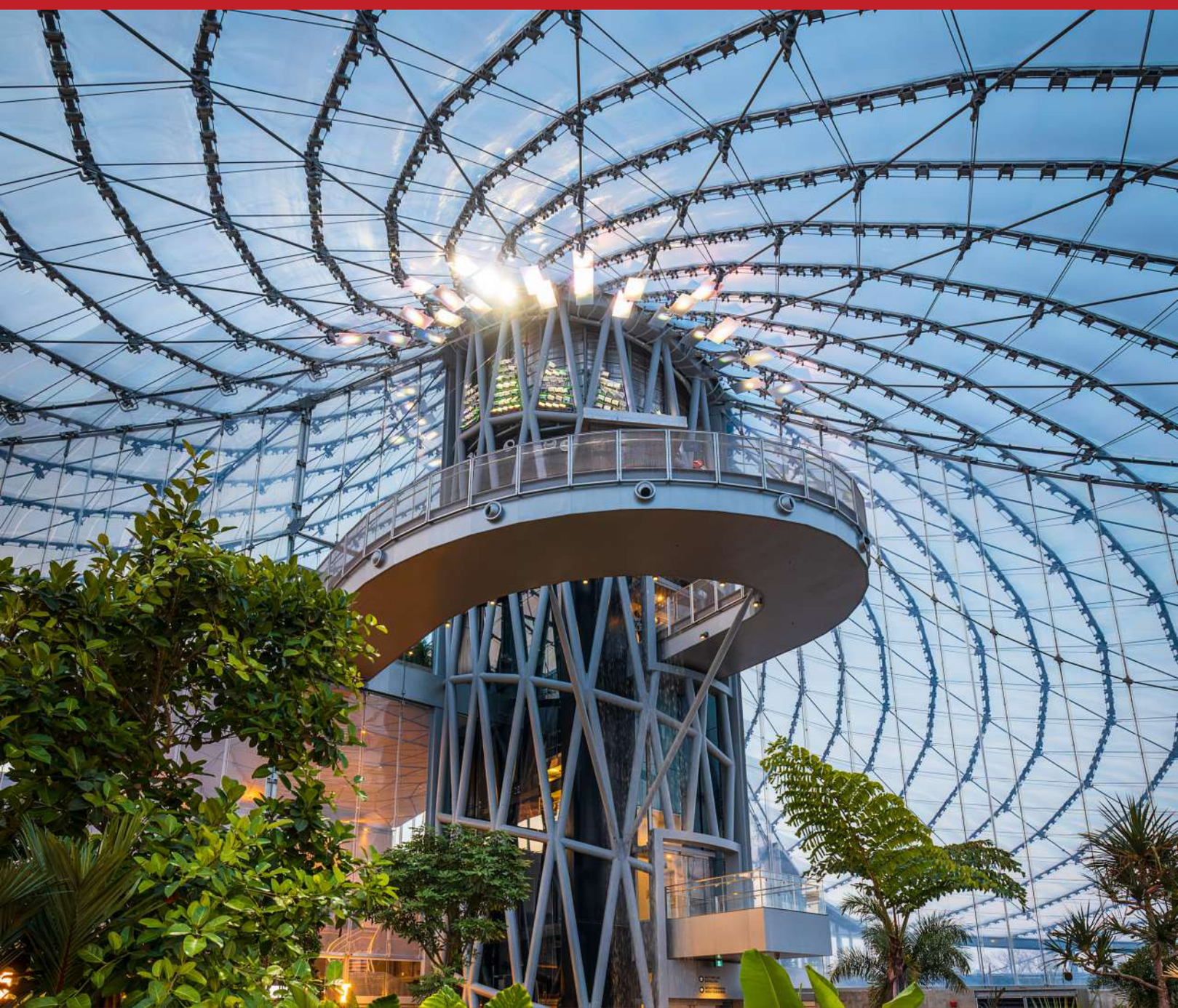
Q4 Impact Report

Encompasses October, November and December of 2025



WINNIPEG
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

Table of contents

CEO’s message 4

Our progress 6

Selling Winnipeg 8

Promoting Winnipeg 10

Investment project pipeline 12

Business, retention, expansion (BRE) and attraction activities 14

Talent & workforce development 17

News and media 18

Corporate partnerships 20

In our community 22

Our people 24

Spotlight feature 26

CEO’s message

The fourth quarter opened a new chapter for Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism and our city. We launched our new multi-year strategy to grow Winnipeg’s economy at the inaugural Winnipeg Forward event on November 4.

This strategy creates new opportunities for businesses, our stakeholders and the broader Winnipeg community to more deeply engage with our agency and set a clear foundation for how we will focus our resources in an increasingly constrained and complex environment. A new revamped corporate partnerships program was also launched at Winnipeg Forward to enhance private sector engagement in support of the strategy.

By its very nature, our work is long-term. Economic development, tourism growth, talent attraction and investment readiness take time and steady effort. This strategy provides our organization with a clear North Star to guide our work for the next five years, with a goal of making Winnipeg a more vibrant and prosperous place to live, work, invest and visit. It reflects the strengths of our agency, acknowledges the realities facing Winnipeg and Manitoba, and provides a practical framework for delivering results.

The strategy reflects a more integrated approach to how we advance Winnipeg’s economy. It recognizes tourism as a core driver and makes clear that tourism and traditional economic development are not separate efforts but reinforce each other. Business retention and expansion, investment attraction, event and talent attraction, and growing visitation all work together to drive economic growth — our one-agency model positions us to leverage these connections more effectively.

The decision to launch the corporate partnership program alongside the strategy was intentional. Private sector leaders drive job creation and investment, and their involvement is essential to the work we do.

