



*The new trade and convention centre, in the heart of old Saint John, New Brunswick.*

Davis, manager of convention sales at the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre.

#### **Working together**

Co-operation has also become a key strategy. Last May, the Montreal *Palais des Congrès* signed an agreement with a sister facility in Paris, France, each gaining access to the other's data bank and client information. Convention officials in New York City are interested in making it a three-way deal, which would create a powerful Canadian, US and overseas combination.

Smaller centres, like the Prince Edward Hilton International and Convention Centre in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, are expecting to gain through internal connections, in this case with its giant parent company, the Hilton hotel group.

At international market-places, such as the spring and annual conventions of the American Society of Association Executives, Canadian participants are brought together under a "Canada umbrella", creating a strong and unified presence that dominates the exposition area.

Many such co-operative marketing forays to the United States and abroad are unique in that they involve the participation of Canada Customs officials, giving prospective clients on-the-spot advice about customs procedures in Canada.

Canadian suppliers also have access to the computerized Meetings and Incentive Travel (M&IT) Data Bank. The bank contains more than 7 000 detailed profiles of organizations that would consider holding an

event in Canada, with key information on the needs and special requirements of each group, their preferred locations in Canada, and much more. Partner support among the members is also strongly encouraged in order to maximize the impact of the M&IT advertising programs.

Key industry leaders collaborate further through the M&IT Steering Committee which

offers advice on issues of concern and the best marketing approaches for soliciting business in foreign meetings markets. The committee, including public and private sector representation, is believed by many to be the only one of its kind.

#### **Economic catalysts**

While these efforts are not expected to produce an overwhelming share of the lucrative international meetings business for Canada, convention officials stress that the centres are not intended as money-makers in as much as they are merely catalysts for economic growth.

The Winnipeg Convention Centre, in its tenth year, is a prime example. Curt Smith, of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, has high praise for the centre's impact on the economy. "The building of the centre and the ongoing business it generates has rejuvenated that whole part of town...brought in new business that otherwise wouldn't be there. There's even some demand for expansion of the centre," he says.

Barely a year old, the convention and trade centre in Saint John, New Brunswick, is already getting rave reviews from local businessmen. Ceci McLean, the director of marketing at the market square shopping and office concourse which houses the new facility says that "there is a distinct correlation between convention bookings and sales peaks".

*(Article from Tourism, Summer 1984.)*



*The steel framework for Vancouver's \$137-million convention complex was completed in early July of this year.*