

Si Se PUEDE, Eh! Canada's National Tourism Board Rolls Out New Ad Campaign

Fueled by the worldwide success of the Toronto Raptors' popular catchphrase, "We the North," Canada's National Tourism Board (CNTB) has created their own unifying slogan for the country, by borrowing a famous one from the past. The phrase, "Si Se Puede!" means, "Yes we can!." It was immortalized by the migrant civil rights leader, Cesar Chavez in the 1970s as he helped to unionize and support migrant farm workers.

Tourism Board CEO, Albert Newcomb, explained the thinking behind the new slogan. "Yes we CAN!" really brings together everything that we feel strongly about in our great country. I mean we are Canada, right? The fact that the phrase was already famous in another language is even better. What country is more inclusive than we are? This may also help us in our Latin American advertising. We enjoy visitors from all over the world, so our advertising should reflect this. We were very excited by how everyone seemed to embrace Toronto's slogan, "We the North." We wanted that same energy with this slogan. Many people tend to think of Canada as just, Mounties, moose, and maple syrup. We want to add a fourth M to that list - missing linking verbs. I mean, why say, "Are," when you don't have to, right? Anyway, that's our thing, now."

This new campaign has not been without controversy, however. Immediately after releasing the new slogan, Spanish speakers complained to the Board that to be authentic, an inverted exclamation mark should be at the front of the statement, if it ends with an exclamation mark. Newcomb responded to this criticism immediately with a statement from the Board:

We at the Canadian National Tourism Board want to express our sincere apology for not including an inverted exclamation point in our most recent advertising campaign slogan, "Si se PUEDE, Eh! We are deeply embarrassed by this oversight. In our defence, we wrote this slogan in Canada and we don't have this symbol on our computers. However, to not offend our Spanish speaking visitors, we have decided to drop the exclamation point altogether and just go with Si se puede, eh.

Further concerns arose when the Cesar Chavez Foundation contacted the Board to express their opposition to the Board's trivializing the phrase that helped lead an important civil rights effort in the United States. Newcomb was forced to respond again:

We at the Canadian National Tourism Board want to express our sincere apology to the Cesar Chavez Foundation for what they perceived to be a diminishing of importance of the work of this great labor leader. Our new advertising slogan, Si se PUEDE, eh, was not meant to demean or trivialize Mr. Chavez or his work. We specifically capitalized PUEDE to reflect CAN vs. can so as to differentiate between these two different phrases. We are truly sorry.

Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, also shared his apology with the Chavez Foundation. In a written statement he again apologized for his country's insensitivity on this issue. Although he

stopped short of saying that the phrase would not be used, he did promise to make Cesar Chavez Day a national holiday in Canada to make up for this.

The CNTB has indicated that the ad campaign will begin with television, radio, and billboard advertisements. Although the graphic work has not been completed, the written billboard statement will look like this:

Si se PUEDE, eh
Yes we CAN, eh
Oui nous POUVONS, eh

This has drawn the ire of officials in the province of Quebec. Quebec City mayor, Regis Labeaume, was outraged. "So, we move from 2nd to 3rd in our standing now in Canada? Why couldn't the French phrase be first?" He countered with his own promotional campaign, stating that Quebec did not need the assistance of the CNTB. "We have our own slogan that we have just adopted, OUI QUEBEC!