

saintlo

St. Lawrence Youth Hostels Inc.

2021–2022 annual report





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st. lawrence youth hostels inc. board of directors

Peter Harrison, President
Vice-President, CPCS, Ottawa

Vincent Bérubé, Vice-President
Director, Rivière-du-Loup International Hostel

Charlène Baron, Treasurer
Director, CAA-Quebec Travel – Montreal

Jacques Perreault, Secretary
Executive Director, St. Lawrence Youth Hostels inc., Montreal

Nathalie Brière, Board Member
Corporate Director, Montreal

Jay Cuyllits, Board Member
Senior Director, Pomerleau Capital, Ottawa

Gabrielle Caron, Board Member
Assistant Manager, Saintlo Montréal

Ryan Collins-Swartz, Board Member
Co-Executive Director, Tapestry Community Capital, Toronto

Mohamed Reda Khomsi, Board Member
Professor, School of Management, UQÀM, Montreal



types of membership

Class "A" Members: People who have an interest in the mission of the association and who are not in an actual or potential conflict of interest with respect to the affairs of the association. These persons must reside in the territory of Quebec or Ontario, have completed the membership form, paid their dues and have been duly accepted by the Board of Directors.

Class "B" Members: Permanent employees of the association.

Class "C" Members: A maximum of one delegate per youth hostel-friend having a marketing agreement with St. Lawrence Youth Hostels Inc.



mission

To create positive encounters between people from here and around the world and to encourage travellers to discover what Quebec and Ontario have to offer.



pillars

Social

We promise to provide a social accommodation option; hostels that are designed to promote sharing, discovery and opportunities for socialization.

Youthful

We are for the young and we are young at heart. We embrace the values of today's youth and support their ideals.

Local

We contribute to the influence of the destinations our hostels find themselves in and promote their discovery through the different, accessible accommodation options we offer.

Lively

We are continually adapting and evolving along with the world and the young people we represent.

Mindful

We encourage a more responsible way of travelling, we celebrate diversity and we create environments in which each person feels at home.

president's message

You only need take a quick look at the cover page of this year's annual report to understand that there has been enormous upheaval during the 2021–2022 period: **Goodbye HI Canada, hello Saintlo.**

In early 2022, our association took the significant decision to leave the HI Canada banner in order to create a new brand identity for its own three youth hostels, as well as create a collective with other independent hostels. **We are still the St. Lawrence Youth Hostels inc., but have been going under the new name Saintlo—our new brand identity—, since April 1st with our clientele and partners.** We have also updated the mission statement to reflect these evolving perspectives: from now on Saintlo's mission is **to create positive encounters between people from here and around the world and to encourage travellers to discover what Quebec and Ontario have to offer.**

As I announced at the special general assembly in March 2022, this new direction has afforded us once again the agility and autonomy we needed in terms of strategic decision-making. It has also enabled us to save on membership fees. These savings, along with the record summer revenue from Saintlo Montréal, have put our association back in a good financial position, ready to reinvest in our facilities to be able to continue offering our clientele innovative accommodation options and carrying out the organization's mission.

Our new Saintlo brand reaffirms its roots in the Saint Lawrence region, which stretches from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean. The two provinces we cover both have a huge amount to offer travellers seeking authentic, local experiences, the opportunity of meeting people from all walks of life and spaces which are both sustainable and inclusive.



Over the coming years, the association will work hard to implement its new strategic plan which should include, among others, sustainable development goals, the Toronto market starting back up, the growth of the Saintlo collective and the expansion of the Saintlo Youth Travel Foundation.

Saintlo has had to face exceptional external challenges over the past few years. If we are in a stronger position now than ever, it is thanks to the combined efforts of our entire team. It is an honour to acknowledge the extraordinary work done once again this year by the staff and the Board of Directors. This being my last year as President of the Board of Directors, these thanks are especially important to me.

Thank you to all.

Peter Harisson,
President

executive director's message

What a year for St. Lawrence Youth Hostels! Not only did the pandemic prolong the turmoil within the tourism industry, but the association itself underwent major change — positive this time — by leaving Hostelling International Canada. This new beginning for our association required us to create an entire new local brand within only a few months.

