

Williams' business is providing replacement parts for older units that are still in operation. "These units may perform just fine for the space they're in, and we've carved out a sizeable niche by providing replacement parts that would be next-to-impossible for hoteliers to source," says Shukovitsky.

Like its name implies, Brampton, Ontario-based AJM Solutions offers complete HVAC and energy management solutions to the hospitality industry across Canada. But President Andy Mastroianni says he treads very carefully when advising hoteliers how best to achieve optimum results with new or overhauled HVAC systems. "Although we represent the top manufacturers and provide the latest and greatest technologies to hoteliers, we're extremely careful not to tout any manufacturer's claim that a certain product will achieve a specific energy savings. Because quite frankly, due to the different ways the product can be installed or its convergence with existing systems, any such claims are impossible to guarantee."

Instead, Mastroianni has earned the trust of hoteliers by examining what systems are already in place and offering a range of solutions – which he endorses on the basis that they will simply be an improvement energy-wise over what is currently operating. "I tell hoteliers that if they choose to follow stringent guidelines, their gains will increase," he says. "And to make their investment even more palatable, I'll work with them and their local utility provider to achieve energy rebates, which is otherwise an enormously complicated process."

However, Mastroianni concedes that advancements in products as basic as PTACs are worth promoting to hoteliers. "For example, we

carry the Amana R410A brand of PTACs, and in addition to its fabulous heating and cooling capabilities the R410A refrigerant used in the conditioners is a relatively new and truly green product that is increasingly being used to meet environmental regulations," he says.

The fact that R410A does not contribute to ozone depletion may not be a selling point to hoteliers per se, but the substance also provides important performance benefits. "It improves operational pressures, and PTACs like the Amana brand are designed to optimize the efficiencies of this refrigerant," says Mastroianni. The Amana R410A package terminals have quiet indoor tangential fans, pullout filters for easy cleaning, and options for both electric heat and hydronic heat. The products sold by Independent Supply Company

Inc. via its branches across Canada proves that even entry-level PTACs released in 2011 have notable advantages over older models. One of the brands carried by Independent is LG, and Norm Mierkains, LG Electronics Canada Inc.'s HVAC national sales and marketing manager, says his company's packaged terminal air conditioners are great for economy hotels. "They are extremely durable thanks to us coating the condensing coils with a substance that protects them from the corrosive effects of outside air and basically doubles their life," he explains, adding that the big draw of LG PTACs from a guest's point of view is operating noise – or lack of. "The Independent Supply sales people put our PTACs alongside normal units and run them for prospective clients in order to illustrate the obvious difference in decibel levels," he says. The LG PTACs have efficiency ratings up to 11.6 EER and feature connections for remote thermostat and front desk controls.

Last but hardly least, NRG Equipment Inc. is the distributor for NRG 16x42 and 16x26 PTACs, Sanyo PTACs, Sanyo Commercial Ductless Split Systems and Multi-Zone split systems. "Our NRG Ductless Split System is something hoteliers wanting to invest in a new AC/heating system should consider, because the units are individually based rather than centrally based," says NRG Sales Manager Jacqueline Pilling. "If one unit goes down, it doesn't affect the other systems."

NRG Ductless Split Systems can be rated up to 20 SEER and come in many different heating and air conditioning capacities. No ducting means no complicated and expensive installations: the Split Systems only require refrigerant lines installed between indoor and outdoor, power, and a condensate line.

NRG markets its Split Systems as being better than conventional split systems because of new inverter technology that makes it possible to regulate the heating and cooling capacity as desired with a steady temperature - which gives the hotelier the potential to save up to 50 per cent of an energy bill compared to conventional air conditioners and heat pumps. ●

**"Increasingly, hoteliers are opting to invest in complete energy packages not only because they save money and are more efficient, but because they can do so many things."**



NRG Equipment Inc. distributes systems such as the Single Zone Split System, which are individually based instead of centrally based.

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# Sailing High

*Nova Scotia sails high on the success of Canada Winter Games - now it's setting sights on a new convention centre and dreams of getting homeport status.*



The ink is still drying on the latest seven month stats for Nova Scotia, yet President and CEO of Destination Halifax, Patricia Lyall, feels positive about 2011 to date. "The highlight of the year was hosting the Canada Winter Games. It was an incredible demonstration of Halifax and Nova Scotia at its best," says Lyall. "I don't think I've ever been more proud to boast of being a Nova Scotian."

