

# ICES ASC 2008

## Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada



### Local Information for Travellers

This is a quick reference for some of those little things it's nice to know when you visit a place for the first time. These are personal comments as a "local" resident <sup>1</sup>– no official recommendations, endorsements or anything like that.

### Money

You do not need to arrive with Canadian currency or travellers cheques. You can pay for just about anything with Visa or MasterCard; you will find other cards such as American Express also accepted but not as widely. However from time to time you will need some cash for small purchases, buses, ferries, etc.

The best way to get cash is at the Automated Teller Machines (ATMs); please see the "Transportation" section below for the location of ATMs at the airport. Canadians love ATMs so you find them just about everywhere in the city. However Canadian banks are different than most European banks and they are going to charge you for using their ATMs. The charge is "per transaction" so keep that in mind when deciding how much you want to withdraw. ATMs that are not directly associated with banks will generally charge you higher service fees.



Canadian money looks somewhat like EU notes in that it is relatively colourful however all notes are the same size. The most common denominations are \$5, \$10, and \$20. You will

quite often see \$50 but only rarely \$100 notes. Like Europe we have a lot of coins – \$0.01, \$0.05, \$0.10, \$0.25, \$1, and \$2. You will hear the latter 2 referred to as a "loonie" and a "twonie" respectively. Why? The \$1 coin has a picture of loon on the back and



<sup>1</sup> This document was prepared by Paul Keizer with the help of members of the Local Organizing Committee.

hence the term “loonie”; it came into circulation before the \$2 coin and we couldn’t do any better than name that the “twonie.”

If you want to change foreign currency there is a foreign exchange kiosk at the airport or preferably use a bank; there are several located near the conference venue and the local information desk can provide you with directions. In mid-July a Euro (€) would buy \$1.60 and a Danish krone about \$0.21. The American and Canadian dollars are about par but most retailers will charge you 5% or more if you to use American dollars.

### *Upon Arrival*

If you travel by air you will fly either directly or indirectly to the Robert Stanfield International Airport located about 35 km north of the city. There are scheduled daily flights direct from London, UK by Air Canada, and indirectly a number of airlines provide service from Europe through Montreal, Ottawa, or Toronto. In addition a number of charter airlines fly directly to Halifax from London, Frankfurt, Munich, etc. If Halifax is your first landing in Canada you will have to go through customs and immigration here. It usually is a speedy process provided you have your passport! The longest wait whether you have to go through customs or not will be for your baggage.

### *Transportation to Halifax*

So how will you get to Halifax from the airport? Presuming that you are not renting a car<sup>2</sup> you will have to take either the bus or a taxi to your hotel. The airport shuttle bus, cost \$18 one way, stops at many of the major hotels. A taxi or limousine into the centre of the city will cost \$53<sup>3</sup>. If your hotel is not one of the stops for the shuttle bus you should consider taking the bus to the nearest hotel and then taking a taxi or walking from there to your hotel. Most of the “downtown” hotels will be within walking distance, although there are hills.

***Time*** – Halifax is in the Atlantic Time Zone (AST) and will be on day-light savings time (ADT) during the ASC. This means it is 4 hours earlier than London, and 1 hour later than New York.

The ground transportation area at the airport is directly ahead and to the right if you come through customs or if you have arrived on a domestic flight that area is straight ahead as you leave the baggage area. Just a word of caution – a new parking garage

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<sup>2</sup> If your main destination is the Halifax area and the symposium you will not need a rental car.

<sup>3</sup> As of mid-July but may increase due to rising gasoline prices.

is presently being built and so there is some confusion around this area, so look for signs or ask for assistance.

Outside the international baggage area and around the domestic baggage area you will find people dressed in the Nova Scotia tartan that are there to provide you assistance.

*Nova Scotia*



The closet ATM in the arrivals area is located down the hall to the left as you look towards the exit from the arrivals area. There are also a couple of third-party ATMs farther down this hall near the food court and by the retail area.

### *Tipping*

If you take a taxi into the city this raises the question – do I tip the taxi driver? In general, in Canada it is expected that you will give a tip to people who provide a service; this includes waiters, taxi drivers, bell boys, etc. Most service workers in Canada are paid minimum wage which is not enough to live on so they are dependent upon tips. A tip of 15% is considered average; personally I will give more if the service is very good and likewise I will give less or nothing if the service is poor. A 10% tip for the taxi driver would be considered normal but if the taxi is poorly kept and the driver is not helpful I would not hesitate to just pay the fare.

### *Directions*

The conference venue, the World Trade and Convention Centre (WTCC) is located in the heart of old Halifax. The old city is on a peninsula and has a population of about 100,000. Greater Halifax, the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has a population of close to 400,000. The Harbour is oriented roughly North-South (actually closer to Northwest-Southeast) so directions are easily given using the major compass points, e.g. go North 3 blocks. Unfortunately many tourist maps (like this one) are oriented



so that northeast is at the top of the page making things a little confusing. The area around the WTCC slopes steeply from the height of the Citadel to the waterfront.

## Social Program

If you are accompanying someone to the ASC and are not planning to attend the science programme, daytime activities are being organized. Check out the ASC website for pre-planned activities. However, there are many activities that are weather dependent and to some extent “number” dependent. Also if you will be spending the Saturday following the ASC in Halifax activities will be available. So if you are interested in some group activities show up for the “companion” meeting that will be held in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor atrium after the opening ceremonies.

