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200-948 Howe Street,  
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www.bcha.com

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President & CEO

**Mike Macleod**  
Director of Operations

**Karissa Bourgeault**  
Project Manager & Board Liaison

**Kelsey Millman**  
Communications Manager

**Samantha Glennie**  
Member Services Manager

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With 2023 nearly behind us, we reflect on the past year and look forward to the year ahead with hope and confidence. 2023 brought both record highs and record lows, and many of us in the hospitality industry faced challenges we had never imagined.

### Impact of Climate Change

The impact of climate change is undeniably a lasting concern, which means that our role as advocates for you will need to include a significant focus on risk mitigation and the establishment of systems to address crises. I am honoured to be part of the Emergency Preparedness Task Force as an advisor and will ensure that accommodators are actively involved in the system and its processes. I must acknowledge the incredible support our industry provided to BC residents by offering safe shelter during evacuations this past year. Our intention is to integrate this system into the broader crisis planning moving forward, with real-time outreach for evacuees. The support and responsiveness our industry demonstrated have not gone unnoticed, and I am deeply grateful to all of you who stepped up in times of crisis.

### Short-term Rental Legislation

We are greatly encouraged by the Ministry of Housing’s commitment to focus on affordable housing in the province, exemplified by the introduction of Bill 35. This landmark legislation incorporates BCHA’s four key recommendations for effectively regulating the short-term rental market. Thanks to our members and industry supporters, our work on research, data acquisition, and advocacy was made possible. Our goal has been clear: to repurpose the surplus of short-term rental accommodations into affordable long-term housing solutions so that BC residents and our workforce has access to affordable housing.

### Focus on Human Resources

It’s impossible to hire people to work if there is nowhere affordable for them to live. Increasingly, we hear that this is the primary reason for the lack of full employment. While we continue to innovate with hotel operations, such as chatbots, new technology, and AI automation, at the core of hospitality we remain in the people business. We continue to prioritize the human connection that is integral to our industry. The focus on training, upskilling, recruitment, and retention will only succeed if we are also successful in preserving affordable housing and the livability of our communities.

### Insurance

Insurance for our industry remains a significant challenge, and the current hard market is unsustainable. Please be aware that we are working diligently with our provincial partners to address this issue. We have consulted with experts on what the federal and provincial governments can do and have explored what other jurisdictions and industries are doing to control costs and ensure adequate coverage for businesses.

### 4% Growth Predicted

As 2024 approaches, experts are predicting 4% growth. What we need to concentrate on is the cost of doing business in our fair province. We are observing a return of the meeting sector, although there are more reports of meetings of smaller sizes. We will continue our research on the meeting and sports market as we have heard loud and clear that these segments are crucial components of the demand landscape and make significant contributions to hotels and communities across the province. ■



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# Leader of the Future: Jilly Haynes

Lauderer, Pacific Sands Beach Resort, Tofino

by Anne-Marie Fischer

Jilly Haynes says that the family she has built around her in Canada makes the days that she misses her family in Barbados a lot easier. Part of the housekeeping team at the slice of paradise known as Pacific Sands Beach Resort in Vancouver Island's Tofino, Haynes has found a strong support system among her co-workers and management. "It's like one big family here," she says.

## Promoting Opportunities for Cultural Exchange

Haynes arrived in Canada in August 2022 through a Memorandum of Understanding that the BC Hotel Association (BCHA) has with the Consulate General of Barbados to create a pathway for skilled, experienced workers to enter the hospitality industry in British Columbia. Through the Consulate General, Haynes, who worked in the hotel industry in Barbados since 1981 in housekeeping and in the kitchen, was given the opportunity to interview for a role in Canada to try something different.

"I didn't know anything about British Columbia, but I had heard people speak about it," she says. "I went online and looked up more about it. I'd never heard of Tofino until this program, so I was going in blindly." She jumped at the chance when she was offered a position at Pacific Sands Beach Resort.

## Bonding With Fellow Staff & BC's Nature

"When I got here, I loved it, because I love nature," she says of Tofino and Pacific Sands' incredible landscape which offers "front-row seats to nature's greatest waterpark." Haynes regularly goes on nature walks with her co-workers, and enjoyed a team whale-watching trip thanks to the creativity of her manager Cathy who places a high priority on finding ways for the team to bond. "She makes it really easy to like the job," Haynes says.

She works eight-hour shifts, five days a week, but she says that she gets opportunities to work overtime when they are really stretched in their housekeeping duties. She lives in a self-contained room in Pacific Sands' staff housing units, across the street from where she reports to work, and enjoys taking in the beauty around her on the five-minute walk to start her shift.



Courtesy of Jilly Haynes

What Haynes likes about the BC hotel industry is the great deal of cultural diversity that can be found among the international workforce in Tofino's hotels. "Meeting with people from around the world is one of the things I always like about the industry," she explains. "You get to share through them things about other countries that you've never heard of." As the only Barbadian on staff at Pacific Sands, Haynes loves sharing things about her country and culture with her co-workers and guests.

## A Long-term Journey

After just over a year in Canada, Haynes has decided that she wants to stay in Tofino long-term. She credits WhatsApp for allowing her to touch base with her daughter in Barbados several times a day, helping ease any homesickness she has. Haynes is keen to look for opportunities to advance among the staff at Pacific Sands, but for now, is taking her time and learning as much as she can from her management team.

Haynes has had the chance to visit some other parts of Vancouver Island, such as Nanaimo, Port Alberni, and nearby Ucluelet, and looks forward to more opportunities to explore the province.

Compassionate, and kind in her demeanour, Haynes is interested in seeing whether there are some opportunities to volunteer in the Tofino community. "My passion is to give back," she notes. She is particularly interested in helping the elderly or working with single parents. "I know the struggles," she states.

Pacific Sands is very lucky to have the dedication and skill of staff like Haynes. We wish her the very best in her career discovery within the BC hotel industry. ■



# Investing in Excellence

The Strategic Role of Employee Benefits and the Canadian Hospitality Health Plan.

by Kelsey Millman

Courtesy of BCHA



Courtesy of BCHA

In the dynamic realm of hospitality, where success hinges on guest experiences, the key to achievement lies in the dedicated individuals shaping each stay or dining encounter. In a sector notorious for high turnover rates, the strategic implementation of employee benefits is not just a human resources perk; it's a crucial tool for talent retention.