Our private sector partners contribute far more than funding — they bring insight, networks and leadership that help elevate our work and set Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism apart from comparable agencies across the country. When businesses invest in our strategy, it sends a clear signal that we are focused on the right priorities and ready to deliver.

That confidence also helps attract public funding, as governments are more likely to invest when the private sector is already at the table.



This quarter provided powerful examples of how our one-agency model delivers results. The return of the Grey Cup to Winnipeg generated an estimated $90 million in economic impact and showcased our city on a national stage.

Beyond the numbers, the event demonstrated Winnipeg’s capacity to host on a large scale, the strength of our tourism ecosystem, and the collective energy that emerges when partners come together around a shared goal. It was a moment of pride for Winnipeggers and Manitobans alike.

I want to acknowledge the leadership of Wade Miller, President and CEO of the Winnipeg Football Club and Drew Fisher, President and CEO of the RBC Convention Centre, along with the many partners who contributed to the 2025 Grey Cup’s success. You can read more about our agency’s efforts to help attract the event, welcome visitors and showcase the best of Winnipeg throughout the report.

Finally, Q4 marked the conclusion of the five-year YES! Winnipeg Impact Campaign. I am immensely proud of what was achieved, with targets exceeded in nearly every category. I want to sincerely thank our corporate partners who invested their time, talent and trust in this work. Their commitment has made a lasting difference for our city.

Looking ahead, successful delivery of the strategy will depend on securing the resources and partnerships required to execute it. We have the strategic framework and the organizational capability to deliver on our vision. Continued progress on realizing that vision for Winnipeg will require investment from both the public and private sectors.

With shared commitment from our partners and business community, Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism is well positioned to deliver outcomes that boost Winnipeg’s economic competitiveness.

Ryan Kuffner
President & CEO

Our progress

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism top-line results year to date

Estimated economic impact of Tourism Winnipeg:

$70.2M

Tourism Winnipeg NPS:

94

Estimated economic impact of YES! Winnipeg:

$158.3M

YES! Winnipeg NPS:

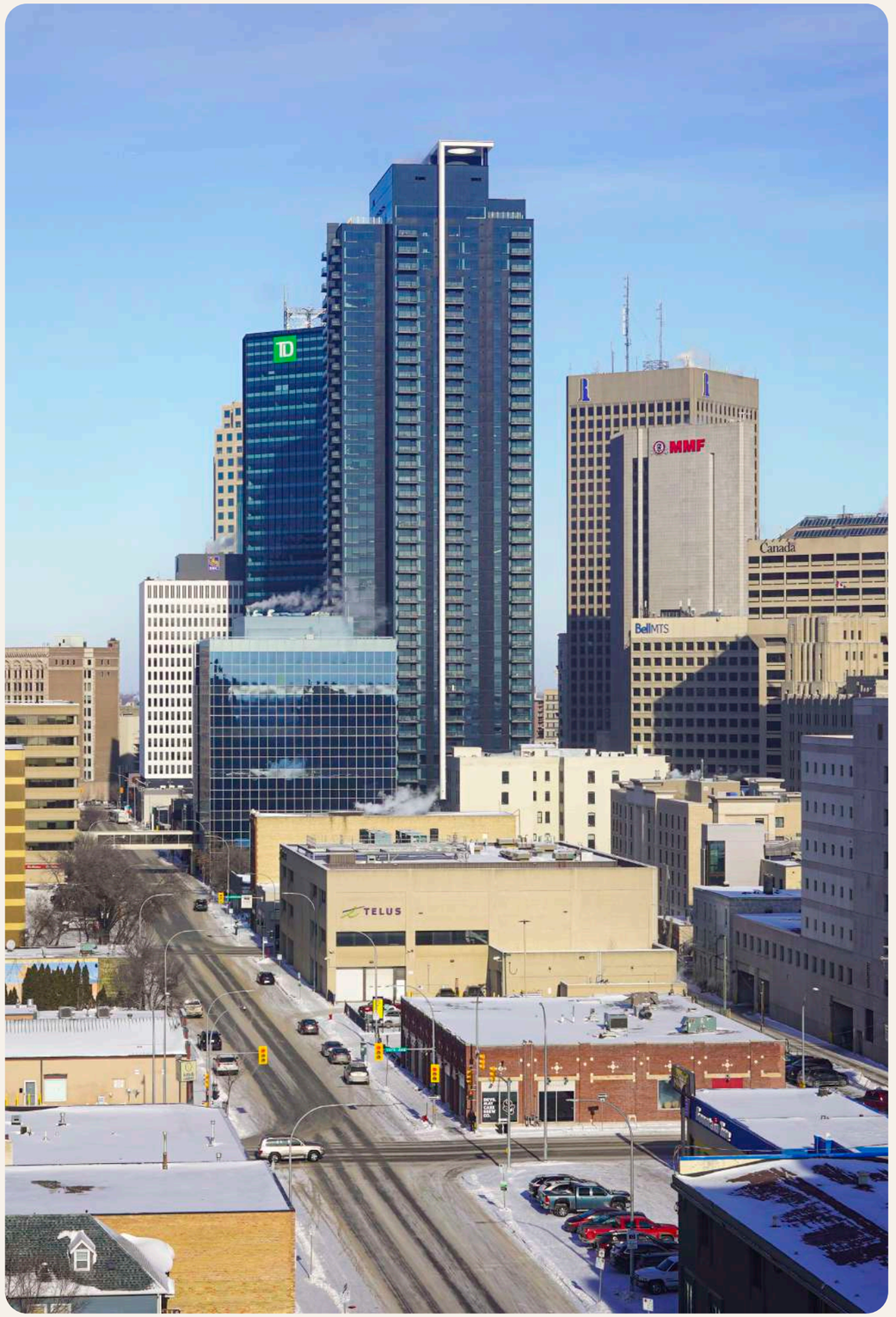
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Update: The estimated impact of YES Winnipeg! for the Q2 2025 reporting period has been revised to $45.7 million.

