



BRITISH COLUMBIA
HOTEL ASSOCIATION

InnFocus

SPRING 2026

From workforce realities
to global opportunity,

BC HOTELS RISE TO THE MOMENT

ALL EYES ON THE ISLAND

Inside the 2026
BCHA Summit

BUILDING FOR DEMAND

Why some BC cities need
more hotel rooms—and fast

WORKFORCE AT A CROSSROADS

How immigration changes
are reshaping BC hotels

BICHIN

LAUNDRY EQUIPMENT

PASSION FOR EFFICIENCY

Equipment | Chemicals | Laundry Carts

Sales • Installations • Service • Parts

INDUSTRY-LEADING LAUNDRY SOLUTIONS



Proud To Service All of British Columbia & Yukon

778.229.3338 | INFO@BICHINLAUNDRYEQUIPMENT.CA





BRITISH COLUMBIA
HOTEL ASSOCIATION

1050 W Pender St #970,
Vancouver, BC V6E 3S7
T 604-681-7164 1-800-663-3153
bcha.com

@BCHotelAssociation @bchotelassoc
 @BCHotelAssociation bchotelassociation

BCHA TEAM

Paul Hawes
PRESIDENT & CEO

Shawna Lang
DIRECTOR, SALES & REVENUE OPTIMIZATION

Gareth Allen-Symons
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Karissa Bourgeault
PROJECT MANAGER

Lien Chang Manager
MANAGER, MEMBERSHIPS & PARTNERSHIPS

Vanda Fragoso
MEMBER RELATIONS & EVENTS SPECIALIST

Ali Parekh
ENERGY SPECIALIST

2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tanya Stroing PRESTIGE HOTELS & RESORTS,
KELOWNA (CHAIR)

David McQuinn COAST BASTION HOTEL, NANAIMO
(PAST CHAIR & GOVERNANCE)

Heather Hamilton POMEROY LODGING, CALGARY
(TREASURER)

Laura-Lee Lofgren TRUE KEY HOTELS & RESORTS
(EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR)

Erin Cassels HUNTINGDON HOTEL AND SUITES, VICTORIA
(EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR)

Gary Yu DOUBLETREE BY HILTON, KAMLOOPS
(EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR)

DIRECTORS

Jessica Dolan RAMADA BY WYNDHAM PENTICTON HOTEL &
SUITES, PENTICTON

Cedric Younge MUNDI HOTELS, KELOWNA

Edan Fay THE ROYAL KELOWNA BY BELLSTAR HOTELS, KELOWNA

Graeme Benn JW MARRIOTT PARQ AND THE DOUGLAS,
AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION, VANCOUVER

Karim Mohammadi EVERGREEN HOSPITALITY GROUP,
VANCOUVER ISLAND

Michelle Le SAGE VICTORIA MARRIOTT INNER HARBOUR,
VICTORIA

Randall Williams FAIRMONT WATERFRONT, VANCOUVER

David McBean WATERMARK BEACH RESORT, OSOYOOS

Jan Brylowski BLACKCOMB SPRINGS SUITES BY CLIQUE
HOTELS & RESORTS, WHISTLER

Brandy Beliveau BELLSTAR HOTELS AND RESORTS,
ROCKY MOUNTAIN PROPERTIES, GOLDEN

Susan Strome THE SUTTON PLACE HOTEL, VANCOUVER

Sandra Gregory SUN PEAKS GRAND HOTEL AND CONFERENCE
CENTRE, SUN PEAKS

InnFocus is published three times a year
by **Canada Wide Media Ltd.**

Return undeliverables to:

BCHA
1050 W Pender Street #970
Vancouver, BC V6E 3S7
membership@bcha.com

COVER: SHUTTERSTOCK; TOP RIGHT: SHUTTERSTOCK; BOTTOM: DESTINATION VANCOUVER/ALBERT NORMANDIN

CONTENTS

SPRING 2026



10 ALL EYES ON THE ISLAND
Why bringing the BCHA Summit to Nanaimo matters

14 CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE
Get to know the finalists for the 2026 Awards of Excellence

20 FIFA WORLD CUP 2026: IS THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR READY?
Positioning BC hospitality for global opportunity, long-term value, and sustained demand

22 BREAKING GROUND—AND BARRIERS
To meet BC's growing tourism needs, hotel development is paramount



4 PRESIDENT'S WELCOME
InnFocus Spring 2026

6 THINKING LONG-TERM
The Canadian Hospitality Pension Program gives hotels of all sizes the opportunity to support their employees in retirement and beyond.

24 INNOVATORS WITH PURPOSE
Meet the 2026 BCHA Summit keynote speakers

26 FINDING THE RIGHT PEOPLE FOR THE JOB
Changing immigration regulations and restrictions have hospitality managers searching for alternative recruitment strategies

29 A LEGACY OF LOOKING AFTER OUR OWN
Celebrating 20 years of community support while building the future of BC's hospitality industry

30 MARKETPLACE AT THE BCHA SUMMIT
Building stronger hotels through strategic partnerships



BY PAUL HAWES

PRESIDENT & CEO

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

InnFocus Spring 2026

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE that a year has gone by and it is Summit season yet again. The team is excited to come together with our friends, partners, and supporters to celebrate and elevate hospitality in British Columbia.

Summit 2026 brings us to Nanaimo, a city that reflects the spirit of our industry: welcoming, warm, and proudly connected. There's something fitting about gathering beside the ocean to talk about the future of hospitality in BC.

Summit provides that rare moment when our industry arrives in one spot—briefly—to learn, reconnect, and recalibrate. This year's theme, Future Ready: Strategies for a Stronger, Smarter Sector, reflects the Summit's focus on innovation, resilience, and the path forward for BC's accommodation and hospitality industry.

Across our province, hoteliers continue to navigate a landscape defined by rising costs, evolving guest expectations, labour pressures, and yes, the occasional curveball from governments and global events. Yet what continues to impress me is the resourcefulness, creativity, and sheer determination of this sector.

This edition of *InnFocus* captures that spirit beautifully.

First, we celebrate excellence. Our 21 BCHA Awards of Excellence finalists represent the very best of our industry—leaders, innovators, teams, and properties who raise the bar not only for themselves but for all of us. Their stories are a reminder that even in challenging times, hotels across BC continue to deliver extraordinary guest experiences.

As we gather for Summit 2026, we also look ahead. This year's keynote speakers and program have been curated with one goal in mind: helping you lead through complexity while spotting opportunity. Because make no mistake, opportunity is very much in front of us.

Of course, none of that happens without people. Recruitment and workforce retention remain front of mind for everyone. We explore practical strategies to attract talent, strengthen culture, and keep great people in our industry. Because buildings don't deliver hospitality, people do.

Speaking of buildings, hotel development continues to reshape our landscape. New projects, renovations, and investment signal confidence in BC's long-term tourism future. Growth, when done thoughtfully, benefits not only owners and investors but the community and broader visitor economy.

And finally, we are proud to roll out the Canadian Hospitality Pension Program. This initiative represents something deeply important: supporting the long-term financial well-being of hospitality employees. It is about retention, yes, but also about demonstrating that our industry offers not just jobs but rewarding careers. □

“What continues to impress me is the resourcefulness, creativity, and sheer determination of this sector.”










A comprehensive TV platform built for hotels

Book a demo:
jenn@getmoby.com | +1.403.466.1434

Key benefits for hotels:

-  Free guest casting from personal devices
-  Works on all TV models
-  Premium IPTV guest experience
-  Runs on your existing Wi-Fi network
-  No head-end + hassle-free install

Scan for details:



Tailored insurance for BC's hospitality industry.

The **Hospitality Insurance Program (HIP)** is the BCHA's preferred program, offering hotel-focused insurance. With dedicated claims and risk-management support, HIP has you covered.

Get Started at westernfinancialgroup.ca/HIP

HIP | HOSPITALITY
INSURANCE
PROGRAM





THINKING LONG-TERM

The **Canadian Hospitality Pension Program** gives hotels of all sizes the opportunity to support their employees in retirement and beyond.

