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on our cover

Playful Boutique

Year-round pool and patio vibe reflects Hotel Arts Calgary’s maverick business plan.
As more cases of COVID-19 are discovered across the globe, the hospitality and overall economy are feeling the pinch, with the stock market plummeting and events across the globe being canceled or postponed. The virus has spread from China to more than 70 countries, and the situation continues to change by the day.

While we are still considered one of the safest places to visit, Canada’s tourism industry is nonetheless bracing for the impact on the number of foreign visitors and even the willingness of Canadians to stay at hotels.

At the epicentre in China the impact has been devastating. Marriott, for example, closed about 90 of its 375 China hotels and could potentially lose out on $25 million in fee revenue per month.

For Canada, China is the second-largest long-haul market for Canada-bound tourists. According to Statistics Canada, there were 571,000 tourist arrivals from China in 2019. Bookings are down from China by about 70 per cent between March and October. Several Canadian tourism marketing agencies have pulled all their ad money from China and are using it to double down on efforts to attract people from other markets like the United States and United Kingdom.

Overall, however, Chinese travellers make up a relatively small portion of Canada’s annual visitors. During the SARS outbreak in 2003, tourists from within Canada and the U.S. still vacationed. The situation with SARS, however, was different in that this virus has spread more rapidly and there have been more deaths. So even though there is a low risk of transmission of the virus in Canada, people’s fears are rampant as shown in the run on sanitizing supplies and other household items.

It may be a long haul for the industry because experts say COVID-19 may be around for quite a while before fully contained and eradicated. A vaccine is well over a year away. In the meantime, hoteliers should be very careful in their own sanitizing procedures and should make sure staff are all up to speed on how to answer questions from guests.
WINNERS OF THE SILVERCHEF HOSPITALITY AWARDS 2020 ANNOUNCED

SilverChef, Canada’s leading hospitality financier, has announced the winners of The SilverChef Hospitality Awards, which recognize the highest standards in Canadian hospitality for innovation, sustainability, and social responsibility and impact. This year’s winners include: Radical Gardens, Somun Superstar and Ozzy’s Burgers. Each category winner has secured $5,000 in commercial equipment from SilverChef to help grow their business. Radical Gardens – the winner of both the Community Award and the Hospitality Business of the Year – was awarded a total of $10,000 in commercial equipment. The winners were announced on March 3rd at an awards ceremony at the RC Show 2020 in Toronto.

Residence Inn by Marriott Calgary Downtown/Beltline District Receives Etablissement d’hébergement Accolade from Quebec’s Grands Prix Du Design

AHLA Hotels’ Residence Inn by Marriott Calgary Downtown/Beltline District has been recognized as “Etablissement d’hébergement” by the Grands Prix Du Design 2020 in Quebec. Architecture firm LEMAYMICHAUD conceived of the property’s design and claimed the esteemed prize at the official awards gala on February 5, 2020. The ‘Établissement d’hébergement’ recognized for its brilliant and thoughtful design, inspired by the building’s roots as a 1940s art-deco hotel. The Grand Prix winners were chosen from six finalists across four categories each year. The hotel’s design is based on the building’s heritage, boot-stitching patterns can be found thoughtfully integrated into guest rooms, while age-old advertisements are shown in the lobby.

Krista Bax Named go2HR’s New CEO

BC’s tourism human resource association has appointed Krista Bax to the role of CEO. Bax is poised to lead go2HR on an exciting new path forward after the organization underwent significant changes last year. Bax has more than 20 years of experience in various strategic leadership roles. Prior to joining go2HR, she was the senior vice-president, Western Canada at Contest, a strategic engagement and communications firm. From 2009-2017, Krista held senior positions at the Asia Pacific Gateway Skills Table, and was promoted to executive director in 2014. She also has extensive experience in occupational health and safety, primarily in the forestry industry and holds an MBA and B.Sc. from the University of Alberta. Bax has completed the Not-for-Profit Program developed by the Institute of Corporate Directors and the University of Toronto’s Rotman School of Management.

BC HOSPITALITY FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES GOLF DATES

The BC Hospitality Foundation (BCHF) has announced the dates of this year’s golf tournaments. The Vancouver tournament will take place Monday, July 27 at Vancouver Island Golf & Country Club, and the Victoria tournament will take place Tuesday, August 25 at the Olympic View Golf Club. Each of the tournaments offers a full day of food, drink, and enjoyment. Participants enjoy all-inclusive food and beverages, activities and games, and a light breakfast, lunch, and dinner are included. The events are a great way to connect with old friends or to expand your network, as they bring together many members of the local hospitality community.

TELUS Network in Canada Beats Fastest Country in the World

TELUS has been recognized as the best network in Canada for 4G Availability, Video Experience, Download Speed Experience, Latency Experience, and Upload Speed Experience in Opensignal’s Canada: Mobile Network Experience Report, in addition to earning 2019 Fastest Mobile Network and Best Mobile Coverage Speedtest Awards in Canada from Seattle-based Ookla for Q3-Q4 2019. “Our achievements from Opensignal and Ookla recognize TELUS’ network superiority within Canada and around the globe, and reinforce the value of our continued capital investments in broadband wireless and fibre technologies, which are increasingly critical as we evolve toward a 5G world,” said Darren Entwistle, president and CEO, TELUS. Canada as a country placed second in UK-based Opensignal’s global ranking of national average download speeds of all countries in the world, behind only South Korea, with a slight difference: 58.7 Mbps and 55.4 Mbps, respectively. It is notable that South Korea is 1/100th the size of Canada. Moreover, previous analysis by Opensignal has shown that if rural Canada were a country, it would rank 12th in the world for download speed, with rural Canada being faster than every urban market in the United States.

Days Inn Awards of Recognition Winners Unveiled

Realstar Hospitality announced the winners of its prestigious Awards of Recognition for 2019. Presented annually, the awards formally recognize the outstanding achievements of the top performing Days Inn hotels and hotel teams from across Canada. “Leading a business to success can be a challenge which is why it’s a pleasure to celebrate our owners, general managers and their dedicated staff who demonstrate remarkable commitment to hospitality excellence,” said Irwin Prince, president and CEO, Realstar Hospitality. “This year’s recipients collectively have shown exceptional attention to guest satisfaction providing a benchmark for all of our franchisees.”

2019 AWARDS OF RECOGNITION RECIPIENTS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guest Choice Award</th>
<th>Days Inn &amp; Suites by Wyndham</th>
<th>Lindsay, ON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housekeeping Team of the Year</td>
<td>Days Inn &amp; Suites by Wyndham</td>
<td>Lindsay, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Property of the Year</td>
<td>Days Inn by Wyndham</td>
<td>Warwight, AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property of the Year</td>
<td>Under 85 Rooms</td>
<td>Days Inn &amp; Suites by Wyndham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property of the Year</td>
<td>Over 85 Rooms</td>
<td>Days Inn &amp; Suites by Wyndham</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Throughout 2019, these properties worked extremely hard to represent the very best that Days Inn has to offer by providing the market with a top quality product and service,” added Prince.
Choice Hotels Canada is creating a new function within its corporate head office to take a more holistic and coordinated approach to its key revenue generating disciplines. These are being organized under a commercial area, which includes marketing, revenue management, distribution, loyalty and global sales.

This new commercial function will be led by Julie Chan-McConnell, in the role of senior director, commercial strategy & performance. “This alignment of resources supports changing consumer travel behaviors,” says Brian Leon, president, Choice Hotels Canada. “Julie is a strong leader with a proven record of success, including strengthening the Choice Privileges rewards program in Canada, advancing our digital consumer strategies and encouraging our laser focus on revenue management. I’m confident she will thrive in this expanded role.”

Previously Chan-McConnell, who joined the company in 2006, held the role of senior director, marketing and distribution.

In light of the global COVID-19 outbreak, and the need for hospitality leaders to manage their businesses in this difficult time, the BC Hotel Association and the Alliance of Beverage Licensees are postponing the upcoming 2020 BC Hospitality Summit.

The conference will be rescheduled for fall 2020. Organizers will share the new conference date as soon as possible and hope to be able to work with participants around the new dates once announced.

The situation surrounding COVID-19 continues to evolve rapidly and everyone is urged to follow the guidelines and protocols put forth by public health officials.

A new date for the Canadian Hotel Investment Conference (CHIC) has been secured at the Westin Harbour Castle Toronto for October 7-8, 2020. CHIC is a well attended, very popular event and the organizers hope all will be able to attend at the new date later this year.

The Western Canadian Lodging Conference (WCLC) will take place at the scheduled time — in Calgary — November 16-17, 2020.

Hotel laundries often struggle to meet throughput goals, especially when space is tight. That’s why the Compact Laundry Solution was developed. This space-saving equipment combination delivers unrivaled quality and greater production per operator hour when compared with other options occupying a larger area.

The highly efficient Compact Laundry Solution is engineered to deliver superior results — virtually every wash, dry and finishing variable is programmable for unrivaled control and the ability to perfectly process a variety of laundry items. Smart ergonomics and simple operation are backed by durable construction and industry-leading warranties.

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Coast Hotels Recognizes Excellence at Annual Conference

On January 13-16, 2020, Coast Hotels leaders gathered at the Coast Cammore Hotel & Conference Centre for its annual brand conference. Over 2.5 days attendees gained insights through educational sessions, socialized and forged relationships, gave back to the community with a sandwich-making session benefiting the Mustard Seed, and celebrated achievements of its ambassadors and properties.

2020 proved a momentous year because for the first time in Coast Hotels’ history, a managed, non-branded property won the prestigious Hotel of the Year award. Campus Tower Suite Hotel has been in the Coast Hotels portfolio since 2007, and under the leadership of General Manager, Steve White, has shown excellent results. “This award is something that the entire team at Campus Tower Suite Hotel earned together. We are all so proud of this great achievement and are humbled by the recognition,” said White. Campus Tower Suites also won awards in the categories of Guest Service Delivery and Revenue Generation Index.

Other award recipients include:

- General Manager of the Year – Freyda Stephens, Coast Wenatchee Center Hotel, Wenatchee, WA
- Leader of the Year – Robyn Warrenex, Coast Sundance Lodge, Sun Peaks, BC
- Ambassador of the Year – Tuan Tran, Coast Edmonton Plaza Hotel by APA, Edmonton, AB
- Highest Net Promoter Score – Coast Anabelle Hotel, Burbank, CA
- Best Hotel Guest Service Delivery – Campus Tower Suite Hotel, Edmonton, AB
- Highest Revenue Generation Index – Campus Tower Suite Hotel, Edmonton, AB
- Highest Average Daily Rate Index – Coast Okanagan Beach Hotel, Kelowna, BC
- Highest Occupancy Index – Coast Osoyoos Beach Hotel, Osoyoos, BC
- Best Hotel in Product Delivery – Coast Anabelle Hotel, Burbank, CA
- Best Hotel in Ambassador Attitude – Coast Annabelle Hotel, Burbank, CA

Coast Hotels also introduced awards for most improvement at the 2020 brand conference. The most improved properties are:

- Most Improved Net Promoter Score – Coast West Edmonton Hotel & Conference Centre, Edmonton, AB
- Most Improved Guest Service Delivery – Campus Tower Suite Hotel, Edmonton, AB
- Most Improved Revenue Generation Index – Coast Langley City Hotel & Convention Centre, Langley, BC
- Most Improved Average Daily Rate Index – Coast Langley City Hotel & Convention Centre, Langley, BC
- Most Improved Occupancy Index – Coast Osoyoos Beach Hotel, Osoyoos, BC
- Most Improved Hotel Cleanliness – Coast Osoyoos Beach Hotel, Osoyoos, BC
- Most Improved Producer Delivery – Coast Osoyoos Beach Hotel, Osoyoos, BC
- Most Improved Ambassador Attitude – Coast West Edmonton Hotel & Conference Centre, Edmonton, AB

Williscroft Joins Holiday Inn Winnipeg Airport West

Bruce MacKay, general manager, Holiday Inn Winnipeg Airport West, has appointed Jo-Ann Williscroft as director of sales and marketing.

Williscroft has an enthusiastic personality and dynamic outlook on sales where relationship building is her top priority. “We are thrilled to have her join our team of professionals and welcome all of Jo-Ann’s former friends and clients to stop in and check out the Holiday Inn Winnipeg Airport West where coming back is like coming home,” says MacKay.

Saskatchewan’s Hotel, Liquor & Restaurant Conference & Tradeshow

The Saskatchewan Hotel & Hospitality Association / Saskatchewan Liquor & Gaming Authority Conference & Trade Show is being held Tuesday, May 26, 2020 at World Trade Centre Saskatoon at Prairieland Park.

The SHHATS/LGA Hotel, Liquor & Restaurant Trade Show will include exhibitors that supply goods and services to the hospitality industry, including food and beverage products to POS systems, you’ll find everything you need to grow your business. Save time and money by shopping, sampling and discovering the latest solutions from Canada’s top suppliers to the hospitality industry.

Please mark the date and plan to attend Saskatchewan’s premier show for the hospitality industry, including a tremendous day of exhibits, presentations by SLGA, Syncrify, Pralines, Restaurants Canada and updates on Human Trafficking, and the evolution of the Cannabis Industry, and much more.

Visit www.skhha.com to register or call (306) 790-1045
Travelodge Canada Adds New Location in Regina

Travelodge Canada has announced the opening of their newest location in Regina. This property adds to the total of more than 100 Travelodge by Wyndham and Thrift-lodge branded hotels across Canada.

The Travelodge by Wyndham Regina officially opened its doors. Guests will enjoy complimentary access to the heated indoor pool, hot tub and onsite fitness centre. The non-smoking, pet-friendly, 151-room hotel also includes free Wi-Fi and free breakfast offerings comprising pancakes, cereal, muffins, coffee and more.

The Travelodge by Wyndham Regina officially opened its doors. Guests will enjoy complimentary access to the heated indoor pool, hot tub and onsite fitness centre.

This is the first Travelodge Canada opening of 2020, but the fourth major property announcement that has been made. Earlier this year the Travelodge by Wyndham Edson and the Travelodge by Wyndham McBride locations announced their openings in Western Canada. The Travelodge by Wyndham Timmins also announced its official re-launch after completing extensive renovations throughout the property on February 26th, 2020.

