



# Communiqué

ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES PALAIS DE CONGRÈS  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGRESS CENTRES  
INTERNATIONALER VERBAND DER KONGRESSZENTREN

## NEW MEMBERS:

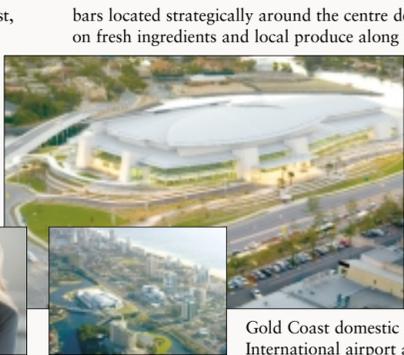
Welcome to Our New AIPC Member Centres:

Since our last Communiqué, we're proud to say that another five congress centres have joined AIPC, boosting our worldwide membership to 140 Centres! In this issue, we recognize three more of our new members:

### Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre

Located in Broadbeach on Queensland's Gold Coast, the GCCEC is ideally positioned to offer the ultimate event experience for conferences, exhibitions, incentives and entertainment. With stunning sunshine and warm weather year-round, the Centre is located only minutes from world-class restaurants, casinos and entertainment, tropical rainforests and golden beaches.

The Centre itself offers a tiered arena that will seat 6,000, 15 meeting rooms and a 3000 square metre divisible Exhibition Hall that can be combined with the arena and foyers to create a total of 7000 square metres of internal exhibition space. It also features an additional 3,000 square metre external deck and 2,000 square metres of parkland that can also be used for events. Wireless technology is available throughout the venue, as is an on-site audio visual team offering the latest in presentation technology. Eight kitchens and nine



Gold Coast domestic airport or the Brisbane International airport an hour to the north.

### Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

The Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, set to open its doors in June 2005, will become a major international venue for conferences and exhibitions.

Located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, it characterizes itself as "the place to do business, in a multi-cultural society and a highly colourful country". A prestigious City Centre site offers not only a strategic location, but also views of Malaysia's icon buildings – the PETRONAS Twin Towers.

The Centre offers a Plenary Hall on two levels with tiered seating for 3,000 people plus a fixed stage with fly tower, backstage support facilities and direct lift, escalator and staircase access; a Plenary Theatre with tiered seating for 500



participants; four Exhibition Halls totalling 9,710m<sup>2</sup> of column free space; a Grand Ballroom to accommodate 2,380 delegates theatre-style or 2,000 guests for a banquet; a Conference Hall for 1,800 delegates in theatre-style, dividing to form three halls to seat 500, 770 and 510 delegates respectively; a Banquet Hall to seat up to 740 people in theatre style and up to 600 for banquets and a further 20 meeting rooms to accommodate from 43 to 224 delegates. Located over two floors and providing a total of 2,200m<sup>2</sup> of space for breakout meetings, some of these rooms combine to form larger areas.

Hotel accommodation includes 1,500 hotel rooms on site in three properties, including the five star Mandarin Oriental Hotel, four star Impiana Hotel and the four star Traders which is integrated into one wing of the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

There are over 11,000 hotel rooms in four and five star properties within 10 minutes of the Centre.

### The Barbican Centre

The Barbican is Europe's largest multi-arts and conference venue. Situated in the heart of the City of London amongst famous historical landmarks such as St Paul's Cathedral, it offers a wealth of space for conferences, exhibitions, banquets and corporate entertainment.

With 1,989 seats in three curved raked tiers Barbican Hall is the centrepiece of the Barbican and ideal for international congresses, conferences, AGM's and product launches. The Barbican Theatre seats 1,150 and has excellent sight lines and acoustics. There are also three presentation cinemas seating 280, 251 and 153 delegates. For large-scale exhibitions, the Barbican Exhibition Halls have been the chosen venue for a full range of business and public events since 1981. They consist of two large adjoining halls, which can be hired



separately or jointly, and offer 8,000 square metres of gross exhibition space.

