

2026 CAFE Convention

Schedule at a Glance

November 11-13, 2026

Halifax Marriott Harbourfront Hotel

1919 Upper Water Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Speakers are shown with their organization where provided.

*Session details and room assignments may be updated before the Convention on the **YAPP app only.***

Tuesday, Nov. 10

Pre-convention board meeting and registration

Wednesday, Nov. 11

Opening keynote, off-site tour, dinner and showcases

Thursday, Nov. 12

Keynote, tradeshow, concurrent education sessions and
National Awards Dinner

Friday, Nov. 13

AGM, education sessions, closing keynote and optional
evening activities

Tuesday, November 10 - Pre-Convention

Available during the day

Convention Registration & Information Desk	1:00 PM - 7:00 PM	Registration Desk
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8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

C.A.F.E. Board Meeting

Nova Scotia BCD

Meeting of the C.A.F.E. Board of Directors.

Wednesday, November 11

Available during the day

Convention Registration & Information Desk

7:00 AM - 9:00 PM

Registration Desk

7:30 AM - 9:00 AM

Breakfast in Plenary

Nova Scotia BCD

Breakfast served in the plenary room.

9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Opening Keynote - Dr. Sylvain Charlebois

Sylvain Charlebois (Dalhousie University)

Nova Scotia BCD

Canada's Food and Agriculture Outlook: Trends Shaping Fairs, Communities and Consumers.

10:00 AM - 6:00 PM

Off-Site Tour

Off-Site

Full-day off-site tour departing from the hotel. Final itinerary to be confirmed.

7:00 PM - 10:00 PM

Dinner & Showcases

Nova Scotia BCD

Dinner served in the plenary room with live showcase performances.

10:00 PM - 11:59 PM

Hospitality Suite

Hospitality Suite

Informal networking and refreshments.

Thursday, November 12

Available during the day

Convention Registration & Information Desk	8:00 AM - 7:00 PM	Registration Desk
Tradeshow	10:00 AM - 4:30 PM	Tradeshow Hall

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM

Breakfast in Plenary

Nova Scotia BCD

Breakfast served in the plenary room.

8:30 AM - 9:50 AM

Keynote in Plenary - Youth Voices in Agriculture

Nova Scotia BCD

Youth Voices in Agriculture: A 4-H Leadership Showcase.
Presented by 4-H student presenters.

9:50 AM - 10:20 AM

Coffee Break

Nova Scotia BCD

Refreshment break.

10:20 AM - 11:30 AM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS - CHOOSE ONE

From Community Tradition to Tourism Infrastructure: Positioning Fairs as Destination Drivers

Brian White (Tourism Halifax); Bruce Murphy (Middle
Musquodoboit Ag Society); Agamani Chakrabarty (ASBB
Economics and Research Ltd)

Halifax A

Topic: Fairs as tourism infrastructure.

Strengthening Governance in Volunteer-Led Fairs and Exhibitions

Angus Mackinnon; Kathryn Cosgrove (Board Leapfrog)

Halifax B

Topic: Governance in volunteer-based fairs.

Turning Economic Impact Data into Policy, Funding and Advocacy

David Grindle (IAFE)

Halifax C

Topic: Economic data for the fairs industry to influence policy and funding. Also featuring a representative from the winning economic impact study firm (TBD).

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

Lunch & Showcases

Nova Scotia BCD

Lunch served in the plenary room with live showcase performances. Quiet room open.

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS - CHOOSE ONE

Beyond Fair Week: Maximizing Year-Round Fairground Use and Community Value

Sylvia Layzell (BCNE); Bruce Mackenzie (Markham Fair)

Halifax A

Topic: 365-day fairground utilization and community relevance.

Beyond the Gates: Growing Your Fair Through Tourism Partnerships

Christina Watts (Tourism Prince George)

Halifax C

Topic: Tourism partnerships.

The Future of Fairs: Using Technology to Enhance Operations and Guest Experience

Hany Mikail (Eveenty); Olid Ahmed (CNE)

Halifax B

Topic: Technology adoption across fairs services / fairs of the future.

2:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Coffee Break

Nova Scotia BCD

Refreshment break. Quiet room available.

2:30 PM - 3:30 PM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS - CHOOSE ONE

Building Sustainable Revenue: Fundraising, Partnerships and Proven Ideas

Halifax B

Topic: Fundraising ideas - avenues, success stories, partnerships.
Speaker: TBD.

Growing the Next Generation: Youth Leadership and Engagement Through Fairs

Mira Dewar (4-H); Kathryn Cosgrove (Board Leapfrog); Brian Casey

Halifax A

Topic: How youth benefits from fair involvement - boards and other programs.