BY ALYSSA HIROSE

The launch of the Canadian Hospitality Health Plan (CHHP) in 2023 was a landmark achievement for the industry: finally, small hoteliers had access to affordable benefits. The CHHP, created by the BCHA in partnership with the Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA), supports the overall well-being of hospitality workers (think medical, dental, and travel insurance) while keeping the costs of benefits stable for business owners. “It was something that was missing across the industry,” says Paul Hawes, president and CEO of the BCHA.

Tracy Douglas-Blowers, president and CEO of the AHLA, points out that the Canadian Hospitality Health Plan also offers essential mental health coverage. “Hospitality can be a high-pressure environment,” she

explains, “and providing access to mental health support helps employees manage stress, perform better and feel valued.” The CHHP is only a few years old, but already more than 250 hotels across the country have signed on.

But instead of looking back proudly on the plan’s growing success, industry leaders continued to look forward. The Canadian Hospitality Health Plan may provide crucial support during the working years... but what about retirement?

RETIREMENT WITHOUT REGRETS

“In the hospitality sector specifically, less than 5% of workers have retirement or long-term savings options,” says

Hawes. Very few small, independent hotels offer any kind of pension plan. Hawes emphasizes that this isn’t because they don’t care about their employees—it’s because plans like these require resources, finances, and expertise that many small businesses simply don’t have. After the Health Plan launched, hoteliers and their teams stressed that their staff value long-term financial security just as much as physical and mental health.

“It’s not just about filling jobs, it’s about building careers and creating stability in an industry that thrives on people.”

So, this January, the Canadian Hospitality Pension Program was born. The Pension Program is an extension of the CHHP’s mission and offers an accessible, structured approach to retirement savings. “It puts the kind of retirement security once reserved for large corporations in the hands of hotels of every size,” says Douglas-Blowers. The Pension Program is managed by Avance Insurance Services and governed by INTEGRIS Pension Management.

Jean-Pierre Laporte, CEO of INTEGRIS, says that the new Pension Program takes the savings burden off employees. Instead of setting up an RRSP, figuring out contributions, and having to navigate big decisions during market highs and lows, a pension plan is an automatic, systematized way to ensure post-retirement economic security. “All of that stress can be alleviated by having this pension plan structure,” he says.

PENSION PROGRAM FAQs

Q How does the contribution structure work, and what will it cost my property?

A This ultimately hinges on how much, as a percentage of earnings, that the employer wishes to invest in the employees' retirement. There is a minimum employer contribution of 1%.

Q How are investments selected, monitored and protected?

A The program is delivered through a Multi-Employer Pension Plan that is subject to a Statement of Investment Policies and Procedures with governance provided by INTEGRIS Pension Management.

Q How does this differ from a Group RRSP?

A Key advantages include active investment management, a rigorous governance structure, access to a wider array of investment classes, and employer contributions that are secured for retirement (GRRSP contributions are at risk of being withdrawn by the employee in advance of retirement).

Q Can I convert my hotel's existing GRRSP to a pension plan?

A Yes, the program is set up to easily support employers in converting their existing GRRSP to the Canadian Hospitality Pension Program.

LEAVE IT TO THE PROS

Knowledgeable leadership of the Pension Program was vital for its creators. "Pension governance is complex, highly regulated, and long term in nature," says Justin Friesen, co-program manager. It's important for pensions to be compliant with provincial and federal pension legislation. Working with industry experts who report transparently means that both employers and employees can understand how their funds are being managed.

According to Laporte, what sets this program apart is that the money management is handled centrally by a discretionary portfolio manager—the majority of Canadian group retirement plans require individual employees to make critical investment decisions. "They're asking people who often don't ►



Tracy Douglas-Blowers
President and CEO, AHLA



Jean-Pierre Laporte
CEO, INTEGRIS



WEBREZPRO



PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

THE WORLD'S LEADING CLOUD PMS FOR ALL PROPERTY TYPES

- ✓ WEBSITE BOOKING ENGINE
- ✓ GUEST SELF CHECK-IN
- ✓ GROUP RESERVATIONS
- ✓ DRAG & DROP TAPE CHART
- ✓ HOUSEKEEPING
- ✓ INTEGRATED PAYMENTS
- ✓ ACCOUNTING SYSTEM
- ✓ CUSTOM REPORTS

WEBREZPRO.COM





Justin Friesen
Co-Program Manager



Paul Hawes
President and CEO, BCHA



have the time, don't have the training, don't have the interest—might have just arrived in Canada recently, may not even be fully conversant in English—they're asking them to become experts in money management," says Laporte. The Pension Program doesn't

require employers or employees to handle anything that requires advanced knowledge of money or investing. "For hoteliers, this means peace of mind," says Friesen. "The heavy lifting is done by experts, not by an HR manager or owner wearing multiple hats."

industry faces, it's critical for hoteliers of all sizes to be able to offer competitive compensation while staying economically sustainable. Douglas-Blowers says that combining health benefits with retirement security addresses the full spectrum of employee well-being. "It's not just about filling jobs, it's about building careers and creating stability in an industry that thrives on people," she says. "Our goal is to make hospitality a destination for talent, not a stepping stone." □

Learn more at chhp.ca

A COMPETITIVE EDGE

The hospitality industry was deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many folks from culinary to housekeeping transitioning to careers in hospitals and healthcare. Amid restrictions and shutdowns, that move was necessary. Returning to hotel work, however, is a choice, and without comprehensive benefits, hotels are less appealing employers for both experienced workers and those entering the workforce.

"Other sectors—mining, forestry, finance—they have these longer-term savings and retirement plans," says Hawes. "Benefits are no longer just a perk; they're a deciding factor for employees," adds Douglas-Blowers. Canadian hoteliers can build loyalty and trust with their staff by offering a strong pension plan, improving both recruitment and retention.

Given the persistent labour shortages that the hospitality



The Canadian Hospitality Pension Program was designed to be portable. If a worker leaves one hotel and is hired at another hotel that's on the plan, the pension stays intact (even if employees move between properties, brands, or even provinces).




Turn guest stays into funded sustainability upgrades.

- Reduce operating and utility costs
- Measure and communicate verified impact

Join **100+** verified properties already funding **\$6M+** in energy-saving upgrades.



Get a **complimentary** funding estimate.



greenstep.ca/ecofund
info@greenstep.ca

CANADIAN HOSPITALITY HEALTH PLAN

Introducing Hospitality's

PENSION PROGRAM

Supporting employees in building their retirement savings has never been more critical.

Program Features:

- Professional Investment Management
- Rigorous Governance
- Full transparency
- Modern Administration
- Portability
- Post-Retirement Support
- End-to-end service

Benefits For Employers:

- Attract and retain top talent.
- Tax-deductible contributions.
- Enhance reputation and qualify for "Top Employer" programs.

Benefits For Employees:

- Tax-deferred growth.
- Employer matching incentives.
- Access to pension-level investment strategies typically reserved for large corporations.

Brought to you by:



BRITISH COLUMBIA
HOTEL ASSOCIATION



ALBERTA HOTEL &
LODGING ASSOCIATION

For more information on how the CHHP can support your employees, please contact us at www.chhp.ca or call **866-744-1632**

AVANCE
INSURANCE SERVICES

Why bringing the BCHA Summit to Nanaimo matters

BY ADAM MEYER

Vancouver Island is gaining overdue recognition as BC's next travel hotspot—and local hoteliers are ready to seize the moment.

With its rugged coastlines, lush forests, and laid-back charm, the Island has always drawn in-the-know adventurers. But in April 2026, all eyes will be on Nanaimo for a different reason: the annual BCHA Summit—bringing tourism professionals, hoteliers, and hospitality leaders together and highlighting the Mid-Island as a strategic hub in BC's evolving tourism economy.

The Mid-Island region is more than a scenic detour—Nanaimo, for example, is a desirable destination that sits at the centre of shifting travel patterns and has a growing influence in BC's tourism economy.

As demand grows for outdoor recreation and nature-focused getaways (and as major events like the 2026 FIFA World Cup drive attention toward BC), Vancouver Island communities and hoteliers are preparing to step into a larger role on the provincial stage.

