



THE AMERICAS: CANADA

What are the most significant global issues facing us today?

Global warming is a serious problem. The climate is changing. The earth is warming up. We need to decrease carbon emissions. We need smarter regulations of cosmetics to achieve emissions reduction (for example, bath products like shampoo and lotion that contain toxic chemicals that can harm our bodies and ecosystems).

The effects of industrial fishing, pollution, and climate change are having a major impact on our oceans.

To ensure water ecosystems are healthy and that we have the water we need, there is a range of challenges to meet, including pollution, water exports, water withdrawals, and diverting water flows. One in five humans does not have access to potable water.

Not only is climate change real, scientists agree that humans are influencing climate change through production of greenhouse gases. Human activity is causing massive extinctions. Even increased efforts at conservation have been insufficient and biodiversity losses continue. In most nations today, the gap between the rich and the poor is quite high and often widening. The amount of waste the industrialized world generates is shocking.

What do you see as the main innovations happening around the world, those which are game changing and/or disruptive?

Some organizations, such as the Canadian David Suzuki Foundation, have become a strong and capable force in transforming the economy, protecting nature, reconnecting with nature and building community. There is a big influence of technology in our daily lives. Electronic devices, multimedia and computers are things we have to deal with everyday. Easy and free access to online information you can find in a short time. Why pay more when we can get free software, free music, free conference call, etc? It is also very easy to create new social contacts all over the world in a blink of an eye. Especially in the business sector, the internet can play an essential part to position a product. But simply having the tools to access information easily is not the same as actually knowing the information.

What do you see as the main innovations in the spa/wellness industry (existing and future)?

The spa industry segment is regarded as the leading player in health and wellness. Innovative new technologies, treatments and products that contribute to well-being and longevity of customers, guests, ourselves and our planet itself are available on the market. Today's customer is looking for a spa experience that promises to nourish mind, body and soul, and access to anti-aging programs.

In Quebec, the Medical spas are not as developed as in the USA. The Quebec Nordic Baths is one product showing more growth in the last few years; they have a different 'flavor' from that offered in the Scandinavian countries. What we see in Quebec (and not in the rest of Canada) is the Generation X (born between 1960-1979) and Y (born between 1980-2000) becoming the most frequent users for this type of spa, meaning that for the next generation, well-being will be mandatory, part of their values.

Too often the customers stop themselves from enjoying activities because of the weather forecast (especially in Canada). Tourism Quebec and a weather forecast channel offer an 'Activityforecaster' (free mobile application) to suggest an activity in a nearby location (Don't Let the Forecast Overshadow Your Plans!). Going to a spa is one of the activities offered.

Therapies for children are now on the agenda. In Quebec, children were rarely allowed in spas. Recently, some spas have created specially designed treatments and events for them, and the response has been great.

Resorts and hotels are joining the health spa development craze, although few resorts are moving into the scope of services currently offered by destination spas. Likewise, a growing number of day spas are adding health and wellness programming options. Eating a healthy, balanced diet is an important part of maintaining good health and reduces the risk of getting cancer. More spas are offering tips for eating and living well as well as nutrition programs.

What do you see as the greatest opportunities/challenges for the global spa and wellness industry?

The exponential growth of the industry has prompted the need for spa professionals and managers to enhance those skills specifically related to business and management issues unique to spas. Staying competitive and profitable means not compromising on the quality of services. Also, offering frequent continuing education to spa staff to maintain the highest standards of practice and ensure educated, qualified employees is mandatory. Global spa standards must be a 'top of the list' priority because people travel all around the world and compare products, treatments, hygiene, client services, etc. They should be able to expect a certain level of quality. A global spa standard would help prevent a situation wherein a death would be caused by inappropriate treatments, as we had in Quebec last summer.

What are some practical ways for businesses to create a climate for creativity and innovation?

The mission of every leader should be to search continually for ideas and programs that are superior to the ones the organization is currently committed to. I believe that the leader has to be a source of inspiration, he needs to be nourished and spend time (booked into his agenda) to go in the field, visit spas, read inspirational stories and allow brainstorming sessions with his staff.

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