### The Hiring and Retention Challenge in Hospitality

The hospitality sector, spanning hotels, restaurants, tourism businesses, and entertainment venues, relies heavily on a frontline workforce—the face of the business. Retaining these pivotal team members has historically posed challenges due to irregular schedules and seasonal fluctuations. In today's competitive job market, attracting and retaining skilled individuals is an ongoing challenge. While employers respond to market demands and an inflated economy by increasing wages, they are simultaneously turning to additional solutions like expanding benefits to attract and retain top talent.

### Attracting Top Talent

For job seekers, employee benefits—including health insurance, dental coverage, and retirement plans—signal a commitment to well-being and job satisfaction. These benefits are not mere perks

but essential offerings that sway potential employees in favour of one employer over another.

In fact, a recent survey conducted by Glassdoor found that nearly 60% of employees consider benefits and perks a major factor when considering whether to accept a job offer. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) reported that about 92% of employees consider benefits important to their overall job satisfaction.



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### **Health, Wellness, and the COVID-19 Effect**

In the sometimes physically demanding hospitality sector, prioritizing employee health is not just a nicety; it's a necessity. Comprehensive health and wellness benefits, such as medical services, mental health support, and wellness programs, contribute to a healthier, happier, and more engaged workforce. Employers tailor benefits packages to address industry-specific challenges, resonating with employees and creating a sense of belonging.

According to a survey by Virgin Pulse, 87% of employees considered health and wellness offerings when choosing an employer. 61% said these programs would encourage them to stay with their current employer.

Among the many changes the COVID-19 pandemic brought forth, the pandemic unquestionably changed the modern-day workplace and employee expectations. With people confined to their homes, discussions surrounding mental health came to the forefront of companies' cultures, creating an increased focus on mental health support and flexible work arrangements.

As a result, a 2021 Mercer survey found that 73% of employers had plans to make changes to their well-being programs in response to the pandemic.

### **The Impact on Retention**

In the dynamic hospitality sector, retention stands as a cornerstone for operational stability and success. The ongoing recruitment and training costs associated with new staff not only strain finances but also disrupt seamless service delivery, underscoring the need for effective employee retention strategies.

Recognizing the pivotal role of employee benefits in talent retention is crucial. These benefits go beyond mere budget considerations; they are strategic investments aimed at fostering a stable and experienced workforce. In an industry where service excellence is paramount, retaining skilled employees holds value beyond immediate financial concerns. It ensures a cohesive and proficient team, contributing to the consistent delivery of exceptional guest experiences and the long-term prosperity of the business.

### **A Hotel-Owned Solution**

Recognizing the importance of employee benefits, in 2022, the British Columbia Hotel Association (BCHA) partnered with the Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) to conduct





Courtesy of BCHA

a thorough review of employee benefit programs offered within the industry.

“As part of our employee benefits review, we spoke with accommodation operators across BC and resoundingly heard of a need for a dependable and affordable employee benefits program,” says Ingrid Jarrett, BCHA President and CEO. “One key objective of ours was to determine if a new program could be created to offer increased value through a collective ownership model. We quickly came to learn that there is an exceptional opportunity for members to leverage their group purchasing power through a new industry-owned program.”

In November 2023, the associations announced a new partnership with Avance Insurance Services, whose team has supported the formation of the Canadian Hospitality Health Plan (CHHP)—a new hotel-owned program that will reduce costs and offer a higher calibre of service to employees.

With two decades of experience specializing in hospitality insurance, Avance manages the CHHP with an in-depth understanding of the unique needs and challenges faced by the hospitality industry. Through Avance’s facilitation, the program

delivers custom group benefit packages that help participating organizations of all sizes get the most value for their benefits’ spend today and over the long term.

The CHHP’s administration and claims payment services are provided by Johnston Group, a platinum member of Canada’s Best Managed Companies. As a leader in benefits administration and claims payment services, Johnston Group ensures that employees are well-supported with prompt service and best-in-class technology.

“This is a solution made by hotels, for hotels. And by working with the AHLA, we are able to provide even better value and rate stability,” says Jarrett.

### The Impact of Ownership Benefits

CHHP introduces a paradigm shift with ownership benefits, offering businesses the opportunity to participate in a collective effort. Surpluses generated don’t disappear into an insurance company’s coffers but directly benefit the participating businesses. This unique approach ensures increased cost savings through collective negotiation power, eliminating insurer mark-ups. In addition, the program’s commitment to cost stabilization is embodied in its forward-thinking “Aggregated Benefits Model”, fostering financial efficiency and stability from the get-go.

### Industry-Made Benefits

As a result of being a hotel-owned program, CHHP has been designed to cater specifically to the nuanced needs of the hospitality industry. The program provides tailored coverage, addressing industry-specific challenges and ensuring comprehensive and relevant benefits.

CHHP also opens doors to enhanced services beyond conventional benefits’ structures that are critical to employee retention. Participants can seamlessly access telemedicine, mental health services, and a user-friendly web portal. The emphasis here is not just on benefits but on creating an enriched and simplified experience for both administrators and employees.

Participants in CHHP can also enjoy the added advantage of association oversight. This ensures transparency and accountability, with a dedicated focus on overall program performance and member satisfaction. The program aligns its goals with the genuine success and satisfaction of its members, adding a layer of trust and reliability.

### Your Ticket to Retention

In the hospitality sector, where service excellence is non-negotiable, the value of offering employee benefits transcends traditional notions of perks. It is a strategic investment in the heart of the industry—the dedicated individuals who transform an experience into a memorable moment. Businesses prioritizing and tailoring employee benefits will not only attract but retain the talent fuelling their success.