Hello, we're Saintlo

The final six months of the 2021–2022 financial year were managed under the new **Saintlo** visual identity. A number of independent hostels also joined our three flagship hostels—Saintlo Montréal, Saintlo Ottawa Jail and Saintlo Toronto — to create the Saintlo collective. Together we hope to create memorable encounters between people from here and elsewhere and to introduce them the parts of the country where our hostels can be found. I can honestly say that this period has been so intense and beneficial for the association that we all have the impression that we have been Saintlo for much longer than just these past six months.

The return of the travellers

All of the hostels in the Saintlo collective report having had positive summer seasons. Travelers from abroad and Canada returned in strength, a recovery which according to Destination Canada¹ wasn't expected until 2024. In Montreal in August 2022, Tourisme Montréal estimated that the city had welcomed 75% of the visitors who had flocked to the city during the same period in 2019². Saintlo Montréal for its part generated record revenues which came at just the right time since our facilities have needed and will continue to require constant renovation work.

This year again, Saintlo Ottawa Jail and Saintlo Toronto were rented out to their respective cities. Last September 30, 2021, the assets of Hostelling International Canada — Ontario East Region, the organization operated by our association since 2011 and which managed the Ottawa hostel, were integrated into St. Lawrence Youth Hostels to create one streamlined association. The end of the financial year on September 30, 2022, marks the last year for which we will present consolidated financial statements. Next year, the association will only present financial statements for St. Lawrence Youth Hostels.



Over the past few years, we have been working on a project to modernize our Toronto hostel. This will unfortunately not be possible for another few years. Rest assured, however, that we remain serious about this project which we are convinced will create a one-of-a-kind hostel in Toronto.

The Saintlo Youth Travel Foundation

Buoyed by the same winds of change which birthed Saintlo, the Hostelling International Youth Travel Foundation became the Saintlo Youth Travel Foundation. The Foundation is currently taking time out to carry out an in-depth reorganization of its activities and continues to be supported by St. Lawrence Youth Hostels. It should restart its philanthropic activities in 2023.

I would like to echo the sincere thanks expressed by our President to the board members and the wonderful staff teams for their incredible work during this landmark year for our association. We have many stimulating years ahead of us. St. Lawrence Youth Hostels will celebrate its 85th anniversary in 2023 and with the creation of Saintlo, a youthful energy is upon us.

Enjoy the read!

Jacques Perreault,
Executive Director, St. Lawrence Youth Hostels Inc.

¹ Destination Canada, Tourism Outlook Fall 2022 Forecast Highlights

² Yves Lalumière, President and CEO of Tourisme Montréal, press release of August 11, 2022

saintlo

IN FIGURES

12 POTENTIAL NAMES

considered before finally choosing
the official Saintlo name

3 HOSTEL PROPERTIES

located in major cities in the region; Saintlo
Montréal, Saintlo Ottawa Jail and Saintlo Toronto

83 YEARS

under the HI Canada banner



1st April 2022:
the official birth date
of the Saintlo brand



75 PEOPLE

worked for St. Lawrence Youth
Hostels during the year

365 DAYS

during which Saintlo
Montréal was in
operation during the
2021–2022 period



This year Saintlo Montreal
welcomed travelers from over

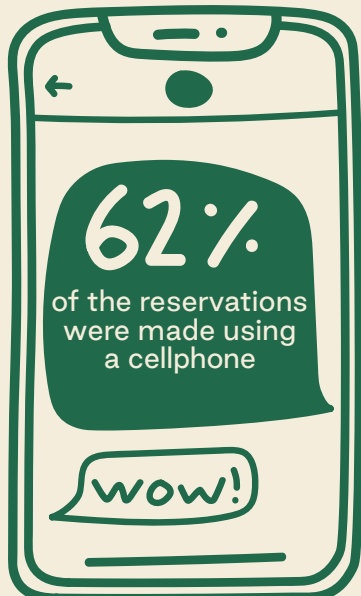
120 COUNTRIES

0 ONLINE COMMENTS

from travellers
expressing their
disappointment
at St. Lawrence
Youth Hostels
for no longer
being a part
of HI Canada