She adds that air visitation is up for both trans-border and international traffic and tips her hat off to the Halifax International Airport Authority and their business development partners. Another positive front she notes is the federal government's sup-

port and participation with the province and municipality on the development of the new convention centre. "This is keeping the dream alive," she adds.

Regarding trends, Lyall believes the recovery rate continues to be sluggish. She says that as a reaction to the dramatic decline in demand experienced late in 2008 (which continued throughout 2009 and into 2010), hotels tried to maintain volume and appeal to the price sensitivity of the market by lowering rates. Yet as market conditions improve, there is stern resistance regarding attempts to reposition rates back to levels that operators consider normal.

On a more positive note, she believes that corporate meeting activity is improving. "Typically, in times of strife, it's one of the first markets to claw back and shut down. Conversely, when conditions improve, it's one of the quickest to rebound and get 'back to business.'" Lyall is also seeing indications of growing confidence as the association sector and larger meetings are increasing their lead time to booking window although overall shorter lead times are the new reality. "Two or three years ago we were seeing strong demand for four to five years out but low levels of confirmation; lots of shopping but little actual purchase. Now, we are seeing greater confi-



Nova Centre  
Conceptual Design

dence in committing to dates and space for three to four future years,” says Lyall.

As well, she notices more requests for value adds, combined with higher expectations. “While this has been a common experience with U.S. based groups, there is an increasing trend for this conversation within the domestic realm.”

Asked to look into her crystal ball, Lyall expects the first quarter to be soft compared to 2011 in the absence of an event happening with the scope of the Canada

Nova Scotia	
Occupancy Rate (%)	59.3
Rate (\$)	118.32
Supply (%)	1.4
Demand (%)	0.9
Halifax	
Occupancy Rate (%)	63
Rate (\$)	123.8
Supply (%)	2.1
Demand (%)	1.5

Winter Games. “But on the transient front, all signs point to 2012 being the Year of Sail, with a Tall Ships event anticipated for July and a possible initiative involving the Clipper sailing vessel in June,” she says.

The stars seem to be lining up as well. “We’re blessed with an incredible line up of opportunities that are enabling discussion with clients for both group and individual travel itineraries.” These include the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy, the New Life Sciences Research Insti-

tute, Halifax Marine Research Institute and Parks Canada/George’s Island. “This list positions Halifax and Nova Scotia as a centre of excellence in fields that are active globally and speaks to a depth and strength of expertise that serves to draw the world to our doorstep.

Lyall believes that the region’s most significant and current challenge also relates to the region’s most significant opportunity—the Convention Centre Project. Referred to as the “Nova Centre,” she says that the challenge lies in exercising patience while waiting for the green light. Already customers are lining up wanting to be first in line to explore usage of the new facility.

Scott Travis, president of the Hotel Association of Nova Scotia (HANS), concurs. He points out that it’s been tough competing in the global marketplace due to lack of facilities.

“The size of our existing convention centre does not allow us to compete for large scale conventions. The recent announcement that all three levels of government will support a proposed new structure is very promising.”

Travis says that there are also challenges around transportation. “Whether it’s by air, ferry, rail or

car, Nova Scotia needs to be accessible and costs need to be reasonable in order to entice travellers to our province.” He gives as one example the loss of the Yarmouth ferry service to the U.S. as a prime example of the failure of the provincial government to offer adequate services. “Our industry has suffered greatly due to the loss of major transportation to this region and will continue to decline until a resolution can be found,” he says.

Another concern is the shortage of a trained workforce. If these shortages are not addressed, Travis believes problems will accelerate. “The food and beverage sector will be impacted the most. In addition, the industry in our province experiences problems due to shortage of skills and inadequate recruit methods. It’s important that operators recognize these issues and be proactive. The need for established training programs in the workplace is becoming absolutely essential.”

Regarding regulations, Travis believes that it’s critical that operators understand them and balance the potential obstacle against the need for the associate ruling. As an example, visa regulations impacting the temporary foreign worker must be balanced against the need for appropriate security measures. “It’s important that we understand and work with regulatory processes accordingly.”

While much of the buzz had been cen-



Scott Travis, president,  
Hotel Association of  
Nova Scotia.