HD Expo + Conference Cancels May Event

After closely monitoring the risk and impact of COVID-19 on a daily basis, HD Expo + Conference, which had been scheduled for May 5-7, 2020, at Mandalay Bay Las Vegas, has been officially cancelled. This is due to recent developments regarding COVID-19 that include, but are not limited to, the declaration of a National State of Emergency by President Trump, the Nevada State of Emergency announced by Governor Steve Sisolak, the latest measures including travel restrictions placed on foreign nationals traveling to the United States from certain EU member states and other places, the declaration by the WHO of COVID-19 as a pandemic, and the accelerating pace of confirmed cases worldwide and domestically. In addition, the current quarantines, containment areas and the restrictions on congregating and large gatherings imposed by states and other governments and public health authorities, various company-imposed travel restrictions on employees affecting attendees and participating companies, and the resulting cancellations made by our Conference customers and partners. These developments have made it impossible to effectively execute a May event that delivers the level of education, connection, and customer value our community expects. Driven by our responsibility to ensure the best interests of our hospitality design community, we have made the difficult decision to cancel HD Expo + Conference for 2020. The next HD Expo + Conference is now scheduled for May 4-6, 2021.

Announcement

BC Hotel Association welcomes Ingrid Jarett as their new president and CEO

In February the BC Hotel Association (BCHA) appointed Ingrid Jarett as president and CEO after James Chase retired in December 2019 after 28 years. This is the first time in the association’s 103-year history that a female has held this position.

What does it feel like to be the first woman in the position of president & CEO of BCHA?

Since 1917, British Columbia has been male dominated. As we look to accelerate the evolution and growth of our industry and progression towards equality, I’m incredibly proud to be representing our industry as the first female president and CEO in the organization’s century long history. It has been a goal of the association to ensure that equal opportunity is provided to all genders, as well as diversity, and that we move toward an organization reflecting the diversity of our population and industry. I’m ballbuth about creating opportunity for women interested in professional development and pursuing management and executive positions. I hope this is a pivotal moment in our history.

What do you hope to bring to the role?

Many of us, organizations and hotel/resort properties, are working towards the same goals — to provide guests and locals in British Columbia with excellence in service and a memorable experience, for both work and leisure travel. I hope to build bridges and partnerships among the industry, I believe that by banding together we can overcome some of the most sustainable challenges, and re-establish ourselves as a forward-thinking, innovative industry. As a province we have set high standards for ourselves, often making ‘must travel’ lists and ‘bucket list hotspots’ in publications and news outlets around the globe. By collaborating and sharing our learnings and wins with each other, we can maintain and even exceed that standard.

How has your background in the industry prepared you for this role?

With a lifelong career in tourism and hospitality, I bring experience and knowledge from both the urban and rural perspective, I developed my career through operations to hotel manager, and understand the property management side. I feel that my deep understanding of the needs of our industry and individual properties in BC will assist in making a difference for our industry. The relationships that I’ve cultivated over the years have prepared me well to listen to all voices, and to make decisions that will help move the needle, drive value, encourage change — including the difficult ones.

There is also much to learn, and I’ll do my best by listening and working with the experts, partners, analysts; the BC Hotel Association team and Board of Directors to drive more value for members, advocate and be the voice of the hotel industry on topics that matter to us most, and to help build the profile of our incredible industry in British Columbia.

What are the plans for the BCHA in this upcoming year?

Initial words that come to mind are opportunity, partners, prosperity, growth, collaboration, and perseverance. We need to re-establish our powerful voice for the industry by educating and advocating on behalf of the properties in our province who deserve to be heard. After realigning our strategic plan, we plan to hit the ground running to work one-on-one with our partners and members. This year, we’ll leverage research and the voice of our membership more than ever to help guide our strategic direction. What is the utmost importance to me, is that we’re reaching every corner of the province — and what that means is that the needs of a hotel in Smithers or hotel in Vancouver might be very different from that of a lodge in Rossland. I’m here to listen and to affect and implement change based on what is being heard.

What do you see happening with the BC Hotel industry in the upcoming year?

While we’re currently experiencing unexpected challenges as we battle COVID-19 and the early signs that this is having economically, beyond that, I see progression. As mentioned, our province has held itself to extremely high standards as we continue to see record visitors internationally and domestically, and while we continue to strive for excellence in service, there is work to be done — together to continue to advance our industry. I foresee movement from our industry in sustainability practices, innovative tech, exceptional boutique service offerings, and most importantly, collaboration. One of the key tiles that keeps me up at night is the labour file. Innovation, collaboration and solution-oriented strategies are key components of making a difference on behalf of this exciting, incredible industry.

The Top Performing Days Inn by Wyndham Hotels Receive Brand Award

Realstar Hospitality has announced the winners of its prestigious Chairman’s Award for 2019. Presented annually, the award recognizes a select group of Days Inns and Hotels across the country that meet the highest level of quality and guest service. Criteria is based on an algorithm that combines metrics of brand standards, operational requirements and guest feedback.

“It is a pleasure to recognize and celebrate the success of those who represent excellence in hotel lodging,” said Irwin Prince, president & CEO, Realstar Hospitality. “With a record-breaking number of winners, a total of 31 hotels continue to set the standard in our industry by providing a first-rate product combined with a guest experience that exceeds expectations.”

Chairman’s Award Recipients for 2019:

- Days Inn by Wyndham 100 MILE HOUSE, BC
- Days Inn & Conference Centre by Wyndham CHANDEROSK, BC
- Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham LANGLEY, BC
- Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham ARMIDALE, AB
- Days Inn by Wyndham CALGARY NORTH BALZAC, AB
- Days Inn by Wyndham CALGARY NORTHWEST, AB
- Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham EDMONTON AIRPORT, AB
- Days Inn by Wyndham EDMONTON SOUTH, AB
- Days Inn by Wyndham NINISFARIL, AB
- Days Hotel & Suites by Wyndham LETHBRIDGE, AB
- Days Inn by Wyndham MEDICINE HAT, AB
- Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham SHERWOOD PARK, AB
- Days Inn by Wyndham REGINA AIRPORT WEST, SK
- Days Inn by Wyndham SASKATOON, SK
- Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham WARMAN LEGENDS CENTRE, SK
- Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham BRANDON, MB
- Days Inn by Wyndham STEINBACH, MB
- Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham THOMPSON, MB
- Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham COLLINGWOOD, ON
- Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham LINCOLN, ON
- Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham NIAGARA FALLS, CENTRE STREET BY THE FALLS, ON
- Days Inn by Wyndham ORILLIA, ON
- Days Inn by Wyndham OTTAWA AIRPORT, ON
- Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham THUNDER BAY, ON
- Days Inn by Wyndham TOLEDO WEST, ON
- Days Inn by Wyndham BERTHIERVILLE, QC
- Days Inn by Wyndham AIRDRIE, AB
- Days Inn by Wyndham EDMONTON, AB
- Days Inn by Wyndham MIRAMICHI, NB
- Days Inn by Wyndham STEPHENVILLE, NF

By Nicole Sherwood
Mundell, Greater Toronto Hotel Association and Nicole Nguyen of CBRE Hotels, addressed the actions taken so far to create a level playing field with the shared accommodation market. The good news was that many jurisdictions are now placing regulations on this market.

Next up was a wide-ranging discussion of the coronavirus and its impact on tourism. Because of Canada’s experience with SARS, we have perhaps some of the best preparedness in the world but there were clearly challenges here as well, especially if hotels are not well prepared.

The good news was that many jurisdictions are now placing regulations on this market.

For the afternoon keynote, Shawn Kanungo, disruption strategist, shared with the audience what future disruptive forces will be at play and how organizations can become more adaptable, experimental and collaborative.

The day closed off with a presentation from Ron Tite, marketing, branding and creativity expert. Tite discussed the importance of creating complete alignment within an organization by people thinking, doing and saying the same things.

2019 Awards of Excellence

The Hotel Association of Canada (HAC) honoured six recipients with an Award of Excellence.

“Recipients of the 2019 Awards of Excellence share a commitment to enhancing guest experiences, each leaving a significant impact on the hotel industry through their efforts. Together, we proudly celebrate their remarkable achievements,” said Susie Grynow, president of HAC.

The Humanitarian Award went to JJ Hilsinger of the Water Tower Inn in Sault Ste. Marie. JJ spearheaded impressive and fruitful yearly fundraising initiatives for local charities, like the Sault Area Hospital. However, JJ’s sense of humanity stretches far beyond the borders of Sault Ste. Marie and Northern Ontario. When the fires burned in Fort McMurray in 2016, JJ immediately kicked in to raise funds. JJ Hilsinger is a lifelong humanitarian and is a true inspiration to the Water Tower team and to the communities he cares for.

The Human Resources Award went to the Chelsea Hotel in Toronto. The Chelsea Hotel currently employs nearly 650 hospitality professionals. Fondly known as the “Chelsea U,” the hotel has cultivated an environment that builds hospitality leaders, not just in Toronto but across Canada and throughout the world. Guided by the results of the Colleague Engagement Survey, a new human resources strategy is developed and implemented annually, with special emphasis on programs and policies to hire the best people, set their colleagues up for success, harness potential, engage talent and celebrate their colleagues for commitment.
Post Show Update

Over 60 of the Hotel Industry’s Top Leaders From Across Canada Attend
2020 VIP Leadership Dinner

The Green Key Environment Award went to Fairmont Le Manoir Richelieu, a 4 Green Key rated property, which has shown outstanding leadership and dedication in every area of hotel and event sustainability. Fairmont Le Manoir Richelieu has enabled systems to conserve energy and cut greenhouse gas emissions, provided electric vehicle charging to guests, converted lighting to LED, installed presence detectors, and implemented systems to reduce heat loss. They have also eliminated plastic bottles and straws from all departments, while limiting food waste, and eliminating disposable items.

The Aspiring Hotelier Award went to Simran Gill, Hilton Winnipeg Airport Suites. A graduate of the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology diploma program, Simran Gill began her hospitality career as a front desk agent in Winnipeg, Manitoba. At the Hilton Winnipeg Airport hotel, her success and growth helped assure her the hospitality industry was where she belonged, as she took on roles of increased responsibility.

The Most Impressive Repositioning award went to InnVest Hotels LP. The acquisition of St. Regis was one of InnVest’s biggest milestones in its history. This hotel was a rare repositioning opportunity. Formerly, the Trump International Hotel, the hotel underwent major renovations to transform to the St. Regis — the first ever in Canada.

The Revenue Performance Team of the Year Award went to TownePlace Suites by Marriott, Sudbury. TownePlace Suites by Marriott Sudbury is one of the only extended-stay properties in Greater Sudbury. These amenities uniquely positioned property with a competitive advantage in the market. 2018 was a record-setting year for the TownePlace Suites by Marriott Sudbury, who grew revenue by 4.7% and finished first in revenue performance for their market.

Over 60 of the Hotel Industry’s Top Leaders From Across Canada Attend
2020 VIP Leadership Dinner

The Hotel Association of Canada’s 2020 Board of Directors:

Representing Corporate Brands:

- Jonathan Lund, IHG (Chair)
- Sara Glenn, Accor Hotels (Vice-Chair)
- Brian Leen, Choice Hotels
- Roiz Weinroit, Marriott Hotels of Canada
- Ally Wesson, Realstar Hospitality
- Scott Puff, Wyndham Hotel Group

Representing Ownership Companies:

- Lydia Chen, InnVest Hotels
- Didier Obeuf, Groupe German
- Melissa French, Silver Hotel Group
- Robert Pratt, Sandman & Sutton Place Hotels
- Marc Staniloff, Superior Lodging

Representing Management Companies:

- Ian McAuley, Atlific Hotels
- Philippe Godbout, Atlific Hotels
- Tony Cohen, Crescent Hotels & Resorts

Representing our Provincial Associations:

- Ingrid Jarrett, British Columbia Hotel Association
- Steven Katters, Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association
- Scott Jocelyn, Manitoba Hotel Association
- Tracey Dans, Ontario Restaurants Hotel & Motel Association
- Xavier Grel, Association Hôtellerie Québec
- David Clark, Nova Scotia Hotel Association
- And, Past Chair, Vito Curalli, Hilton Worldwide

In 2020, HAC welcomed a record of six women to the Board table — representing 27 per cent of the HAC Board of Directors — moving HAC closer to the goal of 30 per cent by 2022.
Chekses stated that “while the event was at fully capacity, I hope to be able to have additional people be able to join us to enjoy the event in the future.”

This 7th annual Canadian Leadership Dinner sponsors included LG Electronics, Ecolab, Shaw Communications, Serta Simmons, Eden Textiles, RHB Enterprises, Foodbuy, and Quad Distribution.

As Satinder Dhillion of Invest shared, “Like many other, I look forward to this gathering each year and is one of the reasons I enjoy coming to the HAC Conference.” Thank you again to Jason and the dinner sponsors!

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1.800.655.8990
There’s a pool party happening right through winter at the cool 185-room hotel in the city’s Beltline district, south of downtown. Hotel Arts put an inflatable structure by Dynamic Air Shelter over the pool last fall, opening up a year-round venue to entertain hotel guests and drop-in visitors on its popular poolside patio. The space is open daily for swimming and dining and can also host events like hosted receptions and cocktail competitions with DJs.

“This city has taken a few kicks over the last few years,” says Fraser Abbott, Hotel Arts director of business development and partner in Hotel Arts Group. “We want to bring back that buoyant sense of optimism we had when we converted this into the first boutique hotel in Calgary back in 2005. Opening our patio in the winter months is a welcome surprise for a city that has struggled in recent years and we’re going to keep the surprises coming.”

In June, the hotel’s Raw Bar will reopen up with a fresh patio feel, design-centric elements and some gamification elements to add to the playful nature of the brand, says Abbott.

“Andrea Raimondi from Ingenium Design is cooking up a design that’s going to be fun,” he says. “She won awards for her work on Yellow Door Bistro and we know she’ll bring some great design to the new venue.”