“For Tofino, [Summit is] an opportunity to share the West Coast perspective directly with the people who shape provincial industry standards, advocacy priorities, and investment decisions,” says Samantha Hackett, executive director of Tourism Tofino. “The Summit creates space for meaningful conversations around labour, sustainability, infrastructure, and responsible growth, all issues that strongly influence the visitor's experience in remote destinations like Tofino,” she says.

NANAIMO: THE MID-ISLAND HUB ON THE RISE

Located halfway between Victoria and Campbell River, Nanaimo is a central location that makes it ideal for hosting the Summit. With daily ferry services and direct flights via Nanaimo Airport (YCD), its reliable transportation and walkable downtown make it both practical for delegates and increasingly attractive for extended stays.

While the city has long been a transport hub, the recent revitalization of Commercial Street and the waterfront promenade has made downtown Nanaimo more inviting for visitors. These investments are helping encourage longer stays, repeat visitation, and stronger local spending—key indicators of a maturing destination. The area offers artisanal shops, floating restaurants, and harbourfront walking paths that fit right in with the Island's signature charm.

“The Vancouver Island Region is home to a wealth of meaningful, authentic experiences,” says Brian Cant, president of 4VI Social Enterprise Group. “Whether it's an Indigenous-owned tourism business



ALL EYES ON THE ISLAND



ISLAND HOTELIERS CAN ALSO STANDOUT BY INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING:

- ▷ **Wellness and nature-based amenities:** Saunas, yoga decks, and ocean-view soaking tubs align with travellers' growing interest in restorative travel.
- ▷ **Local partnerships:** Sourcing breakfast items from nearby farms, offering fishing or brewery tours with local guides, or promoting Indigenous experiences can help elevate brand storytelling.
- ▷ **Green credentials:** Certifications for environmental practices are becoming decision-makers for eco-conscious travelers, especially those flying in from out of province.

offering cultural tours on the water or fresh, locally sourced meals provided by one of the many culinary and agri-tourism establishments, there's something for all manner of traveller," he adds.

EXPERIENCE-LED TRAVEL IS DRIVING DEMAND

Tourists today want to discover new and exciting places that provide meaning, memory, and cultural immersion—a shift that aligns naturally with Vancouver Island's strengths. Experiences such as kayaking with orcas near Telegraph Cove, foraging with local chefs in Tofino, or exploring Indigenous heritage sites near Comox are increasingly shaping how travellers choose where to go and how long to stay.

This move toward experience-led travel is also influencing who enters the

“Tourists today want to discover new and exciting places that provide meaning, memory, and cultural immersion.”

hospitality space. A growing segment of lifestyle-driven entrepreneurs are combining accommodation with wellness, culture, and sustainability. From eco-lodges to curated fishing excursions, the Island's tourism model is increasingly focused on quality over quantity.

“Compared to larger urban centres like Vancouver and some of Vancouver Island's more established resort destinations, Nanaimo remains refreshingly affordable,” says Carly Pereboom, executive director of Tourism Nanaimo. “Visitors find strong value across accommodations, dining, activities, and shopping, which is increasingly important as travel costs rise globally,” she notes.

TOFINO, COMOX, AND CAMPBELL RIVER: REGIONAL ANCHORS

For a relatively small geographic area, Vancouver Island offers remarkable diversity. From Nanaimo, travellers can venture west to the Pacific Rim for a surf-and-soak weekend in Tofino and Ucluelet; north to Comox Valley for farm ▶



Samantha Hackett
Executive Director,
Tourism Tofino



Brian Cant
President, 4VI Social
Enterprise Group



Carly Pereboom
Executive Director,
Tourism Nanaimo



Karim Mohammadi
Operating Partner with
Evergreen Hospitality Group



EMERGING MID-ISLAND TRAVEL TRENDS

More travellers are embracing slow travel across Mid-Island communities and leaning toward immersive experiences that go beyond quick sightseeing. Locally owned accommodations, wellness retreats, and Indigenous-led cultural tours are gaining popularity, particularly around Parksville, Qualicum Beach, and Nanaimo. Visitors are spreading out beyond traditional hotspots and discovering lesser-known gems like Deep Bay, Yellow Point, and the coastal trails of the Lighthouse Country. These trends reflect a growing desire for authentic, low-impact, and restorative escapes that align with a more intentional style of travel.

tours, skiing, or oceanfront cycling; or further up Island to Campbell River, known as the “Salmon Capital of the World,” where wildlife tours and remote lodges deliver bucket-list adventures. Together, these communities demonstrate how varied (and complimentary) the Island’s offerings have become.

“The Comox Valley is about experiencing a place and living like a local,” says Tanya Massa, tourism development specialist with 4EVER Strategies Inc. “Our experiences are rich in participation, igniting the senses and incorporating education and awareness around wildlife conservation, respecting First Nations and historical sites, and enhancing culinary experiences through tide-to-table and farm-to-fork local offerings,” she adds.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS ARE IMPROVING

Behind the scenes, infrastructure improvements are reinforcing the Island’s readiness for sustained tourism growth, supporting both increased visitation and more balanced, year-round travel. Recent and ongoing improvements are promising:

- ▷ **Upgrades at Nanaimo Airport (YCD):** Expanded service and connections to major Canadian hubs are improving travel access year-round.
- ▷ **Ferry enhancements:** A new fleet of diesel-hybrid ferries capable of full electric operation on BC Ferries’ Island Class routes are increasing efficiency, frequency, and sustainability on short-haul routes.

► **Downtown revitalization projects:**

Nanaimo, Comox, and Campbell River have invested in beautifying downtown cores, expanding public event space, and enhancing wayfinding for tourists.

OPPORTUNITY FOR HOTELIERS ACROSS THE ISLAND

For accommodation providers, this momentum presents a timely opportunity to rethink how offerings align with evolving traveller expectations. As visitors extend their stays and explore multiple Vancouver Island communities, local hoteliers can offer packages that encourage longer bookings, combining accommodations with experiences such as whale watching, wine tastings, or cultural tours.

Mid-Island properties are also redefining what “full-service” means. Rather than traditional formality, today’s travellers are in search of comfort, connection, and experience—elements that can be delivered through thoughtful, curated touches.

“As more visitors seek nature-forward destinations with authentic character, there is growing demand for properties

that lean into what makes the Island unique, from coastal-inspired design and local partnerships to curated outdoor activities and family-friendly amenities,” says Karim Mohammadi, operating partner with Evergreen Hospitality Group.

NANAIMO’S MOMENT TO SHINE

The 2026 BCHA Summit invites stakeholders across Vancouver Island to reimagine how collaboration (and shared momentum) can strengthen the region as a whole.

“Ultimately, Nanaimo offers travellers flexibility and choice,” says Pereboom. “Whether they’re coming for the day or using Nanaimo as their basecamp, we’re easy to get to, centrally located, affordable to stay in, and hard to forget.”

This year, one thing is clear: the Summit signals a shift for the Island and beyond. What was once seen as a stopover is now emerging as a launchpad for immersive coastal experiences, outdoor adventures, and a more connected future Vancouver Island. □

Adam Meyer is a freelance writer and registered holistic nutritionist based in Nelson, BC, Canada.



NANAIMO’S RISE IN TOURISM BY THE NUMBERS

According to the City of Nanaimo, accommodation and food services now account for over **11%** of all local business licenses and nearly **9%** of the city’s jobs, highlighting tourism’s growing role in the mid-Island economy. Local and regional tourism reports also highlight a strong rebound in 2022 after pandemic lows, with visitor volumes “inching closer” to pre-2020 levels and positioning Nanaimo to capture increasing demand for Vancouver Island travel in the years ahead.

REGISTER YOUR TEAM TODAY

SUMMIT
BRITISH COLUMBIA HOTEL ASSOCIATION

2026 APRIL 14-15
VANCOUVER ISLAND CONFERENCE CENTRE
NANAIMO, BC

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

Get to know the finalists for the 2026 Awards of Excellence

Each year, the BCHA Awards of Excellence recognize the best of BC’s hospitality sector, taking a well-earned moment to reflect on the achievements of industry leaders. They honour the people, teams, and properties that continue to raise the bar for hospitality across the province.

