

Bonjour : Mesdames – Messieurs - Chers amies - Dear Friends.

Le but de ce symposium était de rassembler des intervenants des secteurs publics, privés et des universitaires pour favoriser des échanges entre personnes cumulant des expériences variées et permettre au tourisme de progresser vers un agenda qui tient compte du développement durable. Nous devons apprendre des uns et des autres pour mieux avancer ensemble. Comme le disait le philosophe grec Platon, les bonnes actions nous donnent de la force et inspirent de bonnes actions chez les autres.

Je crois que ce symposium a été un succès et vous en conviendrez. Nous avons eu l'occasion d'entendre les présentations de quelque 60 conférenciers, nous étions presque 500 participants provenant de plusieurs pays. Ces conférences ont été marquées par des exposés pratiques, présentant des retombées concrètes avec retour sur les investissements : ce fut un symposium qui a traité de chose *terre-à-terre*.

L'un des objectifs était de démontrer la nécessité de faire du développement durable le pivot central du tourisme. Le développement durable n'est pas une mode, il se présente comme un impératif pour l'ensemble des secteurs du tourisme.

C'est avec beaucoup d'intérêt que nous avons écouté attentivement les présentations au cours de ces trois jours; les exposés très riches en contenu ont illustré des actions concrètes à mettre de l'avant pour prendre le virage du développement durable. Le symposium a illustré certains progrès réalisés au cours des récentes années, mais il confirme également que ce n'est pas tous les secteurs qui avancent de façon similaire. Nous en sommes au début. Les progrès se font de façon non systématique et, en ce sens, je crois que beaucoup reste à accomplir. Avec votre permission permettez-moi de poursuivre dans la langue de Shakespeare!

The global context in which tourism is evolving certainly seems to be precarious at present, as outlined in the very first presentation of the symposium. If it is true that our greatest danger in life is in permitting the urgent things to crowd out the important ⁽¹⁾, then we need to reconsider how we deal with the present economic crisis. Sustainable development is very important and is an imperative, because it is about the long-term survival of the planet and its societies.

There have been many crises on the planet in the past, no doubt there will more. These events are difficult and they represent important periods of change and transition. The current period is an opportunity to finally recognise the need for sustainable growth, one that occurs in harmony between people and the capacity of the earth to support their development.

As many conference speakers noted during this symposium, we are indeed in an important era of opportunity for innovation and the solutions to sustainable tourism development are multidimensional, which *will have to* take an integration of economic, social and environmental factors. The problem is ⁽²⁾, is that opportunity is often missed by most people, because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work – and sustainable development poses both significant opportunities and challenges - hence, a significant amount of work.

Based on the success stories outlined during this symposium, it is obvious that tourism needs to move forward together as an integrated sector. As many speakers clearly said, including Jean-Marc Eustache from *Transat AT*, *this requires vision and very strong leadership*.

Several speakers such as Costas Christ explicitly stated that the very foundation of tourism is culture and nature and these are the resources we should be exploiting in a more responsible fashion. While other speakers such as René Daoust and Heinz Julen have shown how a destination can be given heritage value through contemporary architecture and design while capturing the soul and the real sense of a place, and *this in turn* will attract visitors too – if done appropriately.

In the end, it is the authentic places that will probably continue to be viable destinations because of their ability to differentiate themselves as a 'place' in an increasingly homogenised and globalised world. This might bring various other benefits if the destination is careful about its image and brand used for marketing, as noted by Michele Mackenzie and Professor Liping Cai.

Broadly speaking, the tourism sector has ignored its social and especially environmental impacts for far too long in previous decades, and it is still very slow in implementing concrete actions to improve its performance. Tourism is not a smokeless industry. The reality is that tourism has many negative and positive impacts on society and the biophysical environment and simply marketing tourism using traditional approaches is not sufficient to ensure sustainable development. What is needed – and I think I heard this in several sessions - is that a destination needs a vision as to how it wants to be perceived, and to whom it wants to market itself. For this to occur, the sector needs rather careful management from both a natural and cultural resource perspectives. Yes, this is complex but it is not impossible as we heard from numerous speakers.

Many tourism resources are at peril today such as biodiversity, landscapes, built heritage, language, customs and way of life. Judging from just some of the visible impacts from tourism, such as those highlighted by Christina Cameron at some iconic World Heritage Sites, and the degradation of biodiversity in various natural conservation areas - resource depletion – both cultural and natural should be perhaps the biggest catalyst for change in tourism. Tourism can potentially exist in harmony with many land uses as outlined by Robert Sauvé yesterday, and also provide funds from profits towards resource protection and education. I heard several excellent presentations of tourism operations from across the world during this symposium from Quebec's *Parc Safari* and *Bleu Lavande* to *Phillip Island Victoria* in Australia, as to what tourism can do to protect resources and provide positive benefits to the local communities while creating clearly amazing visitors experiences.

I believe the tourism sector needs to consider itself as heavily reliant on natural resources for the production of all tourism related services and experiences. It does not matter if we are talking about a visit to a museum or a national park, or having a meal in a restaurant. It all goes back to basic natural resources such as air, water, land and biodiversity. Many of the negative biophysical impacts of tourism occur indirectly through the production of the goods and services used as 'inputs' in the production chain to what then gets delivered as memorable visitor experiences as 'outputs' in the tourism system. I was most impressed to hear the business cases at this symposium where buying local products and general sustainable supply chain management are part of every day operations.