All this activity is a bright exception in Alberta’s slumping economy and struggling hotel industry.

Abbott says Hotel Arts is doing better on occupancy than the average in the city, which bumped along just over 60 per cent in 2019. But he won’t be specific.

“We’re doing pretty good, better than the index… it’s a challenging market. We’re mindful of that. We don’t shout from the rafters that we’re doing well because some of our colleagues are hurting.”

He says the property’s diversified brand has helped.

Hotel Arts is a full service hotel known for its wealth of cool visual art and design and its well regarded Yellow Door Bistro restaurant and Raw Bar. It has 11,000 sq. ft. of function space, including its 9,598 sq. ft. Spectrum Ballroom.

The property’s ambience attracts a younger crowd, says Abbott, but older guests coming in on the popular Rocky Mountain scenic train find it equally accommodating for their needs and tastes enjoying brunch in Yellow Door or staying the night.

The Hotel Arts Group also includes the 19-room Hotel Arts Kensington, overlooking the Bow River with its Oxbow destination restaurant and lounge. That property, rebranded from its original identity as the Kensington Riverside Inn in 2018, attracts both business clients and leisure travellers, says Abbott.

“We’ve managed to be a very diversified brand. We’re a lifestyle brand but we also have our corporate accounts. We play very well on the meeting and convention side and we have a very strong tour and travel segment. And we’re blessed by our event space and our offsite catering — that’s a division that’s doing exceptionally well. Even in a challenging market we’re everywhere,” says Abbott.

Photo Credit: Brett Gilmour

Playful
Boutique

YEAR-ROUND POOL AND PATIO VIBE REFLECTS HOTEL ARTS CALGARY’S MAVERICK BUSINESS PLAN

On our cover

By Kathy Kerr

PLAYFUL
BOUTIQUE

Photo Credit: John Gaucher Images

(L-R) Fraser Abbott, director of business development and Mark Wilson, general manager & vice-president

Photo Credit: Brett Gilmour

Hotel Arts wants to bring a bit of playfulness back to the Calgary market.
Hotel Arts has a really great collection of contemporary art, mostly by Canadian Artists.

The company’s catering division is a preferred vendor at about 40 venues in the city, says Abbott. Hotel Arts was designed to be distinct in the market as far back as its founding in 2005.

The area directly south of the downtown was ripe for development and a group of investors was assembled to buy the Holiday Inn on 12th Avenue SW and rebrand it as Hotel Arts, the city’s first boutique hotel.

Mark Wilson, now vice-president and partner in the group, and Abbott were recruited in 2005 to join the group and herald in a wave of changes for the brand.

Wilson, with an extensive background in food and beverage, “wanted to ensure Hotel Arts would be in the vanguard of the growing culinary movement in Calgary,” says Abbott, and so developed the Raw Bar and Yellow Door Bistro as destination restaurants.

The other imperative for the hotel was art. The group was actively involved in the city’s arts community as philanthropists, championing different groups like Calgary Opera, Theatre Calgary, and promoting public art. The group worked with artists and galleries to create a unique collection for the hotel.

“We’ve got a really great collection of contemporary art, mostly by Canadian artists. We have pieces by Chris Cran, Bradley Harms, Tim Okamura…,” says Abbott. “One of my favourite pieces is called King, an urban art celebration of the messages of Martin Luther King Jr.’s messages of love, diversity and tolerance. We also have a couple of pieces by Bruce Pashak, expressionist multimedia paintings with horses as the central image but juxtaposed with contemporary themes.” Jeff de Boer’s The Universe and Everything thing In It is a metal sphere embedded with programmable LED lights positioned close to the hotel.

Hanging outside the ballroom in the hotel foyer is a piece by local glassblower Barry Fairbairn called Millefiori. “Barry just purchased a new eco-friendly furnace, and we provide him weekly with about 60 litres of recycled fryer oil so he can use that to refuel his glass blowing,” says Abbott.

There’s also a bit of a playful animal vibe in some the art and decor choices. Late Saskatchewan artist Joe Fafard’s sculpture ‘Rita the Cow’ graces the lobby and there are horse and rabbit lamps and two pig tables from Moooi that celebrate the city’s agricultural past in a contemporary way.

The hotel is always doing renovations, says Abbott. In 2009, the hotel did a major renovation, adding an underground parkingade, expanding the ballroom, a new banquet kitchen and adding a two storey retail complex.

In 2014 the hotel did a major renovation of the main hotel tower, working with Vancouver-based B+H Chil Interior Design, to update the decor, bring art up into the room floors and develop innovative casework solutions designed to withstand Calgary’s dry climate. B+H Chil won awards for this project as well.

In 2018, the group completed a reno of the 28-room studio wing bringing B+H Chil back to work with Calgary modular interior construction firm DIRT and their partner organization Element.

This past year, the group renovated the poolside patio with VisionScapes and added an inflatable air shelter so that the venue could be opened year-round.

The idea of expanding the Hotel Arts brand is much on the minds of the ownership group. Part of the reason for the rebranding of the Kensington Riverside to Hotel Arts Kensington was to increase brand visibility in Calgary and to position the firm to launch into other markets, says Abbott.

The group owns most of the block the hotel sits on and has contemplated expanding to the adjacent parking lot space. Abbott says the recent economic downturn in Calgary dampered some enthusiasm for that move in the near term.

“We’re looking at resort opportunities in Canada… We’re looking at other urban markets. We’d like to keep it in the west to begin with — Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia initially.”

“We’ve got a couple of ironers in the fire right now and we’ve keen to explore more as we have an experience team in place and a compelling brand story,” says Abbott.

The firm would be interested in owner operation or serving as a management team depending on the circumstance, says Abbott.

“We’ve learned a lot with our fun boutique brand. We’re eager to share our brand in other markets,” says Abbott.
A faltering oil and gas sector, an oversupply of hotel rooms and the complications of the COVID-19 outbreak all add up to a challenging environment for Alberta’s hotel industry.

Hoteliers and industry analysts say the doldrums of 2019 for Alberta’s cities and smaller centres could continue in 2020 but there could be some improvement on rates. And the mountain resort area properties, which fared well compared to the rest of the province in 2019, are most at risk from a potential global travel decline in 2020.

David Kaiser, CEO of the Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association, says revenue per available room (revPAR) figures tell the story for 2019.

"Overall year over year across the province we were down 4.4 per cent. The anomaly was the resorts and they were up 7.3 per cent," he says, quoting CBRE Hotels statistics. "It's the energy sector not recovering."

CBRE figures for 2019 show Alberta markets, excluding the mountain resorts, averaged 54.1 per cent occupancy, down 1.8 per cent from 2018. Average daily rates were also down from $130.94 to $129.29.

Hoteliers particularly exposed to that oil and gas economy confirm that.

"We’re just trying to stay afloat. When oil and gas suffers, in Red Deer for sure we suffer," says Sherrie Luxton, Best Western Plus Red Deer Inn and Suites general manager.

The Red Deer hotel market relies on the oilfield service industry, sandwiched as it is between Alberta’s two major cities which can command more tourism visitation. CBRE 2019 figures show occupancy at 43.6 per cent in Red Deer, down 1.5 per cent from 2018 and revPAR at $47.40, down from $49.33.

Everyday budgets are tighter for summer travel and sports tournament, she adds.

“I can see a pattern where parents will talk to other parents and say you can take my kids this time and we’ll take yours next so not paying for extra room.”

Even in the mountains there has been some impact of the softening economy, says Robin Cumine, vice-president of operations and corporate development, Bellstar Hotels and Resorts.

Provincial Focus: Alberta

By Kathy Kerr

A Challenging Environment

Tough economy and too many rooms challenge Alberta’s hotel sector

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Western Hotelier Magazine 27
Despite a solid 2019 year with occupancy in the low 70s in the company’s Canmore resort properties, the Grande Rockies Resort and the Solara Resort and Spa, Cumine says that length of stay has been trending down.

The economic decline in Alberta began with plummeting oil prices in 2014 and 2015 and that downturn has lasted longer than expected.

Greg Kwong, executive vice-president and regional managing director for CBRE, says he thinks the hotel market is at the bottom but it’s been bumping along at that level for four years. He blames federal government policies for failure of Alberta’s oil to rebound in the same way other oil producing markets have.

“I think hoteliers now have realized this is here for a while. Let’s figure out how to survive in a low occupancy environment whereas as recently as two years ago they were still holding out hope it was going to turn around tomorrow,” he says.

Compounding the weak economy in the Alberta market is an oversupply of hotel rooms.

“Over the last five years Calgary’s room supply has been up almost 20 per cent,” says Kaiser. “Last year Calgary added almost 1,000 rooms into their market at a time when demand is barely moving.”

Timing has worked against the hotel industry in terms of construction. Plans for hotels hatched in more booming times before the late 2014 oil price crisis have come on line in the last couple of years during the slump and still more are opening in 2020.

In 2019 the Edmonton market’s new entries included the 346-room JW Marriott in Edmonton’s ICE District and two hotels on the south side, according to an Alberta Hotels and Lodging Association list.

Notable openings in Calgary included the 390-room Residence Inn by Marriott Calgary and the Westin Calgary Airport. There were notable other new entries in 2019 including the Staybridge Suites/Holiday Inn Express in Red Deer; The Pomeroy in downtown Fort McMurray; a Holiday Inn Express in Lethbridge; a Best Western Plus in Hinton and a Travelodge in Edson.

The AH&L lists four hotels opening in Calgary in 2020, and new entries in Medicine Hat, St. Albert, Sherwood Park and Edmonton. The downtown 294-room Sandman in Calgary will unveil its new renovation to bump it up a category notch to be a Signature Sandman.

Many hotel operators have taken a long term view and continue to invest taking advantage of lower costs.

“But it is quite frankly a blood bath in some of those markets. With so much new inventory it’s tough for hotels to differentiate in an overcrowded market,” says Kaiser. “As soon as someone starts to go down on the rates it’s a race to the bottom.”

In Red Deer the competition is particularly brutal, says Luxton.

“We find the ADR is slowly going down. Companies are coming back and saying ‘I need a better rate from you’. There’s six hotels right beside me they can go to. We used to be able to have different selling features and now it’s just ‘What’s your best rate?’” She adds that the Red Deer market is filled with two-star limited service offerings.

“We have nothing above a three star in Red Deer. There’s not a lot of diversity in hotels. Let’s not build any more of the same. Let’s up our game if you are going to put any more in.”

Luxton says differentiation is tough, but her hotel is trying to add some kitchen suites and offering little touches like bag lunches.

“I need a better rate from you”. There’s six hotels right beside me they can go to. We used to be able to have different selling features and now it’s just ‘What’s your best rate?’”

The Calgary market is dealing with supply issues but also other factors that alter the overall financial equation, according to Arjun Channa, general manager of The Westin Calgary.

Customers are free to purchase natural gas services or electricity services from a retailer of their choice. For a list of retailers, visit ucanelp.ca.alberta.ca or call 310-4922 (toll free in Alberta).
“With 12-per-cent growth in supply year over year depending on what location you’re talking about — that is pretty hard to sustain if your demand is only growing at two or three per cent,” he says.

“But it’s important to understand the mix of business has changed over time. Big business associations that used to travel east-west and north-south have all cut back. Local catering has cut back.

“Is your occupancy doing well — maybe yes — but your ADR maybe not because the mix of business you may be getting is lower rated business or entertainment business,” says Channa.

For hoteliers dependent on domestic travel, the immediate future hinges on economic recovery, say the analysts. No one is predicting an enormous turnaround for the coming 2020 year, but there are glimmers of hope that some of the oversupply will be filled by slowly increasing demand.

Kaiser says there’s not quite as much inventory being added in 2020.

“The cities over time will recover. There’s enough economic generation and diversification that the cities will grow into the hotel inventory that’s been built providing that we don’t keep crazily building. I think for the smaller centres that’s a different question potentially.”

In the hardest hit small towns there should be consideration of converting properties into uses such as senior homes, suggested Kaiser.

CBRE projections show revPAR increases of 2.4 per cent for Calgary and 1.4 per cent for Edmonton in 2020, even though occupancy is expected to remain pretty close to where it was 2019.

Kwong says looking farther out for Calgary there is hope offered by plans for convention centre expansion in 2024. In the meantime big distribution hubs for online retailers have been a recent boon to the economy.

In Edmonton the ICE district has produced some buzz in the downtown and that city is not as reliant on oil and gas or suffering the same level of downtown office vacancy as Calgary, says Kwong.

Channa says he’s cautiously bullish on 2020.

“I think 2020 is going to be very tricky. We all have to be mindful we have an election south of the border and a lot of companies will be making decisions based on that.

“I am extremely concerned when it comes to oil and gas investing or not investing... there is some encouragement in the air with regards to the (TransMount) pipeline, but that’s not going to happen overnight. There’s a lot of volatility from external sources.”

Westin continues to show confidence in the Calgary market. The Westin Calgary Airport, a franchisee carrying the brand, opened last year. And Channa says his hotel is in process of working out details on the timing of upcoming renovations.

Cumine says his firm’s Canmore resorts have already shown a “fabulous” 2020 January, relative to last year and February is also pacing ahead of last year.

But the dark smudges on the 2020 horizon is the Covid-19 factor and its effect on international tourism.

AT A GLANCE
January 2020

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"It will absolutely impact visitation to Canada and by extension Alberta," says Royce Chwin, president and CEO of Travel Alberta.

"We know there’s lots of cancellations and what we’re monitoring is what those cancellations look like going into high season in the summer. We know there have been a few but we haven’t seen a raft of cancellations."

International and trans-border travellers accounted for $2 billion of the $8.9 billion in tourism dollars spent in Alberta in 2017. That’s a disproportionately large amount from only five per cent of total tourist visitations in the province. Chinese tourism alone accounted for $172 million in spending in 2017.

“If we do take a hit this year, which is most likely, this industry is so incredibly resilient it will start to begin to pick back up immediately after,” predicted Chwin.

He said as the picture becomes clearer Travel Alberta may reconsider its marketing strategy.

“You can’t just disappear from international markets, they’re important. But if people are changing their travel decisions that might be an opportunity to remind them of what’s in their backyard. Stay closer to home. Have your visitation here."

