

Moncton Major Events Attraction Strategy: City of Moncton SUMMARY REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

This document is the result of a collaborative effort between **TSE Consulting** (“TSE”) and the City of Moncton.

The project was commissioned in October 2017, and the review process took place over a seven-month period, concluding with a report to key stakeholders in May 2018. The purpose of the study was to guide the City of Moncton in identifying, attracting, and hosting major cultural and sporting events over the next 10 years.

Moncton, the largest city in New Brunswick, has an advantageous geographic location as the geographic center of the Maritime Provinces. The city has earned the nickname "Hub City" due to its central inland location in the region and its history as a railway and land transportation hub. Approximately 1.6 million people live within a three-hour drive of the city, thus enabling Moncton to attract sizable audiences for sports and cultural events. It is a bilingual city, with about two-thirds of its residents speaking native English.

Although Moncton has had success in attracting important events over many years, it is evident that the current event bidding landscape is increasingly complex and competitive among cities, necessitating a sound strategy that identifies events that can bring optimal results. And, because the period of time between event bidding and event hosting can be three years or more, it is evident that a long-term approach to event bidding and hosting is critically important.

Events have traditionally produced three notable city benefits: additional economic impact; heightened branding/image; and, enhanced “quality of life” for citizens as volunteers, spectators, and participants. Currently, cities are increasingly placing a high value on “social benefits,” determining that major events can help to reinforce local community initiatives. These changes in the context for event hosting are important new and ongoing circumstances that must be sufficiently recognized in a long-term event strategy.

And, community support for major events is more important than ever before, particularly because of public sector investment in infrastructure and municipal services. Events must do more than motivate economic activity or create media attention; they must strike a chord with the local citizenry, not only to purchase tickets and become volunteers but also to activate involvement and engagement.

Most importantly, events must be aligned with other strategic interests that the community has previously identified, so that such events can become catalysts for change within initiatives that are well-defined and broadly understood. And, to the extent possible, events are able to provide high visibility and create important opportunities for community programs that otherwise might not be able to gain traction or widespread acceptance.

Therefore, the development of a 10-year event attraction strategy is a reflection of the need for good planning and direction by city and provincial leaders and officials, as well as a testament to the highly competitive environment among cities for the most important events.

And, fundamentally, the way in which the major event acquisition and hosting function is organized and structured must be efficient in utilizing the unique characteristics and opportunities presented within the public, private, and nonprofit sector space.

METHODOLOGY

The development of the Moncton Major Events Attraction Strategy has been supported by the recognition of three guiding principles:

- The sports and cultural event attraction plan must be aligned with the most important community strategies, with major events serving as catalysts for achieving such initiatives.
- Major events that are attracted to, and hosted in, Moncton must answer the fundamental question, “Why and how is this event beneficial to the community”?
- Major events must serve the interests of local citizens, with broad participation by all segments of the community.

While the critical importance of producing economic vitality – primarily measured through hotel room night generation and economic impact calculation -- is recognized, the most desirable events will achieve additional benefits for the community, both tangible and intangible.

There were two project phases, carried out over a seven-month time frame.

PHASE 1

Phase 1 of the project focused on the competitive landscape related to event bidding and hosting, with emphasis on two areas:

- Market analysis, focusing on the current level of event activity, in terms of the primary sports and cultural activities, quantity of events in various categories, and economic impact generated.
- Market potential, comparing Moncton to various competitor cities and analyzing opportunities for higher levels of success through an aggressive and strategic “game plan,” supported by appropriate levels of human and financial resources.

TSE Consulting recognizes the significant achievements of the City of Moncton in attracting and staging major events, over many years.

Some of the most important sports events (hosted since 1992) are listed below:

- 1992 Canadian Figure Skating Championships
- 1997 World Junior Baseball Championships
- 2000 Canadian Junior Curling Championships
- 2007 and 2008 CIS University Cup
- 2009 World Men's Curling Championships
- 2010 IAAF World Junior Championships (athletics)
- 2010, 2011, and 2013 CFL regular season neutral site games
- 2012 Canadian Figure Skating Championships
- 2013 and 2014 Canadian Track & Field Championships
- FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup Canada 2014
- FIFA Women's World Cup Canada 2015™
- 2017 Canadian U18 Curling Championships

Some of the most important events, concerts and celebrity appearances (hosted since 1984) are listed below:

- 1984 Pope John Paul II Papal Visit
- 1989 Beach Boys Still Cruisin' Tour
- 1998 Classic Rock Festival
- 1999 VIII^e Sommet de la Francophonie
- 2005 Rolling Stones – A Big Bang Tour
- 2006 Country Rocks the Hill
- 2007 Soul2Soul Tour
- 2008 The Eagles – Long Road Out
- 2009 AC/DC Black Ice Tour
- 2011 U2 360 Tour
- 2012 Nickelback Here and Now Tour
- 2012 Bruce Springsteen Tour
- 2015 AC/DC Rock or Bust World Tour

PHASE 2

Phase 2 of the project included identification of events that have congruence with Moncton's goals and objectives; identification of primary organizational partners; and, establishment of strategic priorities for event attraction and hosting.