This Q4 report reflects activities delivered under our former brands, YES! Winnipeg and Tourism Winnipeg. Beginning in Q1 2026, performance will be measured and reported under our new unified brand and strategy, aligning all metrics across Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism's integrated framework.

***Economic impact** is measured by assessing changes in key economic indicators like output, income, employment and value added, considering both direct and indirect effects of a project or event on a specific region. For Tourism Winnipeg (TW), estimated economic impact is the result of the direct sales revenues for the events that TW has attracted or supported. For YES! Winnipeg, the estimated economic impact refers to the total annual GDP generated by new businesses attracted to the city or by the expansion of local businesses supported by YES! Winnipeg measured once these operations reach full maturity.*

***Net Promoter Score (NPS):** Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a metric used to gauge customer loyalty and satisfaction by asking customers how likely they are to recommend a company's products or services. Calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors (unhappy customers) from promoters (loyal supporters), NPS ranges from -100 to +100. A higher score indicates better customer loyalty and satisfaction.*



Selling Winnipeg

Our team's work enhances Winnipeg's profile and appeal as a destination for business events, sport and special events and leisure travel. In Q4, Tourism Winnipeg secured 11 future events and conferences for our city that will bring more than $10.1 million in direct spending. **Q4 highlights include:**

Grey Cup success

Held November 10-16, the Grey Cup Festival was the result of years of coordinated planning and collaboration, with Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism providing support before and during the event through partner alignment and visitor welcome initiatives.

During the festival, efforts included city-wide welcome signage, volunteer and front-line training, visitor-facing activations at the RBC Convention Centre, and a bilingual visitor survey that generated valuable insights into travel patterns and accommodations. The festival delivered an estimated $90 million in economic impact for Winnipeg and showcased the city at a national scale.

The event was also strategically leveraged to host VIP clients as part of a confidential, final-stage bid for a future major festival, representing a potential $17 million in economic impact and positioning the city strongly in the selection process.



Grey Cup festivities - RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg



2025 Sport Event Forum

Driving business events growth

From November 1-5, the Tourism team hosted a client familiarization (FAM) tour to showcase Winnipeg as a destination for business events, anchored around a Churchill experience. Six association planners from Canada, the U.S., and the EU participated in a curated program highlighting Winnipeg's venues, hotels, culinary scene and wellness and wilderness offerings, developed in collaboration with 18 tourism partners.

The program included site visits in Winnipeg, a day in Churchill, and a reception that introduced clients to local ambassadors with ties to their organizations who can help champion bringing future events to Winnipeg. Following the FAM, Winnipeg secured the 2027 Canadian Nutrition Society annual conference, a city-wide event with approximately 500 delegates and an estimated total economic impact of $1.02 million.

Sport Forum outcome

The 2025 Sport Event Forum, held on November 27 and hosted by Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism in partnership with Sport Manitoba, brought together more than 60 participants from more than 40 provincial sport organizations to strengthen collaboration and advance sport event hosting in Winnipeg.

The forum featured a keynote on advancing Truth and Reconciliation initiatives through sport, facilitated discussions on shared hosting challenges and opportunities, along with a panel of local sport leaders sharing practical insights from recent regional, national and international events.

The event strengthened relationships with sport organizations, highlighted available hosting supports and identified several promising opportunities for future event bids.

Promoting Winnipeg

Every day, Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism tells the Winnipeg story to help drive economic growth. This increased awareness of our city contributes to a positive economic outlook, attracting visitors, businesses and talent interested in visiting, investing or living in our vibrant, thriving city.

Work in Manitoba campaign exceeds targets

In November, Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism launched the next phase of the Work in Manitoba marketing campaign, with the goal of building awareness of the portal among Manitoba job seekers. Emphasis was placed on opportunities in rural and northern areas and used digital tools including search and social media.

As of late December, the campaign significantly exceeded its year four targets of two million impressions and 20,000 clicks, delivering more than 6.3 million impressions (315 per cent of target) and 60,000 clicks (300 per cent of target) compared to year three results.