What the two new hotels will look like that will replace the current Halifax Citadel Hotel will be part of SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts.

tered on the proposed convention centre, SilverBirch Hotels & Resorts recently unveiled their plans for the redevelopment of the footprint that has been home to the Halifax Citadel Hotel. The brand has yet to be announced but it will include two new hotels on the existing site. Construction is expected to begin during the first quarter of 2012. Although supply in Halifax will decline while the hotel closes for the rebuild, other hotels in the area may see a benefit from the reduction in available rooms.

Overall, industry members expect to maintain the status quo for 2012. Travis projects that the first quarter may show a decline by comparison due to the Canada Winter Games that were held in the first quarter of 2011. “The second through fourth quarters will show either slight growth or will see similar averages to prior year.”

On the up side, Travis sees many opportunities for the industry. For example, the cruise business is starting to play a significant role in the tourism sector. In 2010, the Port of Halifax welcomed 127 cruise ships totaling 261,216 visitors while Sydney benefited from the visit of 46 ships. Nova Scotia is currently a port-of-call to approximately 19 cruise lines—meaning that the province is included as a stopover during the cruise.

“If the Port of Halifax was able to obtain homeport status, the impact on our tourism revenues could increase substantially,” Travis says. By definition, homeport status means that the cruise would originate in Halifax. Destinations with homeport status typically see cruise passengers arrive an average of two days before their cruise ship is slated to depart. It could also allow opportunity for travel outside of the homeport city, which could increase spending across the province. “Organizations such as HANS need to work collectively to delve further into this to best determine the viability of obtaining homeport status.” No doubt the cruise sector could provide a welcome boost to the industry.



Patricia Lyall,  
president and CEO,  
Destination Halifax.



(Left to right) Wendy Swedlove - president, Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council, Kaissar Hage -Tourism Certified Professional, Minister Percy Paris - Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism and NSTHRC Chair, Glenn Squires - CEO of Pacrim Hospitality Inc.

## Nova Scotia Tourism Professionals Recognized!

Recently, the Nova Scotia Tourism Human Resource Council (NSTHRC) hosted its 16th annual Recognition of Excellence Gala Dinner and Awards at the Cunard Centre in Halifax. This special evening recognized tourism professionals who achieved their national certification in one of 27 occupations.

During 2010/11, 187 tourism employees in Nova Scotia earned this National designation - the pinnacle achievement for tourism professionals in Canada. With 2,728 Nova Scotians now certified, the province has the highest number per capita, in Canada. Tourism Professionals earn the following Canadian recognized designations: TCP (Front-Line), TCS (Supervisor/Trainer) and TCM (Manager).

NSTHRC also recognized 11 employers with the National Business Recognition Award: Blue Ocean Contact Center, Cambridge Suites Hotel Halifax, Cambridge Suites Hotel Sydney, Coastal Inn Concorde, Glooscap Heritage Centre, Inverary Resort, Nova Scotia Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, Pictou Lodge Resort, Radisson Suite Hotel Halifax, The Lord Nelson Hotel & Suites, and White Point Beach Resort. To receive this prestigious award, employers must have at least 60 per cent of their employees certified in available occupations.

As the labour market continues to challenge many tourism operators, national certification can prove to be an effective attraction and retention tool. Danny Morton, general manager of White Point Beach Resort, has seen great success in this area. “We believe that by incorporating certification into our hiring strategy we have increased our retention rate. We integrate the process of earning this designation into our new employee development plans. This investment in our team shows that we value their contribution to the success of our organization.”

## Nova Scotia Tourism Industry Supports Students and Tourism Professionals

Each year the Nova Scotia Tourism Human Resource Council awards over \$5,000 in Tourism Scholarships. The 2011 Gold Scholarship award was presented to Lauren Perry from Middleton Regional High School. Lauren will be pursuing her Bachelor of Tourism & Hospitality Management at Mount Saint Vincent University. The Silver Scholarship was awarded to Hilary DeCoste from East Antigonish Education Centre. Hilary will be studying Tourism Management at the NSCC Kingstec Campus. In partnership with the Hotel Association of Nova Scotia, the Council also awarded a Culinary Scholarship to Alexander Scanlan, a graduate from Citadel High School. Alex will be pursuing Culinary Arts at the Nova Scotia Community College, Akerley Campus.

The Judith B. Cabrita Tourism Scholarship is presented annually to Tourism Professionals pursuing professional development opportunities. This year’s recipient was Bernice Theriault, general manager of the Comfort Inn Bridgewater.

