

Attractions and Venues

Whether you are hosting a conference for 30 or 3,000 delegates-or specifying lights for a small rural museum versus a large international centre-you have myriad opportunities to make smarter choices. Read on for a few ideas you can apply today in your business.

Quick Start



Set out containers to collect paper, aluminum cans, glass and other recyclables. By making the bins easy to spot, the containers can be a highly visible sign of your efforts to embrace sustainability. Consider allowing customers to use or purchase reusable mugs and cups, or offer a discount to encourage them to contribute positively to their experience and to the environment.

Indoor Attractions

Events

Conferences, meetings, trade shows, banquets and concerts tend to have a significant environmental impact, simply because they concentrate people in one location. However, these large events also present a unique opportunity to tightly control energy, materials and water consumed, as well as waste produced. Consider these "low-hanging fruit" options:

- ◆ Select a host city that is close to the majority of the participants and that offers a well-developed public transportation infrastructure.
- ◆ Choose hotels that are within walking distance of the event venue and/or have green policies and/or certification.
- ◆ Institute a "no idling" policy-with event-branded curbside signage-for vehicles picking up and dropping off participants at the venue.
- ◆ Offer participants the option to attend the event via videoconferencing.
- ◆ Post all information related to the event on a website well in advance; avoid sending out print materials by mail.
- ◆ Distribute information electronically to event participants in advance. Offer a streamlined print package for onsite registrants and print double-sided on FSC-certified paper, which comes from sustainable sources, is produced without using chlorine and often includes a high percentage of post-consumer waste content. If possible, print with vegetable-based (preferably soy) ink.

Try This!

Contact the destination marketing organization (DMO) for the region where the event is being held and ask for a list of local printers that can provide chlorine-free paper with a high post-consumer waste content and/or FSC-certified paper and/or waterless printing.

You can also visit the [Forest Stewardship Council](#) for a list of FSC-certified printers.

- ◆ Provide presentations and handouts on a reusable flash drive.
- ◆ Supply recycling bins for discarded print materials.
- ◆ Serve organic, locally produced food and beverages.

- ◆ Provide water coolers with reusable glasses rather than bottled water.
- ◆ Use ceramic dishware and metal cutlery as much as possible.
- ◆ Incorporate local artists and performers into your event's opening ceremony or reception.
- ◆ Provide locally crafted or handmade items as gifts for speakers, delegates and guests.

Make Your Event Carbon Neutral

Why not make your next event carbon neutral? First, identify as many efficiencies as possible from electricity, heating and cooling, ground and air transportation, food and beverage services, paper and other materials. Then purchase carbon offsets for the remainder. For information on carbon neutral-events and online calculators to measure emissions, check out the [David Suzuki Foundation](#).

Case Study: An Unconventional Convention Centre

Since 1996, the [Québec City Convention Centre](#) has worked to embrace sustainable practices across the full range of operations-from purchasing decisions and eco-friendly kitchen options to waste and energy management and event packages. Here are just a few examples of the strategies the centre has put into action:

- ◆ The building is heated with high-efficiency, natural-gas boilers.
- ◆ The organization constantly identifies opportunities to reduce, reuse, recycle and renew everything from paper selection to carpet fibres and dishware.
 - ◆ The building combines extensive use of natural light with energy-efficient lighting fixtures and a natural cooling system.
- ◆ Bathrooms are equipped with electronically activated urinals and sinks.
- ◆ A system monitors the water quality.
- ◆ The facility uses local and organic products.
- ◆ Food is served on porcelain dishware instead of disposable containers, with biodegradable or recyclable dishware for snacks.
 - ◆ Management offers attendees coffee-break milk, juice and sugar in bulk-rather than single-serving-containers.

These efforts have paid off in many ways. The Québec City Convention Centre was awarded the EcoGeESte (2003) and Stellaris (2004) prizes for slashing its greenhouse-gas emissions in half while reducing its per-sq-m energy consumption by 30%. It's important to note that the convention centre also does an admirable job communicating these wonderful initiatives to the public.

Museums, Galleries and Historic Sites

Canada's cultural and historical attractions not only brim with experiences for visitors, but present wonderful opportunities to increase awareness of environmental and socio-cultural issues in support of sustainable practices. Try to implement a few of the following strategies.

- ◆ Convey site-specific information on large, permanently mounted boards rather than via printed pamphlets, and use e-mail. Consider LCD screens for dynamic, onsite information such as a schedule of daily events, and use Web and e-mail for digital newsletters.

