

# THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

## UFI: The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry Sustainable Development Award Application 2016 The International Centre

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### About us

The International Centre is one of the only privately owned trade and consumer show and conference facilities in Canada. We are proud of our over forty year history of hosting memorable events and building long-lasting relationships with our clients. When it first opened in 1972, the facility had 260,000 sq. ft. of exhibit space. Since then we've expanded to approximately 548,000 sq. ft., offering an ideal mix of exhibit, meeting and special event services. Having grown immensely in size and client base, The International Centre today hosts over 500 shows and events each year.

The International Centre has been committed to sustainability for close to a decade, ensuring that we are continuously improving our efficiency performance and expanding our community outreach and employee engagement programs. The International Centre was the first venue in Canada to receive a 4 Green Key rating in the Green Meetings 2.0 Program. We also received a Level 1 certification for the ASTM/APEX Sustainable Meetings and Events Standard in 2014, among only 14 other venues in North America.

### Scope of Project

In July 2015 The International Centre was host to The Climate Reality Leadership Corp, a two-day Conference of 650 attendees. The Climate Reality Project, founded by Al Gore is a group of individuals committed to adopting sustainable solutions and practices, and educating others on the realities of climate change. The Leadership Corp at The International Centre was one of many global education sessions in 2015.

When selecting a venue for this conference The Climate Reality Project had specific requirements; whether or not the venue had any sustainability certifications or ratings, what waste management plans are in place and any sustainable sourcing commitments. Additional requests were made to track 100% of waste generated, to offer a vegetarian menu with vegan options, to purchase as much local product as possible, and to source alternative transportation options for attendees.

When looking for a venue for The Climate Reality Leadership conference, The International Centre stood out (in part) because of the many sustainability certifications and awards it's received. The International

Centre was able to meet their initial requirements of sustainability certifications with our Level 1 ASTM/APEX and our 4 Green Key Rating. In order to fulfill the conferences additional requests we broke these down into three separate challenges; transportation, food and waste.

### **Transportation**

The Climate Reality Project wanted to provide transportation to the attendees that were staying in partner hotels. An additional requirement for the transportation was to be as environmentally responsible as possible. To meet these requirements The International Centre collaborated with Tourism Toronto to source and secure a more sustainable means of transportation. Initially Tourism Toronto looked to source electric vehicles, however with very few of them being available in the GTA the destination bureau was able to find bio-diesel hybrids from the City of Mississauga's transit. These public transit buses were available for attendees travelling to and from the conference twice per day.

### **Food**

The International Centre kitchen produces all of its event meals from scratch, prepping all of the menu items leading up to the days of the event. Although we offer many vegetarian and vegan options in our menu, having an event of 650 attendees that was requesting a full vegetarian menu with alternative vegan options was a challenge for our culinary team was ready for. Additionally, The Climate Reality Project wanted to source as many of the ingredients as possible from local growers and producers. We made a point of trying to create interesting menu items that could also contain local product. One of these items was our vegan shepherd pie which is made with different beans and lentils, many of which we were able to source locally. Although we used local produce as inspiration for the menu, there were many items chosen that include ingredients not native to Canada. These included conference staples such as Fair Trade Coffee and Tea as well as ingredients such as chocolate and mango. We wanted to ensure that whatever items we did purchase locally were trackable to the farm, so we made an effort to purchase many of these products from *100km Foods*, a food service distributor specializing in local product. Ingredients such as cheese, asparagus, cauliflower, cucumber, carrots, lentils, beans, oils, yogurt, apples, walnuts and tempeh were just some of the items we were able to source. In total we were able to source multiple items from over 20 local Ontario producers and farmers.

