



Industry Briefing Papers 2016

NORTH AMERICA: CANADA

1. What is currently making news in your country when it comes to spa, wellness, wellness travel or well-being?

As a general rule, Canadians have always been great to travel. Each winter, as the temperatures plummet in the colder months, we historically flock south. Known in the southern regions as “snow birds”, Canadians contribute significantly to the international tourism market, most especially in the southern United States, Caribbean, and more recently in Central America (with an increased number of direct flights from key Canadian cities and airlines servicing this region). With this being said, travel outside the country that doesn’t include the same access to health care and coverage provided at home, is becoming more of an issue and deterrent to traveling abroad.

This is particularly relevant for the aging population and also in an era of public health concerns such as Zika. As a result, and also in response to a growing movement towards the concept of “stay-cations”, we are seeing great growth in both the quality and availability of hotels and resorts within Canada with a strong spa and wellness presence. In key Canadian cities such as Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto, we have seen great growth in both the luxury resort and boutique hotel market. Take Toronto for example: Within a 20-month period between February 2011 and October 2012, we saw the opening of The Ritz-Carlton Toronto, the Shangri-La Toronto, Trump Toronto, and the opening of the new Four Seasons Hotel and Residences. All four of these properties have extensive spa footprints which have changed the face of the industry in the city.

In resort towns in the outskirts of major city centres across the country we are seeing great growth too. Many properties that were previously seasonal, and only open during the peak summer months, are now transitioning towards year round operations, with almost all featuring spa and wellness programs. Ski destinations throughout British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec have long been world-renowned for their skiing. Proudly, they are now becoming known as world-renowned wellness destinations too. Nordic-inspired Spas in spectacular locations that feature thermal baths and extensive amenity programs are on the rise and are a perfect complement to the abundance of adventure and outdoor activities available.

2. Please provide one sentence that describes what you think is the most important development in your country for each of the following wellness sectors:

Spas:

The quality of education and hand's-on training received by Massage Therapists in Canada is very strong. Most health care plans include complete coverage or partial re-imburement for these services.

Beauty:

Beauty is both personal and universal in Canada. Such a multi-cultural nation, you can access all the latest beauty trends and offerings in all key city centres.

Fitness:

Finally! We are beginning to move in a better direction here – outdoor walking and biking paths in cities, effective and affordable city bike share programs are more readily available, modern and innovative studios with diverse offerings such as barre, capoeira, reformer-based programs, dance, yoga, pilates, etc..!

Nutrition:

Phenomenal movement towards “Eat Globally, Source Locally”. Great availability of farm-to-table options & home-delivery of local produce.

Wellness Tourism:

Concept of “stay-cations” and advancement of spa and wellness inclusions as noted above.

Wellness Communities or Real Estate:

There is tremendous un-tapped opportunity here.

3. Our theme this year is “Back to the Future.” What do you feel is your country’s most significant contribution to what is now a global wellness economy?

Overall, I would say our approach to health care – from both a quality and accessibility perspective – is a great contribution. The health care system in Canada is progressive and the concept of holistic medicine has been embraced. Health care is publicly funded for essential services. In addition, most corporate health insurance plans include annual coverage for a variety of modalities such as Naturopathic Medicine, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Acupuncture, and Massage Therapy by a registered provider.

4. What do you feel is the biggest challenge in your country when it comes to growing the wellness economy?

Certainly many great challenges we face are a result of urbanization and growing populations in our major city centres which are taxing on our facilities and resources. Currently reactive, we need to become much more proactive in our approach to planning for a growing demand.

5. While no answers are right or wrong, we would like to know what you feel is the difference - if any - between the terms/concepts of “wellness” and “well-being” in your country.

If anything, I think “wellness” is now more commonly understood as being associated with an industry whereas “well-being” is more commonly understood as being associated with the individual. We need both!

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