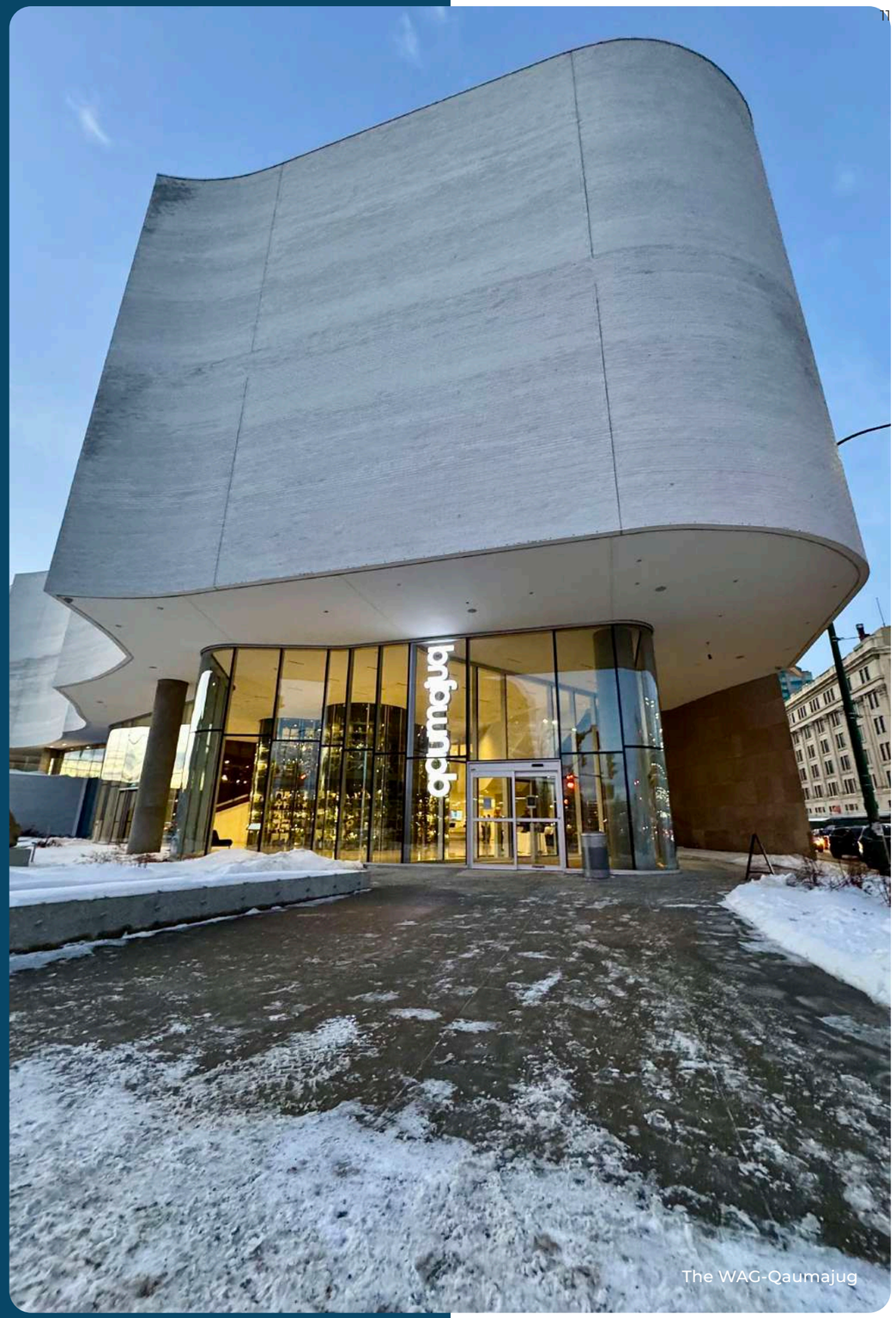
The increase in performance is directly attributable to a mid-2025 shift to bring digital media expertise in-house, which allowed us to maximize in-market media spend through continuous monitoring and optimization, improving our ability to reach and engage target audiences. In contrast, year three required funding for a media partner, reducing available in-market media spend.

Youth retention targeted through influencer campaign

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism launched a new ‘Live in Winnipeg’ influencer campaign with the goal of shifting perceptions among youth about Winnipeg as a place to live, work and play. The campaign targeted youth aged 16-29 in Manitoba, Edmonton, Calgary and Toronto. Working with Winnipeg content creators, the campaign showcased everyday life in our city, highlighting career opportunities, vibrant cultural and sports scenes, and an affordable cost of living.

The campaign generated approximately 18,200 engagements and reached about 451,000 unique users. It also delivered approximately $678,000 in earned media value*, establishing a strong baseline to build on. The campaign will continue in 2026.

***Earned media value (EMV)** is a metric in marketing that calculates the value of publicity gained through promotional efforts rather than paid advertising. It measures the worth of media exposure obtained through channels like social media, press coverage, and word-of-mouth, estimating the equivalent cost of achieving the same exposure through paid ads.*



The WAG-Qaumajug

Investment project pipeline

In Q4 2025, our investment attraction pipeline closed with **334 leads** and **442 prospects**, with **86 opportunities** fully qualified through our investment funnel. This progress reflects the ongoing work of our Business Development and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) teams to convert interest into tangible opportunities for Winnipeg.

In Q4, we undertook a review of our pipeline from the lead stage onward to further refine our investment funnel, ensuring only high-quality, current leads and opportunities remain, with this work continuing into 2026.

LEADS

334

PROSPECTS

442

OPPORTUNITIES

86

Our efforts included:

Supporting Team Manitoba approach at Agritechnica 2025

As part of Team Manitoba, Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism attended Agritechnica Nov 9-12, the largest agricultural exhibition in the world held in Hannover, Germany.

The province's Business, Mining, Trades, and Job Creation (BMTJC) ministry had a strong presence at the conference and coordinated efforts before the event. This included a dedicated Manitoba booth to support businesses, raise awareness and served as a meeting space for clients.

Highlights included: a meet-and-greet with Deputy Minister, Mike Jack and senior BMTJC team members; Versatile's networking reception and completing eight high-quality client meetings during the conference.

Indo-Pacific engagement with CP Group and Invest in Canada

The Indo-Pacific team met with CP Group (Thailand) alongside Invest in Canada in an executive-level meeting during the company's visit to Winnipeg. CP Group reaffirmed its long-term commitment to Manitoba through HyLife, highlighting more than CAD $750+ million invested since 2019 and strong performance in premium export markets, particularly Japan.

Advancing international relationships with Japan

Our FDI team represented Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism and shared the Winnipeg value proposition to a Japanese delegation led by the Mayor of Setagaya (Tokyo Metropolitan Area) during his visit to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Winnipeg-Setagaya sister city relationship.

Generating strong pipeline leads at European investment roadshows

Our Europe team attended Global Affairs Canada investment roadshows November 24-28 in London and Zurich. Each stop featured market briefings from local trade commissioners, networking with international companies and information sessions led by Canadian businesses highlighting the advantages of investing in Canada. One-to-one meetings generated six strong pipeline leads.

