

# President's Message

12<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Awards Banquet

Saturday, November 3, 2007

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I'll try to keep this brief. I thought long and hard about what I was going to say tonight and as many of you know, it isn't always easy to know what message to give and how to convey that message.

Tonight, we are all here to Embrace Excellence in the Rainy River District, saluting those, and I quote "businesses, organizations, and individuals for outstanding business achievement and the contributions made to the economic growth and prosperity of the Rainy River District".

How did these individuals and businesses get here? By working together, within their businesses and organizations, and with the community as a whole ~ in partnership. Partnership ~ an important concept ~ a concept which is embraced by the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce, working as the Voice of Business since 1909. As a Chamber, I think one of our biggest achievements is the many partnerships we have created and nurtured.

In January, we partnered with the Canadian Mental Health Association to present a well attended workshop for employers and employees, on Mental Health in the workplace.

The Rainy River Future Development Corporation – Geoff Gillon or a representative sits regularly at our board table, working together on various projects and events including the NOACC conference held here recently, and of course tonight's Business Awards.

The Fort Frances BIA – Patti Anderson, office coordinator for the BIA also sits on our board, working with the Chamber on various events and projects. Russ Ling, president of the BIA and I are currently working on a proposal to present to Town Council.

After much discussion and planning, Service Excellence, a Customer Service Training program was launched, in cooperation with Confederation College, NCDS Career Works, Skills and Employment, the RRFDC, the Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board and the BIA. We were very pleased to see several business take part in that program, and we hope to offer further sessions in the future.

TBaytel has recently come on board as a major supporter of the Chamber, especially with the Home and Leisure Show and NOACC conference. Bell Canada, too has worked closely with the Chamber, sponsoring the Home Show, Quest for the Best, and the Business Awards.

B93 ~ have been a major sponsor at all Chamber events including the Home Show, Quest for the Best, our Spring Business After Hours, the Business Awards and of course, the Chamber Minute, heard on B93!

Shaw Cable – the Chamber has worked closely with Shaw Cable who televises many of our events including Quest for the Best, the recent Provincial All Candidates meeting, and of course tonight's Business Awards.

Fort Frances Canadian Bass Championship has partnered with the Chamber to bring Quest for the Best to Fort Frances, and in turn the Chamber has provided many in kind services to the Bass Championship as one of their Tournament sponsors.

And a new partnership to the Chamber came recently when the Chamber worked with the Education Workers of the Rainy River District, both the Elementary and Secondary panels of the Public and Separate boards of Education, to host the Provincial All Candidates Meeting.

2007 has seen the return of the Business Retention and Expansion Project – an economic development strategy that focuses on the retention and expansion of existing businesses in the Rainy River District – partnering with the Chamber on this important project is the Town of Fort Frances, the RRFDC, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, and the NOHFC (Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation). I have to make special mention here of a wonderful volunteer in our community, Irene Laing. Our project suffered a slight setback when our Intern left for another employment opportunity. Irene had volunteered with our project, and continued with the interviews she was doing so that project wouldn't suffer an even great setback ~ we are very grateful for Irene's assistance.

We have also recently been approached by the Emo Chamber of Commerce to work together on a campaign to keep our shoppers home, in the Rainy River District. I am personally hoping that this will lead to more projects together, working with Emo and Rainy River as well, knowing that what's good for the District as a whole will benefit all of our communities.

And, I can not forget the Town of Fort Frances. The Chamber of Commerce works closely with the Town not only on projects like the Business Retention and Expansion, but on Tourism promotion, Town Beautification, the Museum Heritage Tourism Project, sponsorship of the Business Awards, ~ we have a representative from council sit on our Board of Directors.

Of course I would be remiss if I didn't mention the most important partner of all and that is our Chamber members. Through your membership and involvement, and with your input, we can be the VOICE of Business. Through out the year we have been approached by members on various issues ~ please ~ continue to come to us so we can continue to work together and truly be that Voice.

We've all partnered together in some way or another ~ everyone of us here tonight ~ to make Fort Frances a better community to work and live in ~ we should all pat ourselves on the back tonight, as we Embrace Excellence in the Rainy River District.

Thank You!