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this issue

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HAVE FAMILY, WILL TRAVEL

Quality togetherness is more important than ever, and you have the opportunity to grow more than just the family travel sector.

Cover photo courtesy of Travel Alberta



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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Interview with the AHLA's new Chairman, Steven Watters



What unique experiences have prepared you for this role?

I would not necessarily define my experiences within the hospitality industry as unique, given that they resemble many other hoteliers' experiences. When I was younger, working as a General Manager at a hotel was not what I envisioned as my professional career. In fact, I kind of stumbled upon it. I worked in hotels because I loved the work, the people, and the fast-paced environment. Within a few short years, I worked my way up from a line position to a management position. The next thing I knew, 22 years had gone by. I have managed various hotels - from small boutique properties to full-service conference centres - throughout diverse areas, including the Mountain Parks and oil-rich Fort McMurray.

My experience working with Sawridge Inns and Conference Centres offers me a fresh perspective on the hospitality industry. We are a First Nations-owned business with four hotels in Northern Alberta - three are situated in challenging remote locations, and one is on city property. We are building a second city property in Fort McMurray, where I am currently located. Our company faces issues that many of our members confront in Alberta. I appreciate our industry's challenges and tackle them daily.

What are your top priorities for the AHLA?

Labour issues have always been, and continue to be, a prevalent challenge. The Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program is critical to our industry and is currently under review. Using testimonials and strong statistical evidence, we must present solutions to government while showcasing the serious need for TFWs in Alberta. Once the review is complete, considerable work awaits us as we support our members through program changes. In the meantime, we will continue

to educate the public on how necessary TFWs are for the survival of our industry.

As important as the TFW program is, we need to pursue permanent solutions for the labour shortages we often face. We must find other means to draw Canadians into the hotel industry, knowing that this is an opportune industry to work in. In this day and age, many young people do not view the hospitality industry as a viable career path. We must offer supplementary educational opportunities, training sessions, and developmental support for existing employees. Additionally, we must tap into other labour demographics to fill the various positions that have continuous turnover and gaps.

We have a Progressive Conservative Party Leadership race this year and a provincial election in the near future. Knowing the importance of our relationship with government, we will ensure that our key messages reach current and future decision-makers.

What will be your first steps to accomplish these goals?

The good news is we have already taken some noteworthy steps. The AHLA is working with the Hotel Association of Canada's Labour Task Force to address the short- and long-term availability of workers. We must propose a long-term plan to address various human resource issues, including the support of a national strategy on accommodation industry labour, the Employer of Choice Program, and the establishment of a national group of employers program. At a provincial level, we will continue to offer human resources programs, we will seek partnerships with educational institutes, and we will continue to engage with our members, government, and industry partners.

Fall 2014

Upcoming Issue

- Culinary Tourism
- Luring Leisure Groups
- Guestroom Design Trends
- Tech Trends

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PC Party Leadership Race

by Dave Kaiser



The outcome of the provincial Progressive Conservative leadership race has important implications for Alberta's tourism and hospitality industry. The winner of the race will be Alberta's next Premier - at least until the time of the next provincial election. In the days and weeks ahead, the AHLA will ensure that all candidates understand the importance of our industry to the Alberta economy and our priorities to sustain its growth.

Three candidates have thrown their hat into the ring. Former federal cabinet member and CIBC vice chair Jim Prentice enters the race with an impressive political and business resume. He has already attracted considerable support from within the PC party caucus and is viewed as the front-runner. The other candidates are Calgary MLA and former Infrastructure Minister Ric McIver and Edmonton MLA and former Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour Minister Thomas Lukaszuk.

Alberta's tourism industry is experiencing a positive upward trend. The new Tourism Framework provides a strategy for growth, and the current Minister of Alberta Tourism Parks and Recreation, Richard Starke, is a great champion for our industry. Travel Alberta is seen as the leading provincial marketing organization in Canada and the Alberta Tourism Levy is the sustainable funding mechanism that supports our success. Of course, all of these elements are subject to change under a new premier, who may have a different vision for tourism in our province.

Perhaps more than ever, the sustainability of our industry and economy depends on our ability to attract and retain a sufficient labour force. Our next premier must understand this challenge and be able to work effectively with the federal government on reforms to Canada's immigration system. A more regional and industry sector approach to managing the federal Temporary Foreign Worker program would be welcomed.

The provincial liquor and gaming policy is key to a vibrant hospitality industry in Alberta. In recent months, we've heard speculation about possible changes to operating hours, expansion of liquor retail to grocery and convenience stores, and Internet gaming. It remains to be seen whether the next premier will support any of these ideas.

We look forward to sitting down and discussing all of these issues with each of the three candidates who are seeking leadership in our province. There is no better time to get their attention and to start building a strong relationship with our industry.

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HAVE FAMILY, WILL TRAVEL

Kids are the New VIPs

by Chris McBeath | Photos courtesy of Travel Alberta

At the Luxury Family Travel Show held in Cannes earlier this year, kids were heralded as today's clients, not the clients of tomorrow. For many players that theme has upped the industry ante of what family travel is all about, even for those that aren't in the luxury market.



What constitutes a traditional family unit seems to be morphing daily, and now often involves co-parenting as well as career-driven and geographic separations. Quality togetherness is more important than ever. Combined with four key travel trends - that apply to groups and individuals alike - and you have the opportunity to grow more than just the family travel sector.

Key Trend #1: Multi-generational Travel

Multi-generational travel has been on the table for a few years, especially among resorts, and it is still on the rise, especially for self-catering, all-suite properties such as Stoneridge Mountain Resort and Falcon Crest Lodge in Canmore. TripAdvisor cites both hotels as top family choices, which Cory Haggart, general manager at Falcon Crest, credits as much to attitude as to facilities. "Our condo units offer all the comforts of home, including a private BBQ per unit, and the fact that any kid (of any age) can stay free in their parents unit," he says. "Our popularity just sort of happened, and when I analyze our success beyond pricing and amenities like free DVDs and board games, it comes down



We treat kids like adults, and everyone is very knowledgeable as to the many family activities there are.



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to the cultural dynamic of our staff. We treat kids like adults, and everyone is very knowledgeable as to the many family activities there are, for all ages, especially the free ones. It's not unusual for us to set up a family's entire itinerary during their stay."

Hidden Ridge Resort in Banff has similar home-away-from-home amenities with the addition of designated Games Room Condos - units that offer multiple bedrooms, living areas, and a separate games room with Nintendo and Wii, alongside foosball and bubble hockey.

However, the rewards of tapping into this multi-generational, togetherness market is not without its challenges. See the sidebar for what properties need to offer.

Key Trend #2: Extreme Experiences

If you've not come across the slang word, YOLO, then you probably don't have teenagers in your realm. As an acronym for "you only live once", the term YOLO went from a rapper song to the rallying cry of teens to live with a "carpe diem" drive. YOLOing, now mainstream, speaks to the adventurous desire to push the envelope, and is - more often than not - associated with bucket list experiences.

For Gen X parents and their younger Millennial counterparts, YOLO experiences are family affairs. Think zip-lining, paragliding, mountaineering, extreme summer camps (flying trapeze, stunt maneuvers, and tough mudder courses are hot commodities) as well as wilderness hikes and wildlife safaris. Hotels that partner with extreme activity providers, even if only as home base before/after an overnight wilderness experience, will help to win this market.

Key Trend #3: Educational Entertainment

Increasingly, Kids' Club programming is geared towards teaching invaluable lessons about people, places, and conservation, all disguised as fun while on holiday. Video games haven't fallen by the wayside, but the trend is for active engagement - looking up from a screen to participate in the world around.

Tap into Family Needs by Offering:

- Family rates with value add-ons
- Spousal and kiddie options for post-convention activities
- Grandparent packaging (increasingly, this is the generation that plans and/or pays the tab, so make purchases easy and value-packed with attractions passes and discounts at restaurants)
- Suites with adjoining doors and a communal living area
- Amenities available as needed, such as baby shampoo, cots, games, booster seats, binoculars, and even reading glasses for parents and grandparents
- Ability to access/provide picnic fare and family-style dinners from pizza to having a chef cook in-suite; include family recipes and even starter ingredients for a classic dish such as spaghetti
- Access to different activities that children, parents, and grandparents can enjoy together and separately - thereby enriching the sharing experience over dinner
- In-suite maps and guides, perhaps plasticized as dining mats for marking and/or colouring
- A Family Facebook page with new ideas posted regularly to establish group excitement and bonding

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When it comes to family travel, themed rooms are big business.

