

So What Does the Future Hold?

The meetings and convention business is a global one – and that means we compete with destinations and facilities all over the world to bring this kind of business to our province. Not surprisingly, everybody wants the business – and that means the competition is tough.

True, we've got some natural attributes: a destination recognized as attractive, safe and welcoming and the benefit of a strong reputation for high quality service built over many years of hard, skilled work by a lot of people. We also have some temporary advantages in the form of an attractive exchange rate relative to some of our best customers like the U.S. and a "novelty" factor as a relatively new destination.

But this isn't an industry that tolerates complacency. We need to work hard just to keep up, as all our competitors continue to improve their products, their facilities and their services. We need to be the best in the world – because that's the competition we face.

As members of the meetings industry, we're committed to meeting the competition head-on – and to delivering the business we need to establish BC as a top meetings and convention destination world-wide. But just as everyone benefits from this business, so do we need everyone to support it.

How? Well, just knowing it exists and its importance in the economy is a good start. Then you'll find we need support from time to time to maintain the quality of our facilities, because governments, as the largest single beneficiary of the meetings, are generally the people who fund those improvements.

Secondly, many of you are members of the kind of organizations that hold annual meetings and conventions, and can help make the difference in our ability to attract those events to our province. If so, you need only get in touch with your local convention centre or tourism bureau to get all the support you need – and the chance to play host to your colleagues world wide!

Finally, we need your support in continuing to offer the qualities that make us such an attractive destination – a warm, friendly place with the kind of clean, green and safe image that appeals not only to those of us who live here but to visitors from less fortunate places. Every one of us is an ambassador for our city and province – and everyone has a role to play in making this place what it is!

We're British Columbia's Meetings Industry. We're worth knowing about!



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You can get more information about the meetings and convention industry on our websites: www.mpiweb.org or www.mpibcchapter.com.

B.C.'s Meetings & Convention Business:

What is it? Why should I care?

Two pretty good questions. And this is our attempt to answer them to your satisfaction.

First, about us. We're the British Columbia committee for **National Meetings Industry Week**, a Canada-wide event carried out in the first week of April each year to bring attention to the important role played by the meetings industry in the Canadian economy – and the great potential this sector offers for the future. We represent the hotels, meeting organizers, convention centres and dozens of other services that together make up the experience a delegate has when they meet in Canada.

And how about those bigger questions? Have a look at the following information – and learn why meetings matter – to you, to your business and to your future, wherever you are in British Columbia.

A Business of Global Proportions

Tourism is already one of the largest industries in the world, and it continues to grow at a record pace. And within the mix of activities that make up the overall tourism sector, meetings and conventions are among the highest per capita revenue generators.

Meeting Professionals International, a global organization for meeting planners and others involved in the meetings industry, estimate that the value of the more than one million meetings held annually throughout the world is over \$63 billion CDN! And if that isn't enough to get your attention, consider that the industry is expecting a 9% growth in 2001 alone.

British Columbia's Unique Advantages

Convention delegates are pretty much like the rest of us. They've got work to do. And they like to have a good time.

For most people, traveling to a meeting, conference or convention is a business or professional necessity – but that doesn't mean it can't be fun!

The people organizing these kinds of events need to be assured of good facilities and service – and here in B.C., we offer both to a world standard. In fact, recent surveys showed that 73% of convention visitors considered themselves to be "very satisfied" with their overall convention experience in B.C.! But it's when the meeting sessions end that we really come into our own. Whether it's within the city or beyond to the surrounding area, we offer an unparalleled range of experiences from cruising to island hopping and from skiing to wine country tours. All that attracts delegates. And nothing makes a meeting organizer happier than lots of delegates.

Vancouver and British Columbia have built a very solid reputation in the meetings market on a very unique combination of sophisticated urban excitement, diverse cultures and spectacular settings. There's nothing quite like it in the world – and as more of the world finds out, our business grows.

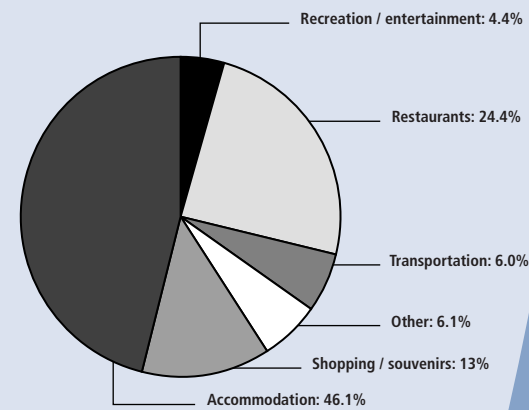
Here's the Payoff:

So what does this all add up to? Take a look at the numbers.

Tourism is a big factor in the BC economy – over \$8.7 billion and 16,000 businesses employing over 113,000 people, according to a 1998 study. And meetings and conventions are an important part of the overall tourism equation.

Each year, an estimated 1.42 million visitors attend meetings and conventions in B.C., leaving behind over \$570 million in expenditures. These expenditures spread into practically every sector of the economy and every region of the province. How this happens is a story in itself.

How delegates spend their money:



Why Everyone Benefits

The wide variety of activity available to meeting planners and delegates is the same reason why meetings offer one of the most diversified economic impacts of any industry sector in the province.

A delegate needs a place to stay, a place to meet and the means to get here and get home. That means hotels, convention centres and transportation. But these are only the beginning.

A convention is a highly complex enterprise that uses dozens of services to deliver the right kind of experience. Event organizers, audio visual companies, lighting specialists, decorators, communications suppliers, printers, security companies – these are only a few of the groups that get involved in staging even a modest event.

Then there's all the activity that surrounds the event. Things like banquets, special presentations, side trips and entertainment. The Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre, for example, is one of the largest specialty food and beverage users in the province, providing jobs and revenue for suppliers of everything from hothouse vegetables to fine wines.

And how about when the sessions are over? That's when restaurants, retailers, entertainment venues and taxis feel the impact. In fact, over 65% of the expenditures by non-resident convention visitors are spent in areas other than accommodation. And these non-resident expenditures are considered to be export dollars, because they represent new money coming in from outside the country.

Vancouver's the Gateway. But the Impacts Reach Throughout B.C.

We're not over yet. Having spread the economic effect through service and product suppliers throughout the province, we still have to tally up the impact of the pre and post – meeting travel that so often accompanies a convention. Delegates routinely plan a few extra days for side trips to take in the local experience – and some, particularly those from outside the country, take much more. From ranches in the Caribou to fishing lodges on the north coast and Okanagan Wineries, this kind of travel is the icing on the economic cake. And it doesn't end with the convention – over 40% of non-resident convention visitors surveyed recently indicated they intended to return to B.C. for another visit within 12 months!

Just to round it out, let's make the point that this isn't all about money. The meetings and convention business is a "clean" industry, in the sense that it not only has much less environmental impact than many of our more traditional industries, it actually thrives on the same environmental qualities we want for ourselves. From this perspective, it gives us an economic reason to maintain our own surroundings.

At the same time, major meetings bring top scientists, researchers and professionals, along with the latest technology, to our doorstep, where we can all benefit from their work and insights. The result is not only economic benefit, but a unique opportunity to learn from the best in the world!



Delegates like these spend hundreds of millions of dollars in BC each year



Pre and post conference excursions take delegates all over BC



Conventions offer many visitors their first taste of BC food and wines

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