The Barbican also offers a range of 6 conference suites and a dedicated boardroom, for groups of between 15 and 80 people. The suites are on a single level close to two of the cinemas, thus offering additional flexibility as part of a corporate event. Barbican Art Gallery comprises two floors, enabling two exhibitions to run concurrently or a single exhibition to occupy the whole space. The Gallery can be hired privately for receptions in conjunction with a major conference event. The highest quality catering is provided in a wide range of unique banqueting areas including the Garden Room, ideal for events ranging from a light buffet to a formal banquet for up to 280 people.

## JMIC Web Site Launched with "Profile and Power" Materials

In a previous issue of Communiqué we described the new "Power and Profile" program developed by the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC) as a way of encouraging members of the meetings industry to develop programs to raise awareness of the industry and its benefits in their own communities. A key element of this program was an undertaking by JMIC to provide resource materials that would help individuals and groups to organize and carry out such activities.

A web site has now been launched to act as a vehicle for all the program materials and to keep participants informed as to what others are doing in

their respective communities. The site is located at [www.themeetingsindustry.org](http://www.themeetingsindustry.org) and contains a variety of resources including a Guidebook to Community and Government Relations, sample local advertisements and "templates" for articles and presentations that can be adapted and used locally. The guidebook has already been translated into three languages, and all of these new materials will be added to the site over the next few months.

Next up: a new award program that will recognize and profile achievements in building local industry awareness for launch by Fall of this year!



## Laure Mouton Wins JMIC Unity Award!

Former AIPC President Laure Mouton has won the 2005 JMIC Unity Award, and was formally presented with the award at the IMEX Awards Banquet in Frankfurt, Germany on the evening of April 20.

"We are delighted to be making this award to Laure as a result of her more than 30 years in the Meetings Industry", said current AIPC President Barbara Maple, who was making the presentation in her capacity of JMIC Chair. "She represents a high level of commitment to the industry, backed by years of service in organizing activities that have benefited many different sectors. We all know what a challenge it is to meet the needs of our own business activities, so someone who takes on a major industry role as well is most deserving of our thanks and our recognition".

The JMIC Unity Award was established by the Council as a way of recognizing individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of the Meetings Industry and the level of



professionalism it represents. The Award is made each year based on criteria which evaluate industry leadership and initiative.

Laure entered the meeting industry in the 1970's with the opening of the Palais des Congrès de Paris, and became the Executive Director Marketing & Sales. From then on, she worked to develop the international meeting market in Paris & Europe, increasing the number of international meetings in Paris from 2 or 3 in the late 80's to over 20 International Associations & Corporate Meetings of more than 3000 participants in 2004.

Her market knowledge was put to use in developing the meeting association area by becoming a board member of AIPC in 1995 and serving as President from 1997 to 2001. Through AIPC, she helped build awareness of the industry to government and communities, at the same time supporting the training of young people entering the meeting industry. One of the seminars she initiated is still very successful, having been attended by Asians, Europeans and Americans.

She also served as President of JMIC, and during this time initiated with other industry partners such as ICCA the Millennium meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 2000, where 20 associations of the meeting Industry where united for the first time to work on the new challenges of the industry.

## To keep in touch with AIPC, visit [www.aipc.org](http://www.aipc.org)

### THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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President's Message:

## A Strategic Response to a Changing World

Change is all around us. Every time we exchange information with colleagues or participate in the kinds of discussions and debates that attend events like IMEX, we can feel the way that our industry is evolving – and the need to keep on top of those changes and the implications they have for our operations and business.

Some of the changes – like shifts in the demographics of our work force and management pool – are affecting many different sectors. Others – like the growing impacts of new technology or the shift in how associations are administering their activities like conventions and trade shows – are unique to our own sector. But together they have the potential to have big impacts on our future business, and therefore need to be identified, analyzed and acted upon.