Authentic engagement is the name of the game. Hotels that partner with outfitters to broaden a guest's experience can find a niche and establish a reputation as a gateway to the experiential. Ideas include volunteerism, chef-for-the-day classes perhaps combined with foraging excursions, cultural sensitization such as participating in a First Nations Pow-Wow or drumming circle, and environmental activities such as touring the oil sands, riding a wagon train out of Stettler across the Badlands, digging for fossils in guided excavations at Dinosaur Provincial Park, accompanying Bear Guides on a bear safari in Banff National Park, or spelunking in the Canadian Rockies.

Key Trend #4: Customization

Tried-and-true packages are still standard fare and need not be geared to transient guests. For example, The Comfort Inn & Suites, Medicine Hat offers a Family Night Out package for local families looking for an affordable treat. It includes accommodation, use of the hotel's pool and hot tub, four movie tickets, one large pizza, and four soft drinks.

Overall, though, programs for children are reaching new heights. It's not unusual to find a Kids Concierge, and big chains such as Ritz-Carlton Hotels & Resorts, and Four Seasons are rolling out new programs like RitzKids and Kids for All Seasons that provide parents with worry-free recreational and educational activities for their children. Although these services are usually found at resort properties, urban hotels are starting to provide resort-like services such as hotel passports, cookie baking classes, and discounts at various retailers and attractions. Larger properties are even moving to family-only floors featuring games, video libraries, and communal family lounges.



Safety First

Temporary tattoos help reconnect parents with lost kids. SafetyTat (www.safetytat.com) are temporary tattoos that read "If Lost, Please Call" and list a parent or guardian's cell phone number. Tattoos can be personalized to the hotel of issue. SafetyTat also offers a waterless "Quick Stick" tattoo allowing immediate, on-the-go safety.

Delta Lodge at Kananaskis rolls out the red carpet for families, and is right on trend in many of its services. Upon check-in, all children receive a Kids' Essentials kit comprising a slinky, a game, and a toy. There's a children's creative centre open daily as well as a year-round schedule of activities from Friday afternoon to Sunday lunch that includes nature walks, wildlife discovery, campfire events, family movies, bingo, and GPS adventures. There's also a concierge to assist with Calgary rafting, skating, helicopter tours, and more. It's little wonder that *Calgary's Child* magazine named the property the Best Family Hotel in the Canadian Rockies.

Themed Sleep

When it comes to family travel, themed rooms are big business. West Edmonton's Fantasyland Hotel has long made themed suites a signature draw, as are its pizza and movie-night packages that include passes to West Edmonton Mall's World Waterpark or Galaxyland amusement park.

When Delta Edmonton South completed its extensive renovation program last year, it introduced 15 themed rooms specifically to attract more family traffic. About half of them offer bunk beds, each with its own flat-screen TV and earphones, and all rooms come with themed bedding. "Delta tends to cater to the business travel, which has a Sunday through Thursday cycle," says Amrit Sandhu, General Manager. "Because of our proximity to the airport, West Edmonton Mall, and downtown, we saw the potential to round out the week with family travel and started to craft a product that would appeal to that market sector."

Suite themes include Spiderman, Justin Bieber, Dora the Explorer, Hello Kitty, Winnie the Pooh, Transformers, Hannah Montana, and many other Disney characters. Kid-oriented amenities include food and beverage options, mini robes, an activity room (summer only), and a state-of-the-art aquarium in the lobby that intrigues youngsters and adults alike.

"The response has been tremendous, and many suites - especially those with bunk beds - are frequently on waiting-list status," Sandhu continues. "Since introducing this family focus last year, TripAdvisor has already placed Delta Edmonton South among the top five family-friendly hotels in Edmonton. We're very encouraged by the positive comments and use them to make our offering even better."

If family travel still isn't on your radar, consider this. If boomer grandparents are driving purchasing decisions at one end of the age spectrum, it's their grandchildren who are influencing those vacation dollar expenditures. It behooves us all to look beyond a cookie at check-in, and a mini robe in the room. 🐼

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Every industry is on the lookout for the perfect recipe for success to ensure it is effective and resilient in today's challenging global economy. For Alberta's tourism sector, that special recipe is collaboration.

We've all seen the benefits of working together and how industry-wide synergies make us stronger. This year, Travel Alberta built a new strategy to mobilize Team Alberta that aligns industry organizations under one framework.

The Alberta Tourism Framework sets out a common vision, goal and priorities to give our industry its best chance at being successful. It trades competition for cooperation, and cultivates the type of collaboration that maximizes resources and results.

By focusing on the traveller/consumer, the framework will create and market new and enhanced authentic Alberta tourism experiences in all regions. To support these goals, a dedicated business unit of Travel Alberta professionals is supporting industry partners across the province with the information and resources you need to grow your business.

Our team helps you market your products by promoting ongoing learning, sharing marketing trends, knowledge and research, and investing in marketing initiatives that demonstrate industry collaboration and return on investment.

Our efforts are focused on three pillars: business development and education; industry events and engagement; and cooperative marketing investment.

Business Development and Education

At the heart of Travel Alberta's successful (remember to breathe) brand is the business owner who understands what it takes to create a goosebump moment for customers. To build this capacity, we've established a team whose primary focus is to coach and educate tourism businesses in how best to enhance experiences, create more consumer interest, and generate more revenue.

Among our many educational initiatives and partnerships is the "Say Hello to Your Best Customer" mentoring program. These workshops help to identify and better understand your best customers - those who should be your primary marketing target.

Once you know who your best customers are - and really understand what motivates them - you can better tailor experiences and adapt messaging, images, services, and marketing materials to connect more effectively

with this customer base.

For hoteliers, this program can be particularly helpful in growing the leisure segment. It can help to focus your marketing efforts and dollars in the places where you will get the biggest impact.

Since the Say Hello to Your Best Customer workshop was introduced this January, more than 200 industry partners have completed the three-session program. That tells us it is bringing value. Workshop schedules are posted on industry.travelalberta.com.

Industry Events and Engagement

The team working under this pillar focuses on bringing stakeholders together and connecting them with new business opportunities - all focused on pooling resources and ideas in order to get a bigger bang in the marketplace. That means supporting industry events that drive networking and training, and connect Travel Alberta services and platforms with industry partners. Key to this objective is strengthening Travel Alberta's partnerships with other organizations and connecting with their membership bases.

We're building a great foundation with the Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA), for example, by supporting its annual conference through the Housekeeping Awards, and by cross-promoting AHLA's participation in the Check In Canada booking website. This regular column in *Alberta Hospitality* magazine provides a great opportunity to share ideas and news, and open conversations about innovative alliances.

Cooperative Marketing Investment

The purpose of this program is to help tourism operators leverage strategic partnerships and achieve a greater return on investment by marketing products cooperatively.

In 2013, this program received a satisfaction rating of 82% from industry, largely because of the coaching provided on effective messaging, suggested timing, potential partners, appropriate marketing channels, and effective performance measures.

In just one example, Travel Alberta provided marketing investment this year for a food and wine festival that had partnered with its Destination Marketing Organization. Their goal was to sell 500 hotel packages and generate more than \$100,000 in incremental revenue across the event weekend. The project was particularly valuable because it drove hotel stays during a shoulder season month.

Results surpassed their goals. More than 550 packages were sold, generating over \$123,000 in revenue.

This is just one few example of how Travel Alberta can help you market your products and build your business. After all, that is our mandate - and no other organization or branch of government offers the marketing support services we provide. I invite you to visit industry.travelalberta.com to discover the events, programs and tools available to create your own recipe for success.

Shelley Grollmuss is Travel Alberta's Vice President of Industry Development. She can be reached at shelley.grollmuss@travelalberta.com



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Today, more than ever, guests demand a high level of service. Guest surveys continue to support the opinion that service is the most important aspect of a hotel stay. Research indicates that a highly satisfied customer is six times more likely to return than a customer who is merely satisfied, so how do you create a high level of service in what you do every day, so that an entire team can understand the concept and importance? It involves consistent practice with total commitment. This is achieved when every employee has the same focus and dedication to guest satisfaction.

Every highly functioning and powerful organization has a higher purpose, which is guest satisfaction. This means that everything we do, every day, whether we have guest contact or not, is focused on guest satisfaction. To reach this higher purpose, we need to embrace four fully integrated and ever-strengthening pillars. Through these four pillars, the work becomes more exciting and the work environment more empowering, enjoyable, and valued. To create this environment, managers need to: (1) Foster engagement; (2) Communicate expectations; (3) Create an empowering environment; and (4) Ensure accountability.