## Eating out

There are some differences that you should be aware of between restaurants in Canada and those in most of Europe. First of all, there is the tipping that I have already mentioned. If you are with a large group some restaurants will have a flat service fee that they will charge instead. Secondly, there are taxes added to just about everything in Canada – in Nova Scotia 13% will be added to the price you see on the menu in restaurants. And finally, often as soon as you have finished eating your meal the waiter will bring the bill. The waiter is not being rude this is just the custom.

There are fine restaurants located throughout the city but if you are staying near the symposium venue, the WTCC, you can walk to many restaurants ranging from coffee shops, to traditional pubs, to very expensive “white linen” establishments. Check out the restaurant guide in the hotel, ask the bell man, or check with the local information desk at the symposium for details or suggestions about any specific interest you have.

If you want to buy some food for your own lunches or for a picnic in one of the parks there are three grocery stores within walking distance of the WTCC. There is an Atlantic Superstore and a Sobeys Store about a 15 minute walk from the WTCC. There is also Pete’s Frootique, a large delicatessen specializing in, guess what – fruit; it is a little closer to the WTCC. Ask the staff at the local information desk or the reception desk at your hotel for directions.

**Caution:** *This is a busy time for tourists in Halifax and in addition during the ASC there are 2 NHL hockey games and 2 Elton John concerts next door to the conference venue. There will also be 10 or 12 cruise ships in port with about 20,000 visitors. Therefore major tourist attractions will be busy during the day and restaurants and bars will be busy during noon time, early evening, and then again later in the evening*

## *Buying and drinking alcohol*

There are many laws related to the buying and drinking of alcohol in Canada and they vary by province. In general you have to be in a private home or in a registered establishment to drink beer, wine or spirits. You cannot buy a beer in a restaurant and then walk out on the sidewalk with it! If you want some beer, wine, or spirits for your hotel room or to take to someone's home you will have to go to an NSLC (Nova Scotia Liquor Commission) Store; there are a couple near the WTCC so just ask for directions. There are a couple of specialty wine stores in this area as well.

If you want to sample some local fare, there are a number of good quality local vineyards, see [www.winesofnovascotia.ca/wineries](http://www.winesofnovascotia.ca/wineries) for more information. Also there are



several good micro- breweries; 2 of these Garrison and Propeller, you will find on tap at many local pubs and restaurants. If you really want to try the local fare on Saturday morning drop into the Farmers market or have a meal at the "Wooden Monkey" or "Fid", restaurants near the WTCC that



specialize in local food and drink.

## *Smoking*

Simply stated there are very limited opportunities to smoke indoors in Nova Scotia or in Canada for that matter, unless it is your own home. The regulations are lengthy and complicated but it includes prohibition of smoking in any public building or space or within 4 m of a building entrance, etc. Also note that there is no smoking in the sidewalk restaurants or on the open deck of the harbour ferry. If you are a smoker ask at the conference information desk or at your hotel reception desk for areas where you can light up.



**NO SMOKING**

## *Shopping*

There are many local stores near the conference centre, particularly along Barrington St., Granville St., and Spring Garden Road and their side streets. In general these stores are open from 0930 to 1800 h Monday to Wednesday and they remain open until 2100 h on Thursday and Friday. On Saturday the stores are open from 0930 to 1800 h. Across the harbour in Dartmouth most stores are open until 2100 h Monday through Saturday. There is a small shopping centre with a variety of "national" retailers at Scotia

Square, adjacent to the conference centre. There are 2 large shopping Centres – the Halifax Shopping Centre and MicMac Mall (in Dartmouth and therefore open in the evenings) both of which are readily accessible by bus. Note that there is a free bus service, [FRED](#), in the downtown area of from 1030 to 1730 h. When considering prices remember that when you pay a 13% tax will be added to the amount on the price tag.

### *Other Entertainment during the ASC*

If you have a free evening there are a number of cultural and sporting activities during the ASC. I have already mentioned that there are two NHL hockey games and two Elton John concerts. Tickets for these will be sold out well in advance so unless you already have a ticket or are prepared to pay a premium to a scalper, they are not realistic options. Check out the link [www.destinationhalifax.com](http://www.destinationhalifax.com) for the details.

In addition if you like running, hiking, walking, cycling, etc. there are a variety of parks and trails accessible from the downtown area. Simply ask at the information desk.

### *Waste Management*

A strange topic for travel information! In your hotel, in cafeterias, and other eating places you will be faced with the problem of what to do with your waste. Nova Scotia is a world leader in the recycling of domestic wastes. Basically there are 5 streams of “garbage.”

- Drink containers, glass and metal (you will be charged a “deposit” which is partially refundable),
- Plastic materials including containers and bags,
- Paper products including newspapers, bond paper, in general any dry paper product,
- Organic “compostable” material including leftover food and paper soiled with food, and
- Garbage, i.e. does not belong to any of the above – usually packing material like Styrofoam and most wax coated hot beverage containers.

Other than in private homes there are just 3 containers; the separation is simply into “garbage”, compostable material, and “non-garbage.”

## *Language*

Canada is a bilingual nation – English and French. While English is the dominant language spoken in the Halifax area you will also find that French is widely spoken and many restaurants and stores will have French language staff available to assist you.

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**ENJOY YOUR VISIT TO CANADA**

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