To get started and expand your employee benefits, visit [www.chhp.ca](http://www.chhp.ca) or contact Avance Insurance Services at 1-866-744-1632 or [info@avancegroup.ca](mailto:info@avancegroup.ca). ■



# 2024 British Columbia **Hotel** **Outlook**

by Nicole Nguyen

Courtesy of Destination BC

## British Columbia

4%

RevPAR Growth vs 2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023F	2024F
Occupancy	71%	37%	50%	68%	71%	71%
ADR	\$192	\$146	\$161	\$213	\$234	\$241
RevPAR	\$136	\$54	\$80	\$144	\$166	\$172



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In 2024, the province of British Columbia, much like the rest of the country, is expected to see RevPAR growth of 4%. While this is a more modest level than during the “recovery” phase following the pandemic, it is still considered to be good year-over-year growth.

With segmentation stability returning and travel patterns normalizing, in general, supply and demand fundamentals are expected to remain in balance with approximately 1% supply growth across the

province, and similar growth in demand. The large majority of the supply growth in the province, approximately 500 new rooms, is expected to come from markets outside of Metro Vancouver, where supply in 2024 is expected to be virtually unchanged from 2023.

**RevPAR growth is projected at 4% in 2024.**

### Demand Trends

With respect to demand, the last several years have seen a larger share than normal of occupied room nights being driven by leisure

## Metro Vancouver Overall

4%

RevPAR Growth vs 2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023F	2024F
Occupancy	80%	32%	48%	74%	80%	81%
ADR	\$219	\$147	\$167	\$237	\$270	\$279
RevPAR	\$175	\$47	\$80	\$175	\$216	\$226



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Courtesy of Destination BC

travellers who were eager to take vacations once restrictions were eased and then removed all together. This continued to be true in 2023, however, as domestic travellers started to go abroad, the BC market saw an increase in US and International travellers offsetting any losses. The strong leisure demand was supported by meeting/conference demand as groups resumed and ramped up on in-person events. In 2024, leisure and meeting/conference demand is expected to normalize and steady increases in corporate travel will help to drive 1% demand growth across the province. Occupancy in BC is projected to hold steady at 71% in 2024, while Metro Vancouver occupancy will increase by 1 point to 81%, pushing just slightly ahead of 2019 levels.

### ADR Growth

While not unique to BC, the ADR growth over the last several years has been a driving force behind the province and Metro Vancouver's recovering to 2019 RevPAR levels in 2022. The province is projected to see another 10% ADR growth in 2023, followed by 3% growth in 2024, and increasing to \$241, almost \$49 ahead of 2019. Overall RevPAR growth is projected at 4% in 2024, to finish at \$172, an improvement of 26% over 2019 levels.

Similarly, Metro Vancouver is poised to see ADR growth of 14% in 2023 and 3% in 2024, improving to \$279, more than \$59 ahead of 2019. As with the province, the metropolitan area is projected to realize 4% RevPAR growth in 2024 increasing to \$225, more than 28% ahead of 2019 levels.

BC was the first to recover to 2019 levels and is expected to lead the country with the strongest top-line performance for any province in 2024. ■

*Nicole Nguyen is Senior Vice President at CBRE Hotels.*



# Improving Staff Retention

by Kevin Woolliams

There are multiple great reasons why an organization would aspire to have high retention rates of employees. As a service-orientated occupation, hospitality providers are very interested in creating an improved customer experience. Our long-term employees are much more likely to provide the best information to our guests in an efficient and effective manner. Think about your own experiences as a guest. It can be a truly pleasurable experience to have a server perfectly describe a bottle or wine or an entrée. Conversely, it can be grating and destroy a dining experience when a server does not even have a favourite dish on the menu and cannot explain the key elements of the entrées on offer.

The benefits expand to other areas of the business as well. An experienced front desk agent is more likely to be able to troubleshoot and fix system problems or seamlessly help a guest with the TV remote. Your experienced maintenance person knows the difference between the “tic-tic-tic” and a “tic-knock-tic” that emanates from your boiler (and who to call for repairs at 5:00 am).

From a human resource perspective, higher retention rates equate to lower recruitment, training, and associated staffing costs. In short, there are strong reasons to enhance your retention rates whether you are looking at it from an operations, guest service, or human resources lens.

Following are some time-proven ideas to improve retention at your hotel.

## Create Career Growth Opportunities

Many long-term employees have mastered the core elements of their “regular” job and are looking for ways to expand their knowledge of your business and add value in new ways. When researching examples of career growth for this article, two areas of success stuck out.

The first example is in kitchens. In a tradition dating back to the 1890s, the Escoffier “brigade de cuisine” gives kitchen staff the opportunity to excel in their own positions and grow into and learn other positions. No-one starts as an executive chef in a kitchen; kitchens are instead set up to give employees a path, for those who are interested, to grow from a part-time dishwasher to the next celebrity chef. This type of system does not need to be restricted to kitchens—there are multiple opportunities to plan structured paths both inside and across departments in your hotel.

The second successful implementation of a career path was in the broader front desk areas of hotels. Sub-paths associated with the front desk were offered and accepted by interested employees. Some of the sub-paths, which were essentially add-ons to the existing front desk work, were in areas like social media, revenue management, being the point person for OTAs, and taking on meaningful accounting/finance tasks. Many of these arrangements included premiums for doing the extra work, but those who were interested in growing their career in hospitality appreciated the challenge of new and different tasks. That opportunity was seen as a sign of management trust and a reason for staying with their employer.

## Creating a Positive Work Environment

There are many simple things your competitors are doing to create a positive work environment in their business. One theme that our research revealed was enhancing, improving, or just better



communicating what you already do. Independent properties that had reciprocal staff rates with other independent properties had positive feedback for just reminding staff about the availability of reciprocal rate agreements (or communicating with them after adding a new hotel partner).

Other things you can do to enhance your working atmosphere is to provide new staff menus, put fresh paint and new lighting in staff areas, making sure everyone has a locker (either by taking back lockers from people with two or three lockers or adding new lockers to match the staff count) and getting employee input into new uniforms.

Reasonable no and low-cost options will not appeal to all employees—no program will ever appeal to everyone—but they will send strong signals that you care about your employees and the environment they work in. If you do get nay-sayers about improvements to your existing programs, use that as an opportunity to have them included in future programs to improve the workplace and be sure to implement those ideas.