77%

Saintlo Montréal's occupation
rate in September 2022
compared to 82% in 2019



70 000 VISITORS

on the saintlo.ca
website since its launch
in April 2022

39 900

overnight stays logged
at Saintlo Montréal
between Oct. 1st 2021,
and Sept. 30th 2022

112 CLASS "A"

Saintlo members

5 HOSTELS



in the Saintlo extended family, independent establishments which,
together with the Saintlo hostels, form the Saintlo collective

saintlo



a new start

A promising new direction has guided St. Lawrence Youth Hostels in 2022, marked by the association's desire to reinvent itself, its willingness to create a collective of hostels able to demonstrate adaptability and creativity, and its determination to build a strong brand that can respond to the aspirations of the new generation of travellers.

Saintlo's lines of communication:

- The best social accommodation options in Quebec and Ontario
- Affordable, safe and welcoming hostels, each with its own personality
- Living spaces which facilitate intercultural encounters and encourage the discovery of local communities
- Accommodation which is committed to environmentally friendly practices and diversity

3 main goals needed to be achieved in order to accomplish this major undertaking. Looking back, the association could not be prouder of the work done by its committed teams and in such a short timer period:

1. Design a new brand and define its graphic universe speaking to the 5 pillars of Youthful, Social, Local, Mindful and Lively
2. Create and launch a transactional website with a focus on conversion as well as the Saintlo blog. The website is colourful, inclusive in its language, bilingual, user-friendly, meets with AA-level standards (web content accessibility guidelines), and has been developed principally for mobile platforms
3. Build Saintlo's reputation via partnerships with the cultural and tourism communities, media coverage, social media content created by ambassadors and content published on its own social media platforms



a few definitions

Saintlo is the nickname referring to the organization's legal name of St. Lawrence Youth Hostels inc. Saintlo remembers its past, which it holds dear, and will adapt to the organization's future growth. St. Lawrence Youth Hostels inc. now publicly goes by this nickname and this new brand image.

The **Saintlo Hostels** refers to the three city hostels owned by the association: Saintlo Montréal, Saintlo Ottawa Jail and Saintlo Toronto.

Hostels in the Saintlo extended family are independent hostels with whom Saintlo has developed special relationships and created partnerships.

The **Saintlo collective** comprises the association's three hostel properties as well as the hostels in the Saintlo extended family.



prioritize target markets

Right from the get-go with its new identity, the association has prioritized two main target groups:

- Young, social travellers: 18–24-year-olds with a travelling mindset who are open to meeting other people. These young people come from Canada, Europe and the United States, markets which are likely to start travelling again sooner than others.
- Staff teams: a key target in Saintlo's expansion, staff teams have always been, and continue to be, the brand's best ambassadors. This target group represents travellers' first human interaction with the brand.

returns and key points

Ambassadors

The Saintlo brand has enabled us to create an organization in synch with young travellers of today. Saintlo has collaborated with a number of content creators since its launch, and they were all quick to want to become the collective's ambassadors:

- Nomad Junkies
- Nomade Magazine
- Mario Rigby
- Mila Taillefer
- Kowala
- Filles du Nord
- La Vagabondeuse

These collaborations have been inspired by Saintlo's new, young and colourful brand image and have allowed us to increase our reach by promoting the brand effectively to a qualified target audience.



© Peter Ryvaux Larsen

Partnerships

A number of partnerships have also been developed with large organizations:

- TrailFinders UK (travel agency)
- ISIC Korea (International Student Identity Card, South Korea)
- PVTISTES.net
- Tourisme Durable Québec
- ISTO (International Social Tourism Organization)
- Concordia University
- Multicolore Group (Picnik Électronik Montreal and Igloofest)
- Le Festival du Nouveau Cinéma
- Mutek Music Festival
- Aire Commune
- Tourisme Montréal

website

The **saintlo.ca** website counted 70,000 visitors as of September 30th, 2022. The site boasts more than 360 referring websites and over 2,300 backlinks, all thanks to the media coverage from the various marketing initiatives of the association itself, as well as its partners and collaborations. The backlinks are particularly important since they represent one of Google's main ranking factors.

industry recognition

Saintlo had the honour of being named finalist in the Alliance de l'industrie touristique du Québec's Prix Excellence Tourisme in the communication/marketing category. This is a wonderful showcase both for the Quebec tourism industry in general and for potential new staff recruits.



international presence

In September 2022, Saintlo participated in the World Youth and Student Travel Conference (WYSTC) and met around 30 travel agencies, tour operators and potential suppliers.

