

Canada to become major meetings centre

Canada's most recent conference centre is a \$90 million facility in Toronto, catering to groups of up to 12 000 people. By 1987, Canada will have more than a dozen of new or expanded centres like this, being built at a cost of more than half a billion dollars. However, as this article shows, that is just the beginning, as Canada moves to become a world-class centre of meetings — and incentive — travel.

It is appropriate that Toronto — Canada's largest city — is named after an old Indian word meaning 'meeting place', because Canada is determined to become one of the world's premier meeting destinations. In the next few years, corporations, associations and international organisations will all be holding conferences, seminars and meetings at one or other of Canada's many meetings centres.

As Anne Massey, a writer for Britain's *Campaign* magazine, reported upon her recent return from a cross-Canada inspection tour: 'The multi-million-pound international association meetings world could be set for a major shake-up — and Britain will inevitably feel the shock waves.'

'The challenge will come from a sleeping giant on the other side of the Atlantic — a giant that is about to awake with a vengeance. Canada, which reckons it makes around \$400 million to \$500 million a year from the international meetings market, is already convincing the world's tourists of its attributes; but in the conference community it has been a backwater.

A model of Canada Place at Expo '86



The Edmonton Convention Centre

'Now, new centres are being opened across the country, the national marketing machine is grinding into action and the United States' "poor neighbour" is about to come out of the shadow of the stars and stripes.

International destination

The time is indeed ripe for Canada to step out of the shadows and start selling her image — and her

facilities — as an international meeting and incentive travel destination. Along with spectacular scenery, outdoor adventure and cultural diversity, Canada also offers modern cities with soaring buildings, tomorrow's technology and an active nightlife, which place her among the top choices of world-wide meetings destinations.

Also, two international events, scheduled for the latter half of the 1980s, will soon be focusing world attention on Canada.

In 1986, the World Exposition will be held in Vancouver. It will see that city's Canada Place completed in ultra-modern 200 000 sq. ft. splendour, which, along with the addition of new hotels and upgraded civic shopping and entertainment areas, will emphasise Vancouver's many appeals.



Photo: Tourism, Canada House

Calgary is also gearing up for a world event — the 1988 Winter Olympic Games. They will undoubtedly showcase the city's Stampede Centre, the Calgary Convention Centre and the Glenbow Museum and Art Gallery, which will be integrated with the soon-to-be-completed Centre for Performing Arts.

However, Canada's campaign to increase her share of the international meetings pie is only one side of the picture. Just as important — and in many ways more creative — is the incentive travel market.

A major motivator

Incentive travel — those plum trips to exotic locales offered by companies to their top-producing sales forces — has become a major motivator in the corporate world. To keep sales high, a company must offer its staff the opportunity to experience something special. Canada is naturally keen to position herself as the Shangri-La to which all good salesmen aspire. This, more than any other component of the Canadian travel industry, focuses attention and effort on defining and promoting attractions and activities, which offer incentive buyers the exotic experience they seek.

That's why ground-operators in Canada (the packagers who put all the details in place 'on the ground') are offering special trips like rafting expeditions in the North West Territories, which feature gourmet meals taken from the finest bone-china and lead crystal; or gold-panning forays into the Yukon; or cruises up and down the St. Lawrence in replicas of century-old riverboats.

Anything that incorporates the very best of what Canada has to offer will be used as the basis of a bright and exciting new incentive package — and a new and developing industry.