That need is the basis for this year's Annual Conference theme: "From Operational Excellence to Strategic Excellence". It's based, quite simply, on the fact that while we have focused for many years on the theme of management excellence in our own facilities – and come to represent that kind of excellence within the industry – we need to pay as much attention to the strategic side of things as we interact with changing markets, governance options,

funding issues and overall business conditions.

As you'll see from the detailed conference program included in this issue, we have recruited a formidable group of expertise to help us consider these issues. From leading trend analysts to expert industry observers and the expertise amongst our own membership, we have everything we need for a good, rigorous look not just at what's happening around us but what we can be doing about it.

As they say, change brings both challenges and opportunities – and those that find the opportunities are the ones that will benefit the most. Seeing what the changes are and considering how we can respond is what it's all about – and when we do it as a group, we can all benefit from each other's experiences and expertise. I look forward once again to the opportunity to share this valuable time with you – and to what we can all take away from the most important event in AIPC's annual program!



Barbara Maple, AIPC President

## Working Together Works for AIPC, IAPCO

For the past three years, AIPC and IAPCO have collaborated on one of the most popular educational sessions at IMEX – a joint seminar aimed at exploring ways that members of these two very complementary organizations – congress centres and PCO's – can work together more effectively.

In year one, the topic was event security. Last year, it was all about creating more successful international bids. This time around, the subject was **How can Centres and PCO's Work Together Better to Add Value to an Association's Event?**

The basis for the session was that Congress Centres and PCO's are natural partners in many different aspects of conferences, from winning the business to delivering the outcome, and as clients seek added value and "seamless" service delivery we need to find ways in which these service providers can blend their efforts to achieve better results for the client.

Panelists Roslyn McLeod, proprietor of Tour Hosts, the leading PCO company in Australia, and an IAPCO Council member and Philippe Fournier who is Congress Director, MCI France and a recognized expert in the management of large meetings taking place in Conference Centres throughout the world represented IAPCO in the discussion. **Rochelle Kempton**, Director of Sales & Marketing of the Cairns Convention Centre, Australia, winner of the AIPC Apex Award 2004 and **Isabel Bardinet**, Sales

and Development Executive Director of the Palais des Congrès de Paris (previously CEO of the PCO firm Colloquium) represented AIPC.

Presentations covered a wide range of topics, from the philosophical to the practical. Common to all were the importance of recognizing the complementary roles played by centres and PCO's and the need for each group to understand and respect each other's responsibility. A second theme related to the need to ensure good communications and a willingness to share information and start early in involving each other in the planning process.

"Let's get to know each other better" was the way panelist Fournier summed up the need for better understanding – understanding that would, in the view of the panel, lead to a "win-win-win" situation for all three key groups; the centre, the PCO and ultimately the client. "You need to work together to make your client's event the most successful ever", said Kempton. "Always remember that a happy client will increase business for everyone".

One thing both panelists and audience agreed on was that more time was needed to accommodate all the interest, questions and commentary the seminar generated, and plans are already underway for another, expanded session for next year.

## IMEX Diary: A Busy Week for AIPC in Frankfurt

AIPC played a major role at this year's IMEX Industry Trade Show in Frankfurt, with everything from advancing industry positions in key areas to hosting seminars and serving cocktails at our AIPC stand. Here are the highlights:

- Monday started off with the semi-annual meeting of the Joint Meetings Industry Council chaired by AIPC President Barbara Maple. This meeting saw the official launch of the JMIC global awareness strategy and kicked off the JMIC web site as a vehicle for distributing program materials (see more in this issue).
- Next up was the IMEX Association Day, where invited clients participated in a series of educational panels, including two hosted by AIPC on contract negotiations. That evening, a reception provided the perfect opportunity for AIPC members exhibiting at IMEX to meet more than 250 International association decision makers in a relaxed and pleasurable environment.

