

Canada - A big idea for a conference



An aerial view of downtown Ottawa featuring the historic Chateau Laurier Hotel and the Canadian Government Conference Centre

As a sign of Canada's great confidence in its future, it is expanding its conference and convention facilities at an amazing rate throughout the country. Thanks to a determined effort on the part of the Federal Government (which is investing C\$535.5 million); provincial governments, municipal authorities and private industry (between them spending in excess of C\$1 billion) – there will be eight new convention centres and enlargements of many others.

These new facilities are putting Canada on the map as the conference destination of the 80's for European organizers. As Geoffrey Smith, head of the European bureau of Meeting Planners International, recently pointed out: 'Canada's image is a place of wide-open spaces, rugged scenery and a wealth of natural beauty. That's true enough. But it is also a place of advanced technological achievement, good communications and some of the finest meetings and incentive destinations in the world'.

Organizers should note Canadian hotel and convention costs now offer the value of a pound for the price of a dollar. Whatever your needs, there is now likely to be a Canadian city with the facilities and surroundings required to make your meeting a success. An aggressive approach is being made not only to North American businesses but to international markets as well.

The pride of 1983 is Montreal's Palais des Congres which opened on July 1 this year. Aimed to accommodate meetings of between 1,500 and 6,000 delegates (to match the city's existing hotel and other facilities), the new centre has great commercial potential and a positive marketing approach.

The ground floor comprises one hundred thousand square feet of exhibition space with room for 520 booths. Conference facilities are above, with a main hall which can serve as a 5,800 person theatre or a 3,480 person classroom, plus 31 smaller meeting rooms. Up to date amenities include special facilities for media communications.

Montreal, long noted for its fine underground shopping complexes; innumerable restaurants and nightlife; its old quarter and recreation areas; is equally the perfect incentive destination. Hotels are excellent and many of them are geared to the conference market. Among the best are the Queen Elizabeth with a complete convention floor handling up to two thousand delegates, and CP's Chateau Champlain which can cope with up to 650 conventioners.

In the spring of this year the Saint John Trade and Convention Centre in Saint John, New Brunswick made its debut. The Great Hall covers 16,150 square feet, enough room to seat two thousand people theatre-style. It utilizes some of the best audio visual and simultaneous translation equipment available. Six additional meeting rooms gives the centre a total spread of 21,450 square feet. Conventioners (and their spouses) using this venue can take advantage of unique sightseeing possibilities. Saint John is situated on the Bay of Fundy which experiences the world's highest tides.

Newfoundland is best known for its fisheries and its newly discovered offshore oil. Its new conven-



A trade show at the Calgary Convention Centre

tion facility, built into a new 312-room CN hotel in St John's, can host up to 1,300 for a reception. The hotel's sport facilities include jacuzzis, swimming pools and squash courts.

Eager to draw international gatherings, Alberta, host province for the World Student Games in 1983 and the 1986 Winter Olympics, can claim two first class city bases. Edmonton's Convention Centre, opened this May, provides an eighty two thousand square foot main hall that can be sub-divided, plus a flexible thirty two thousand square foot area made multi-purpose by portable walls. Up to 7,900 people can be served sit-down meals here. A new exhibition complex, due for completion in January 1984 – Edmonton Northlands – lies less than two miles away and offers more than four hundred and fifty thousand square feet of space.

Calgary, which entertains in a Wild West spirit, is well established. Its Centre can accommodate up to 2,400 persons. A twenty four thousand square foot exhibition hall adjoins the banquet area and an indoor garden may be used for receptions of up to 670 persons. Total exhibition space comes to fifty three thousand square feet and there are ten small rooms plus a tiered lecture hall for 340 persons. Incentive programmes can incorporate nearby Banff and Jasper National Parks, Lake Louise and the Athabasca glacier while the area's convention hotels include the luxurious Banff Springs and Jasper Lodge, both of which provide theatre style seating for up to 750 persons.

One of Canada's outstanding new convention centres will be in Ottawa, the nation's capital. Although the city has previously fulfilled conference needs with the Federal Conference Centre (a converted railway station opposite the Chateau Laurier Hotel); in January 1984 a brand new seventy thousand square foot Congress Centre will open, its main hall seating 4,500 people. VIP reception facilities are of the highest standard as are those for multilingual and top security conferences, in small meeting rooms or plenary sessions.



The skyline of Vancouver, BC, with the coast mountains in the background

Ottawa is an elegant city to which the new Centre can only bring rewards. Across the Ottawa river, facing the Parliament Buildings, Hull, in the province of Quebec, with its bistros and cafes, offers an extra touch for incentive groups. Soon Hull itself will have its own convention centre with capacity for 3,500 persons.