Toronto investment attraction mission and CIFFA engagement

The Business Development team conducted a national investment attraction mission to Toronto, aligned with travel for the Canadian International Freight Forwarders Association (CIFFA) conference.

The team held six in-person meetings across priority manufacturing and ICT sectors, generating strong interest, including two companies pursuing further discussions and one qualified expansion opportunity representing an estimated $100 million in capital investment and 10 jobs. While in Toronto, the team also attended the CIFFA conference alongside the Winnipeg Airport Authority to showcase Winnipeg's emerging transportation and distribution sector, receiving strong interest and positive engagement from conference attendees.



CIFFA Conference

Business, retention, expansion (BRE) and attraction activities

In Q4, the Business Development, Foreign Direct Investment and Talent & Workforce Development teams completed 13 business retention and expansion meetings, seven FDI profiles and five talent needs assessments.

We delivered **107 services to businesses,** resulting in **$21 million** in capital invested and **220 net new full-time jobs**.



Magellan Aerospace roundtable.

Success story: International Truck Body

ITB's new facility to expand operations in Winnipeg

International Truck Body (ITB) will invest $12 million in its Winnipeg facility, which will add 100 new full-time jobs to the city. Originating as a family-owned business in Winnipeg, ITB is known for its patented aluminum side panel innovation. Their new facility will expand operations and increase production capacity in Winnipeg. ITB currently purchases more than $8 million annually from 20 Manitoba-based suppliers, all of whom are expected to see increased business as a result of this expansion, driving local growth, job creation and broader economic benefits.

Our Business Development team supported ITB by identifying relevant funding opportunities, providing program awareness and timeline support, facilitating stakeholder connections and helping promote the economic impact of their Manitoba expansion, resulting in a new Economic Outcome Facilitated (EOF)*.

***Economic Outcome Facilitated (EOF)**: In our sales process, the ultimate milestone is achieving an EOF, which is marked when a client signs a YES! letter. The letter is private sector validation of the value we have provided them through our service offering and ensures we only claim successes when our clients validate that success. The letter provides our organization with the client's confirmation of the number of jobs expected to be created at maturity, the dollar value of capital invested, and the new payroll generated thanks to our efforts. EOFs are ultimately considered "wins" by our team and communicated accordingly.*

Success story: Fluey Trading

Fluey Trading plans expansion in Winnipeg

Fluey Trading is planning a $9 million capital investment and the creation of 120 new full-time jobs to expand its cold and dry storage, processing and export capabilities across food distribution, industrial materials and international trade. Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism confirmed a new EOF by connecting the company to relevant provincial funding programs and Winnipeg-based businesses, helping strengthen local supply chain partnerships and further integrate Fluey Trading into the local business ecosystem.

Aerospace roundtable informs local sector marketing development

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism hosted an aerospace roundtable at Magellan Aerospace to inform the development of new marketing materials promoting Winnipeg's aerospace and defence sector. Industry feedback reinforced the importance of talent attraction messaging that emphasizes purpose, long-term career opportunities and aerospace as a future-driven industry. Core themes included Winnipeg's skilled talent pipeline, productivity advantages and collaborative ecosystem. Next steps include developing creative concepts and draft messaging, with industry review planned for Q1.





Work in Manitoba stand at the career fair.

Talent & workforce development initiative

Work in Manitoba job portal – Q4 update

The Work in Manitoba job portal added **3,586 new job seekers** and **96 new employers** in Q4. Since its launch, the platform has attracted **130,392 job seekers** and **2,213 employers**, supporting workforce connections across the province.

Work in Manitoba job portal: Year 4 plan approved

The Year 4 project plan for the Work in Manitoba initiative was approved in July. This year's plan introduces new applications designed to advance Manitoba's workforce priorities, including apprenticeships, work-integrated learning, youth retention and outreach to Manitobans currently out of work. The plan continues to leverage the Work in Manitoba job portal as a cornerstone of the province's talent ecosystem, strengthening connections between employers and job seekers across Manitoba.

National spotlight on Manitoba's workforce

The Talent & Workforce Development team was the regional partner for Magnet Network Live: Spotlight Manitoba, an event in October that brought local leaders and national trailblazers to discuss how Manitoba is tackling talent and productivity challenges and what it means for Canada.

The event highlighted Manitoba's leadership in shaping the future of work with sessions focused on talent, skills, technology, collaboration and productivity, with an emphasis on better understanding the impact of AI on the Canadian and global economy.

Connecting skilled talent to Manitoba employment

In Q4, the Talent & Workforce Development team participated in job fairs and hiring events across Winnipeg, rural and northern Manitoba, Thunder Bay, Toronto and Calgary to promote skilled employment opportunities in Manitoba. Each event showcased job postings from more than 2,000 Manitoba employers through the Work in Manitoba job portal.

News and media

Winnipeg in the news

Our Travel Media Program actively seeks out and collaborates with journalists, influencers and content creators to tell positive stories about Winnipeg, supporting our efforts to attract visitors. By securing impactful media coverage, we shape and influence how people perceive Winnipeg — highlighting its vibrancy, culture and unique experiences.

In Q4, this included **57 articles/media mentions**, some of which appear in different outlets, for a total earned media value* of **$6.1 million.**

You haven't seen the real Canada until you've explored its cultural cradle, by Mike MacEacheran, The Telegraph

The best things to do in Winnipeg this winter — Art, Food & Polar Bears Included, by Mark Sissons, BOLD Traveller

Winter in the coldest city in North America, by Ruaridh Nicoll, The Telegraph

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism in the news

Earned media coverage includes stories that position Winnipeg as an attractive destination for business investment, as well as corporate mentions of Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism.