To do so effectively, significant focus was placed on the way in which event identification and event selection takes place, as well as the formation of a strategic approach to event bidding.

Because of the intense competition for premier events, Moncton is best served by a strategy that is inclusive, collaborative, and sustainable. Recognition of community assets is an important first step but bringing together support from all segments of the community, over an extended period of time, is an enormous challenge that must be clearly articulated and, ultimately, embraced by community leaders in a unified way.

It is also understood that the event strategy must provide flexibility to minimize the inherent risks of predicting future trends. While the way in which event bidding and hosting is structured is important to success, emphasis needs to be placed on determining organizational structure as a function of event strategy. Simply stated, strategy drives structure.

The City of Moncton must oversee the following key elements:

- Consistency with mission statement, reinforcing and underscoring ongoing successful tourism initiatives
- Congruence between economic development and tourism initiatives
- Accountability and Oversight
- Awareness of “Best Practices” of Cognate and Competitor Cities
- Stakeholder input
- Local Organizing Committee (LOC) Model
- Consistency of Branding and Delivery of Services
- “Homegrown” Events

ALIGNMENT WITH PARTNERS

Although the events world moves at a fast pace, and the current event bidding landscape is increasingly complex and competitive among cities, there is increased value for key Moncton leaders to create and maintain relationships with key decision-makers and opinion leaders.

“Relationship building” is not merely being present at events and meetings and making social contacts; instead, the term implies trust building, which can only be accomplished after many points of interaction in which collaboration is of paramount importance.

Moncton must develop a relationship building plan for each of its organizational partners, which includes a more consistent presence at important event gatherings. However, contact alone is not enough to justify confidence; there must also be elements of collaboration and attentiveness that go well beyond social occasions.

Relationships must also be targeted and multi-dimensional. That is, establishing a relationship in Moncton’s priority sports and within its cultural strengths is very important at the regional and national levels. Fundamentally, it is too late to make a bid presentation with only cursory acquaintance with the decision-makers. It is important that bid presentations reflect the knowledge gained in previous interactions and recognition of new directions, initiatives, or priorities.

EVENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Prior to identifying the recommended events and top prospects, discussions ensued with members of the staff to identify core sports, arts/cultural strengths, facility advantages and challenges, growth opportunities, and market drivers such as hotel rates and facility availability.

Thus, the role of TSE was to identify additional opportunities that could help Moncton expand its efforts and build upon its strong track record of success for both sporting events and cultural/arts-related events.

Within the sports context, Moncton has hosted a broad range of events, reflecting the varied interests of local residents and the specialized facilities necessary for their conduct. However, communities that are successful in event bidding and hosting tend to emphasize eight to ten “core sports” that have the following characteristics:

- Historical traditions within the sport or events
- Venues and athletic facilities that meet the high standards of national or international requirements
- Technical expertise by recognized leaders within the community
- Potential for substantial volunteer interest and support
- Opportunity for significant economic and social impact
- Corporate support through sponsorship and/or volunteer involvement
- Spectator appeal and support
- Prestige, values, and image associated with the event

The priority sports are as follows:

- Hockey
- Curling
- Track and Field
- Soccer
- Baseball
- Figure Skating and Ice Action Sports

- E-Sports
- Youth Sports
- University Sports

Its targets within the arts and cultural world primarily should include the following:

- Touring musical entertainers
- Award shows
- Arts exhibits and special acquisitions
- Community festivals and gatherings
- Acadian heritage and cultural expression
- Optimal utilization of the new Moncton Downtown Centre

TSE Consulting suggests adoption of the following goals (without prioritization):

GOAL #1: EXPAND THE MONCTON FOOTPRINT

- Recognize that the geographic boundaries of Moncton should not be a limiting factor in aggregating resources and support for optimal event attraction success.
- Ensure that Moncton event attraction priorities are complementary to the tourism objectives of the Province of New Brunswick.
- Seek opportunities to collaborate with the Province of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island (and, in particular, the cities of Halifax and Charlottetown) to create an Atlantic Canada/Canadian Maritime footprint to draw benefit from regional appeal.
- Emphasize the unique aspects of Acadie and the potential international opportunities for Francophone cultural and sports events.
- Draw upon SMG experience and professional relationships to attract touring shows, concerts, and sports events to the Downtown Centre.

GOAL #2: REALIGN GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE

- Expand current organizational governance to form a sports and arts council, including key stakeholders, thus creating a strong, direct connection to the community and a “sales force” to assist in the identification and attraction of events.

- Commit to significant volunteer involvement in major events, primarily through “local organizing committees” that are designed to broaden community participation and showcase the unique advantages and characteristics of the region.
- Engage with SMG management of the new event centre for inclusion in relevant event bids and presentations.
- Examine the mandate and composition of the Events Moncton Board, with the goal of tightening its scope, sharpening its focus, and reviewing its composition.

