

FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE

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2007 COMMUNITY SUMMIT

Rainy River District residents came together to discuss the future of our communities at the 2007 Community Summit on March 6 at La Place Rendezvous, beginning with an update on activities since the 2005 Summit, and followed by sectoral speakers and a focused planning session.

Featured this year was keynote speaker Mark Partridge. Mark is the C. William Swanck Chair of Rural-Urban Policy at The Ohio State University and a Professor in the AED Economics Department. Prior to that, he was the Canada Research Chair in the New Rural Economy at the University of Saskatchewan, where he is an Adjunct Professor.

Professor Partridge has made dozens of speeches and presentations on broad economic and demographic trends, as well as on public policy.

He has published over 60 academic and scholarly papers and his work has been ranked among the top-1000 economists in the world. He recently co-authored a book entitled *The*

Geography of American Poverty: Is there a Role for Place-Based Policy? published by the W.E. Upjohn Institute. He is currently the lead investigator on an Infrastructure Canada grant to examine rural-urban interactions and the role of infrastructure.



His current research interests include investigating rural-urban interdependence, why some communities grow faster than others, and innovations in regional policy and governance.

Approximately 70 District leaders and residents came out to listen to the presentations on the Forestry Crisis, Agriculture and Tourism. Afterwards they developed a list of topics that were important to discuss. In total there were eight topics,

from which they chose four to discuss further. The top 4 were:

1. Promote & Create alternative tourism experiences
2. Utilize Technology—explore uses of technology
3. Partnerships with First Nations
4. Market Northwestern Ontario cooperatively

Mr. Partridge pointed out that a myth of rural Canada is that it is a solely natural resource based economy. Natural resources can start things in communities, however it then gets built on and diversified in order to survive in the long run.

He also pointed out that communities need to work together to develop as a region because rural communities can link up to attain critical mass. By working together in a region you then have a voice to politicians.

Rural communities need to build regional identity. Despite interdependence, too many communities think of themselves as islands. Nearby towns shouldn't compete for business — but work together.



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“If you truly believe in what you’re doing, then don’t take no for an answer. Don’t rush anything and don’t listen to the negatives around you.”

*John Racioppi
Global Gaming*

GLOBAL GAMING

John Racioppi just opened Global Gaming on Scott Street and we asked him some questions on what it was like starting a business and getting it up and running. Here are his answers:

What made you decide you wanted to start a business?

I had a unique idea that I thought would really work in Fort Frances. It also gave me a chance to be creative and use my hard work to my advantage.

What has been the hardest thing so far?

Finding employees and keeping up on the technology.

Anything you would have done differently?

I would have asked for more help instead of trying to do everything on my own.

Any advice you would give to someone just starting out?

If you truly believe in what



you’re doing, then don’t take no for an answer. Don’t rush anything and don’t listen to the negatives around you.

How many hours has it taken to get ready?

It’s been countless hours and I’m still not ready.

What has it been like so far?

I wouldn’t trade this experience for anything. I have learned so much about business, my family and myself.

Are you tired?

I am tired but it doesn’t take much to get me fired up. I really enjoy what I’m doing.

What are you best at?

My favourite part of the project was the design and construction. I’m always dreaming up the next improvement.

What do you wish you had more help with?

Now that I see how much work it really is...EVERYTHING.

Any regrets?

None so far.

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Public Computer for Business

RRFDC offers access to a high-speed connected computer available to anyone who is thinking of starting a business, or would like to research some ideas or complete a business plan. We also have many books available, no matter where you are in your plans for a business. So if you are thinking of starting a business, throwing some ideas around, are already in business and looking at expanding the business, or just your knowledge, please stop by the office or give us a call. The library and computer is available Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. It’s best to make an appointment.

BOOKS FOR WOMEN IN BUSINESS

RRFDC has recently expanded its business library, adding some interesting books for women in business, looking to start a business, or looking for some ideas. There is a vast variety available at no charge. An example of one of the books is “Making Working from Home Work”, a step-by-step guide for a successful home office, written by Jane Orend. She states that there are nine easy-to-use planning guides, one for each component of working from home, so you can create your own success. This is a very informative book and a good read for people looking at working from home. Please stop in the office or give us a call if you would like more information on any of the books available for borrowing.