- ◆ When printed material is unavoidable, use recycled paper with a high post-consumer waste content, or FSC-certified paper. Print double-sided using vegetable-based ink and ensure these logos are visible to represent your organization's values.
- ◆ Collect used maps and guides with a drop-box at the exits; reuse them for other visitors.
- ◆ Share your successes with your guests-consider creating a small model or similar visualization tool to convey how your recycling, water conservation or renewable energy practices work.
- ◆ Educate visitors about your area's greater socio-cultural context. Offer guests pointers on how to minimize their impact-particularly with respect to sensitive cultural sites.
- ◆ Help visitors to understand local culture, customs and social norms.
- ◆ Offer hands-on opportunities for volunteers, which will help foster a deeper connection with your area's people and customs.

OUTDOOR ATTRACTIONS

Theme Parks and Festivals

- ◆ Use biodegradable disposable containers or reusable cups and plates.
- ◆ Place recycling bins in multiple, convenient and visible locations.
- ◆ Invite local green groups and charities to set up booths onsite to collect donations while educating the public regarding recycling, water conservation and other sustainable practices.
- ◆ Establish rewards or incentives to encourage guests to return recyclable bottles, cups and dishes.
- ◆ Encourage food providers to use ceramic dishes.
- ◆ Purchase in bulk to reduce packaging materials.

Try This!

Produce reusable mugs with your logo and sell them as part of the admission fee-save the cost and time involved in picking up and discarding disposable items.

- ◆ Serve beverages in bulk and encourage people to bring reusable mugs.
- ◆ Encourage traders and vendors to use non-toxic cleaning products.
- ◆ Use signage to increase awareness about water conservation and/or waste reduction.
- ◆ Use automatic taps to reduce water consumption by up to 70%.
- ◆ Consider solar thermal systems to preheat hot water.
- ◆ Work with your public transit authority to provide shuttle services and convenient transit options.
- ◆ Minimize the use of onsite vehicles and use electric- or biodiesel- powered vehicles.
- ◆ Provide secure parking for bikes to enable visitors to bicycle, rather than drive, to the site.

Try This!

Offer a discounted entrance fee to people who arrive by public transit or active transportation and charge for parking-these all help to encourage sustainable and healthy modes of travel.

Case Study: Edmonton's Low-Footprint Festival

For four days each August, the [Edmonton Folk Music Festival](#) welcomes 20,000 music fans into a city park with no paved pathways or roads. Here are a few things the organizers do to keep the event green.

- ◆ Provide a bike lock-up service.
- ◆ Install temporary walkways to minimize damage to the park.
- ◆ Collect garbage during the festival: EnviroPower, a group of youth volunteers, scours the park picking up garbage.
- ◆ Collect recyclable items to minimize waste sent to the landfill.
- ◆ Restore the grass and remove facilities and equipment in a timely manner.
- ◆ Serve food on ceramic dishes; a \$2 deposit encourages diners to return the plates. Biodegradable cups are made of cornstarch.
- ◆ Erect solar panels outside retail tents to power cash registers and other electrical appliances.

Golf Courses

Some considerations to reduce the impact on the environment from golf course development and maintenance include:

- ◆ Plant more drought/saline-tolerant turfgrass species to reduce irrigation requirements.
- ◆ Whenever possible, plant or restore native vegetation around buildings and off fairways.
- ◆ Store winter melt and rainfall for summer irrigation-consider a water feature or provide a below-ground cistern.
- ◆ Utilize a "grey-water" management system to recycle water from the clubhouse, pro shop and maintenance facilities to reuse for irrigation.
- ◆ Minimize evaporation and water use by watering early in the day or late in the evening.
- ◆ Whenever possible, leave grass clippings and other organic materials in place or compost them.
- ◆ Minimize the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.
- ◆ Maintain a buffer zone between all water bodies and areas of pesticide and fertilizer application to protect water quality.
- ◆ If available, participate in a provincial pest management accreditation program.
- ◆ Erect bird or bat houses for native species and to help control insect populations.

For more details and ideas, check out:

- ◆ [Royal Canadian Golf Association](#) (turf management and environment)
- ◆ [United States Golf Association](#) (environmental principles for golf courses in the US)
- ◆ [The R&A](#)
- ◆ [Environmental Institute for Golf](#)
 - ◆ [Green Ontario](#) (golf courses and the environment)

Protected Heritage Places

Parks and other protected heritage places preserve the natural ecosystem as well as provide an array of opportunities for visitors. Whatever the kind of park-municipal, provincial or national-the ongoing activities to both preserve the ecosystem and serve visitors must work in harmony with each other. Issues of waste, water, transportation and energy are everywhere and can become magnified in cases where businesses, cottages and campgrounds are located inside park boundaries.