A number of WYSTC participants showed interest in the Saintlo Youth Travel Foundation and its mission. The global trend within youth tourism is towards sustainable development, inclusion and giving back to local communities or communities in need. After two years of being isolated, young people are looking for new encounters and social experiences, and also for volunteering programs. In parallel, a number of hostel chains have the vision of becoming carbon neutral by 2025. We have also noted how much investment is being made in digital marketing and on social media. These are key trends which will guide Saintlo in the coming years.

towards a more sustainable and conscientious organization

Raising awareness among young people with regards to ethical and responsible travel has long been paramount for our organization. This year, this goal translated into, among other things, sharing travel ideas on our blog encouraging young people to discover Quebec and Ontario differently by consuming local products and discovering local communities.

All the merchandise used for the launch of the Saintlo brand was made in Quebec (lanyards, baseball caps, reusable bags). Our marketing strategy also included printing as few paper documents as possible. Throughout the entire process of creating the Saintlo brand, we chose to work with local partners such that copywriters, translators, the design agency and the web developers were all based in Quebec or Ontario.

It was important this year for Saintlo to create alliances with networks working for a more responsible tourist industry. Saintlo Montréal and the association's head office thus became members of Tourisme Durable Québec.

The association also renewed its membership with the International Social Tourism Organisation (ISTO), a major player in the social and solidarity tourism sector in 16 countries in the Americas and several countries in Europe and Africa. Part of a partnership movement uniting governments, sectoral players and social tourism operators, Saintlo is recognized as a leading partner supporting joint actions and collaboration, particularly for anything to do with youth tourism.





the saintlo collective

Since the Saintlo hostels cannot be everywhere, they rely on their extended family of hostels to enable young travellers to explore Quebec and Ontario and to have unforgettable encounters while doing so.

Saintlo would like to thank all of the hostels which chose to follow us in this extraordinary new adventure:

- Québec International Hostel
- Rivière-du-Loup International Hostel
- Festive Sea Shack Hostel
- Griffon Aventure Hostel
- La Malbaie Youth Hostel

These hostels showed great patience and trust in the association, giving us the time we needed to get used to our new identity. These hostels' creativity, adaptability and passion for the world of tourism not to mention their respective home regions are key components of the Saintlo collective but also of the Quebec tourism landscape.

VISIT THE
EXTENDED FAMILY
ON SAINTLO.CA



the saintlo hostels

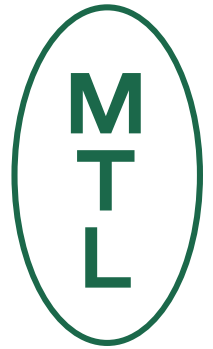
The Saintlo Hostels are comprised of three hostels located in big cities — Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto. We are proud to present the following highlights for the 2021–2022 year.

saintlo montréal

New waves leave their mark

Unlike the winter of 2020, the Saintlo Montréal hostel was able to remain open despite rising Covid cases in Quebec. It did so by requiring guests to show their vaccine passport and by continuing to enforce strict physical distancing measures to do its best to protect its — limited — clientele as well as its staff members. Right through to the end of January, temporarily closing the hostel remained a possible option as travellers were so few and far between.

Yet as winter drew to an end, the winds changed; occupation rates gradually increased from 40% in March to 65% in April and then to 90% at the end of May. From the beginning of the summer season onwards, the hostel welcomed guests at full capacity and this rhythm continued throughout the summer. When comparing May–August 2019 with May–August 2022, we note a near 3% increase in overnight stays for Saintlo Montréal.



a record year

Since the brand was launched on April 1st, 2022, Saintlo Montréal earned \$1,500 000 (April through September 2022) in revenue, an increase of 35% compared to the same period in 2019, its previous record year.



\$1 500 000



A gradual return to normal

The hostel bar, which on public health recommendations had ceased regular activities along with the rest of Quebec bars, resumed its activities during the winter of 2022. This was initially on a limited basis and then returned to normal from the end of Spring on and it's a good thing, since the hostel bistro is the epicentre of the hostel's social life.