## Recognizing Employee Achievements

Managers often overlook and undervalue recognition as a way to improve retention. Our guidance to clients ends up in two parallel paths: find ways to connect your goals to employee goals and keep the goals for employees fresh and interesting. You want the achievements of employees to be meaningful to both the employee and the business.

If you want the business to achieve higher ADR or RevPAR, then find ways to have your employees help you do that. Ensure you positively share results with staff and revise strategies quarterly or monthly (just like you would change your marketing budget/



tactics regularly).

If you want to reduce waste in the kitchen, find ways to have your employees participate in reducing waste and recognize them when they do.

### Offering Competitive Compensation

Up until inflation spiking in late 2022, 30 years of low inflation created an environment where compensation was often an afterthought or at least outside of the top five issues to consider for retention; almost everyone was playing in the same ballpark.

Compared to some of the other retention ideas mentioned, changes to compensation can quickly add up. However, the

changes to minimum wage in BC, inflationary pressures, and a stagnant (or even shrinking) labour market should push compensation considerations into the forefront of your business and human resources strategy. Consider the positive ties to retention when you start to amplify your compensation package.

There is no one size fits all for either the 'why' or the 'how' of retention. Our experience and feedback from hotels indicate when you take care to understand why you want to increase retention, the solutions are easier to find and are a better fit for your business. ■

*Kevin Woolliams is Managing Director at HR West and can be reached at [kevin@hrwest.ca](mailto:kevin@hrwest.ca).*



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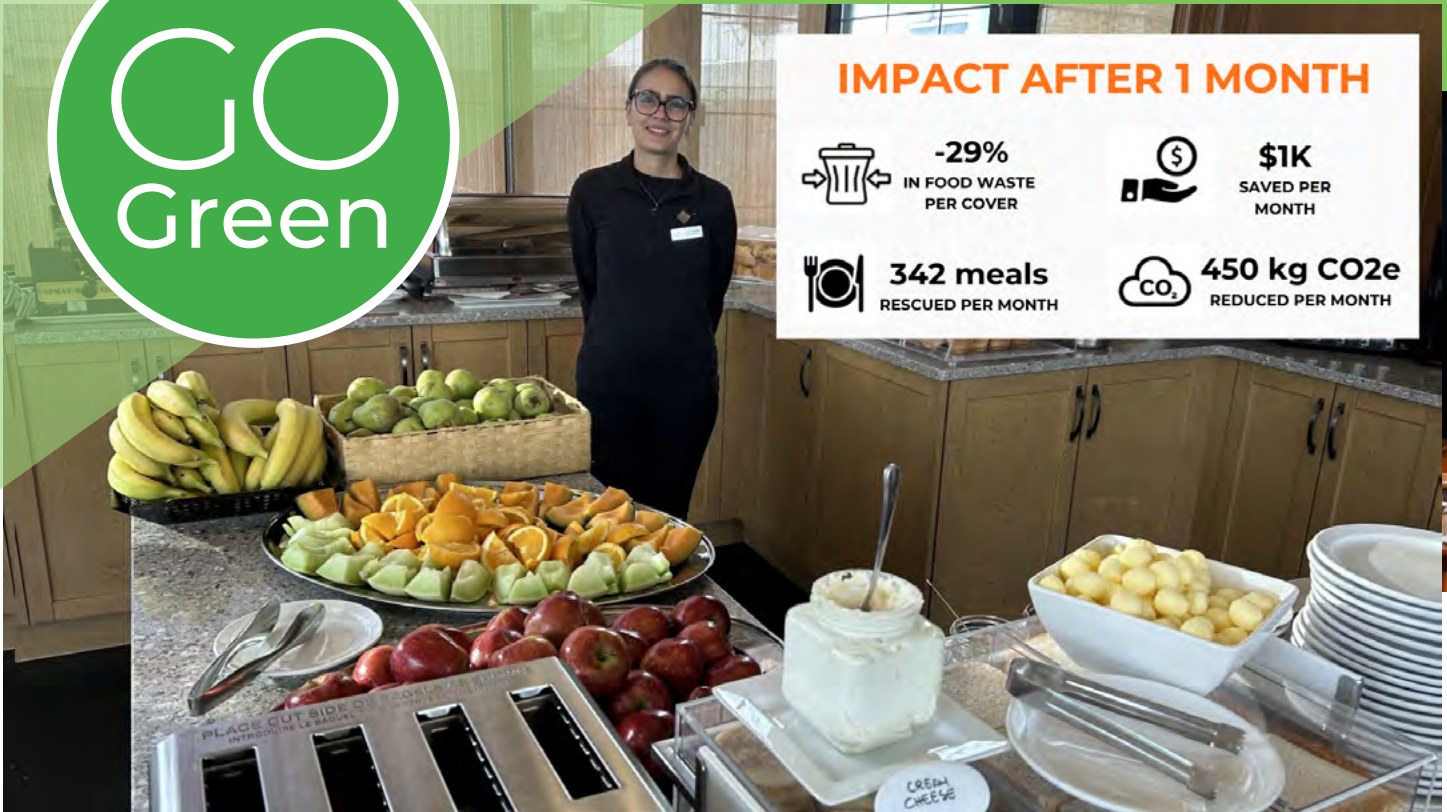
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Courtesy of BetterTable.ca

# The Benefits of Food Efficiency for Hotels: A Case Study

by Ben Liegey

In today's world, sustainability is gaining increasing importance. This case study explores the benefits that can be gained from reducing food waste to achieve a triple bottom line.

Huntingdon Manor Hotel, in Victoria, has 113 guest rooms and a complimentary breakfast buffet. Certified Green Key 4 stars and Biosphere certified, the property is committed to going green. However, during the pandemic, the hotel changed the breakfast restaurant from a-la-carte to buffet, as it was very difficult to find the early morning breakfast servers and skilled line cooks. This came with the challenge of having some guests take more than what they needed, increasing operation costs.

