



Rita Plaskett

CMP, CMM

{INDUSTRY INNOVATOR}

The Industry Innovator Award recognizes an individual planner or supplier who has implemented a service or product that has increased productivity and/or modernized our industry.

During her 25 years in the meetings industry, Rita has focused on the growth and recognition of the meeting profession, as well as the education of the future talent in the industry.

Rita's contributions to the industry are incalculable. An active member of CSAE, Site, CanSPEP and, most prominently, MPI, including president of the Toronto Chapter, president of the Canadian Council, board member on MPI's International Board of Directors, chair of the MPI Foundation Canada and subsequently, chair of the MPI Global Foundation. She is a member of Tourism Toronto's Marketing Committee and the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation Marketing Committee. An award-winning continuing-education teacher at George Brown College for the past ten years, Rita has helped expand the curriculum for the Hospitality and Meeting Management programme.

Possibly Rita's biggest undertaking was as founder and developer of the MPI Foundation Canada. The Foundation supports educational initiatives, corporate social responsibility, the workforce of the future and, overall, encourages awareness and growth within our industry. Rita developed the concept of the Canadian Economic Impact Study (CEIS) and, through the Foundation, raised \$1-million to fund this groundbreaking global initiative. The MPI Foundation Canada has since completed a refresh of the original study and the CEIS model is now the global standard for measuring the economic contributions of the meetings industry.

Rita's career has included being a director of an international association and various leadership positions with third-party meeting-planning companies. Now an independent planner with her own company, AGENDUM Inc., Rita helps clients by way of a strategic approach to project and event management. In 2009, Rita was chair of the CanSPEP (Canadian Society of Professional Event Planners) annual conference and is CanSPEP's president-elect for 2010.

To say Rita has helped modernize our industry is an understatement. Thanks to her, we can now unequivocally demonstrate meetings contribute over \$70-billion per year to the Canadian economy. [m](#)

Q} What are the **future industry innovations** to come?

“ Five years ago, foresight created an industry foundation, which raised the money to produce the long-overdue Economic Impact Study. This study validated the meeting industry as a profession and recognized that it generates more revenue than many other industries.

Fast-forward five years. The crystal ball is cloudy; everything is unpredictable. The pace of change is faster than it has ever been and the life cycle of a new product very short. Today, it's a challenge to find that “new” thing. We need to be fearless about abandoning old structures to make room for something new and better, which may look very different than we have ever been used to. The value of something new cannot be measured by the cost, monetary or otherwise.

This newly recognized industry we have successfully identified now needs a voice. As we have moved to a world of ‘new normal,’ where SARS, H1N1, 9/11, travel challenges and threats to lives and countries are facts we have to live with, this industry must be proactive and available for action, direction and solutions when these occur—and even before.

The next innovation will be the consolidation of associations, the formation of a united representation amalgamating strategic leadership in the industry and that valuable seat at many tables, not just in our own organizations, but where the world will seek the opinion of this segment for their recommendations.”