In Q4, this included **75 articles or mentions**, some of which mention Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism and/or our initiatives, generating a total earned media value* of **$1.4 million.**

'No other place like Winnipeg': Grey Cup weekend kicks off in Manitoba's capital by Sam Thompson, Global News

New strategy to boost Winnipeg's economy, tourism says city's reputation needs works by Darren Bernhardt, CBC

WestJet maps new Winnipeg-Iceland route by Aaron Epp, Winnipeg Free Press

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**** Earned media value (EMV)** is a metric in marketing that calculates the value of publicity gained through promotional efforts rather than paid advertising. It measures the worth of media exposure obtained through channels like social media, press coverage, and word-of-mouth, estimating the equivalent cost of achieving the same exposure through paid ads.*



The wildly beautiful prairie city Canadians keep to themselves

Unsung Winnipeg is Canada's cultural capital – and if you haven't visited, you're missing the best of the country

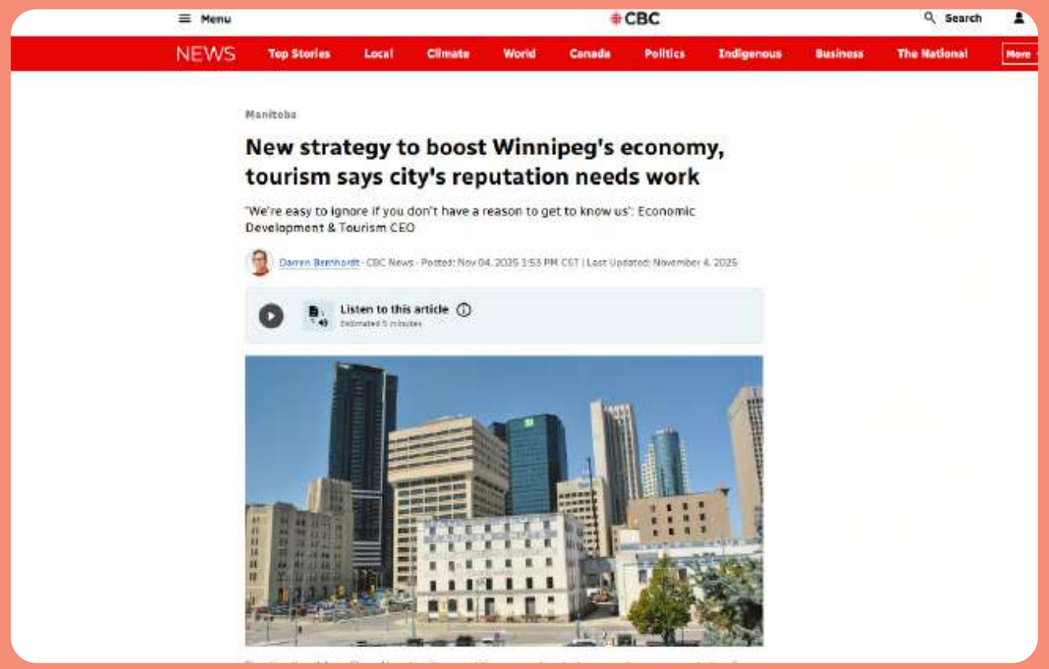
Mike MacEacheran

26 October 2025 12:00pm GMT

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51

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Corporate partnerships

Partner and investor funding committed YTD:

YES! Winnipeg investors

$1.05 million
101 investors

Team Winnipeg partners

$327,000
38 partners

A new strategy to grow Winnipeg's economy

On November 4, Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism hosted Winnipeg Forward, a new event that presented the agency's long-term strategy to drive economic growth for the city, bringing together government, partners and stakeholders for meaningful engagement and networking.

Beginning in 2026, it will become an annual signature event and a key platform to report on the future of Winnipeg's economy and our progress. **Read more on the strategy here.**

As part of the event, Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism launched a new partnership program designed to deepen partner alignment with the long-term strategy and strengthen collaboration across tourism and business development.

Leveraging the organization's one-agency model, the program connects partners to shared initiatives. It provides broader exposure and more meaningful engagement across the full mandate.

This approach supports collective efforts to grow Winnipeg's economy and make the city a more vibrant and prosperous place to live, work, invest and visit. **Learn about the partnership program here.**



Winnipeg Forward event

YES! Winnipeg Real Impact campaign results

Launched February 4, 2021, and concluding December 31, 2025, the five-year Real Impact Campaign raised $5.2 million in private-sector funding, driven by the leadership and investment of Winnipeg's business community. That support delivered measurable results and exceeded targets across key economic indicators.

Over five years, campaign-funded work contributed more than $1 billion in GDP (120 per cent of target), helped create and support 10,130 jobs (101 per cent of target) and generated $1.2 billion in capital investment (344 per cent of target). These outcomes demonstrate what's possible when Winnipeg's business community comes together to advance shared priorities.

Celebrating partnerships and shared success

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism hosted partners and stakeholders at our annual Holiday Mixer on December 4, 2025, providing an opportunity to share highlights from tourism and business development initiatives, recognize partner contributions and celebrate collective successes while looking ahead to 2026.

In our community

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism in our community highlights the foundational local work that supports and amplifies our broader initiatives, which in turn enhances Winnipeg's profile. Our dedicated efforts within the community help fuel our success in promoting Winnipeg in all markets.

New route to Iceland

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism President & CEO Ryan Kuffner spoke at a media event on November 18, announcing WestJet's new direct flight between Winnipeg and Reykjavik. He highlighted the route's importance for improving access to Europe for travellers, investors and local businesses. The announcement, made at Winnipeg James Armstrong Richardson International Airport in partnership with Winnipeg Airports Authority, reflects ongoing collaboration to strengthen Winnipeg's global connectivity.

