

For immediate release

**Art Gallery of Hamilton re-opens with poignant exhibition
highlighting Polish immigrant experience**

Hamilton, ON -- On view from May 28 to December 31, 2005, *The Company We Keep: Exploring Kinship in William Kurelek's The Polish Canadians* presents fourteen images that, in highlighting the Polish-Canadian immigrant experience, also reveal our universal need to seek out and enjoy the company of others. William Kurelek depicts individuals who cope with isolation in a new land by finding strength and solace in family, religion and community. Kurelek tells the stories of these new Canadians with his paintbrush, exploring the ties that bind in his deceptively simple yet powerful works. *The Company We Keep* is one of the Art Gallery of Hamilton's re-opening exhibitions, following the completion of a 19-month recladding and renovations project.

One of Canada's most widely recognized and admired artists, William Kurelek completed *The Polish Canadians* shortly before he died, the fifth in his series depicting the people who built this country. This poignant, engaging and thoughtful pictorial history of Polish settlement in Canada chronicles events and moments that reflect Kurelek's own sensibilities. The artist wrote an accompanying text for each painting that provides history, anecdotes and, often, very personal commentary about the scenes depicted in the series.

"These stirring works by William Kurelek are among the most beloved in the Gallery's 8,500-strong permanent collection," said Art Gallery of Hamilton President and CEO Louise Dompierre. "It is thus fitting that we include *The Company We Keep* in our re-opening season, a season in which we honour the breadth and depth of our permanent collection."

The Polish Canadians was purchased by the Polish Alliance of Canada and presented as a gift to the Art Gallery of Hamilton in 1977. In celebration of the upcoming centennial of the Alliance, the W. Reymont Foundation - a charitable organization established by the Alliance and dedicated to promoting and preserving Polish culture in Canada - is pleased to sponsor *The Company We Keep*.

"The W. Reymont Foundation is pleased to sponsor *The Company We Keep* at the Art Gallery of Hamilton," said W. Reymont Foundation President Kazimierz Chrapka. "The Foundation's involvement in making this exhibition possible is our tribute to a century of good works by the Polish Alliance of Canada. Just as I have, I know visitors to the Gallery will be moved by the early struggles and ultimate successes of the Poles who settled in this country."

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This exhibition is also funded in part by the Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko, and received generous support from the Estate of Marieanne Alphonsine and Raymond Yaniuk.

Admission to this exhibition is free, courtesy of Orlick Industries Ltd.

The Gallery's \$18 million renovation project was funded by the Canada-Ontario Infrastructure Program (through the Governments of Canada and Ontario), the City of Hamilton, Dofasco Inc., and the generous support of corporations, foundations and individuals. Founded in 1914, the Art Gallery of Hamilton is Ontario's third largest public art gallery. The Gallery owns one of the most significant collections in Canada, and has three fundamental collecting and programming strengths: 19th-century European, Historical Canadian and Contemporary Canadian.

Beginning May 28th, the Gallery's hours of operation are:

Tuesday, Wednesday	12 noon – 7 pm
Thursday, Friday	12 noon – 9 pm
Saturday, Sunday	12 noon – 5 pm

With the exception of New Year's Day (January 1st), Christmas Day (December 25th) and Boxing Day (December 26th), the Art Gallery of Hamilton is open on statutory holidays from 12 noon – 5 pm.

For more information about the Art Gallery of Hamilton, members of the public may visit www.artgalleryofhamiltonofhamilton.com, e-mail info@artgalleryofhamilton.com or call (905) 527-6610, ext. 0.

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Media contact: Steve Denyes
Communications Manager
(905) 527-6610, ext. 255
steve@artgalleryofhamilton.com