The foundation of building an exceptional service culture relies on these four pillars. No pillar is more important than the other. For the culture to be strong, each pillar must be integrated into the daily routine of the organization. In addition, each pillar must be inspired by you, the leader. Inspiration is the glue that holds the four pillars together.

Foster Engagement

It is important to have employees who are engaged with management and each other. Employees' opinions are valuable and create tremendous buy-in and loyalty. In order to be successful, an organization must provide the tools and resources that are needed for the employees to be empowered. Encourage participation, set the stage for engagement, create opportunities for feedback, and share success stories. To build a team that effectively and completely pursues guest satisfaction, we must begin with hiring the right people - people who will engage.

Communicate Expectations

Communication is one of the most important functions of an organization, and it's the one that is most difficult to master. Effective communication requires constant attention, and you can never get enough of it. Someone once said, "It's not what you say, it's how you say it."

Indeed, there is more to communication than words. How we communicate has more impact than what we communicate - what is heard, and more importantly, interpreted.

How do you share the opportunities you discover when reviewing guest feedback? How do you move your department towards resolution? Your employees need to hear how committed you are to guest satisfaction. By providing constructive and positive communication, your employees will feel empowered and accountable.

Create an Empowering Environment

Nothing yields greater dividends in team coherence, employee satisfaction, and organizational momentum than advancing the best interests of the people you work with. Leaders know that as an organization's reputation for respecting everyone expands, so will general trust levels. More trust means fewer politics and personal agendas - and without those, people are more productive, more satisfied, and more likely to come up with and execute new ideas.

Ensure Accountability

Accountability is owning your tasks and commitments. Employees need to ensure guest satisfaction by completing all tasks to the full as well as following up with peers, the boss, your stakeholders, and guests. Everyone's work is equally valuable in achieving guest satisfaction. This higher sense of purpose brings people together and unites them as they work together towards a common goal.

Be a Leader

Leaders are the visionaries who embrace the goal of exceptional guest satisfaction and inspire staff to strive to achieve it every day. How do you inspire staff? What are some of the ways you inspire greatness? Here are just a few suggestions:

- Share the goal of guest satisfaction often.
- Surround yourself with others who have the desire to reach the highest level of guest satisfaction.
- Communicate how you are reaching the goal - what is working, and what needs improvement.
- Balance the big picture with the day-to-day steps of managing the organization.
- Find ways to inspire.
- Lead by example.
- Use rewards and recognition regularly and consistently.
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FEATURE

ALBERTA ACCOMMODATION OUTLOOK

2014 Should Be an Even Better Year

David Ferguson, Senior Associate with PKF Consulting Inc., told delegates during the Alberta Accommodation Outlook 2014 session at the Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association's Annual Convention that after a strong 2013, the fundamentals are in place for the overall accommodation industry in Alberta to further improve both top line and bottom line performance in 2014, with industry operating profitability expected to increase by almost 7%. The session was sponsored by the Alberta Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation's Tourism Business Development, Research and Investment Branch.

Prince of Wales Hotel, photo courtesy of Travel Alberta

Strong Economy

Alberta's economic outlook for 2014 is strong, according to forecasts put forth by leading financial institutions, economic think tanks, and the Alberta government's own projections. Several forecasts call for Alberta to lead all provinces and territories in GDP growth for 2014. Strong oil and natural gas prices are leading to increased royalty revenues for the province, and the health of this sector bodes well for solid economic performance in most areas of Alberta. There will be strong capital investment in such areas as oil sands-related construction, development of new pipelines (notwithstanding the ongoing delay in the announcements by the US government regarding the proposed Keystone XL pipeline), and other infrastructure related to the sector. The latest forecast from the Petroleum Services Association of Canada calls for a slight increase in the total number of wells drilled within Alberta in 2014. The strong economic outlooks also include projected gains in employment levels in many areas, a rise in housing starts, and improvements in consumer confidence levels.

Travel Markets Increasing

The Canadian Tourism Research Institute's (CTRI) latest *Travel Markets Outlook* forecast is for increases in overnight visitation to Alberta in 2014 from domestic, transborder and other international sources. The CTRI forecasts cover all types of overnight travel, e.g. travellers staying with friends and families, and those camping as well as tourists using the accommodation sector. Overnight travel by Canadian business and pleasure travellers comprises the largest share of total annual volumes,

Several forecasts call for Alberta to lead all provinces and territories in GDP growth for 2014.

and CTRI is forecasting growth of more than 3% for 2014 in Alberta. Overnight visitation from both US visitors and the combined volumes of other international travellers is also forecast to be greater than 3% in 2014.

New Hotel Construction

Over 2,300 new hotel rooms are forecast to open in Alberta in 2014, which represents over 40% of the total supply of rooms that are projected to open across Canada this year. In addition to new guestrooms in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, new rooms are scheduled to open in 2014 in communities that include Airdrie, Okotoks, Leduc, Lethbridge, Lloydminster, Spruce Grove, and Red Deer. The majority of new rooms will be within branded properties. In addition to the opening of new properties, two assets are reopening with different room counts after undergoing substantial renovations and conversion to new brands; the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel West Edmonton (formerly the Mayfield Inn & Suites), and the Aloft Calgary University (formerly a Quality Inn). There continues to be considerable interest in development of new properties within Calgary and Edmonton. Developers are also closely following the

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Calgary	72.7%	70.8%	3.8	\$162.23	\$156.08	3.9%	\$117.96	\$110.58	6.7%
Calgary Airport	72.3%	69.1%	3.3	\$137.41	\$133.01	3.3%	\$99.41	\$91.87	8.2%
Calgary Downtown	72.7%	73.4%	-0.7	\$209.13	\$199.96	4.6%	\$152.08	\$146.81	3.6%
Calgary Northwest	75.9%	70.9%	5.0	\$125.04	\$113.00	10.7%	\$94.87	\$80.12	18.4%
Calgary South	71.9%	69.1%	2.8	\$137.35	\$132.67	3.5%	\$98.73	\$91.66	7.7%
Edmonton	69.7%	66.5%	3.2	\$127.48	\$122.18	4.3%	\$88.85	\$81.27	9.3%
Downtown Edmonton	73.2%	68.5%	4.7	\$136.71	\$130.17	5.0%	\$100.11	\$89.17	12.3%
Edmonton South	69.7%	66.0%	3.6	\$123.89	\$117.63	5.3%	\$86.29	\$77.68	11.1%
Edmonton West	66.6%	65.4%	1.2	\$124.14	\$120.79	2.8%	\$82.62	\$78.97	4.6%
Other Alberta	64.0%	61.5%	2.4	\$125.41	\$120.72	3.9%	\$80.22	\$74.30	8.0%
Lethbridge	62.0%	58.3%	3.7	\$108.65	\$106.97	1.6%	\$67.41	\$62.39	8.0%
Red Deer	56.9%	56.8%	0.2	\$109.74	\$107.53	2.1%	\$62.46	\$61.03	2.3%
Other Alberta Communities	65.2%	62.7%	2.5	\$131.52	\$126.54	3.9%	\$85.72	\$79.34	8.0%
Alberta Resorts	57.1%	56.3%	0.7	\$202.63	\$196.03	3.4%	\$115.61	\$110.43	4.7%

** Note that the variance between current and previous year occupancy is reported as a point change and not as a percentage variance.

Source: PKF Consulting Inc., Trends in the Canadian Hotel Industry - National Market Report. (Excerpt)

Overall, the accommodation sector in Alberta achieves the highest Adjusted Net Operating Income (ANOI) Per Available Room results in Canada.

announced and projected future activities primarily within the oil and gas sector as they look for new markets in which to invest. Key challenges impacting development activity include the availability and price of vacant land as well as the continual escalation in construction costs for new accommodation properties.

Strong Industry Trends

According to PKF Consulting Inc.'s *Trends in the Canadian Hotel Industry, National Market Report*, province-wide results for 2013 (excluding Alberta resorts) showed an overall occupancy of 68.2%, compared with 65.8% for 2012. Average daily room rates for 2013 for Alberta (excluding Alberta resorts) were at \$137.59, an increase of approximately 3.9% from the 2012 ADR at \$132.38. Revenue per available room (RevPar) in 2013 for Alberta (excluding Alberta resorts) was up a strong 7.7% over 2012.


