

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Emerging Leaders and Innovators Leave Toronto for Better Career and Educational Opportunities -  
Work-Life Balance, Cluster Development, Career Advancement and Improved  
Infrastructure Key for Homecoming**

December 15, 2009 – Toronto – Toronto’s emerging leaders and innovators are leaving the city for better career and educational opportunities but could be attracted back, says a report released today by the Toronto Homecoming Working Group, part of the Toronto City Summit Alliance’s Emerging Leaders Network (ELN).

“Our research shows that people who have lived and been educated in Toronto want to stay here, but they are being lured away by better career and educational opportunities,” says Andrew Graham, Chair, Toronto Homecoming Working Group. “Although they have personal ties to the city, appreciate its better work-life balance and relative affordability, Toronto struggles to compete against cities such as New York, London and San Francisco for people on fast-paced career tracks. Toronto is not perceived as a global centre for a particular industry, and there are significant impediments for people returning home without Canadian experience or Canadian post-graduate degrees.”

The Group’s consultations and survey research shows that these factors, combined with poor transit infrastructure, the lack of transparency in job postings and difficulties in developing professional networks, are keeping high potential expat leaders and innovators from coming home to Toronto.

**Key Findings:**

Toronto is a highly desirable place to live...

- Expats see Toronto as a highly liveable and relatively affordable city
- Emerging leaders and innovators who do return home tend to do so at specific points in their lives, often to raise a family
- Many expats cite close family ties as a reason to return to Toronto

... but there are significant barriers to making a successful homecoming

- 87% of respondents cited career or educational opportunities, or both, as the primary reasons for leaving Toronto
- Expats perceive Toronto as being at a disadvantage on ten career-related metrics ranging from quality of professional networks to accessibility of financial capital
- Toronto is perceived to lack a sectoral or cluster focus
- Returnees report facing barriers to finding employment, with some noting that employers in Toronto were dismissive of foreign experience, even with top-flight companies and institutions
- Toronto’s poor transit infrastructure frustrates many potential returnees

The Toronto Homecoming Working Group report's recommendations include:

1. **Make attracting emerging leaders and innovators a key component in every economic development strategy.** Although many programs for new immigrants exist, few (if any) focus on attracting the next generation of leaders and innovators, in particular those who have left Toronto but continue to have close ties to the city. Efforts should target people in that group who are thinking about starting a family or seeking better work-life balance, as well as entrepreneurs who are attracted to the relatively lower cost of living and lower wages for world-class human capital.
2. **Make coming home easier.** Develop a network for emerging leaders and innovators seeking to come back that will allow them to connect with those who have already made the move. This could include an online community for people to establish personal and professional networks and a more formal mentorship system matching people along professional, industrial or geographical lines to assist them in their job searches. Toronto Homecoming is currently planning a video showcase of people who have made the move back, and will host a signature event to attract former Torontonians to visit, rediscover their city and explore what it has to offer.
3. **Be big, but be specific.** Toronto will be much more attractive to top global professionals if it becomes known as a niche for specific sectors. As the recent report for The Toronto Financial Services Working Group noted, the financial services industry is one area where Toronto could leapfrog from national centre to global powerhouse. A cluster strategy would position Toronto as being a world leader in specific areas.
4. **Improve Toronto transit.** A world-leading city needs world-class transportation infrastructure, and it needs to promote it. Toronto is perceived to be lagging in this area. While new initiatives such as Metrolinx and Transit City are changing the transit landscape, there is very little awareness of these infrastructure improvements among those outside Toronto.

"Toronto is a wonderful place to live and work, but we are losing some of our best people," says Graham. "There is huge upside for Toronto's innovation, economic growth and quality of life if we can attract back more of those who have left, but we need better systems to integrate them, more competitive career opportunities and a global perspective on foreign work experience to bring our emerging leaders and innovators home."

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### **Methodology**

Between July and November 2009, The Toronto Homecoming Working Group and ThinkLounge Market Research conducted five focus groups in Toronto, New York, London and San Francisco, followed by an online survey. Focus groups averaged six participants per session. Focus groups with those living abroad were conducted using Cisco Systems telepresence technology. Potential focus group members were recommended based on their accomplishments by ELN members and selected to ensure diversity of industry and experience. In total, 84 people living abroad and 59 people living in Toronto completed the online survey. It was developed and distributed through a number of networks including the ELN and Canadian Expat Network.

### **About the Toronto Homecoming ELN**

The Toronto Homecoming Working Group is a volunteer group of members of the Emerging Leaders Network (ELN). For more information or to access the report, visit [www.elnonline.ca](http://www.elnonline.ca) or [www.torontohomecoming.ca](http://www.torontohomecoming.ca)

### **About ELN**

The Emerging Leaders Network (ELN) is a group of over 200 engaged civic leaders who in their own spheres are becoming known as "city-builders": people who mobilize action, laying the social groundwork for the city of tomorrow. ELN members support the work of the Toronto City Summit Alliance and, as a result of the myriad resources available through the ELN network, are pursuing city-building projects of their own. For more information, visit [www.elnonline.ca](http://www.elnonline.ca)

### **About the Toronto City Summit Alliance**

The Toronto City Summit Alliance is a not-for-profit, non-partisan coalition of leaders from the non-profit, business, labour, education, and government sectors. The Alliance was formed to address challenges to the future of Toronto such as expanding knowledge-based industry, poor economic integration of immigrants, decaying infrastructure, and affordable housing. At the present time, twelve projects are underway or completed. To read more about the Alliance visit: [www.torontoalliance.ca](http://www.torontoalliance.ca).

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