By doing a 3-day BetterTable Food Audit in June 2023, they've been able to adjust their buffet practices reducing food waste by 29%. Erin Cassels, General Manager at Huntingdon Manor Hotel, says, "The food efficiency audit has allowed us to pinpoint opportunities to decrease our food cost and identified gaps in

training and efficiency within our culinary team." The food audit had the following benefits:

## Better Profitability

BC F&B operations spend on average \$51,000 on food that is never eaten, or 7% of food revenues. By reducing food waste, the Huntingdon Manor Hotel significantly reduced its operating costs. This is even more important now, with food inflation. Through careful food waste monitoring, online training for 13 employees, change in plate size and buffet redesign, and improved communication, the hotel was able to save \$1,000 per month. Additionally, by selling surplus, the hotel was able to generate additional revenue.

"Learning from BetterTable.ca about food saving tips and how to minimize waste is one of the best lessons that every kitchen staff needs," says Noel Andes, Head Chef at Huntingdon Manor Hotel.



Courtesy of BetterTable.ca

### Better Climate Impact

According to the UN, in 2019 8-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions were associated with food that was not consumed. That's four times the carbon footprint of the aviation industry! The food waste reduction achieved at the Huntingdon Manor Hotel enabled them to save 450 kg CO2e per month. A significant reduction to help move towards Net Zero.

Cassels says, "Anyone in a position to decrease the carbon footprint of the restaurant industry has a moral obligation to do so. Food waste contributes so much to emissions and there is a huge opportunity to reduce this impact. BetterTable.ca offers a hands-on customized tool kit to do just that."

### Better Reputation

Beyond financial gains, the Huntingdon Manor Hotel's commitment to reducing food waste has a positive social impact, saving the equivalent of 343 meals per month. The hotel is on track to achieve SDG 12.3: reducing food waste by 50% by 2030, while getting ready for upcoming food waste regulations. The property's commitment to reducing food waste enhanced its reputation in the industry and among guests. This positive perception attracts guests and staff.

Julia Canton, Director of Sales & Marketing / Sustainability Manager at the hotel notes, "It's really important to measure the different types of food waste."

The Huntingdon Manor Hotel's success in reducing food waste serves as a powerful case study illustrating the benefits for hotels. The F&B operation achieved cost savings, enhanced its reputation, and reduced its carbon footprint. This case study demonstrates that preventing food waste is a powerful way to achieve a triple bottom line. Learn more: <https://BetterTable.ca/shortcast>

If you want to leverage the power of a BetterTable Food Audit, apply for the Vancity grant and get \$1,500 and a chance to win \$10,000: <https://BetterTable.ca/vancity>. ■



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# Sunshine Coast

## 180-km Stretch of Paradise

by Danielle Leroux

The Sunshine Coast is a 180-km stretch of paradise tucked into the southwest corner of mainland British Columbia. It is only accessible by ferry, boat, or plane.

Home to unique accommodations and vibrant communities, the Sunshine Coast has something for everyone.

### Untapped Destination in Our Backyard

“The Sunshine Coast is easy. It is right in our backyard. You can get into remote wilderness pretty quickly from the North or South Coast,” says Andrea Wickham-Foxwell, Communications Manager at Sunshine Coast Tourism. “It is one of the best places to go because it is still reasonably undiscovered.”

Jack Barr, President of Powell River Town Centre Inc., Owner of the Beach Gardens Resort & Marina, and Past President of Sunshine Coast Tourism has been going to the Sunshine Coast since the 1960s and has a clear passion for the region.

“I remember being in the Mediterranean and going on the bus from Nice to Monaco. I thought, this is really beautiful but realized that what we have on the coast is equally beautiful. It may not be 1,000 years old, but it has amazing potential for growth,” he says.

Despite its proximity to the Lower Mainland—a 40-minute ferry ride from Horseshoe Bay in West Vancouver—Barr says most people he encounters have never been to the Sunshine Coast.

Courtesy of Sunshine Coast Tourism by Brayden Hall



Courtesy of Rockwater Resort



“It is another world that is so close to us,” he adds.

Wickham-Foxwell says the Sunshine Coast also offers a strong health and wellness feeling for visitors at a fairly affordable price. “It is the type of place where you go to unplug, escape, and relax. We have a lot of really lovely and unique communities that love where they live and want to share it with other people,” she adds.

While many come to relax, the region has also seen a rise in remote workers post-pandemic.

## Unique Activities

“Bringing your family to the coast can be such a great learning experience,” Wickham-Foxwell notes. “There are a lot of great things for families to do like hiking, mountain biking, or visiting the touch tanks at Gibsons Public Market.”

The Sunshine Coast is also a prime destination for food lovers as well as arts and culture enthusiasts. It is home to the highest per capita populations of artists and crafters in Canada.

“If you’re driving around and see a purple flag outside someone’s home, that is an artist’s studio and it is open for people to come and see it,” Wickham-Foxwell explains. “You could end up in a really cool gallery or a place tucked away that you would never have known about.”

Sunshine Coast Art Tours offers art studio visits as well as distillery and brewery tours. Every October, the Sunshine Coast Art Crawl takes place, a weekend-long event that sees hundreds of artists, along with studios, galleries, and other venues open their doors to the public.

The winter season is quieter, and some attractions, accommodations, and restaurants may be closed. However, there are

fun activities to do in the winter, including snowshoeing or cross-country skiing at Dakota Ridge. “They have great rates and cozy, funky accommodation,” Wickham-Foxwell says.

## A Vibe for Everybody

The Sunshine Coast has accommodations that would fit anyone’s vibe. One of these special places is the Rockwater Secret Cove Resort in Halfmoon Bay.

“What makes it outstanding is our tenthouse suites and the piece of property that the resort sits on,” Karen Maxwell says. She does social media and marketing for the property and her family was one of the original owners.

Nestled among the arbutus trees and overlooking Secret Cove, the property opens onto an endless view of the Pacific Ocean. “Not many places in BC sit on a horizontal property like ours,” Maxwell explains. Equipped with hydrotherapy jacuzzi tubs, heated slate floors, a king size bed, rainforest shower, and the ‘whole nine yards,’ the tenthouses offer a unique glamping experience.

Offering a more corporate experience, Powell River Town Centre Hotel is in the hub of town and is Powell River’s only full-service hotel. “We have newly renovated banquet facilities, a fully licensed restaurant and pub, and have done very well in this location,” Barr says. “What isn’t there to do in Powell River? If you want that work-life balance, not to mention highspeed Internet access, and you’re an outdoors person, you are going to like it.”