- Tuesday was the first day of the trade show, and an opportunity for AIPC members to hook up with one another at our association stand and get all the latest information about AIPC activities. That afternoon, it was time for the **Politician's Forum**, a special event arranged by IMEX and JMIC to bring together national political figures with industry representatives to discuss key issues affecting the industry. AIPC made two presentations to the group and interacted with other associations in presenting the benefits and concerns we share.
- Wednesday started early with the third in our AIPC / IAPCO panel series at IMEX, this one entitled **How can Centres and PCO's work together to Add Value to an Association's Event?** This well attended event addressed the important topic of ways in which PCO's and centres can cooperate more successfully (see more in this issue). At noon, the Québec cocktail party swung into action to promote our upcoming 2005 Annual Conference and give more details about both the conference and Québec itself.

- Thursday was the day for the AIPC Board Meeting, where a range of topics from the upcoming Annual Conference program to new education, quality standards and membership initiatives were reviewed and given direction along with association administrative priorities. A very long week – but a very productive one, with a lot of content for AIPC members!



■ Quebec 2005:

# Here's Our Detailed Program:



Plans are now complete for one of the most timely and action-packed educational programs we've ever had at an Annual Conference. Under the overall theme: "From Operational Excellence to *Strategic Excellence*", AIPC members will look to the future of the congress centre industry with the help of a variety of both industry and external presenters who will set the stage for the future and help us look at ways to meet the challenges and opportunities it will bring. Here's the complete program:

## Thursday July 21:

- 09:00: Official Opening Ceremony
- 09:30: **Module 1: A Changing Environment.**  
*Keynote speaker:* David Baxter **Changing Global Business Dynamics and the Meeting Industry:** How overall global demographic and business trends will shape the needs and expectations of the meetings business
- 10:45: Coffee break
- 11:15: Panel Discussion:  
**Designing New Models for the Future:** How should centres respond to the changing conditions created by global business, demographic and policy changes?
  - Alternate ownership and governance models
  - How client expectations are changing
  - Funding methods for facilities and marketing*Panelists:* Mira Altmann (Jerusalem), Didier Scaillet (MPI), John Christison (Seattle)
- 12:30: Lunch
- 14:15: Workshops:
  1. **Planning for the coming HR crisis:** Demographics tell us of a looming shortage of skilled management and operational staff. How should centres be responding?  
*Workshop leader:* Marcia Lyons (Calgary)
  2. **New business opportunities for congress centres:** What alternate revenue streams are available to enhance event business?  
*Workshop leader:* Michael Closier (Glasgow)
  3. **Managing multiple facilities:** Is multi-facility management a more efficient way to operate convention centres and related facilities?  
*Workshop leader:* Rod Pilbeam (Ogden International Facilities Corporation)
- 15:15: Coffee break
- 15:45 Workshops repeat
- 16:45: End of Sessions

## Friday July 22:

- 09:00: **Module 2: Evaluating and Responding to New Market Dynamics.**  
*Keynote speaker:* John Park **Major trends in the market and strategies for monitoring, tracking and responding to changes in the future**
- 10:00: Coffee break
- 10:30: Panel Discussion:  
**Reaching our Markets: New Tactics for Accessing the Client:** How changes in expectations and technology are re-shaping the way we get through to our clients and the kinds of information they most need;
- What's hot in marketing techniques?
- The role of alliances
- Meeting the changing needs of clients
- 11:30: Workshops
  4. **Launching a new product:** What does it take to break into the market today?  
*Workshop leader:* Paul D'Arcy (Perth)
  5. **How New IT Developments Fit In:** New developments in e-marketing, IT systems and their related business management potential.  
*Workshop leader:* David Cotton (Vancouver)
  6. **Helping shape the delegate experience:** What attracts delegates today? What kinds of roles can centres play? How can centres and PCO's work together to create a better client experience?  
*Workshop leader:* Jean Paul de Lavison (JPD.L Destination Management, Montreal)
- 12:30: Lunch
- 14:00: Workshops repeat
- 15:00: **Module 3: Community and Government Relations**  
*Keynote Speaker:* Mayor Jean Paul l'Allier, Québec City  
**Addressing our Important Local Audiences:** Meeting the increasing expectations of our owners and communities;
- 15:30: Coffee break
- 16:00: Panel discussion:  
**Managing Community Expectations and Interactions:** Meaningful approaches to interacting with the local industry, community and governments;
  - Positioning within the community
  - Measuring economic and non-economic benefits
  - Responding to a destination crisis*Panelists:* Tim Husbands ( Belfast), Fred Sainz (San Diego), Barry Smith (Toronto)
- 17:15: End of Sessions