The activity programming department, which had been on hold from the beginning of the pandemic, was able to relaunch programming in the spring of 2022. Different activities were progressively reintroduced into the weekly programming. Outdoor excursions were the first to start back up, then bar tours and later on biking outings, games evenings, community suppers and karaoke sessions. By the end of June, we accomplished our goal of offering clients at least one activity per day.

Innovation

Despite the pandemic, Saintlo Montréal didn't stop innovating and three things in particular deserve mention.

Firstly, unsatisfied with the previous system's functionality, the association acquired a new hotel management platform. Saintlo Montréal was the first of the association's hostels to

benefit and migration to the new platform took place on March 1st as well as staff training to learn the new processes that are now required. Despite the teething problems that are inevitable when installing this kind of technological system, the new property management platform offers clear benefits over previous ones.

The second important innovation was to replace hostel door locks. Magnetic encoding technology has now been replaced by contactless smart cards. There are many fewer malfunctions and it is now easier to track client access to hostel rooms.

The final innovation, in the spring of 2022, was to replace half of the ventilation, air-conditioning and heating units. Over time, all units will be replaced by electric heat pumps which promise to provide greater comfort at a lower cost and in a more ecological way! This first phase of replacing units was a real challenge since the hostel had to continue all the while renting out rooms and doing so to the level of comfort we promise clients.

Renovation work

From October 2021 through May 2022, 5 more rooms were completely renovated, as per the renovation plan established in 2017. The modifications to these rooms allowed us to change the number of beds available in the rooms and optimize their layout to improve users' comfort.

It is also important to highlight the renovation work carried out on two collaborative workspaces. These efforts seem to have borne fruit since the two improved workspaces are always more popular among clients and generate positive reviews in online comments.

Finally, we cannot forget the work done to create a design plan for the Saintlo Montréal hostel to become accessible to all. Created by the design firm hART and financed by PME MTL, it is an important, even essential, step for the association in making the hostel accessible to as many people as possible. Seeing the plans, we have to recognize that the various changes needed to achieve the

association's ambitions in accessibility cost more than the association is able to afford at the current time. Nonetheless, its determination with regards to accessibility remains unchanged. Over the coming years, Saintlo will ensure that the various suggestions in the design plan are gradually implemented as its financial capacity allows.

Human resources

Unused to such high staff turnover, the Saintlo Montréal team faced numerous challenges this year when it came to recruiting new staff. The hostel nonetheless managed to fulfill its promise of providing quality services to all visitors by mobilizing the efforts of the entire team — including the head office —, and all of this with a new brand image which reflects its staff teams; young, authentic and lively. On another note, staff members have responded positively to the new Saintlo identity.



The hostel now has its pre-pandemic smile back on

In compliance with public health directives, Saintlo Montréal enforced a number of measures during the pandemic. Until last winter, it reduced shared room rentals to half their regular capacity, installed acrylic panels at the reception desk and continued offering breakfast but with a limited menu, relying mainly on individual, pre-packaged portions that were served by staff members rather than the usual buffet-style. Hand-sanitizing stations were installed at various places throughout the hostel and access to shared spaces was restricted and monitored. Like everywhere else, it was obligatory to wear a mask and all hostel clients were required to hold a vaccine passport.

From the end of the winter on, these measures began to be lifted one after the other until obligatory mask-wearing was also finally lifted in June 2022.



total overnight stays 2021–2022

(only a decrease of 13% over 2018–2019 figures)

39 900
OVERNIGHT
STAYS

top 5

2021–2022 overnight stays from international markets

- France
- United States
- Germany
- Belgium
- United Kingdom



2021–2022 overnight stays from Canadian markets

- Ontario
- Quebec
- British Columbia
- Alberta
- New Brunswick



95%
POSITIVE OR
NEUTRAL

online reputation

Of the 1,270 comments left by travellers on the various online travel agency (OTA*) platforms, 95% were between positive and neutral. The Saintlo Montréal team managed an incredible performance this past year considering all the work that was done at the hostel. Bravo to the whole team for these undeniably positive results.