Demand and Supply Growing

Room demand growth will be strong in many markets throughout 2014. As previously noted, oil and gas sector activity will continue to generate related room-night demand increases that will improve the top line performance of this sector. The room supply growth throughout Alberta and particularly within some sub-markets will also be strong in 2014, which will in turn slightly temper overall occupancy rates. A few

markets/sub markets will likely see supply growth match or outpace demand growth in 2014, resulting in a lower occupancy percentage. However, the overall trend toward total room night growth is still viewed as very positive. With demand levels increasing, occupancy will improve and Alberta owners and managers will be able to achieve average daily room rate increases in 2014. The accommodation sector in Alberta (excluding resorts) is projected to achieve an overall occupancy of 69% in 2014 (rounded) with an average daily room rate at \$143.00 (rounded), resulting in RevPar growth of 5.4%.

Net Income Increasing

The top line forecast for 2014 translates well into operators having an opportunity to improve bottom line results in 2014 as well. Overall, the accommodation sector in Alberta achieves the highest Adjusted Net Operating Income (ANOI) Per Available Room results in Canada. In 2012, the ANOI per available room in Alberta was estimated by PKF Consulting at approximately \$16,700, compared with the national estimate of \$9,100. For 2013, PKF Consulting forecasts reflect that the ANOI per available room increased by almost 12% to \$18,700, and for 2014 the projection is a 7% increase to \$20,000, far exceeding the national projection of \$9,800.

Overall, accommodation properties can look forward to a good year of business in our province. 

*PKF Consulting's latest forecasts for Alberta's accommodation sector for 2014 were made in the days immediately preceding the federal government's announcement that they were suspending the Temporary Foreign Worker Program for the food services sector. The impacts of that decision and forthcoming announcements on any modifications to the Program are not yet known.

Source: PKF Consulting, with reproduction and use of information subject to PKF Disclaimer and Restrictions as detailed at www.pkfcanada.com.

Cave and Basin Dubbed Banff's Biggest Story

by Debbie Minke

Banff's Cave and Basin National Historic Site, celebrated as the birthplace of Canada's national parks, has reopened after undergoing an intensive three-year renovation.

The Cave and Basin is the lowest part of nine sulphurous hot springs found along Sulphur Mountain's Thrust Fault. The water is geothermally heated from an estimated depth of 3 km. These famous sulphurous hot springs were discovered in the 1800s. Although there are written records of earlier discoveries, in 1883, two Canadian Pacific Railway workers, William McCardell and Frank McCabe, descended through the skylight entrance into the cave using a felled tree, and the next year built a small cabin with the intent of commercializing the site, which quickly became a major draw for tourists.

In order to resolve conflicting claims and protect the springs for public use, in 1885, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald created the 26 sq km Banff Hot Springs Reserve. It is considered to be the beginning of our country's national parks mandate - the very first recognition of the need to protect special places for the benefit of the nation. Banff National Park, centered around the reserve, is the first Canadian national park. The Cave and Basin was formally declared a national historic site in 1981.

In 1886, a tunnel was driven through to expand access for visitors, and the original naturally-heated swimming pool was completed in 1904. The pool was restored several times throughout the years, and was enjoyed by thousands of visitors until 1992, when it was permanently closed.

The Cave and Basin is adjacent to a former World War I internment camp, one of 24 locations across the country that detained landed immigrants who were citizens of countries at war with Canada. Many of the Cave



Photo courtesy of Parks Canada

and Basin's early structures were built by these detainees, the majority of whom were of Ukrainian descent. A permanent exhibit about Canada's first national internment operations is located at the historic site.

The Cave and Basin's \$13.8 million renovations included the restoration of buildings, a new plaza and interpretive exhibits, and the restoration of habitat for the endangered Banff Springs Snail. New programming and interpretive media exhibits provide a fascinating glimpse into the heritage of the thermal waters. The Story Hall's beautifully crafted, original 1914 vaulted ceilings have been uncovered, making it an inspiring space. The Welcome Centre includes a gift store, site orientation, and information on all-season walking trails and snowshoeing trails. The Galletly Building features a café, facilities to support catering, a multi-purpose room, and a 40-seat theatre available for special events. Late night special events include lantern tours, cinema under the stars on the historic pool deck, or stargazing on the boardwalks that stretch over 1 km.

INDUCEMENTS ARE ILLEGAL

by Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission

Call it a gift or a bribe; if liquor distributors offer you something in exchange for a favourable arrangement of their product, it's known as an inducement. You, as a licensee, are not allowed to take it, and neither are your employees. It's against the law, against policy, and against regulations.

These rules are in place because the liquor industry has told the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC) that this is the best way to keep a level playing field within the liquor industry. In fact, as recently as 2012, support has grown for the AGLC to crack down on the practice of giving/receiving inducements. As a result, in 2012, the AGLC established a permanent team to investigate allegations of illegal inducements and product promotions.

What exactly is an inducement? An inducement is either money, a rebate, or anything of value (like a large walk-in cooler or travel expenses to a seminar) exchanged between a liquor agency/supplier and a liquor licensee or its employees that directly advances their business interests. An example of this is an agreement between the two parties to only sell that agency/supplier's product.

If you have a hotel off-sales outlet, make sure you are familiar with the detailed guidelines related to prohibited inducements found in Section 7 of the *Retail Liquor Store Handbook*. If you have a lounge or bar, it would be a good idea to read Section 8 of the *Liquor Licensee Handbook*. Both of these handbooks can be found at aglc.ca.

Accepting or offering an inducement is against the law according to the *Gaming and Liquor Act*. It's an infraction of Gaming and Liquor Regulations, and it's against the AGLC Board policy.

Keeping the liquor industry fair is essential to the success of all licensees. The AGLC encourages you to report any instances that violate the legislation, regulation, or policies. With your help, the AGLC is better able to protect Albertans' choices and ensure the provincial liquor activities are conducted appropriately.

For more information about liquor legislation and related AGLC policies, including inducements, please visit aglc.ca or call 1-800-272-8876. ☞

RENAISSANCE EDMONTON AIRPORT HOTEL

A One-of-a-kind Canadian Hotel Experience

by Joanne Sasvari

The gleaming new Renaissance Edmonton Airport Hotel has only been open since May 15 and it's already booked a number of firsts. It is the first airport hotel anywhere in the world for the stylish lifestyle brand. It is also the first airport hotel ever in Edmonton. It's the first new-build Renaissance Hotel in Canada and the first new high-end hotel in Edmonton in nearly a decade. Its Skybridge has already been nominated for the Alberta Steel Design Awards of Excellence, and more accolades are sure to come.

General Manager Vivian Wagner couldn't be more proud. "It's not a hotel. It's an experience we're opening up," he describes. "The way the whole thing is designed is one-of-a-kind in Canada. It has so many intriguing features."

The 213-guestroom property is designed around a theme of "Curiously Arctic," and it's decked out in hues of white, grey and cool blue, with tiny, glittering crystals embedded in carpets and wall coverings.

Although Renaissance is a chic global brand and part of the vast Marriott family, the emphasis here is on local - locally-grown food in the bistro, local musicians playing in the Halo bar on the RLive® Life stage, even pictures of locally-made Great Western Garment Company jeans in all the guestroom bathrooms.

"You don't even have to leave the hotel and you can experience Edmonton," Vivian explains. And that's an experience he is eager



to share with visitors; it is, after all, the city's he's chosen to call home.

Vivian's family is Swiss, but he was born in Romania, back in 1975, when it was still behind the Iron Curtain. His family left in 1984, and two years later they ended up in Zurich, where Vivian earned degrees in economics and business, worked for Swiss Federal Railways, and fell in love with the mountains. "I kind of miss them a little," he says. "I would not want to be farther than Edmonton from the mountains."

It was the mountains that drew Vivian to Alberta and Jasper, and while he was there on vacation in 1999, he fell in love once more - this time with a woman named Rachel. They married and settled down in Jasper, where Vivian joined the Mountain Park Lodges chain, first as reservations manager, then in sales and marketing. He enjoyed Jasper, but states, "It's a small community, which I like, but there's nowhere to go."

Only a year later, Vivian became director of sales and marketing for Chateau Edmonton, and was part of the team that transitioned the property to a Four Points by Sheraton. Along the way, he also picked up a black belt in the Korean martial art Tae Kwon Do, which he calls the "key to balance".