## Saturday July 23

- 09:00: AIPC Task Force Update:  
Get all the latest on evolving AIPC program initiatives from the Chairs of the Education, Research, Apex Award and Quality Standards Task Forces and help shape the future direction of these program areas.
- 10:00: Coffee break
- 10:30: AIPC 47th General Assembly
- 12:00: Tour of Québec City Convention Centre
- 13:00: Closing lunch

# A Spectacular Backdrop for Social Program Activities



Delegate surveys of our Annual Conference have shown for years the importance members place on the opportunity to interact with fellow members and take full advantage of networking opportunities. And those kind of events take on an even more exciting dimension when they happen in the kind of diverse and exciting surroundings that a destination like Québec City offers in abundance!

Here are just a few of the planned events that take full advantage of a city that is itself a UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site:

- A pre-conference program that offers the choice of golf at the spectacular Royal Québec Golf Club or "soft" river rafting in the Jacques-Cartier Valley, rich with wildlife and history;
- A city and regional tour for all delegates that ranges over the historic old town and a boat tour to Grosse-Île and Île d'Orléans, two islands in the Saint Lawrence River which offer everything from naval heritage to a fresh lobster feast in local surroundings!
- Lunch in Le Parlementaire, the dining room of the Parliament Building; a reception overlooking Battlefield Park and a musical evening in the Grand Hall of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec.

At the same time, accompanying persons will be offered additional experiences ranging from a day in the artist's colony of Baie-Saint-Paul in the stunning Charlevoix region to retail and luxurious spa experiences in the surrounding area.

All in all, the perfect backdrops for our conference – and the perfect program to take full advantage of this very unique setting!



# Annual Conference Keynotes Bring New Insights

Two keynote speakers at this year's AIPC Annual Conference will bring some very informed perspectives on the questions of what "big picture" factors are shaping the future of the industry.



David Baxter has been described as a futurist, a demographer and an economist – but none of these terms fully capture the breadth of his knowledge and insight into today's business challenges. Executive Director of the Urban Futures Institute, Mr. Baxter is one of that rare breed of business thinkers – someone who has both the desire and the ability to conduct original research into business trends, while having the outstanding presentation skills required to deliver the conclusions in and entertaining, engaging, and meaningful way.

He is a recognized authority on the real impact of demographics on the international business and consumer landscape, and offers audiences an insightful odyssey into the future of a rapidly changing and increasingly competitive consumer marketplace. One of the most-quoted business experts in Canada, Mr. Baxter's irreverent, witty, and provocative style and brilliant content have made him a favourite with audiences around the world. He has recently been named the Worldwide ERC Workforce Mobility Expert.



John Park is a key industry observer and renowned presenter on sales and marketing tactics as they relate to the meetings and convention area. Before forming Leadership Synergies, John worked for Marriott International for more than 18 years, most recently as vice president of the global sales organization overseeing more than 200 senior sales executives and \$1.3 billion of annual revenues. Under his leadership, the Marriott sales force was rated No. 1 by Sales & Marketing Magazine for three consecutive years.

John is a Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) with extensive experience in the hospitality industry and association community and serves on several boards of MPI, E-Philanthropy and Certified Meeting Professionals. He also serves on the advisory boards IAEM and Conference Direct Inc. John is a frequent speaker on sales cultures, organizational branding, balanced scorecard and personal branding and has authored many articles in The Meeting Professional and other trade publications.