Canadian Armed Forces welcome

On behalf of Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism, Sarah Robinson, Business Development Manager, delivered a presentation during "17 Wing Orientation Day" on October 8. The session was designed to welcome newly posted Canadian Armed Forces members to Winnipeg. Sarah presented on what the city has to offer in terms of attractions, activities, festivals, events and sports, providing the new recruits with a better understanding of the local community as they settle into their new home.



Ryan Kuffner at the WestJet media event

Participation in the Binasi Economic Reconciliation Forum

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism Director of Corporate Partnerships Ilona Niemczyk participated on a panel at the Binasi Economic Reconciliation Forum hosted by the Southern Chiefs' Organization in October, focused on women shaping the future of economic growth.

The discussion highlighted the economic contributions and leadership of Indigenous women and emphasized the responsibility of non-Indigenous partners to create space, support leadership pathways and elevate Indigenous voices in economic development and governance.

Strengthening connections with research and data leaders

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism sponsored the Canadian Research and Insights Council (CRIC) Winnipeg Networking event on November 24, 2025, in partnership with Leger and Probe.

Our participation was led by Market Researcher Cheryl Hooper, a CRIC member, who also spoke at the event.

The sponsorship supported engagement with research and insights professionals and reinforced Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism's commitment to data-informed decision-making.

Future of events in Winnipeg and Manitoba

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism Vice President of Tourism Natalie Thiesen participated in a panel at Travel Manitoba's Annual General Meeting on November 5, focused on the future of tourism in Manitoba.

She emphasized the importance of a major events strategy to drive visitation, while noting the increasingly competitive environment for attracting large-scale events. She highlighted upcoming events as key opportunities to showcase Winnipeg and reinforce its position as a competitive host city.

Tourism Industry Association of Manitoba (TIAM) presentations

Two Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism staff members were invited to present at the annual Tourism Industry of Manitoba Conference, held October 6–8.

Frances Wellink, Director of Business Development, Tourism, participated in a panel focusing on major events, their economic impact, and future strategic direction.

Taylor Fenn, Manager of Media Relations & Partner Communications, co-presented with Travel Manitoba, sharing practical guidance and best practices to help tourism operators and businesses become media ready.

Our people

We celebrate the people who drive Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism forward, highlighting our commitment to continuous learning, community engagement and the growth and development of our team.

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation presentation

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism staff took part in a presentation delivered by the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, prompted by the 10th anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report.

The session examined the history and legacy of residential schools, shared truths and highlighted the importance of the Calls to Action. The presentation also enhanced our understanding in a meaningful way and left an impact on our team.

Grey Cup welcome

More than 35 Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism staff — sometimes joined by family members — played an active role in giving Grey Cup visitors a warm Winnipeg welcome.

Staff provided Winnipeg information at visitor booths at the RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg and airport, and managed a fun fan-engagement ball toss activity in the Manitoba Social room. Through these efforts, staff helped showcase the city's signature hospitality, attractions and experiences.







Grey Cup festivities

Spotlight feature

Building a Winnipeg events pipeline

How Winnipeg delivered a breakout year for events

From internationally attended conferences to highly anticipated sporting events, Winnipeg experienced a banner year for events with 83 taking place in 2025, resulting in an estimated total economic impact of more than $169 million.

Bringing prominent, high-profile events to Winnipeg such as Rendez-vous Canada (RVC), Canadian Elite Basketball League (CEBL) Championships, and the Grey Cup Festival was the result of dedicated behind-the-scenes work, strategic positioning and close collaboration with industry and government partners.

While residents and visitors see the excitement once an event arrives, the work often starts — sometimes years — before the first guest checks in or the first whistle blows. In this spotlight, we pull back the curtain on what it truly takes for Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism to bring events to Winnipeg and why that work matters far beyond a single day.

Choosing the right events at the right time

According to Natalie Thiesen, Vice President of Tourism, attracting major events* starts with a clear understanding of where the city is in its growth and what kinds of opportunities make most strategic sense.

“It’s not just about bringing in the biggest event possible,” Thiesen said. “It’s about bringing in the *right* events that align with our values, our infrastructure, and our strengths as a city. This sets us up for not just the immediate economic impact of an event but the ripple effect that supports long-term tourism growth.”

***Major events** are large-scale national or international gatherings that generate significant economic, social, and reputational benefits for Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Canada. They may span one or more days and are typically hosted in existing venues. These events are usually secured through a competitive bid or negotiation process, occurring every 3–10 years, and draw broad national and international audiences. Key features include:*

-Long planning and bidding cycles (4–10 years).
-High bid and hosting fees ($100K–$20M).
-Substantial sponsorship and private sector support.
-Dedicated multi-year host committee with staff and volunteers.
-Use of multiple facilities and potential infrastructure investment.



2025 Rendez-Vous Canada

Rendez-vous Canada (RVC) was a prime example. Often described as the ‘Super Bowl of the tourism industry,’ RVC is Canada’s largest tourism conference, bringing together international buyers, tour operators, and industry leaders from across Canada and around the world. Winnipeg last hosted the event in 2010 and a lot has changed since then.

“We actually started working on the bid back in 2016,” shared Frances Wellink, Director of Business Development - Tourism with Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism. “The pandemic paused things, but when we re-visited the opportunity, we knew the city was ready to show how much it had evolved.”

Hosting RVC meant welcoming delegates from more than 22 countries, many of whom had never experienced Winnipeg before. Beyond the immediate total economic impact, which is estimated at $4.8 million, the long-term value came from putting the city back on the global tourism map.