Ahead of the Awards Gala, the BCHA is shining a spotlight on the 2026 finalists across seven categories—each representing a distinct facet of excellence within BC’s vibrant industry. To bring these achievements to life, finalists were asked a series of questions about their nominations, their teams, and the work that sets them apart. The following profiles offer a closer look at the passion, purpose, and people behind this year’s outstanding achievements.



ACCOMMODATION OF THE YEAR

For a property that set a high standard of excellence, showcasing outstanding achievements, leadership, and innovation.

“What achievement or moment in 2025 are you most proud of?”



Old House Hotel

Courtenay, BC
DAVID ROOPER
General Manager

“While our revenue records, great guest satisfaction results, and positive associate satisfaction scores tell us we have our team and operations focused on the right priorities, we are perhaps most proud of our Biosphere Sustainable Re-Certification. We are an organization that is passionate about having a positive effect on our workplace, our environment, and our community.”

ICONS: ADOBE STOCK



The Parkside Hotel & Spa

Victoria, BC
TRINA WHITE
General Manager

“Our team is most proud of the strong, collaborative culture we have built. This foundation empowered our staff to deliver meaningful results ... including achieving a 92 percent waste diversion rate; launching Drift, our floating sound meditation; raising over \$75,000 in support of Rainbow Kitchen’s school meal programs; and exceeding our occupancy and revenue targets.”



Kingfisher Pacific Resort & Spa

Courtenay, BC
AARON GREASLEY
General Manager

“Our team is most proud of bringing the Healing Caves™ to life, introducing a modern, evidence-based wellness circuit that expands the boundaries of traditional experiences in British Columbia. This milestone reflects years of collaboration, innovation, and care, and reinforces Kingfisher’s role as a wellness pioneer on Vancouver Island.”



HOUSEKEEPING EXCELLENCE

For a housekeeping team who is committed to providing high standards of cleanliness and comfort by delivering exceptional attention to detail and excellent service.

“What does this recognition mean to your team?”

Perri-Ann Pike

BALCOMO, A RAMADA BY WYNDHAM
Penticton, BC

“This recognition means so much to us because it shines a light on a team whose work is often unseen but always felt by our guests. Being named a finalist by the BCHA affirms the culture we strive to build—one rooted in respect, teamwork, and appreciation for the people who make exceptional hospitality possible.”



Rhonda Allercott

SUMMERLAND WATERFRONT
RESORT HOTEL
Summerland, BC

“This confirms that our team is golden when it comes to attention to detail and takes real pride in their work. It also means our once quiet, hidden-gem resort is getting well-deserved recognition. Most importantly, it reflects a team that truly kicks a** and gets'er done, day in and day out!”



Roldan Dela Torre

WICKANINNISH INN
Tofino, BC

“It’s external validation that the work, discipline, and ambition the team puts in every day is visible to the world. Achievements like this don’t happen by accident; they are the result of consistency, excellence, and team effort.”





HOTELIER OF THE YEAR

For an individual who has contributed to the BC hotel industry through exceptional leadership and operational expertise.

“What is one lesson hospitality has taught you?”



Sarah Webb

General Manager
THE OSWEGO HOTEL
Victoria, BC

“Hospitality has taught me, over nearly 20 years, that people may not remember every detail, but they always remember how you made them feel and the emotional value of a positive experience. That understanding shapes how I lead, communicate, and show up every day for both guests and our team.”



Ken Hall

General Manager
FAIRMONT CHATEAU WHISTLER
Whistler, BC

“Never get complacent with ‘great.’ We need to constantly see things from a guest’s perspective and strive to do better. Innovate, deliver the dream, and—most importantly—have fun at work!”

David Mackenzie

General Manager
PEMBERTON VALLEY LODGE
Pemberton, BC

“Hospitality has taught me that how you make people feel will always matter more than any transaction or metric. Listening and leading with respect builds trust with guests, your team, and community alike. That lesson guides every decision I make.”



LEADER OF THE FUTURE

For an emerging hospitality professional who demonstrates prodigious leadership potential, innovation, and passion.

“What achievement or moment in 2025 are you most proud of?”



Savannah Cannatella

MAGNOLIA HOTEL & SPA
Victoria, BC

“I am most proud of completing my MBA master’s thesis examining gender differences in senior hotel management in Victoria while simultaneously helping lead Magnolia Hotel & Spa through one of its strongest performance years to date ... balancing academic research with hands-on operational leadership reinforced the connection between thoughtful leadership theory, practice, and exceptional guest outcomes.”



Quinn Luong

VICTORIA MARRIOTT INNER HARBOUR
Victoria, BC

“Hosting Housekeeping Appreciation Week last September remains a core memory because it solidified my professional philosophy: while guest satisfaction and revenue are our targets, a productive and happy team is [what helps us] hit them. It proves that when we invest in our staff, they go the extra mile to provide an unforgettable stay.”



Kayla Pedscalny

PRESTIGE LAKESIDE RESORT NELSON
Nelson, BC

“I am most proud of the incredible team that I get to work with every day. They are a truly collaborative, kind, and compassionate group who show genuine care and respect for one another and for every guest ... I firmly believe a manager’s success is reflected in their team, and I am incredibly proud to work alongside such an amazing group of people.”



GUEST SERVICE EXCELLENCE

For a Guest Service department or team who provides outstanding, memorable, and personalized guest experiences.

“What does this recognition mean to your team?”



Grace Russell

Guest Experience Team
NIMMO BAY RESORT
Port McNeil, BC

“At Nimmo Bay, we pride ourselves on being the best in the industry at surprising, delighting and anticipating the needs of our guests. That is a hard thing to quantify—you know it when you feel it. This award recognizes that which is hard to describe but means the most to guests.”



Billy Kwok Lam

Club Lounge Team
SHERATON VANCOUVER
WALL CENTRE
Vancouver, BC

“Every team member is deeply committed to placing guest experience at the heart of everything we do, and receiving BCHA recognition affirms that this dedication is being felt beyond our guests. [It] motivates our team to take pride in our work and inspires us to continue raising the standard of guest experience with confidence and purpose.”



Mary Lou Mabalay

Front Desk Team
BALCOMO, A RAMADA BY WYNDHAM
Penticton, BC

“This recognition is incredibly meaningful because the Front Desk sets the tone for every guest experience. Being named a finalist affirms the care, professionalism, and heart our team brings to the first and last moments of a stay. It reflects our commitment to people-first hospitality and the importance of investing in teams.”



SUSTAINABILITY CHAMPION

For a property or organization showing remarkable commitment to sustainability across energy, food, and environmental practices.

“What achievement or moment in 2025 is your team most proud of?”



Inn at Laurel Point

Victoria, BC
JULIE WRIGHT
Director of Human Resources

“We were proud to see teams from ten departments coming together each month to make our Project 2030 goals part of everyday work. Alongside this, our colleagues took part in 14 community and wellness events, reinforcing that sustainability at Inn at Laurel Point shows up in how we care for people, our community, and each other.”



The Parkside Hotel & Spa

Victoria, BC
TRINA WHITE
General Manager

“Our team’s commitment to innovation, sustainability, and community has created an experience our guests genuinely love and return to, year after year. This recognition is “deeply meaningful for our team and would affirm that the care they put into both guests and community truly matters.”

Nita Lake Lodge

Whistler, BC
JOHN HOLTON
General Manager

“Our team is most proud of the successful installation and launch of our Rooftop Solar Project, a monumental initiative that now provides clean, renewable energy directly to our property. This milestone reflects our deep-rooted commitment to sustainability, proving that a luxury boutique property can seamlessly coexist with dedicated environmental stewardship.”



CULINARY EXCELLENCE

For a culinary professional or team creatively highlighting BC's local flavours and ingredients with outstanding quality.

“What is one lesson hospitality has taught you?”



Andrea Alridge

Janevca
ROSEMEAD HOUSE
Esquimalt, BC

“It is always important to lead with a sense of calmness, empathy, and understanding. It's very exciting and illuminating as it reminds me that when growing in my career, I am moving forward in the right direction for my own and my team's development.”