Vivian Wagner, GM

Moving from Europe to Canada, Vivian has discovered a very different style of training and management. "In North America, it is very much a motivational leadership, while I find in Europe it's more of a demanding leadership style," he explains. Back home, staff have to

undergo a three-year apprenticeship in all aspects of the hotel before they even apply for a leadership position. "Here you hire for the right attitude, and then you train. It's a different expectation. It's not better or worse. However, I enjoy this one more, because you can see people wanting to learn and looking up to the management more. If you motivate people the right way, you can help them in their careers." He adds, "I like people to be excited when they come to work."

Surely his staff will be excited to come to work at the beautiful new Renaissance property. Just the entrance to the hotel is a thrill: a dramatic, 160-foot sky bridge from the terminal to the hotel atrium, with seating, floor-to-ceiling windows, green tea and floral fragrance diffusers and candles. "It has the ability to make you feel like you're not in an airport, but in a really nice place," Vivian shares. "It's a place where you can feel you can hang out."

Upbeat music plays throughout the property - especially in the lively Halo Bar and Bistro and RLive® Life stage - everywhere except the cozy library. Most public spaces are licensed, which Vivian hopes will encourage guests to leave their rooms and gather in the common areas.

With Edmonton as the hub for all northern travel in Canada, he knows that the hotel is going to become an important stopover for travellers from all over the world. He exclaims, "I can't wait to see their reactions!" 🐾



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SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

by Jordan McKay

Plunging into the online world can be scary for any hotelier. With so many new platforms appearing daily, tackling the social side of the Internet seems like more than any one person can take in. The Alberta Hotel Association (AHLA) appreciates that many hotels are interested in using social media, but feel unsure on where to begin. Instead of trying to keep up with the ever-changing social media landscape, take a more strategic approach by following the best practices outlined below.

Find Your Mission and Purpose - Is the goal of your online presence to increase bookings and awareness, or to better serve existing customers? Knowing why you should be online is the first step to planning your online presence.

Go Where Your Guests Are - You probably know the key demographics of your guests and use this information to find guests and potential guests online. Knowing the platforms your guests most frequently use gives a clear map of where to focus most of your resources. This information can easily be found online and is often in depth enough to isolate demographics of platform users by province or region.

Use Brand Guidelines - Social media platforms are a prime opportunity to strengthen your brand identity. If you have a very formal brand with business type language and stark imagery, or a fun quirky niche brand with slang, make sure to stay true to that style! The goal is for people to identify your brand through your posts, and pages' look and feel. Being on social media also allows for more on-brand touch points for consumers searching for accommodations.

Content is King - The most important thing about social media usage is to make sure you are always posting relevant and engaging content. Quality content garners a group of loyal followers, and more importantly, keeps them engaged. Simply posting rate deals or special events is not enough to sustain viewership. Turn to front-line employees for exciting little stories about guests and staff to share with your followers.

Make "Utility" Your Motto - Be useful. Post content that your followers will find valuable to entice them to come back for more. Are you an adventure property in the mountains? Post tips about nearby trails or conditions for nearby ski hills. Are you a downtown property in a vibrant city? Become the place to find what festivals or concerts are happening around your hotel. Provide content that is useful and people will be sure to think of you when they need to book accommodations for that outdoor adventure or city escape.

Design Metrics - The biggest challenge of using social media is knowing whether your efforts are paying off. Deciding on measurement tools is important and is determined by what you define as success. Set goals for your social media plan and for each application before you post content online. It is important to measure the activity of each application to better understand where to focus valuable time and energy.

Learn more - The AHLA's Social Media Community Specialist, Jordan McKay, is now offering social media workshops and coaching. For more information or to register for these workshops, please contact Jordan at 780-267-5665 or jmckay@ahla.ca.

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FEATURE

LOCKING OUT CRIME

Keeping Guests and Staff Safe

by Debbie Minke

Whether you're a business or leisure traveller, you value a property that exceeds your expectations. Your hotel room is your "home away from home", and safety is non-negotiable. Guests who have a bad experience not only won't return, but they'll share their experience with others, and likely online as well. Employees will also leave if they feel unsafe. Managers need to make it a top priority to ensure that their properties are doing everything possible to make their guests and staff feel confident, comfortable, and secure.

In days gone by, robbery and violent crimes were of greatest concern to hoteliers. Today's criminal activity in properties includes terrorism, organized crime, prostitution, drugs and weapons trafficking, and fraud.

Calgary is the only city in North America that has a special task force dedicated to hotel/motel crime. According to Constable Wayne Birks of the Calgary Police Service, credit card fraud is the number one crime occurring in hospitality properties in the city, followed by prostitution and drugs. Criminals often meet in hotels to share information as well.

Credit Card Fraud

Not only is a guest's safety and private information compromised with credit card fraud, the property takes a direct and significant hit on its bottom line. A hotel may successfully process payment on a fraudulent credit card only to be saddled with a chargeback six weeks later and no trail to follow. "Criminals often spend on gift cards," notes Cst. Birks, "and third party bookings and payments can be suspicious, so be sure to check them out."

Cloning credit card information is a huge problem. For example, a criminal can quickly grab a credit card processor, place a Bluetooth



Credit card fraud is the number one crime occurring in hospitality properties.

receiver in it, and return it to the desk for use. Then he sits in his hotel room with a laptop and collects information transmitted through the Bluetooth and clones it (numbers, names, addresses, everything). He keeps this information until later (even 6 months to 1 year) so the fraud won't be as easily noticed, or sells the information to another party.

Identifying Suspicious Activity

Staff are your key partners in identifying criminal activity. Encourage them to communicate their observations of suspicious behaviour or activity and to follow up promptly.

"If you are suspicious, Google is your best friend," describes Cst. Birks. "Verify signatures, names, email addresses, etc. Check cards from financial institutions. Banks will confirm if the name on the card is correct." When the guest

checks in, ask for photo identification and their credit card.

Front desk employees should be trained to engage individuals in casual conversation and identify any behavioural warnings such as nervousness, reluctance to make eye contact, and apprehension. Dishonest people are usually paranoid and uncomfortable - they don't want to be seen, don't want to be confronted, and will want to leave. They tend to avoid communication. Observe their clothing and their vehicle. How much luggage do they have, and is it big and bulky?

Watch for suspicious activity, such as many short phone calls - they could be faxing criminal information, or engaging in prostitution. Is it an unusual time of day? Are there many people coming and going from the room?

Alberta Hotel Safety Association

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"Wow; a great course, with a breadth that revealed the responsibilities that are yet to be carried out within my property. Thank you both for a great experience."



extra things - a door knock, a handshake, look the guest in the eye, or make a phone call.

It's Not Worth It

When you are not happy with your guests, check the situation out, confront them, and ask them to leave. If criminals don't get challenged, the word will get out that you're an easy stay. When problem guests become regulars, good guests become scarce. The longer the cycle continues, the more expensive it is to stop. Hoteliers who practice effective crime prevention and work hard to attract good clientele experience just the opposite - as problem guests become scarce, desirable guests check in more often, vacancy rates decrease, and profits increase.

Physical Appearance Counts

The physical appearance of your property can make a big difference to your ability to prevent illegal activity. Many of the elements that make your hotel attractive to desirable guests will also discourage criminals. Any steps that show you care about the premises and watch for trouble will help. Consider the following:

Enhance Visibility - Let troublemakers know they will be seen by installing outdoor lighting and removing "hiding places". Problem behaviour is more likely to occur in areas that are dark or dimly lit or where opportunities to hide are plentiful. Brighten up parking lots, sidewalks, hallways, and alleys. Keep bushes and shrubs trimmed. Use chain link fencing or other see-through barriers.

Traffic Flow and Access - If you are having a problem controlling access to the grounds around the building, consider blocking some parking exits, adding fencing, and rerouting traffic so all automobile and foot traffic must pass within view of the reception area. Issue parking passes to guests dated for the length of stay, and have unauthorized vehicles towed.

Control and Monitor Building Entrances - The fewer your building entrances, the easier they are to monitor. If your building has public hallways and common areas, channel guests through the fewest entry points possible. For required fire exits, make them "exit only" doors and consider converting them to alarm doors, suitable for emergency use only. Ideally, all entrances should be visible from the office, or monitored by camera.

Install a video-monitoring system that, at minimum, covers the reception area. It will provide a video record if an incident should occur. It also acts as a deterrent - people contemplating illegal activity are less likely to use your premises if they know you have their picture. In addition, some hoteliers use video monitoring to look at potential guests before meeting them in the reception area - allowing time to observe obvious warning signs prior to registration.