The U.S. is a primary example. It’s our next-door neighbour... it’s the biggest market outside of Canada. It’s worth about $850 million a year and growing. Maybe there’s an opportunity to grow more visibility and drive more visitation out of the U.S.,” said Chwin.

Cumine agrees that his company would also look at marketing changes. So far Covid-19 hasn’t affected Canmore, he says.

“But if it starts to affect Banff, which is more of the home of the international inbound market, does that then open up more inventory and will we see more of the traditional Canmore visitors moving to Banff and taking advantage of the price reductions? That’s the unknown at this point.”

Another complicating economic issue Kaiser is concerned about, particularly in the Alberta city market, is the challenge Airbnb presents for traditional hoteliers.

“We saw figures Airbnb put out for the Calgary summer months. I took those numbers and figured if those numbers had gone into hotels the revPAR would have been up 10 per cent. They’re moving into corporate bread and butter business as well — the Monday to Thursday corporate traveller — especially in this price sensitive economy.”

Cumine adds that the Airbnb phenomenon hasn’t had a huge impact on Canmore’s travellers but it is creating a shortage in staff housing inventory. Landlords who would have housed resort staff in spare rooms in the past are now opting for the more lucrative Airbnb model.

Kaiser says the hotel industry is pushing all levels of government to ensure there is a level playing field — asking the federal government to make sure Airbnb operators are collecting GST, and asking the municipal level to verify Airbnb hosts are just room sharing and not running multiple unit commercial operations in areas zoned residential.

The AHLA has had success at the provincial level. In February’s provincial budget the province announced Airbnbs must now collect the provincial four per cent tourism levy.

There are other provincial provisions the AHLA would like in terms of the tourism levy. The proceeds from the tax, which is collected by the hotels, go into general revenues. Kaiser says the association has suggested the levy be repealed and replaced with clearer intent to grow the tourism sector.

Alberta is currently developing a 10-year tourism plan and has just gone through industry consultation about what the sector needs to grow. The plan is expected to be announced in the spring.

Kaiser says the the provincial government’s focus is getting back to a balanced budget.

“If people expect there’s going to be a big bunch of government money we don’t see it, but there’s certainly things they can do on the policy side.”

Channa says he does not want to see government cutbacks to tourism spending.
Given the contribution tourism makes to the economy, a failure to focus on demand generation would be asking for trouble, he says.

Chwin says Alberta’s UCP government’s platform doubles the goal for the province’s visitor economy to grow to $20 billion by 2030. In 2017 the industry brought in $8.9 billion.

That ambitious goal will require the attraction of international visitors, says Chwin, because they bring in new dollars and incremental dollars.

Despite the concern in the industry, Chwin is not as worried about the current oversupply of hotel rooms in the province.

“If we don’t have capacity in that space that’s going to be a massive barrier to getting even close to that ($20 billion) number,” he says.

“We have a ton of empathy for our partners right now — there’s lots of supply and it’s soft. But we’ve got to be thinking about longer term and how we invest and build. I’d hate to be on the other side of that cycle where we’re driving demand and there’s no hotels and you’re five, six, seven years in that development chute.”

Hotel industry players and analysts predict prospects will improve over the next four to five years. They say the Alberta market has a reputation for resilience.

Flexibility in a tough market is not just an issue for individual hotel owners. The hotel association is also changing its business plans to keep up with the challenging economic climate, says Kaiser.

The AHLA has switched from its traditional once a year major convention to two more focused meetings.

“We just saw what’s happening in the industry — attendance was trending downward. We were having traditional events in iconic Fairmont properties — access and affordability were issues.”

This year the association hosts an Aspire event in Edmonton on April 20, directed at hotel operations, HR and department managers which will include the associations’ awards for housekeeping and employer of choice.

Ascend, a one and a half day event on Sept. 21 and 22 in Kananaskis is aimed at hotel decision makers — investors, owners and general managers.

“We’re finding one of trends is consolidation — the day you can knock on the door and find the owner is becoming rare. And that owner may have other businesses… We think it’s important to engage those folks, especially on the advocacy side,” says Kaiser.

The events will be more affordable and shorter — Aspire is a one day event.

Kaiser says he expects the Aspire event to attract about 300 people and Ascent could attract 50 to 75 senior leaders.

Outdoor themed waterpark at Pomeroy Kananaskis Mountain Lodge.
Hotel Profile

National Park, Valemount is a paradise of Columbia’s most spectacular mountain fishing, hiking, mountain biking, and community in the heart of some of British kilometres from the entrance to Jasper wilderness. Located 35 kilometres from Mount Robson Provincial Park and 90 kilometres from the entrance to Jasper National Park, Valemount is a paradise of fishing, hiking, mountain biking, and white-water rafting in the warmer months.

In the winter, this area is a huge draw for snowmobilers, snowshoers and skiers. With a dramatic mountain backdrop and views, this brand new, 65-room property opened last December.

The hotel offers beautiful, modern guest rooms that have been designed with the traveller’s needs in mind. In-room offerings include free Wi-Fi, microwaves, fridges, flat-screen TVs, sofa beds, irons and desks. Within the hotel, amenities include a fitness centre, indoor heated pool with waterslide, hot tub, and sauna. But it doesn’t stop there. Those travelling for business can also take advantage of the onsite business centre and small meeting room, while leisure travellers will enjoy the golf simulator and the convenient ski and snowboard storage.

Guests at Comfort Inn & Suites in Valemount can start their mornings with a complimentary hot breakfast during their stay, as well as all the perks the Choice Privileges rewards program has to offer. It’s ideal for families, couples, or travellers looking for a place to unwind — and it is a less expensive alternative to hotels in the nearby Jasper National Park.

General Manager Danny Choi leads his team of 10 at this sparkling new property that draws a steady clientele of business and leisure travellers from Canada and abroad. “As a Comfort hotel, there are a lot of efficiencies we benefit from,” says Choi. “Choice Hotels Canada has an extensive local operational structure that allows us to run the hotel more efficiently while still providing our guests with the best possible service.”

The Comfort Inn & Suites Valemount is part of a larger revitalization of the brand, which includes both new build hotels, as well as extensive renovations to existing properties across the country.

“In recent years, we added 17 new build Comfort branded hotels to the system and there are currently eight in the development pipeline,” says Juan Duran, director of franchise development at Choice Hotels Canada. “The continued strength and growth of the new build Comfort branded hotels is a part of a broader strategy by Choice Hotels Canada to transform the brand.”

Choice Hotels Canada has seen tremendous growth in the RevPAR performance of its new build Comfort hotels as well as strong RevPAR indices across Canada. Choice employs a flexible approach to design, with a view to ensuring the hotels are cost efficient to build so that financial performance can be maximized for the owner.

In addition to the new build hotels, over $80M in capital improvements were completed to existing Comforts in the last five years. The brand’s next big wave of transformations was also recently announced last year, with the revitalization of existing legacy Comfort Inn hotels by its biggest franchisee, InnVest Hotels.

MainStay Suites, Econo Lodge, and Rodeo Inn. All hotels are independently owned and operated.

The Comfort brand consistently offers the best possible service for guests and a brand Canadian travellers have known and trusted for over 25 years. The Comfort Inn & Suites Valemount delivers upon that promise, while offering guests a modern and comfortable hotel stay for a reasonable price.

ROO M WI T H A  V IEW

A GLIMPSE AT ONE OF THE NEWEST MEMBERS OF THE CHOICE HOTELS CANADA FAMILY

MainStay Suites, Econo Lodge, and Rodeo Inn. All hotels are independently owned and operated.

The Comfort brand consistently offers the best possible service for guests and a brand Canadian travellers have known and trusted for over 25 years. The Comfort Inn & Suites Valemount delivers upon that promise, while offering guests a modern and comfortable hotel stay for a reasonable price.
From check in to booking a massage, guests have come to expect a seamless and frictionless experience throughout their stay with a hotel property. Integrated PMS and POS through cloud technology — which is becoming industry standard — and integrated technological advances is paving the way to easier, faster, and more effective systems that improve hotel efficiency and paint a better picture of guests and their needs.

"[Hotels] have always known that improving guest satisfaction and engendering loyalty means better, more personalized guest engagement. Better and more personalized guest engagement continues to be the name of the game. And now this singular of focus is being turbocharged by data-driven technology," says Audrey MacRae, vice-president of Maestro, a trusted cloud and on-premise PMS solution for independent hotels and luxury resorts. "It may be guest service agents interacting with guests at the front desk and across the property (with guest-facing mobile apps, in-room digital displays and voice-activated devices powered by artificial intelligence also playing a role), but behind the scenes is sophisticated technology."

Beyond streamlining hotel operations and automating functions across the property, a centralized integrated PMS
Guests just don’t stay at a hotel, they also shop, eat, and get spa treatments. POS that integrates with a hotel’s PMS allows the operator to link transactions across the property. This gives guests the option to charge items/service to their room, and allows hoteliers to capture a more complete picture of guest behaviour by knowing how, when, and where they spend while on the property, ultimately helping them better serve guests and tailor offers on future stays.

Updated POS and other integrations can ensure that the two systems work together to create a seamless and personalized guest experience: the accuracy of guest profiles.

“Guest interactions and transaction information from all sources need to become part of the common data flow both for accurate billing and ensuring service-quality, and most will not appreciate pulling out their wallets each and every time they make a transaction on-property,” says Tanya Pratt, vice-president of strategy and product management for Oracle Hospitality. “Guest interactions and transaction information from all sources need to become part of the common data flow both for accurate billing and ensuring service-quality, and most will not appreciate pulling out their wallets each and every time they make a transaction on-property.”

By pairing cloud-based PMS with POS, even more efficiency is possible for hotels offering a smoother guest experience. Oracle’s new MICROS Symphony POS software delivers mobility, loyalty, inventory, labour, and kitchen management, as well as complete reporting and cost control on one unified platform in the cloud. But its biggest benefit — customers don’t have to swipe their credit card. “It’s safe to say that customers can appreciate a hassle-free experience, and most will not appreciate putting their wallets each and every time they make a transaction on-property,” says Tanya Pratt, vice-president of strategy and product management for Oracle Hospitality. “Guest interactions and transaction information from all sources need to become part of the common data flow both for accurate billing and ensuring service-quality, and most will not appreciate pulling out their wallets each and every time they make a transaction on-property.”

Further innovations and possibilities.

So, they decided to put their faith in the cloud. The new OPERA Cloud — which is based on OPERA property management system, — is a mobile-enabled, cloud-based platform created for organizations demanding high performance, security, reliability, and availability of their most important business applications. A simple-to-navigate user interface means staff can better engage guests without excessively staring at complicated screens.

“By moving away from on-premise solutions and deploying in the cloud, hotels are able to untether their staff from the front desk and empower them to serve guests anywhere via mobile devices,” states Oracle’s Pratt, adding the cloud also lets hotels take advantage of the latest technologies and tools as they become available, including integrations options that help enable limitless innovations and possibilities.

Since time and labour is of the essence, and the unfortunate reality of high staff turnover, PMS must also be a quick learn for hotel employees. When Moira and Jim Hyslop, owners of the King Edward Hotel, a 30-room property in St. John’s, decided to move to the cloud, they were looking to update their disk PMS system (yes, disk) they knew that a
THE EASIEST SOLUTION FOR GUESTS WHO ARE AWAY FROM HOME, BUT DON’T WANT TO GO FAR FOR A MEAL IS ON-SITE DINING. HOWEVER, IF THEY’re FACED WITH LONG WAITS AND COLD FOOD, THEY’re CERTAINLY GOING TO SEEK OUT OTHER OPTIONS. THAT’S WHY PCS PAIRED WITH KITCHEN MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS HAVE BECOME MORE PREVALENT IN HOTELS. “KITCHEN DISPLAY SYSTEMS SUCH AS QSR AUTOMATION HELP SPEED UP THE PROCESSES IN THE KITCHEN AND ALLOW FOR ANY HOST TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE WAIT TIMES TO GET INTO THE RESTAURANT OR LOUNGE, ALLOW THE SERVERS TO UNDERSTAND HOW LONG THE FOOD WILL TAKE BEFORE COMPLETED, AS WELL AS HELP MANAGEMENT UNDERSTAND THE LABOUR RESOURCES REQUIRED AND WHERE ANY LATENCIES ARE IN THE KITCHEN,” EXPLAINS GORD DOERKSEN OF IDEAL POS.

“WHEN DESIGNING THEIR PMS, DSC WANTED TO ENSURE STAFF, WITH OR WITHOUT HOTEL EXPERIENCE, COULD LEARN BASIC FRONT OFFICE OPERATIONS IN A FEW MINUTES AND CAN EASILY USE ALL AREAS OF THE SYSTEM WITHIN A DAY, SAYS KEN HONTOBORG OF DSC SYSTEMS, ADDING IT CAN BE INTEGRATED WITH MODERN ANALYTICS TO PROVIDE BETTER INSIGHT INTO BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND HELP OWNERS MAKE MORE INFORMED BUDGET AND MARKETING DECISIONS.

FOR EXAMPLE, DSC DATA HAS BEEN PORTED TO THE SAP ANALYTICS CLOUD SYSTEM TO PROVIDE SUBSTANTIALLY MORE DETAILED REPORTING, AS WELL AS DETERMINING BUSINESS PATTERNS AND HELPING TO PREDICT FUTURE TRENDS THROUGH MACHINE LEARNING AND EMBEDDED ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE. THE ABILITY TO INTEGRATE THIRD-PARTY APPLICATIONS WITH EXISTING PMS WILL BECOME EVEN MORE IMPORTANT AS NEW ADD-ON SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGY BECOME AVAILABLE—SUCH AS VOICE COMMAND COMMUNICATIONS, GUEST ROOM CONTROLS, AND KEYLESS ROOM ENTRY—SAI TRIA STEPHENS, PRESIDENT OF INQUEST CANADA, SUPPLIER OF ROOMMASTER PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE.

