

PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

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November 27, 2007

I'll try to keep this brief. I would like to thank everyone for taking time out of their busy schedules to be here this evening, showing their commitment not only to the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce but to the Town of Fort Frances and the Rainy River district as a whole.

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.

In the spirit of being 'Green' and Environment Friendly, I thought I would practice the 3 R's tonight – reduce, reuse and recycle ~ so that said, I'm going to reuse and recycle the speech that I gave recently at the 12th Annual Business Awards because I feel that my message is still relevant.

We gathered at La Place Rendez Vous, on November 3rd, to Embrace Excellence in the Rainy River District, saluting those “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.

2007 has been a great year for partnerships.

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 in Fort Frances in September, the 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 businesses take part in that program, and we hope to offer further sessions in the future.

T Bay Tel 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 the 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). Our new Community Development Officer Cassandra Parise, whose main focus will be the Business Retention and Expansion project, is here tonight, having begun her new duties last week.

We have recently been approached by the Emo Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Rainy River Chamber, 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 who will be appointed after the election in January.

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. I'd like to thank those who have served as directors in the past and who tonight have put their names forward to serve in 2008 ~ your time and efforts are indeed appreciated. Thanks also go out to those members who have sponsored events or contributed to our Chamber. 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 ~ and we will continue to do so in 2008. Times are changing with many of our industries facing issues never faced before, but I believe that if we work together, Fort Frances will continue be a great community to live, play and work in.