



# MEETINGS MEAN BUSINESS

## NORTH AMERICA: CELEBRATE YOUR INDUSTRY

Next month marks the first-ever North American Meetings Industry Day—an initiative driven by the success of Canada's National Meetings Industry Day and collaboration between MPI, the Meetings Mean Business coalition and the Convention Industry Council.

By Rowland Stiteler

For just under two decades, the eight MPI chapters that spread across five time zones in Canada have come together each year to focus on a common goal, elevating public awareness of the professionalism, significance and, perhaps most of all, the economic impact that the meeting profession has on that nation. The initiative that has brought this about is the annual celebration of National Meetings Industry Day (NMID), held each April (this year on April 16).

This day of recognition, education and outreach has gained traction as a national celebration in recent years with recognition from Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who recognized National Meetings Industry Day in Canada, stating, "This special day of activities offers a wonderful opportunity to raise the profile of the industry and highlight the many benefits it generates. Business meetings and events bring new knowledge, visitors and learning to our doorsteps, in turn enhancing the well-being of our communities and our nation as a whole."

This year brings the next echelon of success for the NMID movement as North American Meetings Industry Day (NAMID)

becomes an annual event in the U.S., Canada and Mexico—also on April 16 this year.

Claire Smith, CMP (MPI British Columbia Chapter), vice president of sales and marketing for the Vancouver Convention Centre, was there at the beginning of NMID and says the initiative is most of all about giving a powerful voice to the meeting industry.

"That's the most exciting thing about NAMID in the U.S. and Mexico," Smith says. "The more voices that are heard from our industry

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Other MPI members active in NMID throughout Canada seem equally as enthusiastic about the spread of this advocacy movement.

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# NORTH AMERICAN MEETINGS INDUSTRY DAY

APRIL 16, 2015

## WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT

Not quite sure what National Meetings Industry Day (NMID) and North American Meetings Industry Day (NAMID) events should be or could look like? Embrace, celebrate and share *your* industry! For instance, Canadian MPI chapters have celebrated NMID with educational sessions and entertainment for industry professionals as well as the community at large, and presenting awards to top industry innovators. Explore the concise recap of NMID 2013 at [http://nmid.ca/assets/2013\\_NMID\\_recap.pdf](http://nmid.ca/assets/2013_NMID_recap.pdf).

For more information . . .  
National Meetings Industry Day in Canada: [www.NMID.ca](http://www.NMID.ca)  
North American Meetings Industry Day: [www.mpiweb.org/namid](http://www.mpiweb.org/namid)

growing and spreading with NAMID," says Cynthia J. Lamont, CMP, CMM, immediate past president of the MPI Greater Calgary Chapter and one of a group of Canadian MPI-member recipients of the 2013 RISE Award for the NMID initiative.

Lamont attributes the success of NMID to the countless meeting professionals across Canada who have worked hard to make the initiative grow and evolve.

"It benefits us to work to be recognized for what our industry does for our communities and our nation," she says. "You could call it a 'celebration of us' and in that it has only come about through all of us who have worked for the common goal of making NMID a success."

### In the Beginning

One of the key aspects of the Canadian chapters of MPI coming together was the creation of a group of NMID Champions—a team with members representing each of MPI's eight Canadian chapters. For years, the group has been getting together for a phone conference every month to coordinate activities both individually and collectively.

Smith says that NMID in Canada originally began as a conversation among members of the then-existing Canadian Council of MPI, a nationwide steering group. This was in the mid-to-late 1990s, and meeting industry leaders in the United States were going to Washington, D.C., in an advocacy effort to make the industry's case before the political leaders.

"Because the political and governmental systems of Canada and the United States are different, we wanted to do something that was a good approach for us," Smith recalls. "We weren't out to change the world; we were just out to advocate for our industry, and that started on a local basis that was individualized for each community."

So in 1997, the concept of NMID moved forward in Canada. Its initial mission is best summarized by the NMID statement of philosophy: "National Meetings Industry Day is about elevating and building our community through leveraging important issues to raise awareness of the power of meetings in evolving and shaping that community; economically, environmentally, socially and intellectually."

While the focus of NMID efforts is decided in each community by the MPI chapters involved, a move forward in advocacy on a

province-wide and nationwide basis was achieved when all eight chapters across Canada began strategizing together for big-picture impact.

Marie-Louise Doyle, director of event solutions for Pragmatic and immediate past president and board member of the MPI Ottawa Chapter, who has been an NMID committee member, says momentum on a national level started growing several years ago by the NMID Champions thinking together about national strategies, which ultimately led to the proclamation of NMID and the industry's importance by Prime Minister Harper.

"We consider that a very strong sign that we have achieved our objective to a large extent," Doyle says. "We have attention in the national media; the national business community—we are at a level now at which we look at where we go from here."

Another important partnership NMID forged that helped prove the meeting industry's worth was with the Canadian MPI Foundation, which released a very significant study in 2008 showing that meetings activity created the equivalent of more than 550,000 full-time jobs, more than \$32 billion per year in direct contribution to the GDP, over \$71 billion in industry output and, for all levels of government, more than \$14 billion in tax revenues—quite significant figures for a nation of 34 million people.

The next phase, according to advocates of NMID and now NAMID, is the globalization of the movement. The primary planning and execution of NAMID in the U.S. is being conducted by a three-entity partnership that includes MPI, the Meetings Mean Business coalition and the Convention Industry Council. Planners of NAMID say that like NMID, it will be broad-based but also carried out on a community level by MPI chapters and other professional groups within each community, designed to build momentum on a grassroots level. As is the case with NMID, NAMID information will be disseminated through a website, Twitter feeds and other electronic media. ■