Case Study: Renewable Energy On Cape Chignecto

Cape Chignecto Provincial Park, the largest of Nova Scotia's provincial parks, offers deep valleys, sheltered coves, rare plants and remnants of old-growth forest. In 2008, the park opened a new, off-grid interpretive centre powered by a series of photovoltaic solar panels. The centre will feature interpretive displays and programming, and an upper-level observation deck as well as satellite communications. There are no drive-up sites in the park. Walk-in campground and trail systems provide safe access while limiting the impact on the surrounding environment.

Best Practices of Parks Canada

Canadians have a strong sense of connection, through meaningful experiences, to their national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas; these protected places are enjoyed in ways that leave them unimpaired for present and future generations.

Parks Canada is leading the way in our communities in the protection of natural and cultural heritage, through the facilitation of memorable experiences and learning opportunities, and as a model of environmental leadership. Sustainability principles based on cultural and economic influences, as well as environmental leadership, have systematically been integrated into its policies, programs, legislation and operations.

The following examples highlight one of the three areas of sustainability-the technologies and programs for greening operations in Parks Canada:

- ◆ Green buildings: Gulf Islands National Park Reserve's Operations Centre has received a Platinum rating from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program. The centre is 75% more energy efficient than before thanks to photovoltaic electricity, ocean-based heat pumps that provide heating and hot water, and a rainwater collection system that has reduced potable water consumption by 60%.
- ◆ Power from wind: Fort Battleford National Historic Site in Saskatchewan uses a 50-kW turbine that provides 100% of its the energy.
- ◆ Power from moving water: Glacier National Park generates electricity using the natural flow of rivers and creeks to provide power to remote day-use areas.
- ◆ Green toilets: At St. Lawrence Islands National Park, composting toilets are ideal for remote sites, while solar-powered vents reduce odours.
- ◆ Recycling centres: These are in place across Parks Canada's sites and are a highly visible means of demonstrating environmental stewardship.
- ◆ Dark sky preserves: Designated by the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, these wild places have restricted lighting and promote ecosystem protection as well as energy savings. Enjoy the night sky at Point Pelee National Park, Fort Walsh National Historic Site or Elk Island National Park.

Some of the 2007-2009 strategies:

- ◆ Meet targets for sewage effluent quality, water conservation, solid waste diversion, management of contaminated sites and legislated limits to growth.
- ◆ Develop water-quality guidelines for protected heritage areas.
- ◆ Increase the number of represented terrestrial and marine regions.
- ◆ Introduce a green-building policy for Parks Canada Agency; purchase ethanol-blended fuel for federal vehicles (where available).
- ◆ Designate new places, people and events from Aboriginal history, ethno-cultural communities history and women's history.
- ◆ Provide recommendations or certification to built cultural heritage sites based on Guidelines for Historic Places.
- ◆ Facilitate visitors' experiential connections with Canada's protected heritage areas and national parks.
- ◆ Develop and deliver educational programming in and around national parks and historic sites.
- ◆ Develop legislative proposals to better protect national historic sites, federal heritage buildings and archaeological resources under federal jurisdiction.

Some accomplishments from [Parks Canada's 2007-2009 SDS](#):

- ◆ Assigned all national parks to one of six bioregions based on landscape, species and stressors.
- ◆ Conducted self-assessment in all national parks of existing monitoring projects and outlined a strategy to address gaps.
- ◆ Raised awareness and fostered understanding of the number of person-visits to heritage sites according to heritage presentation.
- ◆ Developed an ecological-integrity reporting framework about highway-related impacts such as vehicle-caused wildlife mortality, habitat fragmentation, pollution, invasive species, and construction and maintenance impacts on ecologically sensitive areas.
- ◆ Studied the feasibility of making townsites models of environmental sustainability, including sewer design in Wasagaming, as well as potable water intake, assessment and design of a sewage effluent lagoon in Waterton Lakes.

Water Parks & Pools

Numerous opportunities exist to reduce water consumption and embrace greener business practices while maintaining sufficient volumes for a positive guest experience.

