



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Venue Saint John launching busy 2010 promoting Saint John as province's top meeting destination**

Venue Saint John partners are undertaking an aggressive marketing plan in 2010 to attract conventions and events to the city.

### **2010 OUTLOOK:**

- The **Canadian Healthcare Association** will bring 400 delegates to the city May 2010.
- The city will be hosting the **Jeux D'Acadie** June 30-July 4, 2010 attracting over 2200 people.
- About 400 Red Hatters will also be descending on the city June 11-13, 2010 with the **Red Hat Society**.
- The **Kiwanis Eastern Canada & Caribbean District Annual Convention** will be hosted here August 2010 for 500 delegates.
- The **Canadian Association of Police Boards** will host their 2010 AGM with 200 delegates August.
- And the **Canadian Fire Chiefs Association** will also bring 350 delegates in September 2010.
- While roughly 650 women's barber shop singers from the US and Canada will be attending the **Harmony Inc. annual convention** November 10-14, 2010.

"2010 will be full of promotions to attract new event business for future years," says Cummings.

"Venue Saint John was in Ottawa in January for more promotions aimed at the many national associations who are headquartered there." Partners showcased Saint John at the **Canadian Society of Association Executives Tête à Tête trade show**. "We had an opportunity to meet face to face with about 400 meeting planners from national associations who can bring city-wide conventions to the city." Saint John was a platinum sponsor, giving out gifts celebrating the city's 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Cultural Capital of Canada with a chance to win a trip to the Bay of Fundy. Venue Saint John hotel partners from the Hilton Saint John, Delta Brunswick hotel, and Saint John Trade & Convention Centre teamed up with the Saint John Hotel Association to do a GLAM theme, giving away a \$2500 diamond ring. Partners also pounded the pavement on a **national sales blitz**.

"It's all about building relationships, and the more often we see them, the better they get to know us, and are open to the idea of bringing their next event east," says Cummings. Partners also attended the **MPI Meeting Professionals International Dinner** where about 400 meeting planners and suppliers get together.

Exhibitors from Saint John hotels and businesses also sold their services to potential event organizers in the provincial capital in March. Over 300 meeting planners were invited to attend the annual **Meeting Planners Marketplace in Fredericton**, with a special session on social media.

In June, partners will head to Ottawa again to host the CSAE MPI Golf Tournament and a Client reception with a targeted group of national meeting planners.

**Lots NEW!**

- **New Chateau hotel** brings 112 units in the city's North end, located near Harbour Station where traffic exits into the city off highway 1. That brings the total to **1869 guestrooms** in Greater Saint John area.
- **The Delta Brunswick & Hilton Saint John hotels** are continuing major refurbishments with a fresh modern look and feel.
- **WestJet** will return to its daily flight schedule in May flying 6 days a week direct to Toronto.
- The 25 year old **Canada Games Stadium** is undergoing a \$6-million upgrade at UNBSJ. The plan is to get the nearly \$6-million upgrade complete by mid-October.
- New Q-Plex recreation and conference centre to open in Quispamsis this year featuring an NHL size ice surface open year round with 1100 seating capacity and an additional 1100 seats on the floor, complete with a commercial kitchen, 4000 square foot conference centre, indoor walking track, largest outdoor pool in the region, playground and YMCA childcare site, and walking trails. The facility will have access to approximately 17,000 sq feet of exhibit conference space on the main floor.
- New Ambassadors Gray Line is expanding to Saint John in time for the 2010 cruise season with 8 British double decker buses offering hop on hop off bus tours partnering with the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation the pink buses will be hard to miss.
- Plans for a **\$10 million dollar renovation to the Saint John Trade and Convention Centre** are in the works, with the City setting aside about \$700,000 in the capital budget to get design documents ready for tender this summer. The facility was built in 1983. It is located in Market Square, owned by the city and operated by the Hilton. Tammy Leblanc predicts the booking pace down has been by about 30 % for 2011, just the fact that meeting planners know something is in the works is enough for them to notice Saint John again, she said. "Conferences keep the economy humming in the tourism off-season."

"Even with all of these exciting new things that are happening, we're not about to rest on our laurels now. With new convention centres coming online in Fredericton and a new casino in Moncton, along with improvements to centres in Halifax and St. John's, N.L. We have to stay one step ahead," says Sally Cummings.

We have NB's ONLY Inside Connection Pedway linking everything comfortably under one roof. And a new Executive Director, Ross Jefferson has been hired to launch the new DMO Destination Marketing Organization.

It will increase funding to tourism to over 1.5-million dollars in the New Year, see new people hired including a position focusing on attracting major events and sports to the city. The public-private organization is membership-driven and receives core funding from the City of Saint John and the Saint John Hotel Association. The most important objective is to "create one voice for the tourism industry and foster a shared vision as it begins working on its objectives, such as increasing the average length of time visitors stay in the area.