THE COMPANY RECENTLY ROLLED OUT THEIR NEW STAYCHANNEL MANAGER IN THE U.S. AND WILL BE BRINGING IT TO THE CANADIAN MARKET SOON. SEAMlessly INTEGRATING WITH THE COMPANY’S ROOMMASTER PMS, STAYCHANNEL ALLOWS HOTELS TO MANAGE ALL THEIR OTA CONNECTIONS, INCLUDING THE MOST POPULAR SITES LIKE EXPEDIA, BOOKING.COM, AND TRIPADVISOR, IN REAL-TIME, ENSURING RESERVATIONS ARE AUTOMATICALLY ADDED TO PMS FOR NEW BOOKINGS, CHANGES, AND CANCELLATIONS THEREBY REDUCING THE CHANCE OF OVERBOOKING.

SHE ADMITS ROOMMASTER VERSION 18 IS SCHEDULED FOR RELEASE MID-SUMMER ALONG WITH AN ALL-NEW API THAT WILL ALLOW QUICKER INTEGRATION TO THIRD-PARTY SOFTWARE AND SERVICES. HOTELS USE.

ALONG WITH HELPING TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGING THE DAY-TO-DAY SIDE OF THE BUSINESS, LIKE RESERVATIONS AND ROOM CLEANING SCHEDULES, PMS SHOULD ALSO BE WORKING AS A MARKETING TOOL TO ENSURE FUTURE STAYS. EDWIN JOHNSON OF SMART HOTEL SOFTWARE, WHICH OFFERS FULL FEATURED PMS SOLUTIONS FOR SINGLE OR MULTIPLE HOTEL AND LODGING BUSINESSES, STATES THAT HOTELS ARE CONSIDERING UPGRADE THEIR PMS, THEY NEED TO SELECT A SYSTEM THAT HAS COMPLETE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM) FUNCTIONALITY TO COMMUNICATE OR MARKET TO GUESTS.

AS PART OF THEIR TOP LEVEL PMS PACKAGE, SMART HOTEL SOFTWARE FEATURES A SEAMLESS INTEGRATION TO SAGE CRM, WHICH HELPS HOTELS MANAGE THEIR SALES PIPELINE, PROSPECT COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING CAMPAIGNS AND TRACKING.

“THIS ENABLES YOU TO FOLLOW YOUR GUEST FROM PROSPECT CREATION, THROUGH TO SALE, THROUGH THEIR RESERVATION, THEN FOLLOW UP MARKETING TO ENSURE THEY STAY WITH YOU AGAIN,” HE STATES. “THIS IS A TREMENDOUSLY POWERFUL TOOL THAT ENABLES YOU TO BETTER MANAGE YOUR BUSINESS IF YOU TRACK PROSPECTS BEFORE THE SALE, AND IF YOU DO EXTENSIVE FOLLOW-UP MARKETING TO YOUR CUSTOMER BASE.”

PROPERTIES CAN LEVERAGE THIS ADVANCED ACTIONABLE GUEST HISTORY DATABASE THAT RECORDS EACH GUEST STAY PREFERENCE AND REQUEST. POINT AND CLICK DATA MINING BI ANALYTICS TOOLS MAKE IT EASY TO ACCESS THIS INFORMATION AND EMPOWER PROPERTIES WITH ABILITY TO PUSH VIA MOBILE UPSELL MARKETING OPTIONS THAT REFLECT THE GUEST’S PAST AMENITY PREFERENCES TO CREATE A SENSE OF PERSONAL RECOGNITION WITH THE GUEST AND PROMOTE LOYALTY, SAYS MACRAE OF MASTRERO.

WITH THE ABILITY TO STAFF OPERATIONS, STREAMLINE SERVICES, AND PERSONALIZE PROMOTIONS, CENTRALIZED INTEGRATED PMS IS KEY TO ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF THE GUEST EXPERIENCE TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE.

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The King Edward Hotel uses DSC Systems’ cloud-based service which makes check-in quicker for guests. The ability to integrate third party applications with existing PMS will become even more important as new add-on services and technology become available—such as voice command communications, guest room controls, and keyless room entry—says Triana Stephens, president of Inquest Canada, supplier of RoomMaster Property Management Software. The company recently rolled out their new StayChannel Manager in the U.S. and will be bringing it to the Canadian market soon. Seamlessly integrating with the company’s RoomMaster PMS, StayChannel allows hotels to manage all their OTA connections, including the most popular sites like Expedia, Booking.com, and TripAdvisor, in real-time, ensuring reservations are automatically added to PMS for new bookings, changes, and cancellations thereby reducing the chance of overbookings. She adds RoomMaster Version 18 is scheduled for release mid-spring along with an all new API that will allow quicker integration to third party software and services. Hotels use.

Along with helping to effectively managing the day-to-day side of the business, like reservations and room cleaning schedules, PMS should also be working as a marketing tool to ensure future stays. Edwin Johnson of Smart Hotel Software, which offers full featured PMS solutions for single or multiple hotel and lodging businesses, states that hotels are considering upgrading their PMS, they need to select a system that has complete Customer Relationship Management (CRM) functionality to communicate or market to guests.

As part of their top level PMS package, Smart Hotel Software features a seamless integration to Sage CRM, which helps hotels manage their sales pipeline, prospect communications, marketing campaigns and tracking. “This enables you to follow your guest from prospect creation, through to sale, through their reservation, then follow up marketing to ensure they stay with you again,” he states. “This is a tremendously powerful tool that enables you to better manage your business if you track prospects before the sale, and if you do extensive follow-up marketing to your customer base.”

Properties can leverage this advanced actionable guest history database that records each guest stay preference and request. Point and Click Data Mining BI Analytics Tools make it easy to access this information and empower properties with ability to push via mobile upsell marketing options that reflect the guest’s past amenity preferences to create a sense of personal recognition with the guest and promote loyalty, says MacRae of Mastro.

With the ability to staff operations, streamline services, and personalize promotions, centralized integrated PMS is key to enhancing the quality of the guest experience today and in the future.
IT'S ALL ABOUT LOCATION

The Brewster family has been a part of the Banff community for over a century

In 1886 John Brewster decided that Banff, Alberta would be his family’s permanent home and six generations later the town nestled in the mountains still remains home to the family and an enterprise that has stood the test of time.

In 1923 Missy Brewster started the Kananaskis Guest Ranch. The ranch was opened on the original land that her father-in-law, John, established at the base of the Yamnuska Mountain. Even then it was clear that hospitality was in their blood. The Kananaskis Guest Ranch is now operated by Missy’s great-granddaughter.

Decades later Bud Brewster (Bill and Missy’s grandson) acquired land from Bill on Caribou Street.

“It’s all about location. Bud always wanted to build a hotel with the property he owned. After the planning and municipal parks applications were approved he stopped leasing the space and built the hotel,” shares Bud’s Alison Brewster, co-owner.

The Brewster Mountain Lodge opened in 1996 and has 77 rooms and an inviting atmosphere with handmade log furnishings and western décor.

With the family operating different hospitality businesses in Bow Valley since 1923 the Brewsters are already into the fifth and sixth generation in hospitality.

“I’m fifth generation and my daughter Joleen is sixth generation. Joleen is currently in her third year of a hospitality/tourism business program at Ryerson University. She is expanding her knowledge plus gaining the right tools to help her understand the hotel and hospitality industry.”

Alison takes great pride in the hotel as she knows how difficult it was for her parents to secure the land for it.

“My sisters and I were raised to work very hard. My father always said ‘you go to bed thinking and you wake up thinking’. I have always taken those words to heart. We all have. The hotel business is not easy, but it is rewarding as long as you work hard.”

The architecture of the hotel is keeping with the Brewster family tradition and values. When you step into the hotel you feel the warmth and welcoming environment like a grand mountain lodge.

“I think having our historical family photos throughout the hotel is very important to respect the heritage of our family. It allows the guests an insight of what Banff was like a century ago. The upper mezzanine has a photo gallery of my great-grandfather, my grandfather and my father. It tells the story of how each of them contributed to the family business and our guests really enjoy this.”

The Brewsters give credit to their wonderful staff — such as General Manager, Maureen Van Mackelbergh, who has been with the hotel for over 12 years — for keeping their family values that have made them successful for almost a quarter century.

Brewster’s Mountain Lodge is situated on the corner of Caribou Street and Bear Street. In the spring of 2020 the Town of Banff will be refreshing Bear Street. The project aims to improve the visitor and resident experience, as well as enhance the economic potential of Bear Street businesses.

“We are excited for the potential this will bring to the area as we are the only hotel on Bear Street. This means a lot for the future of the commercial tenants of the hotel, as well as the guest experience in the heart of the new Bear Street. Also happening in 2020 will be a soft renovation to our guest rooms. This project will refresh our rooms for a better guest experience.”

John Brewster could not have foreseen all the changes that would happen to Banff or to his land. But it is clear that he made the right choice for his family when he chose to settle there. The Brewsters will remain part of Banff for decades to come.

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**Finding the Right Franchise**

By Ronda Payne

Carrie Russell, senior managing partner, HVS

**Buying Into a Brand**

Canvas Moncton, Canada

Western Hotelier Magazine

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SUPPLY: 90+ hotels open in 25+ countries
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SUPPLY: 30+ hotels open in 3 countries
PIPELINE: 70+ hotels in an additional 8 countries

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FRANCHISES REPRESENT A NUMBER OF GROWING OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE INDUSTRY BUT THERE ARE DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS

Hotel, motel, inn or resort, a lot goes into establishing a property guests will want to stay at and ideally, return to. One of those considerations is whether to maintain an independent position or to align with a brand and become part of a larger hospitality engine.

There are pros and cons on both sides of the equation and there are a wide range of things to think about if becoming a franchisee seems to be the right option for an owner. Not every brand is a fit for every property, property owner or management team. Carrie Russell, senior managing partner with HVS, a company that specializes in hospitality intelligence, notes that the growth seen in Western Canada is occurring in franchised properties.

“They tend to be sort of in the upper-mid scale,” she says, “more geared towards focus-service brands or limited service brands… so efficiently operated hotels that don’t have a lot of food and beverage.”

She uses brands like Fairfield Inn and Suites by Marriott and Holiday Inn Express as examples.

“The pipeline for new hotels in Canada has increased to 1.5 per cent new supply growth in the country” she notes. “We’ve had a lot of new hotels open in Alberta. Virtually all of the hotels are franchises. The trend is to build branded hotels.”
One example of the growth trend in Alberta is the Red Roof franchise property in Calgary, the company’s first in Canada. This Red Roof PLUS & Suites is slated to be one of a number of properties in the country over the coming years in a partnership with hotel management company FANS International Hospitality Group. Sarah Kessler, communications manager with Red Roof notes that the right fit for the company is a franchisee looking for a relationship based in fairness, honesty and open communication.

“The right fit is a franchisee who wants to invest in a nationally recognized brand that has a proven track record of growth as well as industry-leading guest satisfaction.”

Nigel Lucas, executive vice-president development, Superior Lodging Corp.

The Red Roof PLUS & Suites will open its first property in Canada this year.

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Sarah Kessler, communications manager, Red Roof

The new Red Roof is a conversion of a former Travelodge. Nigel Lucas, executive vice-president development with Superior Lodging Corp. (the master licensor for Travelodge and an area developer in Canada for other Wyndham properties: Super 8 and Microtel) notes that he remains very conscious of whether a conversion to a brand represents enough of an upside to justify the costs.

“We love the upside…we have increased our standards,” he says. “We’ve put a huge emphasis on cleanliness in our hotels, but we’re still an affordable brand.”

Both companies will be competing for the growing economy market, but one that guests expect to provide comfort and convenience with affordability.

On the franchise side, affordability is also a consideration when looking at potential brand relationships. However, values are equally, if not more so, important when looking at a brand to align with according to Mark Hope, vice-president, development and revenue strategy with Coast Hotels.

“Ensure that the owner and franchisor’s values are aligned,” he says. “Whether it be corporate culture or brand strategy. This includes the amount of autonomy allowed.”

He also advises those considering aligning with a brand to look for a franchisor that can help make visions and long-term goals happen. The process of reviewing brands for fit will take time and a lot of questioning.

“Some owners may need larger international franchise systems, some may need regional franchise systems,” he says.

Best Western is a rather unique model in that it is a not-for-profit, membership-based organization, says Brad LeBlanc, senior vice-president and chief development officer for Best Western Hotels & Resorts.

“This means that everything we do supports our member-owners,” he says. “Our members have a real voice in the direction of the brand, voting on all hotel-related initiatives and changes. This allows us to think like hotel operators and make conscious decisions with direct input from our members.”

Russell notes that the biggest reason to consider a franchise is because of a brand’s ability to deliver more guests into rooms.

Mark Hope, vice-president, development and revenue strategy, Coast Hotels.

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Nigel Lucas, executive vice-president development, Superior Lodging Corp.
“Developers and franchisees should always start by identifying what the market needs most and then assessing which brands are competitive within that segment or space.”

“Franchises are really strong in creating guest preferences,” she says. “They’re driving customers into these hotels.”

Determining the right brand can begin with a series of questions and reflections outlined by Scott Richer, vice-president development, Canada with Hyatt.

“Developers and franchisees should always start by identifying what the market needs most and then assessing which brands are competitive within that segment or space,” he says. “Brands should be considered on a wide myriad of factors.”

Richer suggests narrowing the focus to the following critical factors for consideration:

• A brand’s ability to drive performance among target segments
• Which brand offers a product and program that best aligns with the site and market?
• Who are the primary and secondary competitors, including other affiliated brands?
• Who will the property need to share the reservation system and loyalty program with?
• Which brand offers the best partnership and reflects similar values and beliefs?
• Which brand can the project afford and offer the most compelling return on investment?

Jeff Cury, senior director, development, Hilton Canada notes that potential franchisees need to think about the brand that fits the market as well as one that provides reservation systems and loyalty programs to deliver business.

“I would say these are the two main factors to consider when selecting a brand,” he says. “Selecting the brand that best fits the market is based on several factors: the type of market – urban, suburban, resort – the depth of the market and what are the demand generators that are driving the market.”

Another critical factor noted by Gunjan Kahlon, vice-president franchise sales and development supporting Eastern Canada for Wyndham Hotels & Resorts is having strong brand support and the ability to develop relationships with the brand team with trust and a common vision.