For an affordable, easy escape from daily life, visit the Sunshine Coast. As Maxwell says, “It feels like a different era, you feel like you’re a thousand miles away, not 80 minutes.” ■



Courtesy of Sunshine Coast Tourism by Brice Shirbach



Courtesy of Rockwater Resort



Courtesy of Sunshine Coast Tourism by Shayd Johnson



# Affordable Housing Solutions for Staff

by Danielle Leroux

It is no secret that finding affordable and available housing for staff is a growing and significant issue for businesses.

Amidst a labour shortage, the impact of the short-term rental market, escalating housing costs, and inflation have made it very challenging for employees to find suitable accommodation, particularly in resort communities.

The BC Hotel Association and other tourism industry associations are actively advocating at the various levels of government for solutions. Hoteliers and municipalities are also pursuing their own creative solutions.

## Housing Staff in the Hotel

Some hotels and resorts in the province have put temporary foreign workers in rooms to make sure they have enough staff to get through busy seasons.

For instance, at the Hotel Grand Pacific, General Manager Reid James says, “We have eight people living in the hotel in rooms that we can’t sell anyways. It is a tricky market for people to find housing.”

Close to 30% of their workforce is on work visas. Workers end up living all over Victoria in different housing situations.

The hotel offers its workers an afford-

able price for room and board. “We have a lounge and we put in a microwave, rice cooker, fridges, etc. Workers are able to make breakfast. We give them a special price for dinner and they get an inexpensive staff meal at lunch,” James explains.

If other hotels are considering this, James says, “You have to make it an attractive, affordable package for workers. You need to make it worth their while.”

## Building Staff Housing

Sun Peaks Resort, which owns and operates the Sun Peaks Grand Hotel and Conference Centre, is building its own housing for staff with a new \$12 million investment.

Sun Peaks already allocates hotel rooms to staff. “We have a strong foundation of staff accommodations that was already in place,” says Aidan Kelly, Chief Marketing Officer. “There are over 300 beds allocated for team members between the resort and the Sun Peaks Grand organization.”

However, staffing needs ramp up in the winter and the company has to balance the needs of seasonal versus year-round staff.

This is what led them to the new project they’re fully funding as a company. “It is a \$12 million investment in a new condo building that will have 58 suites available,” Kelly says. “The difference is that these are all individual micro-suites, not dorm-style seasonal staff housing. These will appeal to staff who are working on a more year-round basis.”

The company hopes that this investment will also support the wider community.

“As a private company and the biggest employer in Sun Peaks we have a strong role to play in our community in creating affordable and available staff accommodation,” Kelly explains. “In theory, the more staff accommodations that we can provide, the less pressure there is on the open market for other businesses to find places for their staff.”

## Tips for Hoteliers

For hotels and resorts that are looking at affordable housing options for staff, Kelly offers three tips:

1. Identify housing as a key corporate priority alongside your other important infrastructure priorities. This allows you to give the issue the attention it needs.

2. Know that you are not in full control of all elements but can influence and make an impact. “There are all types of factors that go into housing, hotels don’t control the housing market,” Kelly says. “You have to make sure you can communicate, learn, and apply creative thinking and capital.”

3. Remember that happy team members lead to happy guests. “We know how important it is for staff to have housing and a good experience so we can run our business,” Kelly adds.

He acknowledges, “There is no singular solution. There are a number of elements that need to work together for forward progress—from the availability of land and zoning regulations to construction costs and the different types of housing needed for different groups of staff.”

Plus, every municipality is different. For instance, the challenges of Sun Peaks or Whistler may be very different than Burnaby or Vancouver. The municipal housing authority in Sun Peaks is looking at medium and long-term solutions for housing but the resort needed a more immediate solution.

You also need the right capital resources in place. To find out about government funding opportunities, Kelly encourages businesses to be plugged in with the different levels of government and local tourism and industry associations.

### MRDT Funds Victoria Housing Project

A recent announcement out of Victoria underscores the importance of partnerships and community collaboration in addressing these issues.

In September, Victoria City Council approved the Greater Victoria Housing Society’s request for \$2.5 million from the Victoria Housing Reserve Fund to assist with the construction of a 40-unit affordable workforce housing project in the city.

The \$2.5 million in funds were collected by Destination Greater Victoria through their Online Accommodation Platform (OAP) Municipal Regional District Tax (MRDT) revenue allocated for affordable housing purposes. In return for this funding contribution, the Greater Victoria Housing Society will prioritize housing units within the building for hotel and hospitality workers.

Other tourism associations, such as Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism Association are requesting their municipalities do the same.

### Short-Term Accommodations Act

Positive policy change could be on the way. On October 16, 2023, BC’s Premier David Eby and Housing Minister Ravi Kahlon announced the *Short-Term Accommodations Act*. The new legislation will triple the fines for hosts who break the rules and bring in a number of new requirements for operators in an attempt to return units to the long-term market.

Until then, Kelly encourages hoteliers to be part of the solution. “Without significant investment, this is going to continue to be a scaling issue,” he says. “That’s why we’re pushing hard, working with our municipality’s housing authority, and putting in the multi-million dollar investment now. You have to keep your foot on the gas—it is not getting better any time soon. You have to be a willing player and participant and be part of the solution.” ■



# 10 Tips When Hiring International Workers

by Jose Duarte



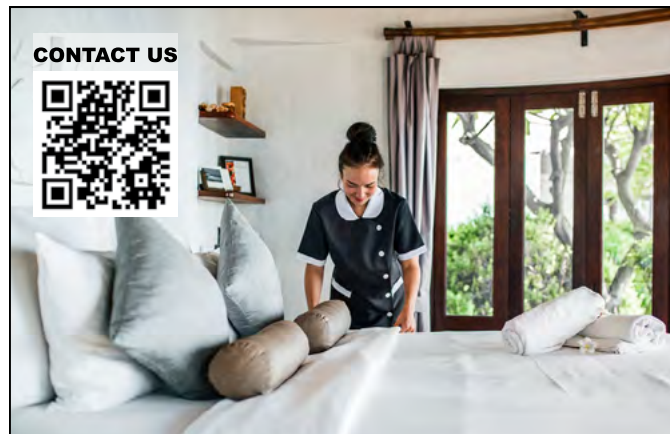


In today's competitive business landscape, hiring international workers has become a strategic imperative for organizations seeking to diversify their workforce and tap into global talent pools. For human resource professionals and business owners in the tourism and hospitality sector, understanding the intricate process of hiring international talent through the government framework in Canada is essential. Following is a roadmap for successfully hiring international workers and integrating newcomers into British Columbia.