Danai Hongwanishkul

KINGFISHER PACIFIC RESORT & SPA
Courtenay, BC

“Hospitality has taught me that ego has no place in the kitchen—everything we do is for our guests. At the same time, I know we have a responsibility to support our team and our community, ensuring that everyone involved feels valued, inspired, and part of something meaningful.”



Elmark Andres

Lola
BODEGA RIDGE
Galiano Island, BC

“Hospitality has taught me that excellence lives in the details and in how people are treated behind the scenes as much as at the table. When a kitchen is built on trust, respect, and shared purpose, the food naturally speaks for itself.” □

The 2026 finalists will be honoured at the BCHA Awards of Excellence Gala on April 15, closing out the BCHA Summit with a seated dinner and a celebration of the people and properties shaping BC's hospitality industry.

FIFA WORLD CUP 2026: IS THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR READY?

Positioning BC hospitality for global opportunity, long-term value, and sustained demand

BY ADAM MEYER



In just a couple months, Vancouver will welcome the world as a host city for the FIFA World Cup 2026—a major sporting event expected to draw more than 1.2 million international visitors to North America.

For British Columbia's hospitality industry, this is a seismic moment of global visibility, regional travel demand, and high-stakes logistics. While the tournament may span just 39 days, the ripple effects will extend far beyond the pitch. Handled strategically, BC's hospitality sector is positioned to benefit from the biggest sporting event on the planet.

HOW TO MANAGE THE DEMAND SURGE

Come June, demand for accommodations will vastly outweigh supply, meaning rate increases are inevitable. The World Cup will drive unprecedented room bookings, especially in downtown Vancouver, Burnaby, Richmond, and nearby Metro Vancouver communities.

"As one of only two Canadian provinces hosting matches, BC will be centre stage for one of the most-watched sporting events in the world," says Maya Lange, VP of global marketing with Destination BC. "The visibility and reach of this event are staggering ... It is estimated that the economic impact to tourism in BC of hosting the World Cup will result in \$1 billion in incremental revenue over the five years following the tournament."

To manage this demand in a way that balances revenue optimization with guest experience, hospitality providers can use a tiered pricing model that gradually increases rates as occupancy targets are met. Revenue managers must also prepare for significant market fluctuations, as there will certainly be last-minute cancellations, compressed booking windows, and high expectations from guests across all service levels.

CAPITALIZING ON GLOBAL EXPOSURE FOR "BRAND CANADA"

With more than 5 billion viewers expected to tune in globally, the 2026 World Cup is a fantastic opportunity to place "brand Canada" in the international spotlight. That means updating websites, booking engines, and marketing assets to reflect multilingual, inclusive, and culturally resonant messaging while leaning into what international guests value most: authentic experiences, convenience, and hospitality.



Maya Lange
VP of Global Marketing
with Destination BC

FIFA 2026: HOSPITALITY BY THE NUMBERS



Mega sporting events like the FIFA World Cup drive significant economic activity in host cities. Across North America, analysts project that the 2026 tournament could increase hotel room revenues by up to

25%

on big match days, with occupancy and average daily rates rising sharply around tournament dates.

Room revenue increases of

7 to 25%

are anticipated in host markets.

Host cities also expect millions of visitors (potentially more than

6 million

across all 16 host cities) bringing billions in incremental spending on lodging, food, and local experiences.

“Accommodation providers are encouraged to stay informed by subscribing to World Cup-focused industry updates through Destination BC, join local or online workshops and planning sessions, contribute to collaborative campaigns that spotlight tourism experiences across BC, offer themed travel packages and services that cater to soccer fans, and ensure their business listings on *HelloBC.com* are updated,” says Lange.

THINK BEYOND THE ROOM TO MAXIMIZE REVENUE

The following secondary offerings represent practical opportunities for accommodation providers to encourage longer stays and increased on-site spending:

- ▷ **Food and beverage:** Offer regionally inspired menus, late-night service, and communal viewing lounges for fans.
- ▷ **Spa & wellness:** Provide therapeutic recovery services (e.g. massage, cold plunge, etc.)
- ▷ **Concierge services:** Partner with local businesses for curated excursions, match-day transportation, and priority seating at watch parties.

PACKAGES AND PARTNERSHIPS

The most successful hotel operators recognize that collaboration extends their reach. Partnerships with transportation providers, restaurants, cultural venues, and sports bars present opportunities to create experiential packages that elevate the guest stay.

This can take the form of bundled packages featuring ferry tickets, shuttle services, food tours, and coastal adventures. Small and mid-sized hotels outside downtown Vancouver can leverage these partnerships to punch above their weight by offering unique experiences fans won't find at bigger name hotels.

“We're working with regional partners and transportation providers to map out real-time travel solutions, especially for communities within a few hours of Vancouver,” says Lange. “We call these communities ‘same day game day,’ as they offer accommodation options within a reasonable distance with suitable transportation options to travel to and from downtown Vancouver. This makes it easier for fans to stay outside the city and still attend matches, while driving economic impact to smaller centres.”

COORDINATING WITH GOVERNMENT AND TOURISM BOARDS

The matches held in Vancouver are expected to create massive urban pressure, so clear communication between hoteliers, local governments, and tourism boards is critical. Event road closures, security zones, crowd control measures, and public transit updates must be anticipated early.

“The greatest long-term value will come from converting match-day interest into province-wide discovery and travel,” says Lange. “To support this, Destination BC has launched a ‘Beautiful Seats’ campaign in May 2025, whose purpose it is to highlight the beautiful places to visit,

not only in Vancouver and in the stadium, but all over the province.”

OUTSIDE THE CITY, INSIDE THE OPPORTUNITY

While Vancouver is BC's only host city, the entire province stands to benefit. Hoteliers in regions like the Okanagan, Vancouver Island, Fraser Valley, and beyond should position themselves as either escape destinations or satellite hubs.

Of the 362,100 event attendees of Vancouver-based matches, 45% will be international from outside the US and Canada. Hoteliers can capitalize on this by advertising ways visitors can extend their stay, further justifying their long-haul flights:

- ▷ Kelowna can offer wine tours, lakeside retreats, or match watch parties for fans avoiding metro congestion.
- ▷ Whistler can position itself as a pre- or post-match wellness destination.
- ▷ Tofino and Comox can promote road trips and adventure add-ons for longer visitor stays.

On average, 80% of first-time visits to BC result in a subsequent visit—so hoteliers can benefit from marketing now for years to come.

A DEFINING MOMENT FOR BC HOSPITALITY

The 2026 World Cup is a rare moment to elevate BC's hospitality profile on the global stage. Whether you operate a boutique lodge in the Gulf Islands, luxury hotel in downtown Vancouver, or a destination resort in the interior, the time to plan is now.

Those in BC's hospitality industry who embrace innovation, collaboration, and storytelling are poised to thrive during the tournament and shape the next era of BC tourism. □

Adam Meyer is a freelance writer and registered holistic nutritionist based in Nelson, BC, Canada.

THINK BEYOND THE MATCH

Mega-event research shows sports tourists like FIFA World Cup attendees often stay between two and six days total (though a significant number extend their trip to more than a week) for recreation, relaxation, and unique local experiences such as sightseeing and cultural attractions.



BREAKING GROUND—AND BARRIERS

To meet BC's growing tourism needs, hotel development is paramount

BY EMILY WINCKLER



As visitor demand grows, so too must infrastructure and hotel development. Last year, the Hotel Community Impact Assessment, released by Destination Vancouver and the BCHA, found that Vancouver alone needs an additional 10,000 hotel rooms by 2050.

This lack of development has far-reaching consequences. According to Madone Pelan, past BCHA vice chair and member of the Greater Victoria Hotel Development Working Group, failure to develop hotels in BC has limited BC's "ability to grow conference business, attract major events, and fully capitalize on tourism demand."

But there is hope on the hotel development horizon: "only now," Pelan adds, "are we seeing the right conditions which

align our tourism partners, municipalities, lenders, and investors to all recognize hotels as a critical piece of economic infrastructure, not just real estate."