“As a franchise business, entrepreneurs are at the heart of what we do and we know how to support them and spur their growth,” he says. “Generations of owners and franchisees have continued to stay with Wyndham because we are all about the return, building relationships and are focused on helping them make their vision

continued on page 54
Two great brands under one roof.

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a reality. Make sure you have a great relationships with the organization – and people – you are working with and that they care about where you want to go.”

Another factor to consider is the evolution of the brand and its approach to business. According to Juan Duran, director, franchise development at Choice Hotels Canada, “Technology has allowed travellers to be more connected and informed and Choice Hotels is one of the most innovative companies in the industry, constantly anticipating and responding to changes in the way travellers choose their hotel stay,” he says. “As an example. We’ve partnered with Google to improve booking functionality and we’ve partnered with Amazon to provide a cloud-based reservation system on Amazon Web Services.”

This falls in line with what Irwin Prince, president and COO of Realstar Hospitality (a privately owned, Toronto–based, franchisor of a number of branded properties) says about choosing a brand.

“Brand impacts the top line of a hotel business immediately and then filters down to the bottom line,” he says. “This is to say that factors such as brand recognition and higher reservation levels are quick to show up with a franchise operation. Aspects such as improved purchasing costs and operational efficiencies take a little longer to work their way through the pipe. A good franchise will deliver both and constantly add value to the brand over the length of the contract.”

He continues that in looking for the right franchise, a hospitality consultant may be of assistance.

“Look at the personality of the company,” he says. “We always recommend that a potential franchisee hire a hospitality consultant to see what brand will be the best fit.”

Exploring fit often leads to questions about what a brand will offer to a franchisee. Looking at the elements included in the relationship may help determine a fit, or the need to move on to another option. However, as Prince notes, the franchisee is their own key to success.

“The ideal franchisee is someone who is upbeat, a problem-solver and both enjoys and engages people,” he says. “Motivational, strong team leader, while still remaining approachable from staff.”

Cury notes that the Hilton brand supports franchisees, but echoes Prince’s comment that franchisees must be motivated in order to be successful.

“We offer much guidance to all our franchisees throughout the development or conversion process, but it is important that franchisees have the wherewithal to undertake these kinds of projects,” Cury says. “Hilton

continued from page 50

Juan Duran, director, franchise development, Choice Hotels Canada.

continued from page 50

Irwin Prince, president and COO, Realstar Hospitality.
THE UNIQUENESS OF SELLING A PROPERTY

It may have already come to mind, or perhaps there will be a point in the future when the idea of selling a property leads to some important considerations. Whether it’s retirement, scaling up to a larger property or a lifestyle change, selling is a big decision and one that needs to be fully assessed, ideally with an intermediary to help guide the process, according to Phil King, M&A intermediary with Selph Business Brokers. “Each time a property changes hands, it is a bit unique as to the reasons it is changing,” he says. “That’s why the intermediary comes in, it is to sort all these things out. Not just to handle the transaction, but also to handle the post-transaction changes.”

The process is different for branded properties as opposed to their independent counterparts. Branded properties have management agreements to spell out conditions of an exit. Larger hotels will have an individually-crafted hotel management agreement (HMA) customized to the property. Smaller branded properties, like motels, may have a franchise agreement which includes some of the parameters in an HMA, but tend to be slightly more standardized to all properties.

“Both [types of agreements] have an impact on what can be done with the property,” King explains. “If someone is considering selling their property, it is critically important to understand the management agreements and the result of the change.”

Therefore the first step in considering selling a branded property is to review the agreement in place to understand all ramifications and requirements of a sale. He says that while it’s a real estate issue for the owner, it’s a room, sales and occupancy issue for the brand. “The people who are managing these brands stay very involved in these properties to maintain the standards of these brands,” he says. This involvement will mean that both the brand and the property manager or franchisee will be able to review the agreement and have a basic understanding of an exit or termination is possible and what the costs and timing would be to do so. These parameters would have been set out when the agreement was drawn up. As King says, there is never a “carte blanche” way that branded properties sell or change hands because of the uniqueness of each agreement.

Because of the brand standards required by a property, it is unlikely that a franchisee would have a property in disrepair or outside of the brand’s requirements. That being said, a brand may have other ideas about the future of the property. “The brand would be involved in the process of selling, but may choose not to maintain their brand on the property with the new owner. This could be an advantage or disadvantage,” he says. “If a franchisee, or the hotel management group, decide not to continue for a new owner, that may be a disadvantage, but… what if the property owner has been solicited by another brand? That could actually be an advantage to the seller. It could be a positive.”

An independent operator has more flexibility in their sales process, but because they lack the standards imposed by brands, they need to consider where they are in the property’s refresh cycle. “A hotel typically refurbishes every seven to 10 years,” notes King. “Depending upon how heavily the property is used.”

If the property was recently updated, there is less capital expenditure required by the new owner while a new owner will need to invest in upgrades but this allows for a degree of putting their ‘stamp on it’ if it’s a state of the property issue only considering in setting the price. Amenities being built, new attractions and neighborhood changes can all contribute to a property’s ability to attract future business. “Based on the condition of the property and the market trends, it will impact the average daily rate… it can command on any given day. But it’s not just the property. It’s what’s going on around the property as well,” he says of setting a price. “There’s a lot of things that get involved in the buy sell decision. Very seldom does it come down strictly to price, there’s a lot of factors in play.”

Those new attractions being built will impact the potential for pricing as well demographics, development, property rates and environmental factors. “Just because someone wants to sell their property doesn’t necessarily mean that someone wants to buy their property,” King says. This leads to an understanding of what is personal and what is business. Personal factors don’t contribute to pricing. King advises to consider the personal implications such as tax, how to approach a real estate agent or stress in taking on a new property. “The best thing to do is to get an intermediary at the beginning,” he says. He adds that waiting until there is an offer on the property is typically too late to reap the benefits of an intermediary’s expertise.

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The Hilton brand also has an architecture, design and construction team that works with franchisees from concept to opening, a hotel opening team and ongoing support from the brand performance teams once the property is up and running. For property owners who want the support of a brand, but still want to retain the name they’ve built, Russell notes some franchisees are offering soft brand options. “They’ve created something that they’re calling soft brands,” she says. “The name of the hotel stays forefront for the guest such as Civic Hotel in Surrey, in the Autograph Collection which is in the Marriott system. That’s becoming more common.”

There must be an understanding that properties and their owners are unique, according to Prince. Realstar works to build personal relationships with its franchisees as they work together to build top line revenue, maximize operation efficiencies and minimize operating expenses.

“We are constantly working to improve what we offer to our franchisees,” he says, adding that franchisees must also bring significant value to the plate. “A good franchise is responsive to the market. This means new architectural prototypes, a willingness to consider the latest technology, an open mind when it comes to matters that affect guest satisfaction and the importance of profitability to owners.”

For some owners, this may mean the soft brand Russell described. For others, it means a complete conversion. Conversions are a key part of the Canadian Red Roof strategy.

Western Hotelier Magazine
“Investor demand for Red Roof hit significant heights in 2019 with strong franchisee satisfaction reflected in the number of owners who have bought multiple properties or invested in new construction or conversions,” Kessler says. “As we enter 2020, we are looking forward to accelerated franchise expansion across all our brands and sub-brands. At Red Roof we live by the motto, genuine relationships, real results. We work together with our franchisees to achieve real results.”

Obviously, results are something every property owner wants. If they choose to align with a brand, they want to be sure they have the support needed to make that happen while also engaging the right people to guide the process.

LeBlanc says Best Western Hotels & Resorts is especially well positioned to help the growing markets outside urban centres and in smaller communities.

“Our goal is to empower developers and hoteliers to embrace their own visions, giving them the tools and support necessary to bring their own hotel concepts to life,” he says. “This, coupled with our more prototypical lifestyle offerings make Best Western Hotels & Resorts an ideal partner to Canadian developers.”

He adds that the partnership with entrepreneurs is what drives the brand.

“We have members that have been with us for over 40 years and with a commitment like that, we’ve truly become a family throughout the years,” he notes. “Our associates and our services make us different. Once hotels join our membership, they can take advantage of sophisticated systems and support, accessing our award-winning website, global partnerships and sales team and state-of-the-art revenue management system.

“As brands expand into various parts of the market, they are able to extend systems to properties that may not have previously had such resources. As part of the Wyndham brand, Travelodge makes use of the company’s loyalty program, but remains true to what it has always done,” he says. “This, coupled with our more prototypical lifestyle offerings make Best Western Hotels & Resorts an ideal partner to Canadian developers.”

The strength of the reservation system is a common theme among brands in a world where online travel agents and booking systems hold a significant amount of market power. Brands that can offer a strong website experience with direct booking are able to help create more customer loyalty and drive customers directly to the branded site rather than an online engine.

A reservation system that runs across all levels of the market is one of the things Richer feels makes Hyatt what it is today.

“In addition to 60 years of being one of the world’s most preferred upscale and luxury hotel chains, Hyatt offers a dynamic portfolio of brands backed by a powerful global reservation system, the World of Hyatt loyalty program, which is second to none in the industry,” he says. “In any market you go into, Hyatt is your number one choice.”

But it is the one brand I’ve stuck with for 15 years, he goes on to explain. “Because they have skin in the game, they understand the operational experience and day-to-day challenges. That’s why upgrades and brand standards are so well thought out.”

“Red Roof isn’t the only brand in my portfolio,” says Paul Patel, “but it is the one brand I’ve stuck with for 15 years. We facilitate the booking process for them. We also offer a strong global loyalty program with an increasing number of partnerships because we recognize travellers want the best bang for their buck and we reward them every time they stay at one of our hotels,” he says. “I think we are strong players in the digital space, offer an award-winning loyalty program and as a company we are innovators in the hotel industry, always looking for new ways to connect with guests and drive more business to our hotels.”

“The booking system is essential in Duran’s eyes. He believes in providing the technology to connect Choice Hotel properties with more travellers.”

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“The booking system is essential in Duran’s eyes. He believes in providing the technology to connect Choice Hotel properties with more travellers.”
gram and fast-growing footprint across Canada and the world,” he says. “Wyndham strives to deliver market-leading properties in all the places our guests expect to find us. We offer the unique combination of global reach and scale with personalized service and genuine partnership.”

These are things that independent hoteliers simply can’t achieve on their own, Russell explains. “Wyndham Rewards, in driving direct bookings to our hotels. We also transformed our back-of-house technology to give our owners the best resources in the business for a simple, consistent operating experience.”

Aligning with a brand is about more than the bottom line, notes Prince. “It’s a way to protect a property’s equity while also growing the business. He advises property owners to know the costs and commitments up front while also knowing what to ask for and expect.

“When entering into a franchise agreement, there is always an initial franchise fee, an initial investment in changing the business identification to that of the franchise organization, a required regular payment to an advertising fund and a required periodic royalty payment,” he explains. “A brand should help with preliminary research including plans, site selection, training and overall assistance. A brand should offer a hands-on friendly team to oversee transition (whether ground to completed property or existing hotel to new brand).”

The hotel business is constantly growing and changing and while a franchise may be the best option for hoteliers to stay pace with the growth, finding the right one requires research and a lot of questions. Brands are no longer what they used to be. With consolidation, expansion into new styles of properties and movement to new regions, hoteliers can find a franchise that is the right fit for their property, goals and personality.

Yet being the world’s largest doesn’t take away from Wyndham’s relationship-building approach.

“We believe in delivering the best value and getting a return for your dollar,” he notes. “We continue to focus on the power of our loyalty program, Wyndham Rewards, in driving direct bookings to our hotels. We also transformed our back-of-house technology to give our owners the best resources in the business for a simple, constant operating experience.”

Kahlon says Wyndham is one of the only hotel companies to support first-time hoteliers which means the company has systems in place to help reduce the risk and increase that all-important return on conversion.

“Scale matters,” he says. “Being part of a brand affords advantages like buying power, recognition, sales teams, negotiated OTA [online travel agencies] rates and local guests. With Wyndham, owners gain invaluable access to our teams, distribution and the power of scale that only comes with being part of the world’s largest.”

Yet the world’s largest doesn’t take away from Wyndham’s relationship-building approach.

“If you’re going to compete, you need to know your competition. If you’re going to win, you need to work smarter than your competition,” he says. “Wyndham’s strength lies in our ability to continuously improve, to provide better experiences and better value to our guests.”

The hotel business is constantly growing and changing and while a franchise may be the best option for hoteliers to stay pace with the growth, finding the right one requires research and a lot of questions. Brands are no longer what they used to be. With consolidation, expansion into new styles of properties and movement to new regions, hoteliers can find a franchise that is the right fit for their property, goals and personality.

This exploration isn’t simple. Every brand offers benefits to their franchisees. It is a matter of determining the right fit at the right time with the right price that will deliver the right long-term vision.
Communication systems and devices help hotel guests and staff understand each other, interact, share knowledge and provide entertainment. While working on a way to improve the telegraph, Alexander Graham Bell’s invention of the telephone changed the way we communicate forever. But, will the landline ever become obsolete? Cody Morash, manager, hospitality marketing at TELUS, in Calgary, Alberta, doesn’t think so.

“Hoteliers need to give their guests access to 911 emergency services. Although most guests have a cell phone, what happens if they do not at that moment,” noting the safety of guests is paramount. Additionally, the exact location of the guest is easily identified with traditional phones. “And, guests still pick up the phone to speak with the front desk, order room service, towels or speak to the concierge.”

Trending now in Asia and heading to North America are pre-programmed smartphones that hotels can give to their guests to borrow, loaded with information on hotel services, local restaurants, maps, directions and mobile apps all requiring wireless Internet. Wi-Fi needs to be fast and uninterrupted allowing guests to use any wireless device they bring to the hotel. According to a report entitled An Intimate Look at Hospitality Wi-Fi: A Study of Guests and Hospitality, 93 per cent of hotel guests consider Wi-Fi the top amenity when choosing a hotel to stay at. In direct correlation, 83 per cent of hotels surveyed offer it for free.