**2009 WRAP UP:****FAMS:**

More than a half dozen National and International Associations toured the city on familiarization visits (FAMS) in 2009. These meeting planner visits resulted in two major conference bookings so far, including:

**The Funeral Services Association of Canada in June 2011** with 400 delegates, and one of the city's first major U.S. conventions, the **American Association of Motorvehicle Administrators in August 2010** with 450 delegates.

**BIDS:**

The Venue Saint John partnership submitted at least 8 major bids for conventions in 2009, and already has 13 bids on the books by April of 2010.

In addition to site tours and fam visits, Venue Saint John is meeting face to face with meeting planners at trade shows like: the **CSAE (Canadian Society of Association Executives) Conference & Trade Show** in Toronto last November, and in Quebec City in 2010, which brings together 500 Association leaders from across Canada who all host annual conventions.

Convention Officer Sally Cummings says "Seeing is believing, and when we roll out the red carpet to meeting planners it almost always translates into future business, and we are working several years in advance, as far as 2015."

So far in 2010, another major FAM is being planned for July, which if successful, could see 450 delegates meeting in Saint John in June 13-16, 2015 for their annual conference.

**2009 MAJOR EVENTS HOSTED:**

- **NB Institute of Chartered Accountants Jan 2009 400 del**
- **AECL Atomic Energy Canada 2000 people, 1324 room nights**
- **World 3 on 3 Street Hockey May 600 participants**
- **CAMPUT Conference, May 800 del**
- **New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers Conference Sept 500 del**
- **Cirque du Soleil** returned in 2009 with the new **Alegria Arena Tour** at Harbour Station June 10 through 14, for eight performances. It was the tour's only New Brunswick stop.
- **The Canadian Comedy Awards and Festival** was also hosted in Saint John October 1,2,3, 2009. The event had up to 2000 attendees and an estimated economic impact of \$1.3 – 3.4-Million.
- The **Canadian Association of Nephrology Nurses and Technologists Conference** also brought 600 delegates to the city in October 14-18, 2009.
- Over 400 tourism industry leaders from across Canada attended the **Tourism Industry Association of Canada Leadership Summit** November 1-4, 2009.
- And Saint John was also be part of the **2010 Olympic Torch Relay** on Nov. 24, 2009, culminating in Vancouver for opening ceremonies.
- One of the successful corporate events hosted in Saint John in 2009 was the **TD Bank AGM**. Sally Cummings says there are many advantages to a small city conference site. "We have a great team of partners who work closely together to assist conference planners with every aspect of their event.

**TESTIMONIAL:****TD Bank AGM, March 27-April 5, 2009, 700 delegates, Delta Brunswick & Saint John Trade & Convention Centre**

*"From complex and large scale venue requirements, to creating unique and memorable experiences as part of our employee reward and recognition program, we found everything we needed and more in Saint John. The fine dining and breathtaking sights in and around the city are what drew us to Saint John, but the warmth of its people and world class hospitality are what will keep many of us coming back!"*

John Shelly Manager TD Bank Financial Group

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*"Everyone in Saint John was so pleasant and helpful on all aspects I would truly recommend the city to all groups and for personal travel. There is so much to see and do regardless of the time of year. I look forward to working with you on future events."*

Brooke Soucier – Event Planner Hidden Champions

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*\*Note: Former NB Premier Frank McKenna now chairs the TD Bank board and had rave reviews after Saint John hosted this event. Some of the unique features included: WestJet added an extra flight chartered from Toronto to Saint John, local chefs in the community collaborated to host an executive companions dinner at the Peter Buckland Gallery. These were just some of the extra touches.*

**2009 Convention & Event YEAR END STATS**

- Saint John hosted 318 meetings and events in 2009.
- That's worth over \$11.7 million dollars in direct spinoffs to the local economy
- There were more regional and provincial events in 2009, and fewer corporate meetings and sport events.
- There were exactly the same amount of National Meetings hosted in 2009 as 2008 (40)
- 226 meetings/conferences were hosted in 2009 which brought 22,000 delegates to the city
- There were close to 50 major sporting events in 2009, bringing almost 6,000 participants

The Energy Boom in Saint John attributed to an increase in provincial /regional guestrooms booked, with construction on the new LNG terminal at Canaport, and refurbishment of the Point Lepreau Nuclear Station.

Venue Saint John is always working ahead, trying to book events, and 2010 is shaping up to be another exciting year says Cummings.

**TRENDS:**

The Canadian Tourism Commission says **Green meetings** remain the TOP meeting trend. Meeting planners are trying to conserve wherever they can, including cutting back on paper. More than 80 % of RFPs, proposals and contracts are now delivered and returned online.

There is also a move towards more **healthy food, Teambuilding**, and an emphasis on **outdoor, physical activities** like rock climbing. Walking, biking, touring historic sites, and even shopping -- activities once reserved for personal time, are now being encouraged as part of the group experience.

**Venue Saint John** is a marketing partnership whose main goal is to increase revenues and visitation to partners and the City, by identifying and bidding for city-wide conventions, sport, and special events with room night potential.

**For more information, contact:**

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