**1. Define Job Requirements and Roles:** Before embarking on the process, it's crucial to define the roles and responsibilities of the positions you intend to fill with international workers. Ensure that these roles align with your organization's specific needs.

**2. Foster Cultural Sensitivity:** Begin by having open conversations with your management team about the importance of cultural sensitivity and open-mindedness. Different cultures may interpret questions and behaviours differently, so clarity on expectations is essential.

**3. Navigate Immigration Requirements:** International hiring involves immigration procedures. If possible, partner with a recruitment agency with expertise in the target country or customize the job position accordingly. Prepare the Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) application if the position you are searching for is eligible for that. Read the application and complete all the steps meticulously. Include comprehensive information about the job positions, wages, and the recruitment process. Ensure that your application complies with prevailing



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wage rates and is accurate in all aspects. Seek guidance from an immigration expert or lawyer.

**4. Tailor Job Postings:** When crafting job postings, ensure they are written in a way that resonates with candidates from various cultural backgrounds. If posting outside of Canada, keep the language clear and concise. Consult with someone from that country to ensure the job details are well understood.

**5. Recruiting Process:** Start with an effective screening process. Develop five to 10 pre-screening questions that assess not only technical skills but also soft skills and cultural fit. Finding candidates

## If posting outside Canada, keep the language clear and concise.

who align with your organization's values and culture is crucial for long-term success.

**6. Communication, Attitude, and Language Proficiency:** Conduct language testing and offer language courses if necessary. Effective communication is essential in the hospitality sector, and providing language support will help new hires integrate and perform better.

**7. Technical Interviews and Team Fit:** Allow potential hires to spend time with their future team and managers to assess if they are a good fit. Consider involving outgoing staff in the interview process by asking them to assist in preparing interviews or case



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studies. Team members can then provide valuable feedback.

**8. Extend the Job Offer:** Once you've found the right candidate, offer the job formally. Provide all necessary documentation and set clear expectations. Also, offer information about the local economy, housing, and support for candidates with families, if applicable. If you are using an LMIA, confirm the rules to proceed with the job offer.

**9. Work Permit Application:** International workers must apply for work permits from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Ensure they understand the requirements and process for obtaining their work permits.

**10. Warm Welcome, On-boarding, and Integration:** Once the international workers receive their work permits, focus on a smooth onboarding process. Provide the necessary training and support to help them integrate into your organization and the Canadian culture, especially within the unique context of the tourism and hospitality sector. Take care of their family as well if they are moving with them. Assign a mentor or a contact person to help the new hire during their first week. Regular check-ins can provide valuable insights into their adaptation process. Offer advice on local resources, including




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


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The COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial impact on immigration processes and policies in Canada,

## Assign a mentor or a contact person to help the new hire.

including BC. These changes, along with other factors like economic conditions and labour market demands, can influence the availability of work permits and the eligibility criteria for international workers. Keep in mind that the situation may continue to evolve in 2024.

In an industry that thrives on providing exceptional experiences to diverse groups of people, hiring international workers can

bring a multitude of benefits. These steps not only guide you in attracting global talent but also in retaining and integrating them effectively into your workplace. A culturally diverse workforce can introduce

new traditions, knowledge, and ideas that contribute to better results and a stronger, more dynamic organization.

As the world becomes more multicultural, the tourism and hospitality sector in BC has the opportunity to lead the way by embracing international talent. Remember, a good place to work will always be a good place to be. ■

**New Members**

The BC Hotel Association is proud to welcome these new members:

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**Accommodation Members:**

- Oceanside, a Coast Hotel
- Sandy Beach Suites
- The Vic, Ascend Hotel Collection

**Community Members:**

- Soap for Hope Canada

**Appointments**

Bighorn Meadows Resort has proudly announced the appointment of Julia Blakley as General Manager. With seven years of dedicated service within the Bighorn Meadows family, Julia's journey from Guest Services Manager



Julia Blakley



Jared Sissons

to Assistant General Manager reflects her unwavering commitment and exceptional work ethic.

Jared Sissons is returning to Atlicof Hotels & Resorts in the role of General Manager at Walnut Beach Resort in Osoyoos. He was previously GM of Whistler Village Inn + Suites.

**Congratulations**

Kudos to the outstanding BC resorts featured in *Conde Nast Traveler's* 2023 Readers' Choice Awards for the Best Resorts category! Led by Nita Lake Lodge Resort & Spa in Whistler at #1, Wickaninnish Inn, Brentwood Bay Resort,

Four Seasons Resort and Residences Whistler, and Fairmont Chateau Whistler all earned well-deserved recognition for their exceptional hospitality and unforgettable experiences.

The Westin Bayshore, Vancouver won the Best Prime Location Award in Canada in the 2023 Haute Grandeur Global Hotel Awards. Established in 2014, these awards recognize top-rated hotels around the world that offer exceptional customer service, high standards in all aspects of the hotel, and unparalleled experiences for their guests. What makes these awards different is that they're based on feedback from guests—not quantity of votes, nor selection by a panel of industry judges.