“When I am travelling for work, all my devices are open and connected at all times,” says Morash, who actively travels for her job.}

And it’s not just the business traveller that comes armed with technology. The average family travels with between four-eight Internet connected devices while on vacation.
Western Hotelier Magazine

And 90 per cent of hotel guests will stream a television show or movie during their stay.

The biggest problems guests encounter when using their devices are poor signal coverage at 71 per cent, low speed at 68 per cent and connectivity issue at 57 per cent. Additionally, 85 per cent of guests surveyed said they would not return to a hotel because of these issues.

Hoteliers should try to obtain the highest bandwidth speed available depending on geography and systems. Morash explains that with TELUS Hospitality Wi-Fi and managed guest Wi-Fi, the access points are scattered across the hotel, allowing everyone Wi-Fi, while preventing rooms with multiple devices from burdening any one system. “If one access point is in use the signal will pass to the next access point. This is what enables guests to walk around and still remain connected.”

Case in point: 29 per cent of hotels guests report that they use their devices in the lobby, 22 per cent in the restaurants and 19 per cent in the pool area.

The number of access points required are a combination of the number of hotel rooms, the guests the rooms can accommodate, the number of devices the guests may have, while keeping in mind public spaces.

Hoteliers surveyed understand the need to update Wi-Fi networks, with 27 per cent reporting upgrades two to three years ago, 23 per cent one to two years ago and only nine per cent stating their systems were more than five years old.

Richard Carruthers, co-founder and chief operating officer of Hotel Communication Network (HCN), in Ottawa, Ontario, sees a trend for hotels to provide in-room tablets. “These guest-facing mobile devices serve as the command centre of the guest room, and they are bi-directional transactional tools of irreplaceable value because they are always on and always communicating,” he says. “Not only do tablets provide general service information on the hotel and city, but they also facilitate room service, send message alerts, give guests choices over room cleaning times or opting out of housekeeping altogether, control the room environment — lights, drapes, temperature, Do Not Disturb, and TV — streamline check-out, send surveys, promote in-house events, share loyalty club information, facilitate service requests, charge guests’ personal mobile devices, and provide alarm clock functionality.”

Hotel staff can use the Dynamic Alerts feature via the in-room tablet to inform guests about temporary pool closures, Wi-Fi testing, HVAC maintenance, window washing or water shut-off, preventing unwelcome surprises. Digital Dynamic Alerts are also an ideal way to promote in-house services and amenities.

Hotel Communication Network sees a trend for hotels to provide in-room tablets.

HCN has introduced a new digital program called DineIN. By using the navigator tablet guests can order food and beverages from local restaurants selected by the hotel. This feature can help eliminate the high cost associated with providing room service.

“The more guests use in-room tablets, the more comfortable they will be engaging with the hotel and sharing more personal data about their stay preferences,” Carruthers explains. “This helps corporate to build better marketing programs and loyalty initiatives.”

Keeping current on communication systems and devices that help both hoteliers and guests communicate, both internally and externally, will lead to higher guest satisfaction and ultimately higher profits.
How Brands Can Manage a Travel Industry Crisis

DEVELOP A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN
Silence is not a viable plan when it comes to crisis management. Develop an internal and external communications plan to keep associates informed and stay in touch with loyal customers. Global brands must have a response team identified, business continuity plans in place, and a crisis communications team and agency. Individual and small groups of hotels can also benefit from identifying the team or an individual who will be the central communicator. Additionally, a clear process for internal communication is key. Facebook groups are good for check-ins, and it’s important to have access to cell phone numbers and email addresses for all associates, as well as family members. Depending on the crisis, regular updates may be necessary to make sure company messages are getting out, as opposed to risking rumors or speculation by the press due to lack of information. Most importantly, do not hide from the press. They have a job to do and are providing news to their readers and viewers.

LISTEN TO CUSTOMERS
It’s important to provide information as well as listen to what customers think. Find information on social media and ask employees to share what they are hearing from customers. Depending on business impact, adding short surveys to communication updates can give a pulse on what people are thinking and provide important information as next moves are considered to recover lost business momentum.

Best practice is to prepare a statement, answer questions (even if just in writing). Sometimes you are the story and sometimes you become the story. Being proactive with employees, consumers and the media gives businesses a chance to tell the story from their perspective.

Pay attention to competitors who have also been impacted. Don’t be afraid to collaborate with them. It may take everyone’s effort to rebuild and restore reputation. Sometimes the entire industry needs to work together to recover. For example, hurricanes are not generally selective when they hit a major tourist destination. Working together to get the island up and running again, sharing contractors, relocating guests from damaged rooms across the travel industry to create an ad campaign encouraging business and leisure travelers to hit the road again. It was an industry-wide effort — cruise ships, airlines, hotels — along with President Bush, telling them it was okay.

The Chamber of Commerce and Ministry of Tourism often work to pull everyone together to develop action plans, and at times, provide funding to generate new business and restore momentum. Don’t wait to get involved with local tourism or economic organizations.

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CARL ZUMBAULI, CHIEF INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, THE HILTON GROUP

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Rebuild customer confidence and business momentum

“When is it time to start marketing again?” was the question asked after September 11. Most advocated waiting, however, Marriott International took a different approach. The company took on an industry-wide effort through the Travel Industry Association of America. Bill Marriott played the lead role in encouraging companies from across the travel industry to create an ad campaign encouraging business and leisure travelers to hit the road again. It was an industry-wide effort — cruise ships, airlines, hotels — along with President Bush, telling them it was okay.

Meanwhile the internal Marriott team debated whether company advertising should resume. Consumer feedback indicated the company could market right away provided the message was light and had a valuable offering. “Come Out and Play” was launched portfolio-wide encouraging families to plan time away together over the weekend of fun. This helped to increase traffic and room night hotels which also meant front-line team members could return to work at a time when re-building the business was crucial.

Bottom line

Process and training, resource identification and tactical plans are the basic advance planning requirements to help minimize personal and brand risk in challenging times, which will inevitably occur. Once a crisis emerges, such as the current coronavirus outbreak, history tells us that the impact on the travel industry will extend many months beyond the peak. Identifying ways to continue to operate and provide a customer experience should be a key focus. For instance, if the hotel’s occupancy has tanked, close off several floors so that you can work together to recover. For example, hurricanes are not generally selective when they hit a major tourist destination. Working together to get the island up and running again, sharing contractors, relocating guests from damaged rooms across the travel industry to create an ad campaign encouraging business and leisure travelers to hit the road again. It was an industry-wide effort — cruise ships, airlines, hotels — along with President Bush, telling them it was okay.

Last, keep in mind employees are watching what management does as much as consumers are. Crisis times are when company values and CEO integrity and leadership are on display. Don’t fail. ●

Deborah Fell is Partner & CMO with Chief Outsiders, the nation’s fastest growing fractional CMO firm. She works with companies to develop and implement strategies that accelerate growth and was with Marriott International during the 9/11 tragedy and aftermath.
If hotel rooms are the extension of guests’ own homes and treated as such, then outdoor patios are their backyards — a place to unwind, enjoy the sun, have a drink or two and perhaps a meal while taking in the view.

But just like a backyard, time and effort is required to realize any patio’s full potential. “Consideration of the setting along with regular upgrades is important,” says Loren Heder, director of food and beverage at Fairmont Banff Springs. “It doesn’t necessarily take a lot of money to create great outdoor spaces, just care and planning — and a willingness to solicit and act upon guest feedback.”

Considering its portfolio in the west includes Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge and Fairmont Chateau Whistler, Fairmont has spectacular outdoor patios — but partly due to its sheer size, the historic Banff Springs hotel (with 757 guest rooms and suites) has arguably the most impressive array of outdoor gathering spaces: five in all, each of them distinct.
“About 20 years ago the entire hotel underwent a major renovation, and the Lookout patio at our Rundle Bar was created to give patrons maximum exposure to our natural surroundings: amazing views of the valley and our golf course.”

Heider says, “About 20 years ago the entire hotel underwent a major renovation, and the Lookout patio at our Rundle Bar was created to give patrons maximum exposure to our natural surroundings: amazing views of the valley and our golf course. However, even spaces with the greatest views need regular sprucing up. Three years ago we built a gazebo on the Lookout for year-round foodservice, and we try to extend daily operations and the patio season overall by providing blankets and heaters.”

Around the corner from the Lookout is the Cascade patio, a more intimate venue with built-in firepits and seating. “After that, in terms of popularity, we have the 85-seat patio at our Waldhaus Pub & Biergarten,” says Heider. “This is followed by the 75-seat patio at Stanley’s Smokehouse. Our fifth patio is something we created in 2017: a 50-seat venue in a greenhouse, intended as the perfect place for guests to enjoy a quiet afternoon coffee.”

To a large degree, the Banff Springs patio décor is inspired by the menus. “For example, the Waldhaus serves Alpine cuisine, so its décor is Germanic right down to the checkered napkins; and the Lookout has Mexican-patterned blankets and even cacti on the tables to match the Mexican food offerings,” says Heider. “These are understated touches that are easy to undertake and have a big impact.”

Other small touches that make patios inviting have nothing to do with décor but pertain to guest convenience. “During the summer we offer sunglasses and sunscreen,” says Heider. “Such items go a long way in keeping people outside for longer.”

Meanwhile in B.C., The Bayside Oceanfront Resort in Parksville has a killer patio with unobstructed views of the Pacific Ocean, but although such a venue is a guaranteed lure for guests, Bayside’s director of sales & operations, Corina Ludovici, echoes Heider’s sentiment that even the best locations require care to achieve their fullest potential. “For example, our firepit tables ward off the evening chill, but some time ago we decided to make them available to guests who want to sip an espresso at sunrise - and as a result our mornings can be quite busy,” she says.

Taking advantage of events is another strategy to lure guests outside. “On Canada Day we open the patio to our courtyard and bring in live music,” she says. “We’ve also become a venue for weddings, and last year we made the lower portion of our patio dog friendly, which also increased traffic.”

As for furniture purchases, Ludovici says, “We don’t go over the top. However, you have to thoroughly vet the furniture manufacturer, as one time we invested in what we were told was UV-resistant material, but the colours faded pretty quickly anyway and had to be replaced.”

Heider stresses that when patio season ends, “You should start planning right away for the following season by taking photos of your venue before it closes: that way you can examine what elements worked and what did not. We also mine data from our review platforms to address issues and ensure guest satisfaction.”

Given that service is just as important as ambience in patio settings, Heider adds...
No matter how many stars a hotel holds, no matter how dedicated its cleaning staff, the odds are that at least twice a year, some very undesirable guests are going to check in and won’t want to leave — Cimex Lectularius: the dreaded bedbug.

The hard truth is that there is no way to keep them out as they hitch rides on luggage, clothing and furniture. All any hotel can do is fight them through early detection and eradication.

“T he best thing a hotel can do is be proactive and have a bedbug defense strategy, have a clear understanding of what actions they can take to make sure they avoid deep infestations,” says Andrew Walters, director of marketing for CleanBrands LLC. “Hotels must have bedbug action plans; if not, they are at risk of a lawsuit and loss of reputation. Step one is to train staff on what to look for, the patio’s all-important views — and contribute greatly in supporting a pleasant guest experience.

that summer staff recruitment should start early. “It’s always a challenge to recruit, and as we speak in late February we just finished hiring for the summer of 2020,” she says.

Patios are a major lure to weary travellers who seek what they get from their own backyards: a place to unwind and enjoy the surroundings. Easy to navigate layouts, comfortable seating, and subtle flourishes (from cacti to flowers) all enhance rather than compete with the patio’s all-important views — and contribute greatly in supporting a pleasant guest experience.

The Bayside Oceanfront Resort in Parksville has a killer patio with unobstructed views of the Pacific Ocean.

GETTING AHEAD OF RELENTLESS PESTS

DON’T LET BEDBUGS TAKE A BITE OUT OF YOUR HOTEL’S REPUTATION

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BE PREPARED

“The best thing a hotel can do is be proactive and have a bedbug defense strategy, have a clear understanding of what actions they can take to make sure they avoid deep infestations,” says Andrew Walters, director of marketing for CleanBrands LLC. “Hotels must have bedbug action plans; if not, they are at risk of a lawsuit and loss of reputation. Step one is to train staff on what to look for, where bedbugs hide, what stains to look for and
Kevin Eyre, technical director with Orkin Canada, advises partnering with a reputable pest control company and working with them to develop protocols on how to deal with bedbugs. “You need to train all staff, from housekeeping to management, on the basics of bedbugs, how to detect them when cleaning/room changeover, what to do if they find them. We do these training sessions, partnering with the people hiring us so all staff is an active part of the solution.”

Eyre adds that it’s very important to have a policy in place on how reception or housekeeping personnel will deal with bedbug complaints and media queries. “When a guest walks up to the front desk and says, ‘I’ve got a reservation, but I’m concerned about bedbugs and want to know what you’re doing about the issue,’ will your staff be ready with the answers?”

“People are very well educated, especially frequent travellers, and you need to be prepared to give them confidence,” says Mike Heimbach, director of business development, Abell Pest Control. “Nobody can prevent a public place from getting bedbugs, but you can learn to identify the signs very quickly. Train your people to be empathetic if guest is upset, get them to a private location and have the manager speak to them. It’s a very emotional thing for both the guest and staff.”

**THE BEST DEFENSE IS A GOOD OFFENSE**

Early detection is absolutely paramount when it comes to bedbugs; two bedbugs can become over a thousand within a month, and that’s when your guests are going to see them and take them home. As part of the regular cleaning/checklist, housekeeping staff should have a cursory inspection of the mattress and bedding for signs of bedbug activity. Having monitors in the rooms, placed discreetly so as not to attract the attention of guests, is another effective way for staff to check and quickly detect the presence of bedbugs.

“Monitor placement is key,” explains Taz Stuart, entomologist with Poulin’s Pest Control. “Put active and passive monitors in locations where bedbugs are likely to climb up looking for a host, such as in common areas, under couches. Bedbugs can be anywhere people congregate. Also, if there is a kitchen in the room, place roach monitors near the water source.” Stuart adds that it is important for staff to inspect these monitors across a defined timeline.