CHAMBER LAUNCHES TWO PROGRAMS TO HELP FOSTER BUSINESS THE BR&E PROJECT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING

The Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce is leading the way to help foster business growth in two initiatives announced this month.

First, the Chamber will be working on a second Business Retention and Expansion Survey starting in late March.

They have hired Community Development Officer, Kerri Dittaro to spearhead the project over the next year.

The process consists of Kerri going to each business that has signed up to participate, and completing a survey with the owner/manager. The survey will take approximately one hour to complete. Afterwards the information will get compiled in a database and when all businesses have been surveyed, a report will be issued on the findings. The BR&E task force will then develop action plans to be followed up on by the

appropriate organization identified.

A BR&E survey was first conducted here in 2001, resulting in many action plans that were identified and completed.

This is an excellent way to talk directly to business owners and find areas that are in need of improvement, or things the businesses would like to see changed in our community.

If you are interested in completing a survey, or if you would like to find more information out about this initiative, please contact Kerri Dittaro at the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce, 274-5773.

Secondly, the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce together with Confederation College, Rainy River Future Development Corporation and the Business Improvement Association, have partnered to organize, promote and offer "Service Excellence", a customer service training program to the businesses of the Rainy River District.

This program will help those who interact with customers to recognize their impact on building customer loyalty, as well as provide them with the tools and techniques to ensure customers are being served in a consistently exceptional manner.

Customer Service Training is always needed and should be considered a top priority by business owners/managers in order to continue to grow and prosper into the future.

The program is aimed at front line staff, supervisory staff and management to help them deliver

consistently great service to help attract new customers and keep current ones.

Courses are scheduled to commence in March. The cost of the course is \$75 for owners/managers and a discounted rate of \$35 for the first 50 employees who register with their managers. The course is valued at \$199

For more information contact Confederation College at 274-5395 or the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce at 274-5773.

WATCH FOR OUR UPCOMING SEMINARS ON: CUSTOMER SERVICE

HUMAN
RESOURCES

MARKETING

BASIC
BOOKKEEPING

Phone RRFDC at
274-3276

for more information
or
check the website for the
latest updates

at:
www.rrfdc.on.ca

CUSTOMER SERVICE CHALLENGE 2007

Now in its fourth year, the Customer Service Challenge has proven to be very successful. We are hoping to match the number of business signed up last year, or even better, we could get even more. This is an RRFDC area Challenge, open to any business in the RR District west of Mine Centre.

The set-up is as follows:

- The business signs themselves up.
 - They will be mystery shopped in March and April.
 - The surveys will get tallied.
 - Completed surveys will be sent out to the business owners after the awards.
- an additional 10 will earn an Honourable Mention.
- The businesses will be featured in our next newsletter, the district newspapers and recognized during Small Business Week in October 2007.
- Good luck to all participating businesses! Remember, service is everything!

We will award the top 10 businesses with plaques and

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CANADIAN YOUTH BUSINESS FOUNDATION

The Canadian Youth Business Foundation (CYBF) is a national charitable not-for-profit organization that empowers young entrepreneurs through mentoring, learning resources and start-up financing.

The CYBF provides business start-up loans of up to \$15,000. Loan repayments of three to five years are available.

To be eligible, you must be:

- 18—34 years old
- Eligible to work in Canada
- New full-time business start-up
- Viable business plan

- Must work with a business mentor

The organization is all about dreams, energy and momentum. It supports youth who would not otherwise have the opportunity to realize their full potential and launch a business.

The CYBF is helping to drive the Canadian economy by leading the future development of youth entrepreneurship both domestically and internationally.

It is also an accredited member of Youth Business International, and has been recognized as one of the most efficient organizations of its kind globally.

As the CEO of CYBF, Vivian Prokop stated, "We, the people who together make CYBF the great organization it is; our Board, our Sponsors, our network of Community Partners, our volunteer Mentors and Loan Review Committees, and our professional staff, are incredibly proud of the diverse and creative young entrepreneurs we support. Whether urban or rural, service or high-tech, traditional or futuristic, we are honoured to help Canada's youth make their dreams come true. They are our future!"

For more information please contact the Northwest Business Centre at 807-467-4643 or visit the Canadian Youth Business Foundation Website at

www.cybf.ca

"Competition is a healthy entity on its own, but pair it with a cooperative spirit and the prosperity is endless".