VANCOUVER

The Impact Assessment found that Vancouver hotels are continuously at 80 to 95 percent capacity, limiting the city's—and hotelier's—ability to or meet growing demand.

Hotel development in the city is not just stagnating—it's declining. In the past twenty years, Vancouver has seen a net loss of hotel rooms, largely due to conversions to supportive housing.

The City of Vancouver, excitingly, is starting to take decisive steps. For example, on January 15, 2026, city councillors unanimously approved Musson Cattell Mackey's new 464-room hotel tower on Granville and Davie, a development that proponents believe will not only work towards meeting tourism needs but help revitalize the neighbourhood, signalling the bipartisan appeal of hotel development.

In all, there are 29 projects representing 5,800 rooms currently in the development pipeline as of January 2026; however, 23 of these projects are still subject to rezoning, fire development, and building permit applications, which will ultimately determine whether they proceed.

With continued cooperation between all stakeholders, these projects will lead to great prosperity for Vancouver and surrounding areas.

VICTORIA

In the last ten years, Victoria has lost roughly 2,000 hotel rooms, yet the city is seeing decade-high numbers in tourism.

Paul Nursey, president and CEO of Destination Greater Victoria, explains the important work the not-for-profit is doing to solve this: "We have been working with local municipalities to streamline approvals, and some are working on incentive and certainty in the application process."

"Destination Greater Victoria worked constructively with the City of Victoria to create a target of 1,500 rooms in their new Official Community Plan," he adds.

The Greater Victoria Hotel Development Working Group is bringing municipalities, local First Nations, developers, lenders, and industry professionals together to assess and identify current barriers and make recommendations for change.

HERE TO STAY

In the second quarter of 2025, domestic travel within Canada went up by 10.9%—while outbound travel decreased overall by 12.1%, with a 21.6% decrease in trips to the United States.

The trend coincides with a 13.5% increase in domestic expenditures, totalling 20.3 billion dollars this quarter.



“There are currently 18 hotels under construction across the province, totalling roughly 2,800 rooms, more than double the number of projects underway a year ago.”

Currently, three new developments are under way, set to add 399 rooms in total by 2028.

PROVINCE-WIDE

“Hotel development in British Columbia has picked up meaningfully over the past year. There are currently 18 hotels under construction across the province, totalling roughly 2,800 rooms, more than double the number of projects underway a year ago,” says Carrie Russell, senior managing partner, HVS Canada.

Russell explains that “developers are being drawn to hotels because existing properties are performing at record levels, with sustained RevPAR growth since 2021, while other real estate asset classes have softened.” What’s additionally compelling



BY THE NUMBERS

The facts reflect developers’ preference for established loyalty platforms and operating systems, the depth of demand in major urban centres, and the growing confidence in select resort and secondary markets.

BRANDED PROJECTS

15 of 18

projects currently underway are branded

8 Marriott projects

3 Hilton projects

3 Hyatt projects

GEOGRAPHICS

~50%

of projects concentrated in Metro Vancouver

~27%

of projects in the Thompson-Okanagan region

~16%

of projects on Vancouver Island

VAST SIZE RANGE

33-room independent hotel in Grand Forks

315-room Element Hotel in Richmond

for developers is that “construction costs are stabilizing and debt financing remains accessible for well-structured projects.”

THE RIGHT ROOMS

In this pivotal moment, Pelan speaks to the necessity of thoughtfulness: “What’s important now is that we don’t just build *more* rooms, but that we build the *right* rooms, in the right locations, at the right scale, and with the right positioning for each market.”

Residential owners moving into the hotel space bring opportunity but also risk, she explains, should their projects not strategically align with long-term destination needs. “The decisions being made in the next few years will shape the competitiveness of our tourism markets for decades, so thoughtful planning and disciplined development are essential to ensure sustainable growth for both the industry and the communities we serve,” Pelan concludes. □



CANADIAN
HOSPITALITY
HEALTH PLAN

Introducing the
**Canadian Hospitality
Pension Program**

 chhp.ca/pension

ahla ALBERTA HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION

 BRITISH COLUMBIA HOTEL ASSOCIATION

INNOVATORS WITH PURPOSE

Meet the 2026 BCHA Summit keynote speakers

BY EMILY WINCKLER

In addition to the vendor Marketplace, Awards of Excellence Gala, and unparalleled networking, the BCHA Summit's two-day program features speakers addressing current market trends, social responsibility, and leadership under pressure. As the hospitality sector shifts, BCHA's 2026 Summit speakers deliver grounded perspective and actionable strategy for today's operating environment.



“In today's market, guests aren't just looking for a beautiful room—they're seeking experiences that align with their values.”

Jonny Bierman

While studying Tourism Management at Vancouver Island University, Jonny Bierman was introduced to ecotourism—something he now calls his “north star.” Bierman's many achievements include founding Eco Escape Travel Marketing & Storytelling Solutions and producing award-winning journalism for BBC Travel, National Geographic, Lonely Planet, Canadian

Geographic, The Toronto Star, and more. This June, Bierman's second Lonely Planet British Columbia & The Canadian Rockies guidebook, his “love letter to BC,” will be hitting shelves.

At Eco Escape, Bierman's team offers full-service digital marketing and storytelling agency work, specializing in helping clients turn sustainability initiatives into engaging guest-facing narratives.

When reflecting on his decade-long career in ecotourism, Bierman explains that he's learned “the most powerful tourism stories are those where environmental stewardship, community empowerment, and cultural preservation create a transformative guest experience.”

Informed by his journalism and consulting work, Bierman's session will explore what he calls the hospitality industry's greatest missed opportunity, “the powerful sustainability, cultural, and community stories that remain invisible to guests,” and how this disconnect “represents millions in lost loyalty and revenue.” Attendees will leave Bierman's session feeling energized about the opportunity to build brand loyalty from pre-trip research to post-departure communications.

CONSCIOUS CONSUMERS

Booking.com's 2025 Travel & Sustainability Report reveals that

84%

of travelers value sustainability. Jonny Bierman explains “this represents a massive opportunity: by strategically sharing your sustainability story during their research and stay, you can drive repeat business, increased revenue, and lasting brand loyalty.”

Bierman hopes to show attendees exactly how to capitalize on consumers' desire for sustainable travel: “What excites me most is showing attendees how to transform their existing sustainability efforts from back-office compliance and back-of-house check lists into front-line competitive advantage. We'll dive into real-world examples where properties have turned their environmental initiatives into compelling guest experiences that drive measurable business results.”

Above all, Bierman believes “BC's hospitality sector has incredible sustainability achievements that deserve to be celebrated and shared” because “in today's market, guests aren't just looking for a beautiful room—they're seeking experiences that align with their values. Your sustainability efforts are that alignment; we just need to make them visible.”

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT MATTERS



39% of Canadian employees report feeling burnt out.

Burnout costs employers **\$5,500-\$28,500** per employee annually.

Companies that prioritize prevention see a **27%** burnout rate versus **47%** for those taking no action.

Prioritization can potentially save **\$3,400** per employee.

Timea Nagy-Payne



In a 2018 poll, 75 percent of human trafficking survivors reported having contact with a hotel at some point in their trafficking situation.

Since 2009, Timea Nagy-Payne has been a dedicated advocate for Canadian survivors of human trafficking—a critical issue that hospitality workers can play a foundational role in mitigating.

A survivor herself, Nagy-Payne supports survivors in a myriad of ways—from founding Walk with Me and Timea’s Cause to presenting keynote speeches and workshops that educate personnel on human trafficking-related issues. She has been recognized for the value of her work with prestigious awards including a King Charles III Coronation Medal, the Meritorious Medal by the Governor General, a Prime Minister’s Volunteer Award, and a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, among others.

To Nagy-Payne, it is “crucial to integrate survivor voices into ... educational efforts, particularly within the hospitality sector” because they “possess unique insights and experiences that can significantly enhance understanding of behaviours.”

By listening to survivor testimony, the hospitality industry can therefore “develop more effective training, risk assessments, and compliance policies.”

like food and safety,” she explains. Thus, she notes, “their firsthand knowledge is invaluable for training programs designed for security staff, housekeepers, HR personnel, front desk employees, cleaning teams, and dining staff.”