“It elevated everything that the city now has to offer,” Thiesen added. “That kind of exposure has a long tail, given we can position our city for return visitation.”

Building momentum through opportunity

The Canadian Elite Basketball League (CEBL) Championships followed a different trajectory, demonstrating how agility can create opportunity.

“Even for residents who may not attend events directly, the long-term benefits still resonate through things like volunteer opportunities, jobs, sense of pride and revitalization of the city’s core.”

-Kenny Boyce
Manager of Film and Special Events, City of Winnipeg

Thiesen explained Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism was approached by the Sea Bears organization to pursue hosting rights for the league’s 2025 Championship Weekend after the club had built strong attendance and a positive reputation locally.

“The Sea Bears were fairly new to the league, but we all wanted to quickly demonstrate our city’s capacity to host this type of event,” Thiesen said. “The turnaround time was much shorter than other bids, so it was really about saying: let’s go, let’s build momentum and let’s show what Winnipeg can offer.”

The economic impact of CEBL Championship Weekend in Winnipeg exceeded $5 million in total event impact and supported more than 1,300 jobs. And while economic impact is a foundational component of hosting major events, the benefits go much deeper.

Kenny Boyce, Manager of Film and Special Events with the City of Winnipeg, is a strategic partner, working hand-in-hand with Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism to help bring events to Winnipeg. He pointed out that many events also include charitable components, directing portions of proceeds, drop-off donations and awareness to local causes.

“Even for residents who may not attend events directly, the long-term benefits still resonate through things like volunteer opportunities, jobs, sense of pride and revitalization of the city’s core,” said Boyce.

That momentum mindset extended to the 2025 Grey Cup Festival. With only a limited number of Canadian cities able to host, securing the event required coordination at the city and provincial levels, as well as strong relationships with the host club and corporate partners.

“The Grey Cup is a true city-wide event,” Wellink said. “When we host, the economic impact is felt everywhere including hotels, restaurants, transportation and retail. But it’s also about the experience. We worked closely with partners to enhance what the event feels like when it comes to Winnipeg.”

The result was an estimated $90 million in total economic impact and a festival that showcased the city’s ability to deliver at scale.

Smoothing the way with collaborative partnerships

While Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism takes the lead on attracting and bidding on events, the City of Winnipeg plays a critical role in execution, highlighting the value of its long-standing collaborative relationship.

“Our role is to help smooth the way for events,” Boyce said. “We serve the citizens of Winnipeg, who tell us they want to work hard and play hard. We also work closely with Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism to make sure organizers feel supported.”

That support includes everything from permits and street closures to transportation planning, safety and city services.

“We want to be an event-friendly city,” Boyce explained. “When organizers come here, we can say: here’s your venue and your hotel options, here are the bus routes, here’s how we’ll make this work. That brings real relief to an event organizer.”

The city’s ability to pivot quickly has become a major strength.

“In the event business, we encounter unexpected logistical and weather challenges,” Boyce said.



Sea Bears game



“Our team shines when things change. We can move very quickly, and Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism is great to work with because they know the landscape and the partners that allow us to adapt extremely fast.”

Standing out with a unique experience

In an increasingly competitive global events market, size alone isn’t enough to win bids. What often sets Winnipeg apart is how the city shows up.

“Our stakeholders are incredibly collaborative,” Wellink said. “The airport, hotels, RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg, Princess Auto Field, True North Sports and Entertainment, our world-class attractions and off-site venues, the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba — when we work well together, it’s genuine, not forced.”

That collaboration is paired with a sense of warmth and authenticity that organizers consistently notice.

“It sounds cliché, but it really is about the people,” Wellink added. “The welcome that event organizers receive really stands out for being approachable, enthusiastic and accommodating.”

That welcoming spirit is then paired with high-quality, distinctive venues and experiences. From cultural institutions to downtown spaces, the city offers variety and authenticity that can’t be replicated elsewhere.

Looking forward: A provincial events strategy

Reflecting on a successful year, leaders agree that shifting to a more proactive approach to secure a major events pipeline is the most sustainable long-term vision.

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism is now working with Travel Manitoba and the Province of Manitoba’s Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism department to advance a broader provincial events strategy — one that aligns funding, capacity, expertise and infrastructure planning.

“We know we’re not winning our fair share of events,” Thiesen said. “And we’re not just competing with other Canadian cities; we’re competing globally.”

A strategy has been developed and is now focused on buy-in and execution. A key focus is ensuring clear accountability, involving the right stakeholders and rights holders, and staying agile enough to respond quickly to opportunities.

“Event acquisition has evolved over the years,” Thiesen added. “We need a long-term view to ensure we are positioning our city and province for success.”

Most of the work that brings events to Winnipeg happens behind the scenes. For example, the team is currently preparing a bid for the 2027 JUNO Awards and prospecting the Canadian Country Music Awards, leveraging key learnings and successful outcomes from major events held in 2025. But without a sustained and coordinated effort — the prospecting, bidding and relationship-building — the city wouldn’t see the economic, cultural and community benefits that follow.

“Most bids are months in the making,” Wellink said. “They’re highly customized, with technical requirements, site visits and detailed planning. Often, while one event is being hosted, teams are already working on the next opportunity.”

“This journey from prospect to confirmed host is a full sales cycle,” Thiesen said, emphasizing that while much of that work remains invisible to the public, it’s essential. “If we want to continue driving our tourism industry forward, it has to be resourced and supported.”

This banner year wasn’t just a moment. It was a signal of what’s possible when strategy, collaboration and execution align. And for Winnipeg, it’s only the beginning.

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism

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Q4 Operations Report

Thank You

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