### **Waste**

Leading up to the event we organized how the waste would be collected, sorted and tracked and ensured that we had the proper materials required in each area. For the conference attendees we had three stream bins in place to separate organics, mixed recyclables and waste to landfill (see photo 1). These three waste streams are also used in our kitchen and staff corridors (see photo 2). The tracking of waste began four days prior to the event days in our kitchen during food preparations. All of the waste specific to The Climate Reality Project was disposed of in specific bins separate from other event's waste and was organized by stream in a main collecting area. During the event, the source separation was monitored ensure proper practices were being followed; additionally staff from The Climate Reality Project were taken on tours to see the waste management practices and collection areas.



Photo 1: Bins used front of house



Photo 2: Bins used back of house

In addition, The International Centre took strides to reduce waste, purchasing and serving items in bulk. Some of these items included yogurt, tea, sugar, milk, cream, apple cider, honey, butter and fruit preserves. We also provided china for all to use this for our clients as well, and for the duration of The Climate Reality Leadership Corp conference, our Conference Centre was also Bullfrog-powered.

We traditionally provide our clients with a gift following their event to thank them for choosing our facility. In lieu of this gift, which is generally wine, local preserves or baked goods we purchased seedlings from a charitable organization to be planted in the Toronto area on behalf of The Climate Reality Project. This gift will hopefully provide habitat to animals and insects when fully grown.

## Measured Results

All of the waste for this event was tracked and weighed by stream; organics, waste to landfill and recycling. The International Centre provided The Climate Reality Project with a Post Event Sustainability Report including a breakdown of where the waste was generated and by each stream. The efforts to reduce and track waste for this event resulted in a 95.4% diversion rate.

### Back of House

Garbage/Landfill	Recycling	Organics	Total Waste
75.6 lbs	452.34 lbs	1,734 lbs	<b>2,261.94 lbs</b>

### Show Floor

Garbage/Landfill	Recycling	Organics	Total Waste
38.6 lbs	71.4 lbs	117.4 lbs	<b>227.4 lbs</b>

### TOTAL SHOW

Garbage/Landfill	Recycling	Organics	Total Waste
114.2 lbs	523.74 lbs	1,851.4 lbs	<b>2,489.34 lbs</b>

## Lessons and Next Steps

As we were required to track all of the waste generated from the event, we were also able to look at our current waste separation practices and procedures and pinpoint the areas for improvement. We have realized that for many events getting an accurate detail of waste generated would be difficult with tight turn-arounds and multiple shows running congruently. However the process we adopted for The Climate Reality Project can be replicated when we have stand-alone events happening in one exhibit hall, or when we have time and space allocated at the end of an event to sort waste.

The International Centre has hosted several events in the past with local Ontario menus, and although we are well connected to local farmers and producers, each event has its own challenges. Although local food is available in Ontario, especially during the summer months it can be very difficult to secure local menu ingredients for a large group. We had to be selective of which items we sourced local to ensure we were purchasing as much as possible while keeping within the planner's food and beverage budget. Unfortunately, local product can often be more expensive because there still is not a large enough market for it within the industry. However each time an event chooses to purchase local product we start to increase the demand and make Ontario product more readily available.

Now that we have a better understanding all-around of a sustainable event start to finish, The International Centre can begin to incorporate some of the best practices from The Climate Reality Project into our everyday operations. Perhaps serving banquet items in bulk is a more sustainable and cost effective approach when we schedule events of a certain size. Additionally, with stronger local farmer and producer connections made through this event we now have a longer list of suppliers that

can provide Ontario products. As we strive to continuously provide sustainable events, The International Centre always looks to partner with events interested in sustainability. Whether this is reducing and tracking waste, to sourcing local food menus, we want to help the events industry with more environmentally and socially responsible practices while looking to improve our own operations at the same time.

### **Additional Information**

Before the event took place at The International Centre, The Climate Reality Project released an article as to why sustainable event venues matter, and why they decided to choose us as their venue. The full article can be found here: <https://www.climaterealityproject.org/blog/location-location-location-why-your-green-event-venue-matters>



From Left: Sonya Poorter, Sustainability Officer; Al Gore, Founder and President of The Climate Reality Project; and Trevor Lui, Director of Operations and Sustainability



The Climate Reality Leadership Corp training attendees and planners