In addition, she highlights the danger of armed human traffickers causing “significant liability risk for hotels, especially if altercations occur in common areas like hallways or elevators.” By listening to survivor testimony, the hospitality industry can therefore “develop more effective training, risk assessments, and compliance policies,” she shares.

In her keynote, Nagy-Payne will discuss pertinent information about human trafficking for hoteliers from the perspective of survivors: “hotels have the potential to play a crucial role in combating this crime by implementing measures to restrict traffickers’ access to hotel rooms. By doing so, they can help protect vulnerable individuals and ensure a safer environment for all guests.”



Stephanie Labbé

Stephanie Labbé’s accomplishments as a professional soccer player, highlighted by an Olympic gold medal, are both impressive and inspirational. Labbé’s talent and drive took her from her small hometown of Stony Plain, Alberta, to representing our country on the world’s biggest athletic stage. From goalkeeping for Canada at the Tokyo and Rio Olympic games to playing professionally in Sweden to becoming the sporting director for Vancouver Rise FC, Labbé has been a trailblazer for more than 20 years.

“Through my experience of playing and competing at the highest level in Sport, I learned so many valuable lessons about myself and the world around me,” says Labbé. She speaks of “learning to ‘speak the same language’” as the players and staff from different cultures and backgrounds when living and working abroad. “Being able to take your lived experiences and find a way to connect and uplift others around you who have totally different lived experiences is critical,” she adds.

As a goalkeeper, Labbé emphasizes the importance of communication and organization in both her and her team’s success. “Leading, organizing, communicating with my teammates, buying in and believing in what the coaches

“If you feel pressure, it’s because people expect something from you, and if people expect something from you, it’s because they know you are capable of it.”

are saying, and being committed to something that’s bigger than yourself were all things I have taken away from Sport and had to apply to my new role as sporting director with Vancouver Rise FC,” she explains.

An outspoken advocate for mental health, Labbé’s success has come from her ability to “[smile] in the face of adversity,” a motto she takes into her role as a speaker, where she shares “what it takes to win a gold medal, and how [audiences] can apply this, look at challenges head on, all with a smile on [their] face.”

“One of the best and most important things I’ve learned is that pressure is a privilege,” says Labbé. “If you feel pressure, it’s because people expect something from you, and if people expect something from you, it’s because they know you are capable of it.” □

Emily Winckler is a writer and editor based in Vancouver, BC.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CANADA

In the last decade, **over 5,000** incidents of human trafficking have been reported by police in Canada—**93%** of identified victims were women and girls, two-thirds of which were **under 25 years old**.

FINDING THE RIGHT PEOPLE FOR THE JOB

Changing immigration regulations and restrictions have hospitality managers searching for alternative recruitment strategies.

BY ALYSSA HIROSE

Access to a reliable workforce is essential for any hotelier, but it's especially crucial for those operating independent hotels in rural communities. David McBean is the general manager of Watermark Beach Resort in Osoyoos, a town of just over 5000. "That 5000 includes retired persons, people too young to work, people who can't work," he says, "and, of course, people who already have jobs." He points out: there isn't an abundance of locals who are available, qualified and willing to work in hospitality.

During peak tourist season, this small community's population more than doubles with visitors. It's up to McBean, his employees, and the teams at neighbouring hotels to host them all. In 2026, many local hoteliers are finding it increasingly difficult to hire enough staff to meet that demand.

NEW RESTRICTIONS, NEW PROBLEMS

One factor impacting labour shortage is changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program. The TFW program allows Canadian employers to hire foreign workers for roles that can't be filled by Canadian citizens. In September 2024, program changes resulted in a 50% reduction in applications to the TFW program overall, including a 70% reduction in the low-wage stream.

Matthew Iwama, immigration specialist at VVS global, explains that



David McBean,
General Manager,
Watermark Beach Resort

TFW program changes were in response to the Canadian government's aggressive pre-pandemic expansion to the international student program—but the cuts to immigration and heavy restrictions on work permits only created more issues, especially for the hospitality industry. "The government felt like they needed to appease the public," he says, leading to unnecessary loss.

The percentage of foreign workers a business could employ

“If you want to hire a foreign worker inside of the Vancouver census metropolitan area, you have to be paying \$36.60 per hour or higher—this shuts down the entire low-wage program.”



LEFT: SHUTTERSTOCK



Daren Hancott
 VP of Academic Affairs,
 Western Community College

was cut in half (from 20% to 10%), and permits were reduced from two years to one. In big cities where the unemployment rate is 6% or higher, companies can no longer apply for Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs) to hire foreign workers in the low-wage program. Iwama provides an example: “If you want to hire a foreign worker inside of the Vancouver census metropolitan area, you have to be paying \$36.60 per hour or higher—this shuts down the entire low-wage program.”

For hotel GMs like McBean who rely on the TFW program, these changes are felt deeply. “Team members who have become part of our family here at the resort are concerned that they will have to return home, to a country they have not lived in for years, once their permits expire,” he says. Additionally, updates to the BC Provincial Nominee program’s points system have made recruitment even more difficult (a job in hospitality used to be a viable path to achieving permanent residency, but now, chances of obtaining PR as a “lower-skilled” worker are extremely low). Some hoteliers worry that they will no longer be able to operate sustainably.

MULTIPLE ROUTES TO RECRUITMENT

However, immigration specialists like Iwama note that while the TFW program is the most well-known, it’s not the only program that allows Canadian businesses

to hire foreign workers. There’s the Francophone Mobility Program, open work permits for family members of foreign workers, post-grad work permits and free trade agreements (Canada has free trade agreements with the US, Mexico, Chile, Panama, and Peru, to name a few, meaning Canadian employers can hire citizens of these countries without going through the TFW program).

“A lot of people just lump in all foreign workers with the

Temporary Foreign Worker Program, and once that door is shut, they think it’s over,” says Iwama. “They don’t know all of the niche exemptions and little programs that they can use.”

LOOKING CLOSER TO HOME

Daren Hancott, VP of Academic Affairs at Western Community College, also warns of the over-reliance on the TFW Program, but for a different reason: he advocates for more opportunities for those with a Canadian post-secondary

education. “Sometimes there are insufficient jobs for qualified graduates,” says Hancott, who believes that the Lower Mainland hospitality industry could be adequately supplied and served by Western Community College and a few other schools if allowed the opportunity—that is, if there was “adequate balance between the low-wage and the skilled, high-wage educated workforce.”

Moira McDonald, EDD, director of Royal Roads University’s School of Tourism ▶

WELCOMING FOREIGN WORKERS FROM IMMIGRATION SPECIALIST MATTHEW IWAMA



Matthew Iwama
 Immigration Specialist,
 VVS global

- ▶ **Acknowledge** the challenging transition your workers are going through. Ask employees how they are settling in, connect them with community resources and local cultural associations, or give practical advice on living in the community.
- ▶ **Create** psychological safety around language by making it clear that accent doesn’t equal competence and that asking for clarification is always okay. The worst cultures are ones where workers stay silent because they’re afraid of looking foolish.
- ▶ **Focus** your training on the operational context, such as your systems, standards, service philosophy, and technology stack. A chef from Colombia doesn’t need to learn how to cook. They need to learn your POS system, your menu specs, your vendor relationships and how your kitchen communicates during service.
- ▶ **Document** your processes—compliance is non-negotiable: employment contracts that match LMIA conditions, evidence of wages paid, records of working hours and abuse-free workplace policies. Don’t wait until you get an audit notice to scramble for paperwork.
- ▶ **Understand** the worker’s immigration status and timeline: when work permits expire, what pathway they’re on (PR, PNP?), what’s happening with their family members’ status. Being proactive about these conversations shows you’re invested in their future, and it helps you with workforce planning.