If you have areas that are not monitored, have employees check them as often as every 15 minutes during hours when criminal activity typically occurs.

Maintenance and Cleanliness - A building that looks cared for will not only attract good customers - it will also discourage many who are involved in illegal activity. Any changes that help communicate "safe, quiet, and clean" may further protect the premises. Keep the exterior looking clean and fresh with fresh paint, well-tended gardens, and no garbage around. Confirm that guestrooms are clean and well maintained as well, assuring guests of your high standards.

Work Together to Make a Difference

Take every opportunity to share information with other hospitality providers as we work together to eliminate the criminal element from our businesses and provide a space where guests and staff feel at home. ☺

Housekeepers on Alert

Housekeeping staff can also be your eyes and ears, especially long-time employees. They will recognize abnormalities, and should be encouraged to communicate them. If a housekeeper notices scales, lots of phones, shells, crack pipes, strange machines, syringes, or unusual items in the garbage, then the manager should follow up. If a guest doesn't want housekeeping service for several days, make a point to confirm it with the guest. Perhaps the guestroom has a peculiar smell that should be investigated.

Are housekeeping and other staff treated respectfully? Follow up on guests who are vulgar to staff - check their names online and determine if further action is needed. Managers should invest the time in doing the



WHAT'S NEW?



Huebsch® HT200 is a new 200-pound tumble dryer for on-premise laundries. Available with Galaxy™ controls, the single-pocket tumble dryer can help laundry operators increase staff productivity and utility efficiency. The Galaxy-equipped HT200

features 30 programmable cycles, three cycle types, and reversing technology for greater drying consistency. Reversing technology allows the machine to stop, pause, and then switch direction, which helps reduce the balling or roping of large items, such as sheets, comforters and tablecloths. Operators can further decrease labour and energy costs and extend the life of linens by adding the optional Over-dry Prevention Technology (OPT) on Galaxy controls. Baffles provide pinpoint moisture readings throughout the entire load, and once the tumble dryer senses the pre-set level of dryness, it automatically shuts off. With OPT, linens experience 31% less fiber loss, which allows laundry managers to spend less money on linen replacement. www.huebsch.com, www.coronetequipment.com



Forbes Industry's all new **Guest Room Attendant carts** offer a modern alternative to your traditional GRA carts. They were designed to be durable and lightweight while offering a sleek two-toned design. They are

loaded with features such as a convenient flip-out, removable, stainless steel bottle caddy, a built-in top tray compartment with adjustable inserts and lid, and a high-capacity amenity drawer to keep all of your cleaning supplies concealed from your guests. Their new Next Generation directional wheels provide easy, noise-free navigation. www.forbesindustries.com, www.macsaleskitchen.com

Voiceware by PhoneSuite is a VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) phone system (IP-PBX) application designed specifically for hospitality voice communications. The server-based core makes Voiceware extremely flexible, and enables PhoneSuite to continually enhance and improve your hotel PBX feature set without expensive equipment upgrades. Voiceware is designed and built by a US-based

company that has been providing hotel voice communication solutions for over 20 years, and whose sole focus is to produce inexpensive yet feature-rich hotel phone systems. www.totalcomm.ca

Adria Contract Seating has added two new models to its extensive collection of chairs. The walnut wood-grain look metal chair coordinates with a matching bar stool, while the new aluminum walnut wood-grain stacking chair is perfect for dining rooms and banquet facilities. www.adriachairs.com

Fusion Woodworks has launched a new hospitality furniture collection called Emerald Park. The clean, simple lines create a high-end, timeless look that's a dream for designers. It's available in oak or maple, and is manufactured in Canada with Fusion's standard 7-year warranty. www.fusionwoodworks.ca

AJM Solutions Group Inc. has introduced the **SE8000 series controller** from Schneider Electric to the hospitality marketplace. It is built with leading-edge technology, contemporary designs, and customizable features. These in-room controllers create exceptional energy efficiencies, and allow for either wireless or wired functionality utilizing existing wiring, which simplifies the installation process and reduces the overall cost. www.ajmsolutionsgroup.com

Birchwood Furniture introduces a small chair that doesn't compromise comfort. Chair model #2720 has a small footprint (only 28" wide), but has a generous seat made possible by an attractive narrow arm, making it a stylish alternative to traditional slipper chair. www.birchwood.com

Education & Training

Alberta Hotel Safety Association members can now take advantage of a 15% discount on first aid training through **St. John Ambulance**. Ensuring the health, safety and quality of life for Canadians for well over 125 years, St. John Ambulance offers the most comprehensive, state-of-the-art first aid and CPR training programs for the workplace, home, and community. To receive your discount code, simply email the Alberta Hotel Safety Association at info@ahsa.ca. To see the dates and location of training, go to www.sja.ca. Alternately, arrangements can be made by contacting St. John Ambulance directly to schedule a private course at your organization.

The **Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC)** and the **American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute (EI)** are

proud to announce a credential recognition agreement that will offer hotel administrators the opportunity to hold credentials from both organizations. This agreement is an excellent example of two national organizations working together to serve their sector and address the needs of the industry. In Canada and internationally, the CTHRC offers the Certified Hotel General Manager (CHGM) credential through emerit, its training and certification brand. EI offers its Certified Hotel Administrator (CHA®) to hospitality professionals in the US and around the world. Under the agreement, each organization recognizes the two credentials as equivalent, "testifying to a comparable degree of competency and knowledge of their holders."

More importantly, each organization has agreed to award their credential to individuals who hold the other organization's designation. This means that for only a small cost to cover administration of the credential, a hotel manager who has earned the CHGM credential will also be awarded the CHA credential, or vice versa. This will give top hospitality administrators the professional recognition they deserve across North America and around the world.

"The Hotel Association of Canada is very pleased that a GM achieving the CHGM credential in Canada is automatically eligible for the CHA designation in the US and vice versa," stated Tony Pollard, Hotel Association of Canada President and CTHRC Treasurer. "This is a ground-breaking credential recognition agreement between two organizations that provide world-class training and professional certification for the industry in North America. It is also an excellent example of international co-operation, which benefits these highly skilled individuals and enhances recognition of their credentials around the world."

Food and Beverage Management International Competency Standards and Certification for food and beverage management professionals are now available from emerit. The Food and Beverage Management International Certification program places successful candidates among the elite of their profession and rewards them with a globally-recognized emerit professional designation, Certified International Foodservice Management (CIFM). The certification program and credential was developed by an international committee of food and beverage professionals, and is recognized by major industry players around the world. www.emerit.ca



The Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association is pleased to welcome the new board of directors for 2014-15, which includes ten returning directors and four new directors: Chair: **Steven Watters**, Sawridge Inn & Conference Centre, Fort McMurray. Vice Chairs: **Perry Batke**, Best Western Denham Inn & Suites, Leduc; **Michael Sieger**, Hilton Garden Inn West Edmonton, and **Tina Tobin**, Alberta Place Suite Hotel, Edmonton. Past Chair: **Perry Wilford**, Glenmore Inn & Convention Centre, Calgary. Directors North: **Amir Awad**, Pacrim Hospitality, Grande Prairie, George Marine, Radisson Hotel & Suites, Fort McMurray, and **Peter Parmar**, Nova Hotels & Resorts. Directors Central: **Perry Batke**, Best Western Denham Inn & Suites, Leduc; **Karen Naylor**, Super 8 Edmonton South and Ramada Sherwood Park, **Robin Cumine**, Radisson Hotel Edmonton South, **Michael Sieger**, Hilton Garden Inn West Edmonton, and **Tina Tobin**, Alberta Place Suite Hotel, Edmonton. Directors South: **Chris Barr**, Banff Aspen Lodge; **Cory Hagggar**, Falcon Crest Lodge, Canmore; **Leanne Shaw-Brotherston**, Country Inn & Suites by Carlson, Calgary; and **Dwayne Stratton**, Holiday Inn Lethbridge.

