

You asked for it and it is here. In part to feedback received from last's year's National Meetings Industry Day, the Business Events Industry Coalition of Canada (BEICC) was formed towards the end of 2009 and formally launched in January, 2010, to act as a unifying voice for the myriad business-events industry groups and associations.

For its part, the Coalition emphasizes business as a common denominator, and focuses on the importance of presenting a strong collaborative approach to government, industry, business leaders and the general public. Our aim is to be the go-to source for consultation with these sectors, in ensuring a solid environment for our industry to grow and deliver strong financial returns for our member groups.

Driving this effort are nine far-sighted industry associations that have come together as the Coalition's founding members: CAEM, CanSPEP, CAPS, CHMSE, Convention Centres of Canada, ISES Canada, PCMA, MPI Canada and Site Canada. The joint leaders of these groups have recognized the need to join the industry's disparate voices for strength and synergy. Each founding member holds a seat on the BEICC board of directors. Naturally, the hope is that other industry associations will join in the near future, and that other partners, whether from the larger business world, advisors to the industry or official bodies, will come aboard. BEICC has already begun to canvas these groups for additional support.

The Coalition is also building an advisory council. It's anticipated that in addition to providing strategic advice, these leaders will assist in communicating to senior business representatives, government and regulators across the country.

We know that becoming an accepted industry voice does not happen overnight, but we anticipate building solidly throughout 2010. The BEICC board is implementing a plan of action to meet with member association boards and their members, with industry and general business leaders and with government representatives, to tell them about the Coalition and to familiarize them with priorities in our sector.

Furthermore, the landmark MPI Economic Impact Study (produced by the MPI Foundation, Maritz Research and the Conference Board of Canada), updated late last year with 2008 statistics, will be a vital tool to demonstrate the value of our industry as an integral component of the Canadian economy. Interestingly enough, Canada is once again leading the way in recognizing the importance of giving a unified and authoritative voice to the business-events side of the meetings industry. In March, 2010, a press release out of Washington, D.C. indicated that the U.S. travel sector is following suit, with the U.S. Travel Association creating a new council to address meetings, incentives and trade shows.

Please forward comments, suggestions, offers to join a committee or information on key issues to the BEICC at **general@beicc.com** or visit **www.beicc**