*Results compiled by Review Pro from various online booking agencies (OTA) between October 1st, 2021, and September 30th, 2022.



saintlo toronto and saintlo ottawa jail

For their part, Saintlo's two Ontario hostels continued their rental agreements with their respective cities. As a reminder, the goals of these contracts was to provide extra space for physical distancing and to temporarily house homeless people as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite these rental contracts, the Saintlo Toronto and Saintlo Ottawa hostel managers have not just been sitting around doing nothing. On the contrary, renting out buildings of this size requires them to be available to oversee many different repair jobs. The hostel managers have been working hard behind the scenes to ensure that the association respects its obligations as a property owner and to ensure the renters also respect their obligations. The hostel managers' work now will ensure the reopening process going forward is smooth for these hostels. Reopening should come sooner rather than later for Saintlo Ottawa which is planning to open its doors again in May 2023, but will be another few more months for Saintlo Toronto.

The association is happy to report that its rental relationships with the cities of both Ottawa and Toronto have once again gone well this year. Saintlo would like to congratulate the teams of professionals in each of its Ontario hostels for their dedication to supporting a vulnerable clientele and providing them with a safe space every single day.

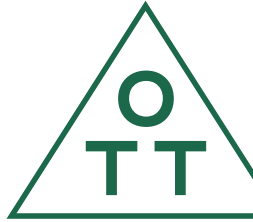


saintlo ottawa jail

On September 30th, 2022, the Ottawa Jail Hostel—whose official name until very recently was Hostelling International Canada — Ontario East Region (HIC OER), an organization managed by St. Lawrence Youth Hostels Association (SLA) since 2011—, incorporated its assets into the SLA to create one streamlined association. A number of things motivated this transfer of assets; first of all, the departure of St. Lawrence Youth Hostels from HI Canada obviously required there to be a change of name. Secondly, consolidating the two organizations will bring savings in both administration time and money. The association also hopes that this merger will enable it to move towards an arrangement with the city of Ottawa for an extension to the right of use of this patrimonial building. The end of this financial year on September 30th, 2022, is therefore the last year for which consolidated financial statements will be presented.

Saintlo Ottawa Jail should reopen its doors in the spring of 2023. A period of renovation will undoubtedly precede this reopening, and architectural plans have already been drawn up for the changes to be made to the self-serve kitchen. This will be the first major investment in the hostel's kitchen facilities in over 25 years.

Even though the hostel team and the association are proud to have been able to support the Ottawa community during these past few difficult years, we are eager to reappropriate the premises and bring the new Saintlo image and values to life next Spring.



ottawa festivities to come

Saintlo Ottawa will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2023. Celebrations should take place throughout the year.

Keep an eye on the Saintlo newsletter for details.



saintlo toronto

For Saintlo Toronto, the 2021–2022 year has been similar to last year with a various repairs and preventive maintenance work being carried out on the building. As an example, the return-air unit was replaced by a more efficient model, representing a significant investment. This project turned out to be a real logistical challenge since a large crane had to be used to lift the unit from the 9th floor roof.

The project of buying a new building in Toronto so as to have a brand-new hostel was abandoned following a number of studies. Moreover, the hostel has now been taken off the market. Since the costs of buying a new building are too high, the association is now planning on renovating the current building. We have invited some architect's firms to carry out preliminary studies on the existing building. The goal is to evaluate the costs of adapting the building into a modern hostel with a focus on energy efficiency and sustainability.

Economical tourism accommodation has never been harder to find in Toronto; hotel rooms invariably cost over \$300 per night, and it is not rare for hostels in the downtown core to be full several weeks in advance. Groups also have few options, with many having no choice but to stay far from the city centre. With the right investment and a value-oriented product, the new improved hostel will no doubt be a success.





saintlo and groups

Saintlo Montréal hosted 56 groups this year, for a total of over 4,250 overnight stays. These overnight stays represent 50% of the total overnight stays clocked up by groups in 2018–19, the last complete year before the pandemic. The busiest month was May 2022 with over 1,350 overnight stays.

Although the Toronto and Ottawa hostels were advertised on all of our platforms as being "Closed temporarily", between them they still received around 50 requests from groups that the association was unable to respond to.