As we know it today, the future is increasingly resource constrained, particularly water and carbon. Many natural resources used by tourism, especially for transport and energy are non-renewable, whose stocks are diminishing and whose prices are rising rapidly. So it might also make common sense to eliminate them where possible, or use them very efficiently. The use of resources such as fossil fuels has proven to contribute to pressing environmental problems such as global warming. By becoming more efficient in the way industry manages operations in terms of energy, water and waste, it can improve its environmental performance. As one speaker said, it is actually possible to become richer using fewer resources. As we heard from several speakers, the good news is that the cost of improving environmental performance has been diminishing over the years and so profits don't have to suffer.

This symposium has showcased examples of businesses from many sub-sectors ranging from attractions to accommodation, resorts, parks, and events, tour operators and so on. These operations all represent leading tourism businesses, because they take both resource use, including climate change seriously and have engaged socially responsible practices. They understand that management of tourism operations poses just as much a problem to society as it does to the profit margins of businesses. These operations understand that traditional business models are not acceptable for the future.

Corporate social responsibility in the private sector is an urgent issue and from the presentations of businesses we heard during this symposium it appears that sustainability improves the performance of a company, while quite clearly delivering wider benefits to the community such as the maintenance of traditional cultural values or contributing to biodiversity conservation efforts. We heard this from small businesses, as well as big ones including global operations such as GAP Adventures.

The presentations and workshops of the symposium addressing destination management highlight that *this scale* remains a very important one for sustainable tourism, as everybody in the sector is embedded here. I think that the example of *South West England* is a living proof that a destination *can* implement sustainable development principles at the regional scale, including establishing clearly measurable indicators of progress and setting up adaptation strategies for climate change. The recommendation of scenario planning by Malcolm Bell 15 to 30 years ahead is an advice I believe everybody should take seriously.

As far as the demand side of tourism is concerned; and as obvious as this may sound, tourists remain a common denominator in the broader tourism system. They are a very important component of the change towards sustainability. It seems that people are increasingly aware that their travel choices make a difference in the environment and the community they visit. I was most impressed to learn from the presentation of *Roskilde Festival* in Denmark, where environmentally engaged visitors get preferential reward treatment to be able to reserve in advance their campsites compared to regular people who don't take climate friendly action before the event. I think rewarding visitors to reuse their towels, or participate in any other environmental initiatives is a great idea since this helps awareness building and might result in repeated responsible action, and eventually more demand for responsible and sustainable products.

Visitors need to be informed about their options to choose responsible tourism products. If the tourism industry does not act proactively now, the way I see the evolution of the conscious traveler market is that people are likely to put pressure on businesses and destinations to implement even more operations to improve sustainability performance in the future. I believe the use of technology especially social media on the Internet such as Facebook, TripAdvisor, Twitter and so on represent transparent platforms and provide a practical and efficient way for tourism businesses to influence travellers and other businesses. So - businesses cannot AND will not be able to cheat about being responsible, or get away with green washing.

Finally the implications of all the actors of the Québec tourism sector. ...[en français](#)..

[Je crois que ce symposium permettra au gouvernement du Québec et plus particulièrement au ministère du Tourisme de mieux assumer le « leadership » d'encadrement nécessaire pour appuyer l'industrie et l'encourager avec des mesures concrètes. Sur un plan plus spécifique, le gouvernement doit également encourager davantage ceux qui prendront, et accéléreront, le virage vers le développement durable en tourisme. À ce titre, l'industrie du tourisme du Québec, de concert avec le Ministère, pourrait articuler à court terme un plan d'action cohérent selon leur besoins, avec des objectifs et des indicateurs de mesure pour évaluer les progrès accomplis. Le tout devrait se réaliser en concordance avec les normes internationales reconnues. À titre d'exemple, pour le développement du futur parcours des croisières au Québec, les remarques de Jonathan Tourtellot de la *National Geographic Society* sont particulièrement inspirantes.](#)

[Ma vision est la suivante : je rêve que le Québec devienne un leader en tant que destination socialement et écologiquement responsable avec des entreprises rentables sur l'ensemble de son territoire. Mais pour que cela se produise, beaucoup de travail doit être effectué par chacun d'entre-nous nous. Je souscris à l'adage suivant : il y a trois genres de personnes dans le monde. Il y a ceux qui laissent les choses se produire, ceux qui font les choses, et ceux qui se demandent ce qui s'est produit as in English...there are people who watch things happen, those people who make things happen, and those who wonder what happened!](#)

Je pense que ce symposium nous a présenté une panoplie d'outils et de solutions pratiques face aux problèmes rencontrés par notre secteur pour mieux avancer vers le développement durable. Naturellement, deux jours et demi s'avèrent peu pour traiter de tous les enjeux. Mais j'espère sincèrement que ce symposium a inspiré plusieurs d'entre vous pour passer à l'action et faire partie ainsi des personnes qui agissent.

Il est urgent de saisir des occasions qui se présentent à chaque jour pour favoriser ce changement. Nous ne pouvons certainement pas prévoir le futur bien que nous savons au sujet de ce futur qu'il arrive un jour à la fois. again in English.... As an African Proverb sums it up: For tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.

Enfin. Je vous invite à adopter le principe bien connu et lié au développement durable : FAIRE PLUS AVEC MOINS OR LESS IS MORE!

Merci beaucoup pour votre présence; bon voyage and enjoy Québec City and the Joie de vivre à la québécoise...et à bientôt!

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Endnotes:

1. Charles E. Hummel
2. Thomas Edison