GOAL #3: PRIORITIZE CORE SPORTS/ARTS STRENGTHS

- Focus attention on bidding for events in priority sports and areas of demonstrated arts/cultural strength, while being flexible enough to embrace new opportunities.
- Identify the key attributes of the major events that have resonated within the community – what elements made some previous events “click,” while others did not – and focus on bidding for events with similar characteristics.
- Evaluate the need for new and/or expanded facilities that can expand the Moncton “event universe.”
- Identify targeted events within a ten-year window, and nurture new and existing relationships with important event rights holders that control these events.

GOAL #4: CREATE SIGNATURE HOMEGROWN EVENTS

- Support the creation of one or more signature homegrown events that are owned and operated by a non-profit, locally based organization.
- Identify one or more existing annual events that could be supported, expanded, or improved.
- Ensure that procedures for various municipal licenses and permits are seamless and are designed to encourage individuals “with a dream” to bring events to fruition.

GOAL #5: INCREASE COMMUNICATION

- Create a mechanism through which the community can learn about the ongoing work, including an annual meeting and accompanying annual report.

- Communicate regularly with key city and provincial leaders to aid in understanding the importance of sports and cultural tourism to the economic vitality of Moncton and New Brunswick.
- Expand the “report card” of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) beyond hotel room nights and economic impact. Develop broader evaluation methodologies to include a more diverse set of success metrics.
- Create a well-defined and consistent message that evokes positive response from event decision-makers and events rights holders, to answer, “Why choose Moncton?”
- Engage in strategic relationship-building with sport and arts/cultural organizational leaders so that partnership on event bidding and hosting are enhanced and strengthened.
- Establish consistent, direct, and meaningful communication between city personnel and local sports and arts stakeholders to optimize their relationships and technical expertise.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS IN KEY FUNCTIONAL AREAS

TSE Consulting makes the following recommendations in five key functional areas:

Recommendation #1: Positioning

- Utilize a standardized event evaluation model to make fact-based judgments about events that are appropriate for bidding. One such instrument has been developed by the Canadian Sports Tourism Alliance (CSTA).
- Attract important events that emphasize identification and quantification of both the economic and social benefits that will accrue to Moncton as a result of hosting the events.
- Identify criteria for predicting future event success by analyzing the key elements of events that have previously achieved successful results. In broad form, understand the key components of the events that have resonated most directly within the community.
- Utilize stakeholders in the identification of, and bidding for, major events. Stakeholder inclusion can be more broad and comprehensive.

- Enhance efforts to infuse arts and cultural elements in major sports events, reflecting the diversity of artistic talent in the community.
- Explore the feasibility of developing the region as an important center of para sports emphasizing contributions by the local medical community and relevant healthcare providers.
- Establish initiatives within every major sports event that prioritize youth involvement through learning or service opportunities, as well as providing ways to promote and encourage healthy lifestyles.

Recommendation #2: Image and Place Branding

- Moncton can be more aggressive and bold in telling its story, and the narrative must emphasize the unique “Moncton DNA.”
- Those who are charged with bidding for events are encouraged to engage more frequently and at a more consistent level with domestic organizational leaders.
- The natural beauty of New Brunswick and the friendliness of Moncton citizens should have a high priority in the sales effort.
- Identification of one or two primary attributes (distinctive “selling points”) has proven to be difficult, but in a crowded group of competitor cities, Moncton must be able to distinguish itself through compelling imagery. “Why Moncton” is the most important question to be answered in event bidding.

Recommendation #3: Aligning

- Nurture and strengthen provincial sport association relationships, including hosting an annual conference on “best practices” and providing regular opportunities for information sharing on event bidding and hosting.
- Develop a long-range sport facility plan to enable successful bidding and hosting of major events, including ongoing maintenance at a high standard; repair, renovation, and rehabilitation of existing facilities on a scheduled basis; and, the financing and construction of new venues.
- Identify and target opportunities for sport leadership positions within major domestic sports organizations for local sports stakeholders.

- Prioritize data collection and maintenance through research that supports successful event bidding and hosting. It is essential that leaders have an understanding of the events that are the best “fit” for the community.
- Prioritize events for attendance by Moncton representatives, emphasizing relationship building and communication of key community messages. It is essential that local representatives attend events with the greatest likelihood for bidding, both to get vital information about event operations but also to engage with the event’s leaders.
- Identify for future hosting the most important meetings, conferences, and conventions, recognizing their value in relationship building, media attention, and participant familiarity with Moncton.

Recommendation #4: Organizing

- Determine organizational structure that provides a clear and effective structure to future efforts.
- Structure and process must be clear to external constituents. Conflicting or competing messages confuse stakeholders and leads to concerns regarding the ability to effectively and seamlessly execute the event.
- Develop procedures and regulations that enable higher levels of quality control for events that do not fall under the direct management auspices of the City of Moncton.

Recommendation #5: Activating

- Establish a 10-year bidding cycle for events that prioritizes important national championships, as well as other events where the unique “community identity” can be established.
- Seek to host congresses, conventions, and meetings of national sport and arts/cultural organizations (and their committees), as well as important Board meetings, conferences, and conventions that expand awareness of local assets and nurture relationships with sport and arts/cultural decision-makers. It is essential that its decision-makers have familiarity with Moncton in order to enhance successful event bidding.