The groups department sent a newsletter to over 250 groups who had stayed in the Montreal hostel over the previous four years to introduce the new brand and to remind them that the Montreal hostel still exists and they had a good time staying there. This newsletter contained a vacation offer with 15% off future reservations, garnered a 30% opening rate and generated new reservations and potential group clients.

The association hopes that these figures bode well for a great year to come.

Montreal :

- 4,250 overnight group stays from Canada and international markets
- France and Canada are the largest markets for group stays followed by Belgium, the United States and the Netherlands
- The majority of groups were school groups from the primary level through to university level

Toronto :

- Around 20 requests for group accommodation had to be refused

Ottawa Jail:

- Around 30 requests for group accommodation had to be refused



revenue manager

With the easing of government restrictions, there were signs of an increase in demand for March 2022, along with increased interest in reservations for the summer period.

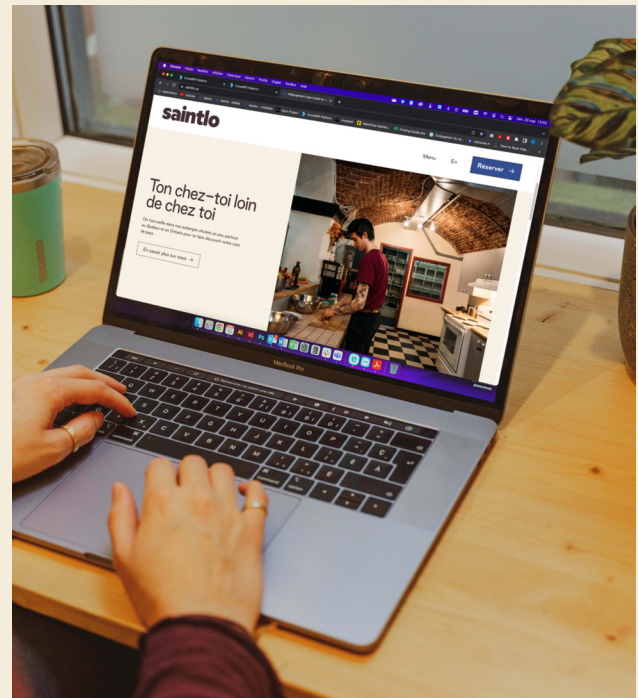
Bolstered by the positive ratings from travellers who appreciated its cautious and detailed approach to managing the COVID-19 situation, not to mention the focus on private rooms, Saintlo Montréal began to find itself once again ahead of competition which had slightly higher rates. The strategy of offering affordable options in private rooms allowed the hostel to improve on its value for money and, as time went on, to bring the dormitory market back to "normal" price levels in Montreal. As time went on, we noted that a number of our competitors followed in our footsteps.

According to the Review Pro platform, 90.4% of clients who completed an online evaluation said they appreciated Saintlo Montréal's value for money, an upward trend this year.

From April to September, there was a 40% increase in revenue per night and in the average daily rate (compared to 2018/2019). The increase in prices during an almost unexpected return to normal occupation rates in Montreal enabled the hostel to break the \$2,000,000 annual revenue barrier for the very first time in its history.

The association also offered a best price policy by committing to match and offer an extra 10% off the lowest price found elsewhere than its website. "Rate-savvy clients" were therefore encouraged to reserve directly on the Saintlo.ca website to get the best rate available as well as a wide variety of promotional offers and discounts. There was also a focus on discounts on shorter periods of stay.

The rate strategy put in place with online reservation agencies (OTA) made it more favourable to make direct reservations. The rates on OTA sites were sometimes 5% to 20% higher than rates on the Saintlo.ca website. This strategy meant Saintlo Montréal could offset commissions paid to OTAs, increase the number of rate plans it had on offer and use tools like online visibility boosters so its website appeared at the top of search results.



human resources

saintlo: a promising project for staff teams

A wonderful brand backed up by just as wonderful staff members

Integrating the new Saintlo brand image into the work environment was a key objective for the association.