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS IN CANADA'S HOTEL SECTOR



- ▷ **1,736,400** people hold a work permit in Canada as of November 30, 2025.
- ▷ **More than half** of the leading tourism and hospitality occupations are still experiencing lower employment levels compared to their pre-COVID employment levels in 2019.
- ▷ Temporary foreign workers made up **1.8%** of the total Canadian tourism workforce in 2023.
- ▷ **47%** fewer new workers arrived in Canada between January and November 2025 compared to the same period in 2024.
- ▷ **November 2025** marked the lowest monthly arrivals for the Temporary Foreign Worker Program in two years.

and Hospitality Management, stresses the importance of hoteliers connecting with local graduates, especially for management positions. “Get to know some students who are looking for their next role,” she says, “the talent is impressive in this group—they need a chance to share what they know and how they can contribute to your business.”

A MIDDLE GROUND

Topics like immigration and workforce in hospitality can stir up a sense of competition, but Iwama points out that foreign and domestic workers often aren't vying for the same roles. He argues that it's not realistic that every Canadian on EI would change linens in a hotel if given the chance. “The government has an idea that an unemployed person on paper is immediately going to be

available and willing to work in those positions,” he says.

Ideally, hoteliers should be able to hire both foreign and domestic workers of varying skillsets and education levels to fill the roles that need to be filled. It's more complex than whether a person has a work permit or college degree, and McBean believes that there is much to learn on all sides: “I think there is a significant lack of education about the challenges that the industry is facing.” Addressing that gap will require clearer dialogue between industry and government, as well as more informed conversations within the sector. Those conversations will continue at the BCHA Summit, where panel discussions will explore the trade-offs and practical paths forward for the hospitality workforce. □

ICON: ADOBE STOCK



FAST TRACK YOUR FUTURE

Register for BCHA's Online Education Series

www.bcha.com/fast-track-your-future



A LEGACY OF LOOKING AFTER OUR OWN



Celebrating **20 years** of community support while building the future of BC's hospitality industry

FROM THE BCHF OFFICES

JOIN US AT the BCHA Summit, take part in our raffle, or make a donation in honour of the 20th anniversary of the BC Hospitality Foundation (BCHF). This milestone is only possible thanks to the incredible

community that has supported us over the years. Together, we can continue to strengthen BC's hospitality sector and make a real difference for the people who keep it thriving.

BCHF 20TH ANNIVERSARY

This year, BCHF celebrates 20 years of supporting hospitality and tourism workers, made possible by our community through donations, volunteering, and sharing our mission with the world.

To mark this milestone, we are hosting a 20th Anniversary Celebration Fundraiser this summer that brings the

industry together to celebrate past impact and raise essential funds for future beneficiaries.

We invite you to celebrate with us by getting involved in different ways and helping shape the next 20 years of impact for our industry!

Be part of the change: sign up at www.cognitoforms.com/BCHospitalityFoundation/HelpUsCelebrate20Years

OUR LEGACY SCHOLARSHIPS

Beyond supporting hospitality workers facing challenges, we also support the next generation of industry leaders. Applications are now open for

this year's Legacy Scholarships. Don't miss these opportunities:

Hospitality industry scholarships—accepting applications year-round:

- ▷ Michael Willingham Legacy Scholarship
- ▷ 2SLGBTQ+ Hospitality Scholarship

Culinary scholarships—applications close March 31, 2026:

- ▷ Chef Nik Lim Legacy Scholarship
- ▷ Gia Pastion Legacy Scholarship
- ▷ Greg King Legacy Scholarship
- ▷ Valerie Soon Legacy Scholarship

Thank you for being part of the BCHF community! bchospitalityfoundation.com □



20 YEARS of
Making a Difference
SUPPORTING BC HOSPITALITY & TOURISM WORKERS

www.bchospitalityfoundation.com



MARKETPLACE AT THE BCHA SUMMIT

Building stronger hotels through strategic partnerships

The Marketplace is the Summit's dedicated exhibition space, bringing together suppliers and service providers who support hotels across British Columbia.

This is where you can meet partners face to face; explore products and services firsthand; and have practical conversations about operations, costs, staffing, technology, insurance, and sustainability. It is designed to be accessible and focused, making it easy to connect with companies offering practical and innovative solutions for today's hotel environment.

This year's Marketplace features a strong mix of returning partners and new allied members, each offering solutions tailored to the needs of BC hotels.

- ▷ 33 Lock Inc.
- ▷ Abell Pest Control Inc.
- ▷ Bichin Laundry Equipment
- ▷ Canadian Trade House
- ▷ Cloudbeds
- ▷ Coldstream Commercial Sales Inc.
- ▷ Colin Campbell & Sons Ltd.
- ▷ Contract Furniture Solutions
- ▷ Culligan Quench
- ▷ Currant Designs
- ▷ Ecolab
- ▷ Eden Textile
- ▷ ETM Distribution
- ▷ Fairmas Canada Inc.
- ▷ Foodbuy
- ▷ Fortis
- ▷ Genuine Comfort
- ▷ Gordon R. Williams Corporation
- ▷ GreenStep
- ▷ Guest Supply, a Sysco Company
- ▷ Haddon Equipment and Supplies
- ▷ Imprint Plus
- ▷ Innovative Flooring
- ▷ Lieberman Textiles
- ▷ Mews
- ▷ Moby
- ▷ MTech Locks
- ▷ Nerval Corporation
- ▷ Nespresso (EVS Canada)
- ▷ Owner Relations
- ▷ Polaron Energy Corporation
- ▷ Precise Parklink
- ▷ Procter & Gamble Inc.
- ▷ Prostar Contracting
- ▷ RHB Enterprises Inc.
- ▷ Rogers Communications Canada Inc.
- ▷ Royal Roads University
- ▷ Serta Simmons Bedding
- ▷ Sherwin-Williams
- ▷ SONA
- ▷ Spring Air Hospitality
- ▷ Standard Textile
- ▷ Stream Financial Services
- ▷ Sunco Communications & Installation
- ▷ Swift Charge
- ▷ Textiles Patlin
- ▷ The Fifteen Group
- ▷ True North Hospitality
- ▷ Unilever Canada
- ▷ VVS Global
- ▷ Western Financial Group
- ▷ WorkSafeBC

Less Water More Clean.



The Tide Professional Coldwater System uses less water per cycle and extends linen life up to 67%. The result? Up to **\$6,300** in annual savings and linens your guests notice for all the right reasons.



Results that Deliver Significant Savings



YOU CAN FILL **20** AVERAGE-SIZED POOLS A YEAR WITH THE WATER YOU SAVE**

LESS WATER



LOWER TEMPS



LIKE-NEW LINENS



UP TO **\$6,300** IN BOTTOM-LINE SAVINGS*

CUT YOUR WASHING MACHINE GAS & WATER COSTS

IN **1/2**[†]

WHEN YOU SWITCH

Visit us in the Marketplace at the BCHA Summit

*Annual savings based on a 150 room property switching from a standard alkaline system to the Tide Professional Coldwater System. Assume Canada national average water and gas costs according to Canada West Foundation "Water, Water Use & Water Pricing Around the World" report (figure 8), September 2011 and the National Energy Board of Canada "Short-2014-2016- Energy Market Assessment". Must have fully programmable washing machines to qualify for savings. Linen savings based on a 50-cycle test vs. the leading alkaline system. Savings assumes the standard competitive system is priced parity with Tide Professional Everyday system (Tide Detergent, Clorox and Downy) and uses linen replacement cost data based on a study among Hospitality key decision makers in April 2014. ** Based on a 150 room property and Sierra Club reporting the average pool requires 18,000 gallons of water to fill. † Assume Canadian national average water and gas costs according to Canada West Foundation "Water, Water Use & Water Pricing Around the World" report (figure 8), September 2011 and the National Energy Board of Canada "Short-2014-2016- Energy Market Assessment".

We've got **Rebates**



for commercial and industrial customers

Upgrading to higher-efficiency equipment may help lower your business's energy use and help you save on operational costs. Plus, our rebates can help improve your return on investment.

We've got rebates for gas heat pumps, heating, ventilation and air conditioning controls, LED lighting, refrigeration, restaurant equipment, optimization measures and more. Improving energy efficiency is one of the ways we're working towards a lower carbon energy future.

Energy for a better B.C.

fortisbc.com/businessrebates

Connect with us

