

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hospitality Leaders Across Ontario Unite to Celebrate Hospitality Workers Appreciation Day on February 23

MISSISSAUGA, ON – FEBRUARY 23, 2026

Hospitality leaders from across Ontario are coming together to recognize **Hospitality Workers Appreciation Day**, officially recognized by the Government of Ontario and observed annually on February 23, celebrating the dedication, care, and professionalism of the people who power one of the province's most people-focused industries.

The day, acknowledged by the Province of Ontario and supported by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, recognizes the contributions of hospitality workers across restaurants, hotels, accommodations, tourism, and foodservice – including front-of-house and back-of-house staff, full-time, part-time, and seasonal workers who serve communities in every corner of the province.

The **Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association (ORHMA)**, **Smart Serve Ontario**, **Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO)**, **Kingston Accommodation Partners (KAP)**, **Ottawa Gatineau Hotel Association (OGHA)**, and the **Greater Toronto Hotel Association (GTHA)** collectively recognize the essential role hospitality workers play in welcoming guests, supporting local economies, and creating the moments, memories, and experiences that define Ontario's cities, towns, and regions.

Ontario's hospitality workforce represents a significant share of provincial employment. The accommodation and food services sector employs more than **426,000 Ontarians**, accounting for **over 5% of the total workforce**. It is also one of the province's most diverse sectors, with women representing more than half of workers and youth making up nearly half of total employment – reinforcing hospitality's role as both a cornerstone employer and a critical entry point to the labour market.

Hospitality workers are also trusted stewards of Ontario's reputation. Whether welcoming visitors from across Canada or around the world – or caring for Ontarians choosing to travel and spend closer to home – hospitality teams shape first impressions and lasting memories through service, care, and professionalism.

Collectively, the organizations encourage employers, colleagues, and community members to recognize hospitality workers on February 23 through simple but meaningful actions – thanking employees, recognizing teams internally, sharing appreciation publicly, highlighting employee stories, and supporting local hospitality businesses.



Hospitality Workers Appreciation Day, as recognized by the Government of Ontario, serves as a reminder that behind every meal served, room prepared, and guest welcomed are dedicated workers whose efforts strengthen Ontario's economy, support local communities, and create the experiences that bring people back.

"Hospitality Workers Appreciation Day, as recognized by the Government of Ontario, shines a light on the people who serve at the heart of our industry. Restaurant and hotel workers – from kitchens to dining rooms, housekeeping to front desks – care for guests during everyday visits and life's most meaningful moments. Their work ensures that when people choose Canadian hospitality businesses, they feel welcomed, valued, and eager to return."



Tony Elenis
President & CEO
Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association (ORHMA)

"Hospitality workers are ambassadors for Kingston. From front-of-house to back-of-house, they help shape how visitors experience our city and support our local economy. Their dedication plays a vital role in creating welcoming, memorable stays that reflect the pride we have in our community."



Krista LeClair
Executive Director
Kingston Accommodation Partners (KAP)

"Hotel workers in the Ottawa-Gatineau region support everything from major conferences to family travel and cultural events. Their professionalism and adaptability ensure our region delivers high-quality experiences year-round and leaves visitors with a positive impression of our communities."



Steve Ball
President
Ottawa Gatineau Hotel Association (OGHA)

"In the Greater Toronto Area, hospitality workers support the largest visitor economy in the country. Across our region, hotel teams work behind the scenes and on the front lines to care for guests and uphold the GTA's reputation as a welcoming, world-class destination."



Sara Anghel
President & CEO
Greater Toronto Hotel Association (GTHA)

"Hospitality workers – whether full-time, part-time, or seasonal – operate in environments built on trust, responsibility, and care. Through training and education, they help ensure safe, positive, and respectful experiences for guests and communities. Hospitality Workers Appreciation Day recognizes the professionalism and accountability that hospitality teams demonstrate every day."



Richard Anderson
Executive Director
Smart Serve Ontario

"Ontario's hospitality workers are the backbone of our tourism economy, and this legislation ensures their contributions are recognized in a meaningful and lasting way. By establishing February 23 as Hospitality Workers Appreciation Day, the province is honouring the people whose service, care, and professionalism shape how visitors experience our communities. We are grateful to MPP Hardeman for championing this initiative and to Danny Murrell, whose leadership and lived experience helped bring this important concept forward."



Andrew Siegart
President & CEO
Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO)

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ABOUT ORHMA

The Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association (ORHMA) is the largest provincial hospitality association in Canada, representing the interests of foodservice and accommodation businesses across Ontario. ORHMA provides advocacy, business support, and member-exclusive programs to help operators succeed in an ever-changing industry.