Toronto is looking forward to the 1984 opening of what will be the biggest new convention centre in Canada. The centre, projected to cost \$160 million, will be located at the foot of the CN Tower and feature a two hundred thousand square foot main hall; a forty thousand square foot ballroom; 50 meeting rooms and a 1,200 seat theatre. Toronto has already excelled itself as a cosmopolitan metropolis capable of hosting prestigious international gatherings like last year's IMF meeting held at the Sheraton Centre. It is a city with food and wine for all budgets; shopping complexes, boutiques and street markets; and a host of sightseeing possibilities both in town and close by.

The showpiece of Canada's convention plans will be in Vancouver for Expo '86 – a futuristic five-storey convention centre with a new 500-room hotel, restaurants, an IMAX theatre and other amenities, on a ten acre site. When the convention facility is complete in 1987 it will accommodate as many as fifteen thousand delegates in 25 separate meeting rooms. The column-free main exhibit hall will have natural daylight through the roof. The site on the old pier B-C will include new cruise ship facilities that will provide fifty five thousand square feet of covered space.

And still there's more. Halifax, Canada's principal east coast port, is adding a new world trade and convention centre – Canada Place – to be ready next year. It will have available one hundred and nine thousand square feet of meeting and exhibit space on three levels. Its main hall will accommodate two thousand people for banquets.

Prince Edward Island, a destination well known to North American tourists but still waiting for

European discovery, will soon boast a new Hilton International Hotel and convention centre in Charlottetown. The largest hall will seat up to fifteen hundred persons in twelve thousand square feet of space. An additional eight function rooms are geared for forty to one hundred and twenty people.

Expansion of existing facilities should remind European planners that destinations like Quebec should be high on their list. Quebec City's Centre Municipal des Congres, beneath the Hilton Hotel and linked to the Auberge des Gouverneurs, is being enlarged this year by seventeen thousand square feet, raising the hall's capacity to fourteen hundred persons theatre style. And there are plenty of attractions for off duty hours – from historic sites to some of the finest restaurants in North America.

Many smaller Canadian cities are also expanding their convention facilities. Hamilton Convention Centre is adding purpose-built accommodation to Hamilton Place, thereby providing an exhibition area of nineteen thousand square feet with meeting space for twenty four hundred persons. Work is under way in Windsor, Ontario to add a further eighteen thousand square feet to the Cleary Auditorium and Convention Hall. Plans also call for a new 350-room hotel.

One of the first of Canada's new generation of convention facilities was the Winnipeg Convention Centre. It covers under one roof 30 acres of activity on three floors. The eighteen ground floor meeting rooms can seat twenty five hundred persons. While the second floor contains a six hundred seat theatre, a shopping mall and restaurants. Above that is a pillar-free main hall of seventy eight thousand square feet.

Whatever the type of meeting you may be planning, whether it be an international convention or a mountain retreat where senior management can get away from it all, Canada has something to offer.

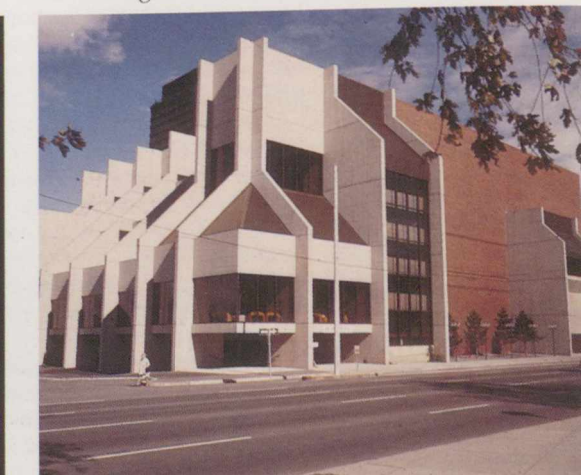


The Glenbow Convention Centre, with the Calgary Tower in the background

Visitors to Halifax can stroll through over forty specialty shops, pubs, galleries and restaurants in a newly restored harbourfront corner of the city. These historic properties are some of the longest surviving waterfront structures in North America



Halifax's restored waterfront area with the schooner Bluenose II in the background



Hamilton Place, Hamilton, Ontario

Further information on convention facilities and incentive travel can be obtained by contacting Tourism Canada at Canada House, Trafalgar Square, London, telephone 01-930-5305 or Prestel 3443300.