Congratulations to the following new general managers: **Loreen Auger**, Hide Away Campground, Grimshaw; **Sherry Blake**, Super 8 Grande Prairie; Helena Borges, Days Inn Calgary Airport; **Tannis Botting**, Cadogan Red Lion Hotel, Provost; **Lana Brost**, Ramada Brooks; **Trudy Buckrell**, Family Inn Motel, High Prairie; **Sherry Chodan**, Spruce Grove Inn, Banff; **Tom Confiss**, Simpson's Num-Ti-Jah Lodge, Lake Louise; **Sonja Cuthbert**, Days Hotel & Suites Lloydminster; EconoLodge and Suites, Lethbridge and Super 8 Lethbridge; **Maria De Torres**, Hampton Inn by Hilton Fort Saskatchewan; **Kumar Dewan**, Best Western Cedar Park Inn, Edmonton; **Naomi Ducklow**, Pomeroy Inn & Suites, Grande Prairie; **Jian Qing Feng**, Didsbury Inn; **Jenelle Gartner**, Motel 6 Grande Prairie; **Greg Gauchier**, Peavine Inn & Suites, High Prairie; **Chris Jung**, Breton Hotel;

Brandon Kim, Bashaw Commercial Hotel; **Sam Kim**, Century 2 Motel, Fort Macleod; and **Kyle Lamothe**, Best Western PLUS Pocaterra Inn, Canmore.

More new GMs include **Matthew MacKenzie**, The Banff Centre; **Scott Mann**, Radisson Hotel & Conference Centre Calgary Airport East; **George Marine**, Radisson Hotel & Suites Fort McMurray; **Michael McElligott**, Delta Edmonton Centre Suite Hotel; **Cynthia Meikle**, Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites Calgary Downtown; **Fred Millar**, Big Valley Inn; **Milica Mrdjjenovich**, Chateau Nova Yellowhead, Edmonton; **Ellen Nazar**, Windmill Motel, Youngstown; **Sean Park**, Whitecourt Inn & Suites; **Georgina Raso**, Banff Voyager Inn; **Stacy Risdale**, Canalta Jurassic Drumheller; **Steve Shin**, Misty Mountain Inn & Suites, Grande Cache; **Juno Son**, Lac La Biche Inn; **Matt Squires**, Service Plus Inns & Suites Calgary; **Gaurav Srivastava**, The Coast Lethbridge Hotel & Conference Centre; **Paula Sutherland**, Rosedeer Hotel/Last Chance Saloon, Drumheller; **Edward Van Den Hoek**, Camp Tamarack RV Park, County of Grande Prairie; **Brian Wang**, Holiday Inn Express Edmonton International Airport, Nisku; **Renee Wingrave**, Ramada Cochrane; and **Kelly Anne Yeaman**, Acclaim Hotel Calgary Airport.

The Coast Edmonton House is now the **Holiday Inn Sherwood Park Conference Centre**, and **Norman Theoret** is GM. Executive Express Hotel in Leduc is now the **Executive Hotel**. Greenwood Inn & Suites Calgary is now the **Ramada Plaza Calgary Airport Hotel and Conference Centre**. Also in Calgary, The Pointe Inn is now **The Airport Traveller's Inn**. Executive Royal Inn Hotel and Conference Centre in Leduc is now the **Executive Royal Hotel Edmonton Airport**.

Homewood Suites Calgary-Airport is now open - Western Canada's first Homewood Suites by Hilton® property. **Marcel Berube** is general manager. **Home2Suites by Hilton® West Edmonton** will be opening this summer, and the **Paradise Inn & Suites Redwater** will be opening its doors mid-July. **Diana Stanford** is GM. The **Holiday Inn Express Spruce Grove** will be opening September 15, and **Jon Sholter** is GM. **Staybridge Suites West Edmonton** is scheduled to open October 16, and **Mark Perry** is GM.



Garrett Turta, general manager of The Fairmont Macdonald Hotel, has been inducted into Skål International Edmonton. Turta has held various management positions with The Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, including GM of The Fairmont St. Andrews, Scotland,

and The Fairmont Algonquin, Ontario, prior to becoming GM of The Fairmont Hotel Macdonald in February, 2013.

Richard Main, general manager of the Courtyard and Residence Inn by Marriott Calgary Airport, has been appointed as Chairman of the Board for the Calgary Hotel Association.

SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts has appointed **Jonathan Korol** as the company's new Senior Vice President, Investment and Portfolio Management. A Vancouver native, Jonathan is returning home from New York where he most recently served as the co-founder and managing principal of Amadeus Property Partners.

Eric Watson has been named Chief Operating Officer of MasterBUILT Hotels, a group of companies that is focused on the development, investment, construction, and operation of Microtel Inn & Suites by Wyndham branded hotels in Canada.

Mike Muir is Best Western International's new Vice President North American Development.

Tourism Calgary presented their 52nd annual White Hat awards on May 14. More than 550 nominations were received and over 450 interviews were conducted. Congratulations to the following recipients: White Hat of the Year - Accommodation Winner: **Hotel Arts**; Mayor's White Hat Award: **Merlin Ho**, Delta Bow Valley; Doug Johnson Service Award: **Lisa McDonald**, Calgary Zoo; Best Guest Service - Accommodation/Front Desk Agent: **Tara Boyde**, Clarion Hotel and Conference Centre; Best Customer Service - Attraction: **Jordan Gaukel**, Calgary Zoo; Best Cleaning Services: **Gerald Paduit**, Calgary Marriott Downtown Hotel; and Best Back of House: **Christina Wessel**, Hotel Le Germain.

Calgary's iconic **The Fairmont Palliser** is celebrating its 100th anniversary with special events throughout the year. In addition to centennial celebrations, the hotel debuted the results of restoration work totaling in excess of \$12 million.

Congratulations to the **Hyatt Regency Calgary** and the **Hilton Garden Inn West Edmonton** for receiving a TripAdvisor® Certificate of Excellence 2014.

SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts received the Horizon Award from Marriott International, recognizing leading select-service and extended-stay owners and franchisees, and the Developer of the Year Award for multi-brands in the Americas by Hilton® Worldwide.

If you have any noteworthy community contributions, please send the details to Debbie@emcmarketing.com.



Best Booth - won by Alberta Jobs, Skills, Training & Labour.



Blackstone Mountain Lodge receives 2014 Housekeeping Award.



Frank Stewart, GM, Ramada Downtown Calgary, accepts the AHLA Award of Distinction.



Outgoing Chair, Perry Wilford, opens his first set with Elton John's "Rocket Man".



Richard Wurst, GM, Bonnyville Neighbourhood Inn, accepts an Employer of Choice Award.



The AHLA's Jordan McKay helps delegates use social media effectively.



John Goulart wows the crowd with an evening of Spanish guitar, followed by an impromptu unplugged encore.



Hon. Richard Starke, Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation, presents Housekeeping Awards to happy housekeepers.



73 properties won the designation of an Employer of Choice.
Jeff Mowatt closes out the convention program to a packed house.

GREEN INITIATIVES

Sustainability and Environmental Responsibility

As Drivers For Business

by Carol Schram

Over the past two decades, the hotel industry has made huge strides in its commitment to the environment. "In my first job as a GM, it was a hot topic," recalls Ian Marceau, now the general manager at the Sheraton Suites Calgary Eau Claire. "About 15 years ago, you could tell it was something that was coming on strong. At that point, it was from an optics perspective: Can we find a competitive advantage in being greener?"



Environmental Expectations

The most impactful green choices in driving business are the ones that the guest can see, feel and touch, according to Marceau. "Can he recycle in his room? When she gets to the restaurant, is there organic or local food on the menu, or Ocean Wise fish?" Marceau asks. "Are you offering a program where a guest can ask not to have any housekeeping done, maybe with a small benefit attached?"

A four Green Key property, the Sheraton Suites Calgary Eau Claire started a composting program in their kitchen in July of 2013. Marceau has been amazed by the results and hopes that his colleagues also get on board. "In the first seven months, we diverted 30,000 kilograms of food," he explains. "When you think of that amount, it's just mind-blowing! We're just one of the big properties in downtown Calgary. Multiply that by six or seven and you're starting to have a very big number."

Nature's wonders are at the heart of the experience at the Blackstone Mountain Lodge Resort in Canmore, a five Green Key property. General Manager Andrew Shepherd says Blackstone's location goes hand-in-hand with its environmental commitment. "Our guests are coming up here for the pristine lakes and mountain views and air quality; to go kayaking down a whitewater river. We get a lot of people who enjoy nature, so they tend to be environmentally-minded as well."

Blackstone Mountain Lodge has recently introduced a new initiative called "Hot for Mother Earth". The program puts a fun spin on the property's green efforts, promoting them from a sales and marketing angle. "Hot for Mother Earth" means that we're committed to having the lowest possible environmental impact, Shepherd explains. "We have a collection station where we sort all our recyclables; our staff has been fully trained. We have energy-efficient lighting. We have a central printer so our office



Photo courtesy of Blackstone Mountain Lodge

In the first seven months, we diverted 30,000 kilograms of food.



staff think before printing out a document. We do a full room service every three days, but we do a light service daily. We also work with an organization called Clean the World, donating unused soap and shampoo, which they distribute to third world countries."

