



## Media Release

**For immediate release.**

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*Founded in 1929, the Ontario Motor Coach Association is a full-service trade association representing 80 bus operators, over 100 tour operators and over 700 affiliated sellers to the group tour industry including attractions, destinations, hotels, and retail outlets across North America. Operator members provide scheduled intercity, charter, tour, school bus, contract, shuttle, airport and transit services. The OMCA works with all levels of government to outline the industry's contributions and concerns regarding a seamless, sustainable public and private passenger transportation network.*

Toronto: May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011

### **GroupConnect.com Managing Director Completes Successful Transition and Integration of Product Offerings**

When [GroupConnect.com](http://GroupConnect.com) was conceived and originally established by the Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA) and the American Bus Association (ABA), it was initially envisioned only as a tool that would help connect the group travel industry together in one place through technology. In the time since joining GroupConnect, Jim Palmeri, GroupConnect's Managing Director oversaw the successful launch and implementation of GroupConnect, with many new enhancements for travel members and trip planning tools for bus and tour operators and the traveling public. After that initial assignment, Palmeri expanded the company's scope and direction so that it now has offerings for every segment of the industry. These tools now include the successful [CharterBusConnect](#), an affordable referral tool for motorcoach operators that is generating thousands of leads a month and bringing new business to motorcoach companies from tour operators, schools and the public. In developing another tool to further expand the visibility for members of the travel industry, Palmeri oversaw the creation of [GroupTravelConnect](#), a public facing site that gives more visibility to all travel members of both OMCA and ABA.

It was announced today that Jim Palmeri will end his term of service at GroupConnect.com, a joint venture of ABA and OMCA, at the end of June having successfully accomplished and exceeded his goals in successfully launching various components of GroupConnect and helping it to gain traction in a short time, both within the industry as a business to business itinerary creation tool as also with the public looking to fulfill their travel needs. As was planned during the creation of GroupConnect.com, during the next phase of its development and implementation, the current staff will manage and promote the growing services as an integrated part of the membership benefit of the two associations and continue to operate as a separate stand-alone company.

GroupConnect.com, was initially launched in 2009, as an online travel tool that expedites lead generation; consolidates staff research efforts during itinerary development; increases low-cost business-to-business exposure and aids in regional tourism tracking.

Under the leadership of Jim Palmeri, GroupConnect.com launched, thrived and expanded. Jim was the driving force behind creating CharterBusConnect.com and GroupTravelConnect.com, sub-sites of GroupConnect.com, in order to reach other markets and engage member segments important to both ABA and OMCA

"We hired Jim to take GroupConnect.com from its development stage to its operating stage. We were so pleased with his work that we extended his contract once to launch CharterBusConnect.com and then again to help us successfully integrate GroupConnect.com into ABA and OMCA as a membership benefit," said OMCA President and CEO Brian Crow. "I could not be prouder of Jim for the job he's done for us."

"GroupConnect.com would not be the success it is today without Jim Palmeri," said ABA President and CEO Peter J. Pantuso. "Jim's leadership allowed this venture to get off the ground, and it was his vision to build CharterBusConnect.com and GroupTravelConnect.com sites and get them ready for the integration in to the Associations' membership services segments of the our respective associations. We wish him all the best in the future and thank Jim for positioning the company to move to the next phase."