# A New Addition to the AIPC Publications Series: Calculating Economic Impact Figures – and Putting Them to Use!



The latest addition to AIPC's growing series of management publications addresses a topic that's close to everyone's heart, although not always carried out to everyone's satisfaction. "Economic impact calculation has been a topic of great interest for some years, with numerous presentations and discussions on this topic taking place at industry conferences and various centres taking different approaches to calculating and presenting such figures" reads the introduction. "This level of interest is entirely understandable, as more and more centres find themselves in the position of having to demonstrate their value to the community, particularly when industry economics are such that an operating deficit may need to be justified. As competition amongst congress centres worldwide intensifies, this need is only likely to increase in the future".

The publication avoids creating formulas for simple calculations, instead emphasizing the need to develop good spending data through customer surveys and processing this information through "input / output" models that can calculate the induced effects of this spending on the local and national economies of areas where centres are located. Again from the introduction: "There have been many different models developed for

measuring economic impact, with many of these subsequently rejected in favour of a newer or allegedly more accurate model. In the process, economic impact calculation has developed something of a "black box" reputation. The reality is that the calculations are really simply a matter of common sense; understanding the purpose and audience, making sure that all potential benefits are identified and carrying out actual delegate and planner surveys instead of relying on industry "averages" for spending figures which actually vary significantly from one location to another".

In identifying the factors that need to be taken into consideration, and how to approach the calculation in a way that best responds to local resources and circumstances, the publication describes a process rather than the outcome. In addition, it addresses the question of how the resulting info can be put to work in improving a centre's position in the community.

It is the product of numerous presentations on this subject at AIPC and other industry conferences as well as extensive review by knowledgeable AIPC members, and is available via the AIPC Secretariat office.

# Corporate Partner GALA Systems Leading the Industry in Multipurpose Systems

GALA Systems have developed the GALA Venue concept to permit a venue to be flexible enough to easily host, over the course of a single day, a variety of events such as stage rehearsals and performances, corporate and civil assemblies, conferences, seminars, exhibitions, banquets, cabaret shows, dinner theatre...

The GALA Venue is easily tailored to each event's and project's uniqueness. Using that technology, one can automatically adjust the actual seating capacity and event configuration in 10 minutes or less, match the expected number of attendees or achieve the preferred seating/stage configuration. Halls can be configured to accommodate all platform sizes, shapes, load capacities. Platforms can be angled toward the stage for better sight lines. Such flexibility will permit the Owner or the Operator to substantially increase booking opportunities and revenues.

Through innovative engineering and seamless systems' integration, the GALA Venue technology permits to achieve, at any level and in any configuration, a stability and appearance comparable to that of structurally supported fixed floors. Up until now, the GALA Venue technology is unmatched by other floor reconfiguration technologies.

Easily integrated in the design of new buildings or renovation projects, the self-guided seating riser assembly utilizes the Spiralift technology. This patented mechanical lift column has been successfully used by GALA over the last 19 years

(more than 9000 units installed in 600 plus installations, in 52 countries).

The GALA Venue uses multiple Spiralift units, mechanically synchronized for smooth, safe and efficient transitions. Their mechanical operation is electronically monitored and fully automated to permit easy reconfiguration of the room by one single operator.

Using low friction drives and high quality-control, Spiralifts are designed and built to last longer, and to ensure continuous performances with minimal maintenance. Moreover, because seats and platforms are never in contact, and because no part of the installation is ever manually handled, there is no wear due to the great number of uses of the system or reconfigurations of the space.

The systems' installation necessitates minimal related civil engineering work. Caissons are not required so that the integrity of existing foundations is never compromised.

GALA Systems' engineers have worked worldwide with project planners and local contractors to create multipurpose halls of all sizes, and in major centres such as the Lliure Theatre in Barcelona, Spain where a completely transformable hall of 945 seats was installed. GALA Systems are currently setting up installations in River Rock Theatre, Richmond, British Columbia; a GALA Venue consisting of a multipurpose hall of approximately 800 seats and in Coquitlam, BC, another venue with a capacity of 1000 seats.