Changing a brand image is not just about changing a logo on a sign, even if there were many documents and posters that needed updating. No, changing a brand image is also about having these new organizational values beat in the heart of all staff members and making them the fundamental principles which govern interactions between staff members. Thanks to the collaboration of all and to staff members' conviction that the association was making the right decision by leaving HI, the Saintlo image was quickly incorporated into the work environment. The spirit of openness and communication which reigns throughout the organization facilitated this transition greatly. The new image was able to rally staff teams and give them the energy they needed to get through one of the biggest seasons ever.

our employee community in figures

- **75 employees** on the payroll throughout the year: **↑ 17**
- **50 people** worked for the organization as of September 30th, 2022: **↑ 16**
- **8 volunteers** at Saintlo Montréal

seniority

The association became more youthful, just like its brand image...

- Average years of service in 2022 = **4 years and 6 months**
- Average years of service in 2021 = **6 years and 4 months**



number of employees per establishment

Establishment	2019	2020	2021	2022
Saintlo Montréal	38	16	22	36
Saintlo Ottawa Jail	24	12	1	1
Saintlo Toronto	46	1	1	1
Regional Office	11	11	10	12
Member Services	1	0	0	0
Total	120	40	34	50

new careers page and linkedin

To match the new image, a new careers section was added to saintlo.ca to reflect the nature of the work environment at the Saintlo Hostels, namely young, open-minded and flexible.

We shouldn't forget the association's LinkedIn page which garnered plenty of interaction and which is also a great tool for promoting Saintlo and attracting other passionate individuals to join its teams.

staff retention strategies

The summer season was very demanding, with labour shortages being the main reason behind the fatigue felt by staff members. Saintlo chose to adjust salaries to maintain staff's enthusiasm and to attempt to become more attractive to potential candidates. We also offered staff a referral bonus and a retention bonus to recognize their excellent work.

If this year has been a successful one for the organization, it is thanks to the flexibility and incredible commitment of all staff in both Quebec and Ontario.

contribution to the hostelling movement:

Greg Brockmann, Executive Director, Saintlo Ottawa Jail → **25 years**

Charlène Baron, Board Member → **20 years**

Peter Harrison, President of the Board of Directors → **15 years**

Gabrielle Caron, Deputy Manager, Saintlo Montréal → **10 years**



saintlo youth travel foundation

The Foundation's activities were put on hold throughout the past year for restructuring, with the reorganization process taking a number of months. The Hostelling International Youth Travel Foundation changed its name in July 2022 to the Saintlo Youth Travel Foundation. The structure of its Board of Directors has also been modified and now comprises two members from the St. Lawrence Youth Hostels Board of Directors and 3 guest members. Its mission, which still centers on the world of travel, has been reviewed and will be officially unveiled in 2023 alongside its new grant program and, of course, its new website. The new mission will be all about equal opportunities, solidarity and leadership for 10 to 17-year-olds.

Since April 2022, Saintlo has contributed \$1 for every overnight stay at Saintlo Montréal to the Saintlo Youth Travel Foundation. This financial participation will support the Foundation in being able to carry out its mission once its activities relaunch.



community involvement

involvement in boards of directors and committees

St. Lawrence Youth Hostels inc. board members and management have been involved in a volunteer capacity on different Boards of Directors and committees:

- **Conseil d'économie sociale de l'île de Montréal CÉSÎM:**
Nicolas Lemaire — representing the recreation and tourism sector
- **Corporation de l'Industrie touristique du Québec (CITQ):**
Vincent Bérubé — representing youth hostels
- **Youth Travel Foundation:**
Gabrielle Caron — President of the Board of Directors, Nathalie Brière — Board Member
- **International Social Tourism Organisation (ISTO) — International:**
Vincent Bérubé — Board Member
- **International Social Tourism Organisation (ISTO) — the Americas:**
Vincent Bérubé — Treasurer

St. Lawrence Youth Hostels are also a member of:

- Alliance de l'industrie touristique du Québec
- Association Hôtellerie du Québec
- Regroupement Loisir et Sport du Québec
- Conseil québécois du loisir
- Tourisme Montréal
- Destination Toronto
- Greater Toronto Hotel Association
- Heritage Ottawa
- Ottawa Tourism
- Tourisme Durable Québec
- International Social Tourism Organization (ISTO)
- World Youth Student and Educational Travel Confederation (WYSE)