Fairmont Waterfront proudly became Canada's inaugural hotel to earn IGLTA accreditation, solidifying its dedication to LGBTQ+ inclusivity. This accreditation demonstrates genuine, action-based support for LGBTQ+ travellers. ■

**The Hotel Association of Canada**

and the American Hotel & Lodging Association have signed a Letter of Intent to form a joint venture company that will own and operate the Green Key Global certification program in Canada and the United States. This represents a pivotal moment for environmental action in the hotel industry. Green Key's certification criteria are recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and aligned with all 17 of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. <http://www.greenkeyglobal.com>

**Western Financial Group** continues to innovate in the hospitality insurance marketplace by protecting restaurants, hotels, motels, and liquor stores in a unique way. The company's brand-new website has the tools and information to help keep a hospitality business safe and protected. [www.westernfinancialgroup.ca/hip](http://www.westernfinancialgroup.ca/hip)

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**Eden Textile** is adding a Twill Box Spring Wrap to its in-stock offering, after years of manufacturing the product on a made-to-order basis. Available this December, the launch means faster order fulfillment and is the perfect complement to Eden's new decorative top sheets for hoteliers embracing triple sheeting. [EdenTextile.ca](http://EdenTextile.ca)

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Courtesy of Erin Cassels

# HOTELIER FEATURE: Erin Cassels

General Manager of Huntingdon Manor  
Hotel & Pendray Inn and Tea House

by Danielle Leroux

Erin Cassels was born into the hospitality industry. “My parents were hoteliers and restaurateurs. I was quite literally raised in the hospitality industry on Vancouver Island,” she says. “When we were growing up, we played more in hotel kitchens and boardrooms than we did playgrounds.”

While Cassels jokingly says she spent the first 30 years of her life trying to get out of hospitality, she found her way back to the industry. “I love hospitality because it is different every day. There is always an opportunity to make a difference.”

## Becoming General Manager

Since 2013, Cassels has been the General Manager of Huntingdon Manor Hotel & Pendray Inn and Tea House, an English country-style hotel located in the heart of Victoria, BC. “I joined Huntingdon Manor when new owners took it on,” she says. “Prior to that, it had been through a few years of receivership since the last recession. The property is in such a beautiful location and is home to three gorgeous heritage buildings. It has so much potential, it just needed some care.”

It has been a long journey to build the property back up. “Our work is never done here. We are always improving. By the time we finish on one end we start back at the beginning again. The management team has developed into a group of leaders who are passionate about building things and improving spaces. It takes a certain type of person who sees potential in things,” she notes.

## Owning a Restaurant

Prior to 2013, Cassels and her husband, Chef Robert Cassels, owned a restaurant called In Flavour. It closed due to a fire in December 2012.

“My husband opened Saveur after that and we decided because we have kids we would split careers—I would move out of the restaurant industry and its long hours, evenings, and unpredictability. I went into hotels,” she says.

## Giving Back to Community

Giving back to her community and taking care of the environment are Cassels’ core values. “I strongly believe that sustainability is the only way forward for tourism and hospitality,” she says. “BC had the most devastating forest fires on record in 2023. We are seeing firsthand the impact of climate change on tourism.”

The property has a big vision for sustainability and Cassels sits on several sustainability committees. She acknowledges that it can be challenging for hotels to know where to start with sustainability.

“We started with the lowest hanging fruit. With the leadership of our Director of Sales & Marketing and Sustainability Manager, Julia Canton, we’ve become Biosphere Certified, and are working on our 5th Green Key this year,” Cassels says. “Sustainability must be embedded in your company culture on every level. It isn’t easy—it’s a journey of constantly seeking ways to do things better, to buy better, and to find ways to be better community members.”

Huntingdon Manor is deeply invested in its staff and community. For instance, during the pandemic they transformed unused land into the Dr. Bonnie Henry Commemorative Community Garden. Originally a temporary 12-plot project, it has grown into a permanent community garden with 25 plots, including three that are accessible.

## Future Plans

As she looks to the future, Cassels says there is still work to be done on the property. “It’s a huge property with so many moving parts and there is still so much to do.” She also wants to build on their community initiatives and continue to give back. “I am very honoured to be part of building a better future for tourism in our destination—my hometown.” ■



## BCHA MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

by Mike Macleod, Director of Operations

As we approach the end of 2023, we are beginning to hear forecasts for 2024 from various industry sources and forecasting experts. Most agree that growth will be in the 4% range, and several indicators, such as airport visitation statistics, Forward STR, and conference and event schedules, indicate a healthy overall picture. However, pressures persist in terms of profitability, with inflationary costs affecting the prices of everything associated with running a hotel, which continues to erode the bottom line. The result is a challenging environment in which operators are forced to maintain high service levels with fewer resources.

With this landscape in mind, we have started working on our program for the 2024 BCHA Summit, focusing on profitability, flexible training options, and a strong networking opportunity to share best practices and build stronger vendor relationships. The BCHA Summit is set to be the premier hotel operations conference of 2024, and we have chosen Whistler as the backdrop for the event on May 1 and 2.

To tackle the challenges of 2024 head-on, we are putting together a robust program centered around operational execution, best practices, technology, and forward thinking. In addition to providing updates on today's top issues, our aim is to ensure that all attendees leave with tangible, useful information that they can implement at their properties immediately upon their return.

Addressing workforce constraints, training new employees, and promoting the advancement and development of our accommodation talent are also significant solutions to today's challenges. With this in mind, we will be introducing a development learning track at this year's Summit. This track will feature a concentrated, hands-on learning approach with specific outcomes outlined for all attendees. This unique approach is designed to encourage more participation from a broader audience, offering tangible opportunities and fostering a community around today's key issues. Attendees of the development learning track will be full conference attendees; however, they will have a customized experience over the two days of the event.

A popular component of the Summit is always the Vendor Marketplace. This gathering will feature over 50 BCHA allied members who will provide the latest information on their products and services, as well as offer a dedicated networking

opportunity to build relationships. These relationships will be of critical importance as we navigate 2024, and there is no better place to connect with and meet everyone who matters.

Finally, recognizing and celebrating the best in our industry is vital for building careers, legacies, and industry reputation. Once again, the BCHA Awards of Excellence will be presented during a gala dinner that will conclude the conference.

The benefits of building a community and networks have never been greater, and BCHA is committed to providing meaningful content and excellent networking set against the backdrop of the best that BC has to offer. Whistler will be an outstanding host, and we look forward to the conference at the Fairmont Chateau Whistler, with the welcome reception at the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre.

We will release registration and program information in early January, and we hope that you will mark your calendars and encourage members of your team to join the development track. ■

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