At this stage, it's important that service isn't compromised. "When people stay at a luxury property, sometimes they want fluffy towels every day," Shepherd describes. "We don't have a problem with it, but it is a request."

"I think we're leading edge on using our greenness as an advertising tool," explains Shepherd. "People want to stay at a hotel that's green-rated, but still want their services available to them. Environmental opportunities are becoming exciting opportunities. If we're not green, the Canmore/Banff/Lake Louise area isn't going to be pretty for very much longer."

EcoStay Offers Opportunities for Improvement

Hotels can make a tangible commitment to getting greener through participation in the EcoStay Program. It supports hotels across North America in their efforts to take action against climate change. The Super 8 Shawnessy in Calgary is a three Green Key property that has been a member of EcoStay since January 2014, and General Manager Monica Stewart-Bittner couldn't be happier.

"It's a charge of two dollars per night per room, plus GST," Stewart-Bittner shares. "At the end of the month, we turn over \$1.50 [of that charge] to EcoStay. They buy carbon credits and send us a certificate, so our guests are always aware of exactly how many carbon credits we're able to purchase. We keep the 50 cents in a special fund to use for future green





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initiatives. We cannot use that money for anything else and we can't just let it accumulate. It's governed by EcoStay, and it has to be used for green initiatives."



"Guest participation in the Super 8 Shawnessy program has been outstanding," reports EcoStay Director Christina deVries. "The property is well on its way to achieving its 2014 improvement goals."

deVries reports that, in Alberta, properties have collectively offset about 87,500 tonnes of carbon emissions (greenhouse gases) through the purchase of carbon credits from Alberta-based projects such as grid-connected wind power generation, energy efficiency, and agriculture initiatives. That's the equivalent of avoiding 350 million km of driving.

Property-level improvements that have been funded through EcoStay in Alberta include:

- Installing CFL light bulbs
- Purchasing 10% renewable electricity
- Switching to biodegradable disposable cups/plates/cutlery
- Switching to biodegradable guest shampoos and soaps
- Installing low-flow showerheads
- Retrofitting heating system for improved efficiency
- Purchasing Energy Star televisions and in-room appliances
- Installing environmentally friendly fencing
- Installing in-room water filters to replace bottled water
- Upgrading exterior parking lights with LED fixtures
- Changing Interior pot lights to LED
- Installing new energy-efficient HVAC systems throughout the property
- Developing a sustainability policy
- Starting a linen re-use program
- Purchasing FSC recycled paper products
- Adding facilities and receptacles for recycling programs onsite
- Installing in-room programmable thermostats
- Installing motion sensor thermostats throughout the property

Corporate Expectations

Marceau observes that there has been a definite shift in green expectations for corporate meetings. "It used to be all about the image, right? The room had to be set a certain way, with a pen and pad for everyone, and bottled water," he explains. "Our program now calls for limited pads of paper, recycling, and water in either a bulk dispenser or pitchers on the tables." Marceau notes that corporate expectations for green meetings in today's environment are determined by corporate image; priorities tend to be the aspects of the meeting that participants will see, feel, and touch.

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In Alberta, properties have collectively offset about 87,500 tonnes of carbon emissions... That's the equivalent of avoiding 350 million km of driving.

The Tipping Point

For now, hoteliers aren't losing out on bookings due to an absence of environmental features. "I don't think people would absolutely refuse to stay at this point because a property didn't have green initiatives, but as time moves on, their expectations might be raised," states Stewart-Bittner. "If you don't have something, it might turn people away."

Marceau expects to see the next wave of changes in two key areas: "First, it's going to be about energy. How can buildings reduce their footprints in their use of traditional energy? Maybe we're talking about wind power, maybe solar. The other hot topic of the day is food - local food, organic food. It's food that allows us to still create that great culinary experience, but not at the expense of the planet."

"I think when guests see a property buy into an environmental program, they buy into it as well," says Shepherd. "Are we going to get more guests with it? Maybe a few more, but are we going to retain the guests we have? Yes, absolutely. They know that we're committed to the environment as well." 🐾

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- LED light bulbs
- LED emergency EXIT signs
- Energy Star appliances and ice machines
- Energy Star TVs
- Low-flow shower heads
- Motion sensor taps, toilets
- Low-flow toilets
- Aerators
- Ionic laundry systems

Eco Impact

- 10% reduction in heating/cooling costs
- 8-15% reduction in heating/cooling costs
- 20% reduction in heating/cooling costs
- 40% reduction in A/C electricity
- 20% reduction in electricity per light
- 75% reduction in electricity per CFL
- 80% reduction in electricity per LED
- 90% reduction per sign in electricity
- 20% refrigerators
- 41% dishwashers in electricity
- 30% reduction per unit in electricity
- 70% reduction per shower
- 50% reduction per sink
- 25-40% reduction in overall use
- 13% reduction in water use per tap
- 50% reduction in laundry operational costs

Source: EcoStay

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Past, Present, Future: The Housekeeping Award

The Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) encourages, recognizes, and fosters excellence in Alberta's accommodation industry. In 1983, the AHLA, the Motor Association, and Alberta Economic Development & Tourism developed the Housekeeping Award, one of the most coveted awards in the industry. At the 2014 AHLA Convention, 153 hotels and housekeeping teams received the Housekeeping Award.

The award is presented to Approved Accommodation Program participants – properties that surpass the minimum required standards for program participation and reach a perfect score in the cleanliness, comfort, and maintenance categories. While consumer complaints and resolutions are considered, the majority of properties earn their rankings based on an annual inspection. To better determine the criteria used to reward hotels with the Housekeeping Award, the program measures have been adjusted over the years.

The Internet has certainly become a highly reliable and common medium to deliver and acquire mass messaging. As such, the AHLA collaborates with TrustYou to collect consumer reviews, including general commentary, social media coverage, and overall opinions. The inspection team does comparative analysis on a property's previous inspections and years of experience, leading to the determination that the reports are extremely accurate.

As consumer interactions become more important to the Accommodation Program, the program has evolved to upgrade the consumer experience from the very first moment they look for a hotel. To qualify for the Housekeeping Award, properties must be listed on www.checkincanada.com. Additionally, hotels must apply to be considered for the award. As part of the integration, the award is undergoing an exciting rebrand and will offer new ways to promote the winners and display the absolute best hospitality Alberta has to offer.



BANFF LAKE LOUISE'S HOUSEKEEPING OLYMPICS

by Banff Lake Louise Hotel Motel Association

The 2nd Annual Banff Lake Louise Housekeeping Olympics were held at the Banff Fenlands Recreation Centre. 18 teams competed in five different timed events, which included: mop race, bed making, towel folding and towel art, buffer pad toss, and the vacuum relay. Darren Reeder, Executive Director, Banff Lake Louise Hotel Motel Association (BLLHMA) says, "The reason we put on this event is to acknowledge the important contribution our destination's housekeeping staff make to creating memorable visitor experiences. It's our way of saying 'Thanks. What you do each and every day matters to those around you.'"

The evening started with a multicultural-themed BBQ, followed by the team parade into the competition arena. Teams competed in five heats in all five events. An Executive Housekeeping Challenge event also provided senior leaders from the various properties an opportunity to demonstrate their housekeeping skills. Following the competition, an awards ceremony and prize presentations took place. Participants were treated to a wonderful selection of appetizers as well as ice cream sundaes and iced coffee.



Every team member walked away with a Housekeeping Olympic participation medal; those that placed first, second, and third overall received theirs in gold, silver, and bronze. Approximately \$16,000 in team prizes and draws were presented, ranging from ski and golf experiences, white water rafting, caving, and helicopter adventures to townie bikes and tickets to various local and Calgary-based attractions. "We put a big emphasis on the prizes that participants can receive at this event. The hospitality industry may not be able to compete with the wages offered by our province's resource sector, but one of the ways

we try to compensate for that as an industry is by doing an event like the Housekeeping Olympics. [It offers] great food and prizes and nurtures the competitive spirit while helping to build new connections to the community."

It is estimated that between 450-500 people were in attendance at the Housekeeping Olympics this year, with 246 spectators. "We were thrilled to see the number of people that brought their family members out to the event: that young kids were there in support of their parent(s) was really heart-warming - and a great example of how we help support and celebrate family in this community." 🐾

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