Live Entertainment at Your Fair: Strategy, Programming and Return on Investment

Jason Au; James Simpson; Krista Grear (Valley Regional Exhibition)

Halifax C

Topic: Live entertainment - the how's and why's at your fair or exhibition.

3:30 PM - 4:00 PM

Coffee Break

Nova Scotia BCD

Refreshment break. Quiet room available.

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS - CHOOSE ONE

Beyond Admission: Curating Memorable Guest Experiences

Neil Christopher (Calgary Stampede)

Halifax B

Topic: Curating guest experiences - behind the scenes tours, etc.

Building the Fair Workforce: Recruitment, Retention and Skills

Jean-Marc Valmont (CNE); Amy Heise

Halifax C

Topic: Recruiting staff for fairs and vendors.

Reimagining Agricultural Identity: Agritourism, Local Food and New Audience Connections

**Carol Van Den Heuvel (Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture);
Leann Grosvold (Elann Consulting); Jennifer Manual (Food Art Nature)**

Halifax A

Topic: Repositioning agricultural identity / food & wine / agritourism.

6:30 PM - 10:00 PM

National Awards Dinner with Silent Auction, Live Auction & 50/50

Nova Scotia BCD

National Awards Dinner featuring the silent auction, live auction, 50/50 draw and live showcase performances. Cocktails from 6:00 PM.

10:00 PM - 11:59 PM

Hospitality Suite

Informal networking and refreshments.

Friday, November 13

Available during the day

Convention Registration & Information Desk

7:30 AM - 2:00 PM

Registration Desk

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM

AGM Sign In

Nova Scotia BCD

Sign in for the Annual General Meeting and collect voting cards.

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM

Breakfast in Plenary

Nova Scotia BCD

Breakfast served in the plenary room.

8:30 AM - 9:30 AM

C.A.F.E. Annual General Meeting

Nova Scotia BCD

C.A.F.E. Annual General Meeting.

9:30 AM - 10:00 AM

C.A.F.E. Board Meeting

Nova Scotia BCD

Meeting of the C.A.F.E. Board of Directors.

10:00 AM - 10:30 AM

Coffee Break

Nova Scotia BCD

Refreshment break. Quiet room available.

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS - CHOOSE ONE

Beyond Government Funding: Building Corporate Sponsorships That Drive Revenue and Impact

Erin Roberts (Zzeem)

Halifax C

Topic: Sponsorships.

CAFE Leadership Forum: Open Q&A

**Allison Wright (CAFE); Reg Ash (CAFE); Judy McFaul (CAFE);
Phil Shuchat (CAFE)**

Halifax B

Topic: Open Q&A with CAFE leadership.

Event Marketing in 2026: Trends, Tools and Audience Growth

Shyra Wells (Event Atlantic); Leah Deveau McNeill (Versatile Management Group)

Halifax A

Topic: Event marketing trends.

11:30 AM - 12:30 PM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS - CHOOSE ONE

Leading Across Generations: Mentorship, Technology and Team Success

**Rae Tretiuk (NBEX); Ally McConchie (4-H New Brunswick);
Allan Melvin**

Halifax A

Topic: Managing intergenerational teams - mentorship, tech support.

Navigating the Regulatory Landscape: Compliance, Accessibility, Safety and Vendor Operations

Halifax B

Topic: Regulatory environments for vendors - food/health, safety, accessibility, waste. Speaker: TBD.

Peer Exchange Roundtables: Challenges, Solutions and Shared Learning

Halifax C

Topic: Round tables. Facilitators: TBD.

12:30 PM - 2:00 PM

Lunch & Showcases

Nova Scotia BCD

Lunch served in the plenary room with live showcase performances.

2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS - CHOOSE ONE

Fair Innovation in Action: A Canadian Success Story

Rod Tate (Tatex Group)

Halifax B

Topic: Success story from a fair with a unique offering.

Peer Exchange Roundtables: Challenges, Solutions and Shared Learning

Halifax C

Topic: Round tables. Facilitators: TBD.

Ready for the Unexpected: Emergency Response, Climate Resilience and Business Continuity

Johnathon Donovan (RCMP)

Halifax A

Topic: Emergency response - wildfires, climate adaptation, floods. Also featuring an ESA Canada representative (TBD).

3:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Coffee Break

Nova Scotia BCD

Refreshment break.

3:30 PM - 4:30 PM

Closing Keynote - Morgan Toney

Morgan Toney

Closing keynote presentation.

4:30 PM - 5:00 PM

Convention Closes

Nova Scotia BCD

Formal close of the 2026 convention.

5:00 PM - 10:00 PM

Friday Night Optional Activities

Get out and enjoy Halifax!