- ◆ Reduce overall water consumption through water reuse, "grey-"water systems and water storage for later use.
- ◆ Install an onsite water treatment and filtering system to increase your ability to reuse water.
- ◆ Minimize the use of chemicals. When used, control and monitor the amounts.
- ◆ Try using salt water instead of chemicals.
- ◆ If you drain water to a natural water body, be sure to treat it up to natural standards in advance, and remove oil and chemicals.
- ◆ Consider a solar thermal system to heat the water. With energy costs rising, such a system may pay for itself sooner than you think.
- ◆ Install ultraviolet light to break down chlorine.

Ultraviolet light v. chlorine

Ultraviolet technology is a non-chemical approach to disinfection. In this method of disinfection, nothing is added to the water, making it simple and inexpensive. It also requires very low maintenance. How does it work? Ultraviolet purifiers use germicidal lamps that are designed and calculated to produce a certain dosage of ultraviolet light.

Advantages of using UV light for water treatment:

- ◆ No chemical consumption, storage or transportation issues.
- ◆ Low energy requirements.
- ◆ No harmful by-products.
- ◆ Minimal moving parts.
- ◆ Disinfects better than chlorine, killing more waterborne microbes than chlorination.
- ◆ More cost effective than chlorination.

Downside of using chlorine:

- ◆ By-products of chlorine production are toxic to aquatic life.
- ◆ Chlorine is a hazardous substance. Storage, transportation and handling present a potential safety hazard and potential liability.
- ◆ Chlorine is much less effective in killing viruses than in killing bacteria, and is not as effective as UV light in killing both.
- ◆ Chlorine can damage pool infrastructures, rusting ventilation systems and corroding pool liners.

- ◆ Where feasible, cover swimming pools when not in use to limit evaporation and reduce heat loss.
- ◆ Use biofuel or biodiesel instead of petroleum-based fuel.

Ski and Snowboard Resorts

Climate change already impacts the bottom line of winter sports operations around the world. For this reason alone, emissions-reduction programs in this sector should be viewed as a business imperative as much as an environmental or moral obligation. Here are a few starting points, as well as advice on broader sustainability strategies.

- ◆ Optimize the performance of snowmaking systems by installing energy-efficient air compressors, designing a better piping system and repairing air leaks in air compression systems and water leaks in the piping system.
- ◆ Cool water used in snowmaking systems in a water-cooling system or tower to reduce evaporation.
- ◆ Try to restrict snowmaking activities to times of reduced energy demand.
- ◆ To power buildings and lifts, purchase renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, small-scale hydroelectric or methane-based power.
- ◆ Specify metal halide fixtures for night skiing instead of less-efficient, high-pressure sodium lamps.
- ◆ Establish energy-efficient lighting and install timers on heaters in all buildings.

- ◆ Provide shuttles or public transportation to the ski hill for guests and employees.
- ◆ Develop an anti-idling policy in the parking lot.
- ◆ Wherever possible, use biodiesel and biofuel in vehicles and heating systems.
- ◆ Use less polluting, four-stroke engine snow machines.
- ◆ Turn off lights when ski runs not in use.
- ◆ Identify sensitive areas-inform visitors and limit the traffic in these areas.
- ◆ Re-vegetate damaged areas.

Case Study: Shredding Emissions at Whistler Blackcomb

[Whistler Blackcomb](#) is radically reducing its environmental impact by focusing on reducing emissions, waste management, land use and water conservation.

On the waste-management side alone, efforts to reduce, recycle and reuse have paid off in a 60% reduction in the amount of waste being sent to the landfill. The company's [approach is comprehensive](#)-from purchasing less packaging and materials to recycling more than 80,000 beverage containers per year and more than 25 types of materials from light bulbs to ski poles. Used items such as ski equipment, desks and office equipment, dishes, furniture and clothing find new homes through the Mountain Materials Exchange or are donated to charities. A composting program at several of the area's restaurants diverted 100 tonnes of organics from the landfill over three years. The composting program has now been expanded to include paper towels from the on-mountain washrooms.

The company's eco-trophy case is packed with accolades, including the BC Tourism Award for Environmentally Responsible Tourism, the Silver Eagle Award for Excellence in Waste Management in the North American Ski Industry, and the First Choice Responsible Tourism Award for Best in Mountain Environment.

For more details and ideas, check out:

- ◆ [Canadian Centre for Pollution Prevention](#) (pollution prevention at ski resorts)
- ◆ [National Ski Area Association](#) (sustainable slopes)
- ◆ [Keep Winter Cool](#)