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For immediate release

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“An economic engine contributing \$3.9 billion to Ontario’s economy.” That’s how Margaret Walton, senior partner with Planscape, described the results of her firm’s study, “GREENHOUSES GROW ONTARIO,” presented today at TOGA’s annual industry conference in Guelph, Ontario.

Walton teamed up with Dr. Richard DiFrancesco of Regional Analytics Inc. to assess the economic impact of the growing greenhouse sector in Ontario.

“Ontario’s greenhouse industry has an economic multiplier of 2.81” according to DiFrancesco’s analysis, based on a proven assessment model. “That means that for every dollar of greenhouse activity, the economy as a whole experiences output impacts of \$2.81” explained DiFrancesco. With the farmgate value of the Ontario greenhouse industry for 2004 estimated at \$1.1 billion, the total economic impact is \$3.9 billion. This estimate includes direct, indirect, and induced industrial output impacts and labour income earned by households.

The Ontario greenhouse industry includes both floral and vegetable operations. Floral operations include cut flowers, cuttings, bedding plants, and potted plants. Vegetable operations include tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers. The Ontario industry is responsible for over half the total of greenhouse agriculture in Canada and represents the largest cluster of greenhouse production in North America.

The industry is a strong contributor to the Province’s exports, according to recent trade stats cited by Planscape. Annual exports, based on the most recent trade data, exceed \$1.2 billion. Greenhouse vegetable exports account for a slightly larger share of total export trade, primarily with the U.S., than the floral side.

Greenhouse agriculture in Ontario has younger farm operators, on average, than agriculture in general. Greenhouse agriculture is characterized by an entrepreneurial spirit that has demonstrated its capacity to embrace innovation and adapt to change. As measured by the value of farmgate receipts over the past ten years, greenhouse agriculture is the fastest growing major segment of agriculture in Ontario.

“Greenhouse agriculture in Ontario has been a quiet engine for growth,” notes Cole Cacciavillani, Chair of The Ontario Greenhouse Alliance, the organization that brings the interests of floral and vegetable greenhouse producers together. “Not many people in Ontario realize how significant our industry is. We are expecting that the Planscape study, GREENHOUSES GROW ONTARIO, will help inform the public about the key role we play in Ontario’s economy” says Cacciavillani.

“Ontario needs to recognize its successes. Greenhouse agriculture is one of the foremost successes Ontario has achieved in the past ten years,” observes Jan Vanderhout, a member of TOGA’s Executive committee and a greenhouse vegetable producer. “We can’t be complacent about the future, based on the growth of the past. The industry needs to be at the forefront of research in order to increase productivity and find effective solutions to the challenges posed by rising energy costs and a rising Canadian dollar” says Rejean Picard, a member of TOGA’s Executive committee and CEO of a large floral operation.

The Ontario Rural Economic Development Program of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Canada-Ontario Research and Development Program funded jointly by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Province of Ontario under the Agricultural Policy Framework matched the industry’s own funds in financing the extensive analysis undertaken by Planscape and Regional Analytics. “We appreciate the vision of our funding partners in enabling this landmark study to be carried out,” said Cacciavillani, in thanking Hon. Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs at today’s event marking the release of the study.

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