

ONTARIO CHAPTER SUCCEEDS IN TORONTO AT HFTP ONTARIO REGIONAL CONFERENCE

TORONTO, CANADA – The 2010 HFTP Ontario Canada Chapter Regional Conference organized on May 19 by this year's HFTP Ontario Executive Committee and Directors at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel proved to be a very well attended and information jam packed affair. Total attendance was 45 this year with up to six CPE's available to be earned from seven speaker presentations. HFTP Ontario Chapter president, Amnon Reshef and vice president, Barry Ward opened the conference and moderated the conference program.

The keynote speaker, *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Radio Business Analyst and CFA Program Professor from George Brown College, Michael Hlinka* got the ball rolling with an informative and insightful overview of the current global and Canadian economies. His general conclusions were that the worldwide and Canadian economies are rebounding well from the severe economic downturn experienced from the recent banking and credit crises, but, very serious issues still confront us. Mr. Hlinka also forecasted positive, but subdued future economic growth in the single digits for the years ahead in the developed world, held back by higher amounts of less productive government spending, higher taxes, less profitability in many industry sectors resulting from worldwide production overcapacity, and the effects of higher inflation arising from the winding down of the decades long trend of cheaper foreign imports.

For Canada in particular, Mr. Hlinka pointed out, that while Canada usually experiences more serious downward swings than the U.S. during recessionary times, this time around Canada has been fortunate and its economic activity suffered a relatively minor recession with its resulting unemployment peaking at significantly lower levels than the U.S. and the rest of the world. The reasons presented why Canada appears to have been insulated somewhat during this recessionary period is because Canada's banking industry regulations, non-subsidized homeowner mortgage interest tax policy, and, its lack of heavy handed governmental interference in the mortgage and mortgage insurance industries for social engineering purposes prevented a sub-prime mortgage fueled systemic housing price bubble and the resulting banking crisis from developing in Canada as it did in the U.S. and the rest of the world. Indeed, Mr. Hlinka points out that as a result, not a single major Canadian bank failed while virtually the entire U.S. and European banking industry sectors collapsed into insolvency in 2008 and 2009 requiring huge government takeovers, bail outs, subsidies and capital infusions for them just to keep their countries banking doors open.

One very serious and foreseen, and yet, generally ignored future challenge for the world economy and for Canada in particular Mr. Hlinka recommends everyone to keep a close eye on is the huge and unprecedented unfunded pension and social security liabilities currently faced by all the major U.S. industries and the U.S. federal, state and city governments just as the baby boom generation is reaching its retirement age. While the U.S. current operating budgets, total national debt, and un-funded pension and un-funded social security systems match up eerily similar by almost all measurement dynamics in relative terms to the countries who are presently experiencing the negative fallout from their huge debt hangovers (Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain), it appears that the sheer size and scale of the U.S. economy along with the lack of any viable world currency alternative is forestalling the U.S. government's day of economic reckoning and allowing politicians worldwide to ignore the problem for the time being.

Other presentation programs presented during the conference in order of appearance included a very informative real time case study analysis provided by *Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide D'Arcy Coon* examining the current vertical and horizontal restructuring and centralization of its accounting, payroll and human resources functions within Starwood's system of 10 Canadian owned hotels. *Mr. Paul A. Willie, Professor at the School of Hospitality, Tourism, and Administration at Niagara College, Canada and a chapter member* presented a detailed exploration of the discipline of hotel, golf club and restaurant industry revenue

management techniques, policies and procedures from scholastic theory to real world application examples. The luncheon speaker, Ms. Erin O'Brien, from PKF Consulting, Inc., Toronto and a chapter member presented a detailed overview of PKF's current survey of Canadian hotel operating revenues, expenses and profitability by province and for the country showing the steep declines from last year and the very encouraging rebound and forecast for this year. A key point raised was the severity of the 2009 decline in hospitality Revenue Per Available Room (REVPAR) appears to have been very heavily influenced in Canada by the severely negative drumbeat of the major news media worldwide during late 2008 and early 2009 and the re-enforcing downward spiral created by the wide spread reaction of many Canadian hotels pursuing price discounting strategies in an attempt to try to maintain their relative market shares. Carol Suzuki, from Suzuki and Associates presented a very well received and appreciated workshop program on *The Business of Listening* reminding everyone that the difficulties in listening stem from the fact that while speakers can communicate at 250 to 450 words per minute, people think at the equivalent rate of 1,000 to 3,000 words per minute. Her three key elements for an effective listening strategy, 1) Give Others the Floor, 2) Grant Them An "A" and Follow Their Lead, and 3) Consciously Strive to Make Communication Moments Perfect For All Parties were demonstrated and explored.

The final session had two presentations running concurrently, with Bob Willard, author of *The Sustainability Advantage*, *The Next Sustainability Wave*, and *The Sustainability Champion's Guidebook* using his business vision from his upper level management career at IBM to present one of the most compelling looks at the development of sustainability from grassroots consciousness, to basic terms and language definitions and usage, and to exploring the many ways in which business, companies and governments large and small are integrate sustainability to make their organizations more efficient and profitable. The major benefits demonstrated by the successful implementation of sustainability strategies presented were customer retention and attraction, drop in operating costs, greater productivity, improved employee retention and recruitment, and more beneficial tax incentives. The other concurrent session was a very informative and useful presentation from *The Lipsitt Group Principal*, Mark Lipsitt who showed conference attendees a wide range of free or very inexpensive cool software tools for club and hotel operations that most people have never heard using his selection criteria of Impact, Ease of Use, Cost and Coolness. Mr. Lipsitt's appearance was generously sponsored by club software supplier, IBS, *Integrated Business Systems*.

This year's Ontario Regional Conference was hosted by members, Brian Hall from *MatrixPOS* and Patricia Chiuppi-Silverio from *PSAV Presentation Services*, and, *Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals Global Headquarters*. The Closing Session Happy Hour Mixer for all the conference speakers and attendees was sponsored by *Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals Global Headquarters*. Look for copies of the 2010 Ontario Regional Conference speaker presentation materials on HFTP Ontario Chapter's website, www.hftpontariochapter.org. All of the proceeds from the Ontario Regional Conference are earmarked to fund the HFTP Ontario Chapter's ongoing University Scholarship Program for next year, which this year contributed \$6,000 in scholarships to eight students at three Ontario Universities.