# Member Survey Shines a Light on Contracting

AIPC's most recent member survey was developed in response to the fact that over the past few years, many clients seem increasingly unable or unwilling to commit to a formal contractual agreement until the last possible moment, with a resulting need to manage client expectations and commitments in the interim. Specifically, the purposes of the survey were to determine if this kind of delay is a general experience amongst centres and to find out how centres are responding. The survey topic was clearly of great interest to AIPC members as there were over 70 responding centres – the highest response rate we have experienced since member surveys began!

## Here are some of the highlights:

1. 77% of respondents indicated that clients were delaying contracting for longer now than 5 years ago. Only 23% felt that this had remained unchanged, and of these, some noted that this was only the case with certain types of business.
2. In a time when the major impacts of global economic / political turmoil appear to be subsiding, over 63% of respondents felt that the delay is continuing to increase! Only 6% saw an decrease, with the balance believing that the delays remained unchanged.
3. 90% of responding centres stated that they require a signed contract and deposit to formally confirm business. 10% did not, although most of these indicated that this was dependant on the nature of the clients.
4. When asked how far into the future they would hold space for a qualified client without formal contracting, centres varied widely, with many noting they had no specific time requirement. Those who did have a requirement varied widely, from a matter of days to more than 3 years. However, these responses were qualified with a number of conditions, the most significant of which were:
  - That the decision to hold space without contract was dependent on the nature of and relationship with the client (larger and repeat clients given preferential treatment over smaller and new events), and
  - That holding space was subject to another client challenging the booking or wanting to confirm business for the same period.
5. When asked if they had any interim form of agreement (i.e., that does not require a formal contract or deposit) until such time as the contract and deposit are in place and what certainty, if any, they offered under such an agreement, respondents were more evenly split between those who did (40%) and those who did not (60%). Amongst those that did have such an agreement, the actual form of that agreement varied considerably, ranging from a tentative booking secured by a letter of intent to those who required an actual start on formal contract paperwork, sometimes with a non-refundable deposit. However, most had conditions attached to the agreement, including:
  - The need for an actual date at which the contracting process would be started / completed
  - A mechanism whereby another potential client can "challenge" the booking by offering to contract, and
  - The need for some formal "milestone" to be achieved (i.e., bid won, board decision made) to maintain the booking.
6. The majority (61%) of centres reporting indicated that they had no formal process for encouraging earlier contracting by clients, although a number of others indicated that maintaining contact and frequent inquiries were used to move things along as much as possible. Formal or informal, the specific tactics fell into three general categories;
  - Incentives for early signing, which ranged from preferred rates and / or discounts to reduced deposits;
  - The threat of cancellation and / or offering space to other events, and
  - Guaranteeing rental rates which would otherwise be subject to subsequent increases

In conclusion, the trend to delayed contracting by clients appears to be not only well established, but still on the increase, which suggests that it is being driven by factors other than just the economic / global security issues of the past few years which are now beginning to subside. Amongst the range of possible explanations, one of the most likely is that there is currently something of a "buyers market" which reduces client's sense of urgency that the space may be lost to other events if they do not confirm quickly. If this is the case, it will take an adjustment in the "space / client ratio" before the situation changes much.

As a result, a process for dealing with such delays is of increasing importance, yet it appears that relatively few centres have formal mechanisms for either encouraging faster booking or managing the interim situation. Instead, the approaches seem to be simply maintaining the prospect of losing the space to other clients (obviously of less concern than previously) and urging them along toward deadlines for commitments. As far as interim agreements, these again are much more likely to be informal and based on "letters of understanding" or interim bookings which are subject to challenge by other clients than any more formal type of agreement. Overall, the only true booking commitment remains in most cases one based on a formal contract and deposit, with interim measures largely ad hoc and depending on the nature of the client, the stage of their decision process and any competition for the dates in question.