



May 2, 2014

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MEDIA RELEASE – HAMILTON, ON**

2014 NATIONAL BIA CONFERENCE WHERE HERITAGE TRULY MET INNOVATION

Over 300 people crossed the threshold of the once Hamilton Railway Station into the foyer of the Liuna Station. The gathering was dressed in their finest...for the 1920s, but were here to recognize the communities across the province who were about to receive the Ontario BIA Awards.



Honoured on April 28, 2014 were:

Collingwood Downtown - Tremont Heritage Properties Inc. for the Bricks & Mortar Award, Uxbridge BIA for the Business Retention, Recruitment + Expansion Award, Burlington Downtown Business Association for Marketing + Communications, Tilbury BIA for Safe + Healthy Environment, Downtown Simcoe BIA for Special Events + Promotions
And...



The only award that goes to a single Person each year...Patti Brooks of UpTown Waterloo received the Alex Ling- Lifetime Achievement Award.

Each of these awards are given annually as a part of the **National BIA Conference**.

The **2014 National BIA Conference** was held in Hamilton from April 27 to 29, 2014, in partnership with The Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA).

Taking place at The Hamilton Convention Centre, The Sheraton Hotel and Liuna Station, the 2014 National BIA Conference brought over 300 delegates from across Canada into the downtown core, coming together to share ideas, network and learn more about how to build their local economy in their community.



Hamilton was the host of the first National BIA conference in 2002, and delegates saw remarkable changes in the city. The theme of this year's conference is "**BIAs...where Heritage meets Innovation.**" The conference explored how BIAs are revitalizing their communities by preserving the past through heritage work and building retrofits, while building a future by utilizing the latest technologies and brightest professionals.

Keynote speakers included social media guru **Scott Stratten**, the Toronto Star's Urban Issues columnist **Christopher Hume**, Heritage Canada's **Jim Mountain**, and Hamilton's Chief of Police Glenn De Caire.

This conference shared the best that Hamilton has to offer, including insight into their innovative food truck policy, a trolley tour of the Waterfront, a visit to historic Dundurn Castle, a 1920s themed gala at breathtaking Liuna Station, and guided walking tours of revitalized downtown buildings, including the 95 King Artist Lofts,

Treble Hall, Lister Block and the Empire Times. Delegates attended over 30 sessions with subjects dealing with Heritage, Tourism, Social Media, Branding, Governance and more. Delegates left after 2 ½ days of networking armed with ideas and innovations to apply to their own communities.

The Annual General Meeting of the Ontario BIA Association was held on April 28, 2014 and the Board was proud to share the work they underwent with the Minister Hoskins of the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment in a program called Open For Business. The Board reviewed the five OBIAA identified priorities that four different Provincial Ministries have been working to solve, they are:

(1) Providing clarity and improving awareness of compliance obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) (2) Improving understanding and engagement on the Tourism Oriented Directional Signs (TODS) Program (3) Building collaborative relationships and partnerships with Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) (4) Streamlining and simplifying information related to Festivals and Events permitting (5) Establishing an OBIAA forum for working across provincial government.



The Ontario BIA Association (OBIAA) has been in operation since 2001, acting as an important resource for education, partnership and collaboration to each BIA across the province. OBIAA recognizes the power of networking, the strength in numbers and the value of sharing common concerns and finding resolutions specific to our individual communities. The levies from BIAs across Ontario invest over 40 million dollars back into their local economy and the economy of Ontario and Canada.

The 2014 National BIA Conference was a joint conference held, in partnership, with the **Ontario BIA Association, The Downtown Hamilton BIA, and The City of Hamilton.**

-30-

For More Information Contact:

Kay Matthews, Spokesperson for Ontario BIA Association: 647-521-5341 or 1-866-807-2227 | info@obiaa.com

Pictures:

1. 2014 BIA Conference Award Recipients
2. Patti Brooks receiving the Alex Ling Lifetime Achievement Award from Alex Ling and John Kiru
3. Liuna Station, Hamilton
4. Dr. Eric Hoskins in January at the Ontario BIA Association Open For Business Roundtable