre, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and the International Centre generate in excess of \$1.1 billion in direct expenditures in the GTA. Since the mid-90's organizers have been enhancing their trade and consumer shows with the addition of a meeting or educational program. Consequently, the selection of a tradeshow facility is increasingly dependent on the availability of both suitable exhibition space and flexible and multiple meeting rooms.

NORR has designed that flexibility into the new centre. Gallant explained, "The heart of the new facility is a 3,000 seat ballroom, which will be used for conferences, galas, weddings, receptions and exhibitions. To support conferences, the ballroom can be subdivided into a 1,500 seat dining room and a 1,500 seat plenary room. On the second floor, as many as 20 conference rooms of varying sizes can be configured for breakout sessions."

The ballroom established a key design feature for the building. The existing structure has a central, 2 storey high space surrounded on all sides by a mezzanine level. The roof of the central space is supported by rows of columns at the edge of the mezzanine and a row of columns running down the centre of the space. To accommodate a 3,000 seat ballroom with unobstructed view lines required the elimination of the centre line row of columns. NORR determined that the most cost effective solution was to replace the entire central space roof with a new structure clear-spanning the space.

To create a powerful arrival experience upon entering the facility and to develop a strong connection to the second floor conference rooms, the NORR designers introduced a relatively narrow atrium the full length of the ballroom. In it, the wall of the ballroom is treated as the major feature, leading the eye up to the second level and providing a strong linkage between the levels. Escalators to the second floor are contained within the atrium and clerestory lighting permits a flood of natural light into the space.

The 162,000 sf, \$46.88 million, redevelopment has been designed to meet the IACC Universal Criteria for Conference Centres.

NORR's David Clusiau is the project's Principal Architect. Mr. Clusiau has been Principal of Architectural Design for NORR since 2001, and has been responsible for projects such as the SAS Headquarters, the DeGroot Centre for Learning & Discovery at McMaster University and the Ford of Canada Headquarters.

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Project Team:

NORR Limited: Architecture, structural, mechanical and electrical engineering, interior design

Enermodal Engineering Ltd.: LEED® consultants

Engineering Harmonics Inc.: Audio/visual consultants

Swallow Acoustic Consultants Ltd.: Acoustic consultants

Leber Rubes Inc.: Building code consultants

Andre Scheinman: Heritage preservation consultant

CFMS Consulting Inc.: Commissioning

About NORR Limited

Part of the Ingenium Group of companies, NORR Limited is a fully-integrated architectural and engineering firm headquartered in Toronto, with offices in Ottawa and Kingston. NORR's expertise is focused on the hospitality, commercial, institutional, justice, correctional, educational, sports and recreation, aviation and healthcare market sectors.

Operating under the CION, Giffels, NORR and PMA brands, the Ingenium Group of companies offers an extensive range of engineering, architectural, interior design, construction and project management services focussed on quality performance, superior client service and on-budget, on-time delivery of innovative solutions. The companies employ more than 1,200 professional staff in offices in Canada, the United States, Latin America, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Asia.

About Exhibition Place

Exhibition Place is Canada's largest entertainment venue, attracting over 5.2 million visitors a year. The site is an integral component of Toronto and Ontario's economy, particularly with respect to sport, festivals, recreation, culture and tourism. In 2004, Exhibition Place undertook an environmental stewardship initiative, which included the promotion of sustainable development, environmental initiatives and leading edge green technologies and practices across the 192-acre site. This environmental initiative has resulted in award winning recognition across North America, and has established Exhibition Place as a world leader in energy-efficient technologies.

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