Catch them early and without calling attention to their existence — this is the goal of every hotel and the inspiration for Randal Sanford, founder of 1st Defense Industries. “We developed our Bug Coaster to stop bedbugs from going up bed legs, chair legs and spreading across the floors. Guests will not be able to tell that it’s an actual interceptor as it looks like a regular furniture leg coaster but is actually an inviting and inescapable trap for bedbugs, carpet beetles — any crawling insect. If the bed frame is solid, simply place the coaster between the mattress and box spring. We recommend checking the monitors weekly to know immediately if there are any bugs in the area and then taking action to prevent an infestation.”

Another essential weapon in the bug battle is mattress/box spring encasements — six-sided, full-coverage impenetrable fabric shields. “The proactive job of encasements is to keep bedbugs out in the first place,” says Walters. “They are bright white, have no seams or folds where bedbugs like to hide so

Poulin’s recommends a regular bi-annual inspection of all rooms.
staff can spot them more easily and then deal with them right away. CleanBrands offers an online ROI tool to help management understand the benefits of mattress, box spring, sofa bed encasements. They are well worth the investment.”

At Focus Hospitality, Brenda James, regional sales manager for Canada and Northern U.S. advises hoteliers to encase new mattresses and box springs not only against bedbugs, but to combat stains, spills, dust mites and allergens, prolonging the lifespan of the asset. “There is no wrong time to encase a mattress as it may extend the life of the asset anyway at a fraction of the price of new. This is simply what we call ‘mattress insurance.’”

“Also, from the health and wellness perspective, which is becoming a critical factor in hospitality, the comfort and protection of a mattress encasement is a very important consideration. Guests want to see what has been done to protect them.”

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

“When you do find a bug or two, that’s is not necessarily a major concern,” says Eyre. “It may have been dropped off by a traveller, but it can quickly go beyond that, so that’s where you need proactive bedbug inspections — in order of preference, utilizing specialized bedbug canines. At a scheduled frequency, depending on hotel protocols, these remarkable animals can quickly go through every room and find even a single bedbug egg.”

Stuart recommends a regular, biannual inspection of all rooms to see if there is any activity not being seen or reported. “Make sure your technician is properly licensed by the province and ask for the bedbug detection certification for the rapid bedbug-detecting dogs.”

“As well, a trained hotel staff will be able to identify signs of bedbugs — especially blood spots on sheets — and will know what to do if they spot something,” says Heimbach. “Leave everything in place, quarantine the room and have your pest control company come right away to perform an intense inspection, including in adjacent rooms. You can’t get rid of bedbugs by yourself.”

If the worst happens and bedbug activity is found, having a partnership with a certified pest control company ensures the problem will be taken care of quickly and according to established pest control protocols for that hotel. Heat treatments, intense cleanup using a special vacuum, targeted applications of biopesticides and follow-up inspections and treatment are all in the arsenal of these pest professionals.

A proactive bedbug control plan that includes staff training, monitoring and protective equipment, and scheduled professional inspections will save money, give peace of mind to everyone and protect your hotel’s reputation.

CleanBrands LLC notes that the proactive job of encasements is to keep bedbugs out in the first place.
Across the West

British Columbia

BRITISH COLUMBIA’S FIRST BEST WESTERN PREMIER!

British Columbia’s first Best Western Premier hotel is now open in Vancouver. The new hotel is named No.1 in the upscale segment of the J.D. Power 2019 North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index. Room service to the full-service restaurant, Sneeky Tiki bar with a fusion of Southern and Asian cuisine, and over half of the rooms feature spacious views of the ocean and Stanley Park. Hotel openings include 44-room Knights Inn Prince George, British Columbia and 36-room Knights Inn North Bay, Ontario. Both properties offer free guest Wi-Fi, complimentary hot breakfast, pet-friendly accommodations and open parking with plenty of guest room spaces.

As newcomers of the Canadian Franchise Association and with focused development efforts in these regions, we are thrilled to give Canadian travelers more lodging opportunities at our ever-reliable Knights Inn brand,” says Harry Sladich, executive vice-president of franchise development. “Both properties will provide travelers with necessities and service they can rely on.”

Shangri-La Hotel, Vancouver is renowned and only global rating system for luxury hotels, restaurants and spas, recently announced its annual Star Rating list, presenting Shangri-La Hotel, Vancouver with its first Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star hotel award. Shangri-La Hotel, Vancouver will be showcased with all of the Star Award winners on ForbesTravelGuide.com.

Travelers, shoppers, outdoor adventurers, and marine enthusiasts alike will experience exceptional service quality to our guests,” says We Wai Kai’s general manager, Reardon, chief development officer for HE. “Their partnership with one of Canada’s most beloved hotels brands, Four Points by Sheraton, is a perfect alignment with We Wai Kai’s mission to continue to partner with communities to preserve cultural heritage and to partner with businesses that are committed to promoting their culture through this new development.”

HOTEL EQUITIES ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON HOTEL IN B.C.

Hotel Equities (HE) announced plans for the development of two new Four Points by Sheraton hotels to be located in Campbell River, British Columbia, Canada. The new hotels will be owned and operated by WE Kai Nation. Hotel Equities is providing development services for the new-build and will operate the hotel upon opening. This property will be the ninth Four Points-branded property in HE’s growing portfolio.

“We are so proud to partner with WE Kai Nation on this new hotel,” said Joe Reardon, chief development officer for HE. “Their vision to create a much-needed accommodation aligned with WE Kai Nation’s mission will be enhanced through their decision to partner with one of Marriott’s most loved brands, Four Points by Sheraton. We look forward to further promoting their culture through this new development.”

Travel Canada adds two new locations in Alberta and B.C.

Travel Canada is pleased to announce the recent opening of two new locations within western Canada. The two properties will further enhance the roster of more than 100 Travelodge by Wyndham and Tryriott branded hotels across Canada. Hotel openings include Travelodge by Wyndham Edmonton, Alberta on November 28th, 2019, and Travelodge by Wyndham McBride, British Columbia on December 4th 2019. Both hotels are non-smoking, pet-friendly properties, with hot tub facilities onsite. Guests will receive further value with complimentary parking, free Wi-Fi and a complimentary breakfast including pancakes, cereal, muffins, coffee and more.

“All of us at Travelodge are thrilled to provide our guests with further opportunities to Go West and Discover. Two new locations with close proximity to the expansive Jasper National Park,” said Trevor Hapiel, executive vice-president, operations, Travelodge Canada. “Both of these hotels in Edmonton and McBride, will provide our guests with friendly service and value they can rely on from Travelodge.”

The past year was especially beneficial to the brand, as Travelodge was honored at the Wyndham Worldwide Convention in Las Vegas. The Travelodge by Wyndham Draytonville location was awarded with the “Hotel of the Year Award” alongside five other Canadian locations which were recognized as “The Best of the Brand”. Travelodge Canada opened a total of eight new locations across the country in 2019 with an additional two more set to open in the first quarter of 2020.
Tarkett Introduces Vellum & Bindery Modular Carpet

Tarkett, a worldwide leader in innovative and sustainable flooring, has introduced two new modular carpet designs—Vellum and Bindery. Through crisp pattern detail, colour contrast and lustre variation, these complementary patterns draw on the rich tradition of book binding and impart the handcrafted patinas of early papermaking, enabling architects and designers to craft a story through interior spaces.

Vellum and Bindery marry geometric and organic themes with clear and crisp colour separations. A hand-drawn feel carries through both patterns, with linear striations coming and going in the background. The styles are bold and refined, yet their abstract nature warms commercial interiors with a soft elegance. Constructed with Tarkett’s proprietary fibre innovations and honed tuffing techniques, Vellum and Bindery offer the perfect blend of value, performance and style.

Featuring Tarkett’s ethos Modular with Omnicast Technology, a non-PVC backing made from recycled windshields. Vellum and Bindery are highly sustainable carpet solutions. The Cradle to Cradle Certified Silver and ILFI Living Product Challenge Imperative certified backing material has enabled Tarkett to recycle the PET film from 28.2 million windshields between 2004 and 2019 which kept about 29,000 tons out of landfills. Furthermore, when installed with TarkettTAPE, ethos Modular with Omnicast Technology is unaffected by testing for pH, RH and MVER.

WEBREZPRO INTEGRATES HOTELITIX REVENUE MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

WEBREZPRO cloud property management system (PMS) by World Web Technologies Inc. (WWT) now offers integration with Hotelitix revenue management software, streamlining revenue management for hotels, inns and vacation rentals, and helping lodging operators drive more bookings and profits.

Using modern data analytics and machine learning, Hotelitix provides an automated revenue management solution that continuously analyzes thousands of data points and patterns, identifying revenue-generating opportunities in real time and accurately forecasting demand to generate the exact price changes a hotel should be making to maximize performance.

The two-way integration between Hotelitix and WEBREZPRO PMS improves demand forecasting by automatically delivering daily rate, availability and occupancy data from WEBREZPRO to Hotelitix, which then analyzes the information along with historical property data, market data and competitor rates to generate optimal pricing strategies. Pricing recommendations generated by Hotelitix can be automatically or manually approved, with approved prices then pushed directly from Hotelitix to WEBREZPRO PMS for automated rate and channel management.

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For more information: www.tarkett.com

NEW - Paper Wrapped Condiment Kit

True North Hospitality has taken their traditional plastic wrapped hotel condiment kit and replaced it with a new paper wrapped solution. In addition, the plastic straws have been replaced with wood.

True North is leading the way toward sustainable hotel solutions!

For more information: Chris Berry, Director, True North Hospitality

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CROSSWORD - Test Your Hotel Knowledge

Across

1 Type of hospitality properties where growth is occurring in Western Canada
2 Master’s degree, abbr.
3 Prefix with night and day
8 Hotel guest who comes back often
10 Trusted name, hopefully
11 Trattoria course
13 Required items from the menu
14 Asphalt surface
15 Exercise facility
16 Corporate takeover
18 Meet as a board
20 Cloud-based platform enabling secure, reliable and effective hotel management
22 Add, with up
25 Very important factor for any hotel (eligence in staying free from dirt)
29 Room entrance point
30 The 5 Ps
31 Animals trained to detect bedbugs
32 Location

Down

1 Great outdoor features for cooking and warmth
3 Summer month, popular time for vacations
5 Canadian city where the first Red Roof hotel was established
7 Manitoba, abbr.
8 Part of an hour, abbr.
9 Throw in
11 Example of a major franchising hotel brand
12 Hotel unit
14 Dreaded hotel pest
20 Solutions Group, trusted hospitality TI provider
21 Bathroom essentials
22 Often where guests can relax and enjoy the natural scenery
25 Canals between Huron and Superior

Visit www.westernhotelier.com to see the answer key to this Crossword

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The Chateau Louis Hotel & Conference Centre celebrates 45 years

The journey for the Chateau Louis Hotel & Conference Centre in Edmonton, Alberta started 45 years ago when the Koziak family among others purchased the newly built two-storey Le Chateau Louis Motor Inn from Lou Letourneau in 1975.

In the late 1970s, “during the boom,” the addition of a third floor changed the motor inn to a hotel. When the RCAF 700 Wing building adjacent to the hotel came up for sale in 1989, President Julian Koziak saw the opportunity for a substantial banquet division. This added 17,000 square feet and increased the property to over six acres. The addition of the conference centre resulted in the property name being changed to Chateau Louis Hotel and Conference Centre.

The hotel currently has 139 guest rooms. This includes the Crowne Suite — a 1,300 square foot room with rooftop terrace, which along with the two adjoining bedrooms makes it the ideal location for more intimate, elegant receptions.

Amenities include a fitness room and laundry facilities, the Royal Coach Dining Room (North America’s first Gluten-Free Verified Kitchen), Julian’s Piano Bar and Touch of Class Gaming Entertainment Centre with 22 VLTs. The Conference Centre has nine tastefully appointed rooms that can accommodate groups up to 400 people. They also have more space in the conference centre to develop.

The rooms include unique and practical furniture designed in-house and produced by a local craftsman. “Porte-cochères inspired by French Chateaux were added to both the hotel and conference centre, along with a beautiful Crowne Suite, patios, solariums, courtyard and gazebo,” shares Assistant General Manager, Debbie Koper. “Though the original French Provincial theme of the hotel interior has been updated with a more contemporary style it still maintains an atmosphere of relaxed elegance while embracing its old-world influences.”

The hotel demographic spans from business travellers and conferences to weddings and special occasions to romantic getaways and medical (there are three fully accessible rooms and proximity to medical facilities). It is also the host hotel for the Blues Festival.

The Royal Coach Dining Room is run by Executive Chef Lorne Soles who believes in wholesome cooking and fresh cuisine. This includes soups, stocks, sauces, dressings and desserts that are made in-house using the freshest ingredients possible. The restaurant is North America’s first Gluten-Free Verified Hotel Kitchen. It offers a gluten-free three-course dinner on Fridays and a gluten-free prime rib buffet on Saturdays.

The Chateau Louis is unique in that it has been in the Alberta hotel industry for over 80 years. “Our biggest asset is our employees and along with numerous members of the Koziak family, many other employees work with their family. It’s always a good sign when employees encourage their parents, siblings, cousins and children to work at the same business. In an industry plagued by frequent staff turnover, Chateau Louis has been blessed with numerous long-term and loyal employees — many working 20, 30 and even 40 years. Having always prided itself in being a family business this is also a hub of multiculturalism with staff members from over 30 countries included in the Chateau Louis family. This global cultural appreciation is demonstrated in their support for Vinko Worlddance, a professional company with a repertoire of dance and music from 60 cultures who have called Chateau Louis home for 30 years.”

Looking to the future the hotel plans to continue their path to excellence with ongoing renovations and improvements.

The new Veil bathroom collection carries a modern, minimalist vibe with gentle lines and sculpted asymmetrical shapes. The collection includes a vessel sink that offers a unique aesthetic with its sloping design. This gentle slope gives fluidity and movement to the vessel, mimicking the waving motion of clay on a sculptor’s wheel as the piece begins to show its form. The new sink is joined in the Veil collection by the Veil freestanding bath as well as a wall-hung toilet. The Veil collection is one of Kohler’s global offerings, featured in showrooms and Kohler Experience Centers around the world.
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