

## **Retail Sales Soar At 2012 Toronto International Boat Show**

TORONTO – The 54<sup>th</sup> annual Toronto International Boat Show, Jan. 13 to 22, closed Sunday with positive feedback from key stakeholders in its 550 exhibitor base, and an overall attendance of 76,253 – up 5% from 2011.

Held at the Direct Energy Centre in Toronto, ON, and recognized as an industry harbinger of the year to come, Canada's largest recreational boating showcase is renowned for each year building the world's largest indoor lake. Hourly programming offered on The Lake includes free boat rides, powerboat handling and other demos, Wakeboard Shows featuring pro riders, and wakeboard instruction – which resulted in more than 300 show-goers suiting up and getting out onto The Lake to “Go Wakeboarding” this year.

In addition to a multitude of other family-friendly features, the 10-day Toronto Boat Show saw the return of Special Preview Night Jan. 13 – in support of Children's Charities and Canada's Boating Olympic Athletes – and expanded its popular seminar series to more than 140 seminars spanning three stages.

Exhibitors were upbeat when the doors closed on the final day early Sunday evening. “The results are consistent across most product segments of the industry,” reports show manager Cynthia Hare. “Exhibitor feedback was overwhelmingly positive,” Hare adds. “With strong features and special event areas, and a strategic marketing emphasis on retail, exhibitors are very happy with the quality and quantity of consumers at this year's show.

“Canada's boating industry is off to a great start in 2012!”

“We just completed our best entire year ever,” says Richard Osborn, owner of Sobstad Sales and Marine/Topper Boats, “and at this year's show, we sold three times what we sold last year!” Osborn attributes part of that success to the new Boat Finder Showcase feature on TorontoBoatShow.com, which allows consumers in the pre-show weeks to research boats that will be available on the show floor during the show.

“If we had a good show last year – and we did – we had a *great* show this year,” echoes Marc Duhamel, general manager of Legend Boats. Duhamel says the 2012 Toronto Boat Show is the second best Legend has experienced in more than 25 years, noting he observed a more positive and confident consumer this year.

“We’ve found that consumers are definitely more educated and did their homework before they came to the show,” agrees Rhonda Brown, owner of Kawartha Boat Depot. “They know what they want, so it makes the sales process more efficient,” adds Brown, a 26-year Toronto Boat Show exhibitor. “This is definitely one of the best shows we’ve ever had.”

“The best show ever” is a sentiment also shared by exhibitors Bob Spencer and Jack Summers.

President of the Dockside Group, Bob Spencer says Bennington boats set sales records at the 10-day show. “We’ll sell close to 50 boats to a wide cross-section of people who came here ready to buy,” says Spencer.

“We beat our previous best, which was the 2008 show,” says Jack Summers, owner of Radioworld. “If you didn’t make money at this show, either you had the wrong product, the wrong price or the wrong attitude.”

One great thing about the Toronto Boat Show is the variety of people it brings in – from cottagers to commercial operators, says Brian Higgins, international and custom sales for Stanley Boats, which sold everything it brought to the show – from \$6,000 boats to \$160,000 boats.

“We had loftier goals this year, for sure, and we’re very close to achieving them,” says Jason Crate, VP and comptroller for Crate’s Lake Country Boats, a dealer for Regal, Pursuit, and Riviera Yachts.

President of Champion Boats, Brock Elliott is also pleased with Champion’s results: “We’ve sold a broad cross-selection of boats and hit targets set coming into the show.”

“There’s been considerable pent-up demand for our products as people determined how to deal with the economy over the last couple of years, and I think we’re seeing new sales now as a result,” says Rai Mannu, eastern Ontario district sales manager for Yamaha Motor Canada. “It also seems that more families have decided that going away on a holiday every couple of years isn’t nearly as much fun as having a boat that you can own for life.”

“There’s no question people were in more of a buying mood here this year,” agrees Bernie Luttmer of Swans Marine Ltd. “And with the new platform set-up [Sailors’ Upper Deck] at SailFest, plus the Island Village, there was a very positive attitude on the part of our customers, as well as all the exhibitors: Definitely a win-win!”

Owner of The Boat Warehouse (a Four Winns, Lowe and Wellcraft dealer), Dave Mayhew concludes that they, too, had a banner year: way up over last year – perhaps as high as 25%. “I was particularly pleased with the mid-week

crowds this year,” says Mayhew, “as on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, we sold boats!”

Mayhew sums up the 2012 Toronto Boat Show in one word – *fantastic!*

Dates for the 2013 Toronto International Boat Show are Jan. 12 to 20. Special Preview Night will be Fri., Jan. 11.

***Recreational boating annually represents more than \$26 billion in economic impact to Canada, with more than 52% of all Canadian boaters living in Ontario. Each year generating more than \$354 million in economic impact to the region, during the last five years the Toronto International Boat Show has annually attracted more than 550 exhibitors and an average attendance of 75,000 visitors. Up to \$80 million in sales is generated at the Toronto International Boat Show.***

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