

January • March 2001

# Access West

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## A New Strategy for Sustaining Western Canada's Future

**T**he Government of Canada has made sustainable development (SD) a national goal and is taking action to ensure that Canadians can enjoy environmental, social and economic security now and in the future. Sustainable development is a way of recognizing that social, environmental and economic issues are interrelated and interdependent.

In May 2000, the Commission of the Environment and Sustainable Development released a report evaluating the performance of the sustainable development strategies of the 28 federal departments. In his report, the Commissioner highlighted key weaknesses in the management of environmental and SD issues and management practices required to implement SD principles.

**Western Economic Diversification's Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) 2000** took into consideration these weaknesses, as well as the evaluation results of the Department's 1997 SDS. The 1997 strategy evaluation indicated that while WD had contributed to a number of SD projects, it needed to build SD practices into its daily business operations. In addition, the Department needed to demonstrate progress with measurable outcomes. These concerns have been addressed in the WD SDS 2000.

The WD SDS 2000 contains three main goals for the Department:

1. To facilitate the integration of sustainable development in the business practices of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Western Canada through our network partners;

2. To integrate sustainable development into the programs, services and activities that we deliver directly and in partnership; and  
3. To foster a sustainable development culture within WD.

As a regional department that advances economic development in the western provinces, WD is positioned to enhance Western Canada's progress towards sustainable development within government and business.

Future generations have the right to a quality of life equal to that of today's generation. In order to achieve this objective, Western Economic Diversification embraces the concept of sustainable development and is working to integrate it into all aspects of its decision-making. For WD, this means sustainable development is achieved when full consideration is given to economic development, the preservation of the environment and the social well-being of Canadians.

The WD SDS 2000 includes an environmental performance measurement framework (PMF) that outlines how the Department will review, monitor and evaluate the achievement of the outlined goals and objectives. The PMF includes the collection of baseline data (where WD is beginning) and provides for regular reporting on performance to employees, stakeholders and the public.

For more information, or a copy of the WD SDS 2000, please contact Cynthia Hyslop - WD Headquarters at (780) 495-8384 or by e-mail: [Cynthia.Hyslop@wd.gc.ca](mailto:Cynthia.Hyslop@wd.gc.ca).

"I welcome the opportunity to include in each issue of Access West a column which allows me to share some of my thoughts on what the Department is currently involved with and some insight on its future undertakings," Ronald J. Duhamel, Secretary of State for Western Economic Diversification.



## Add an "E" to Small Business

**S**mall businesses make a giant contribution to Canada's economy. In fact, they're responsible for creating nearly 80 per cent of all new jobs across the country.

My department, Western Economic Diversification Canada, is a one-stop source of business information and services for entrepreneurs in the four western provinces. We're here to help and this year we also encourage you to talk to us about the challenges and opportunities of e-business. The Canadian share of the Internet economy is poised to grow to \$155 billion and could create 180,000 incremental jobs by 2003.

We recently commissioned a study of what business in the West will be like in 2004. Over and over, Western entrepreneurs described their vision of a West where e-business and Internet technology had become indispensable to prosperity. Working together, we can help you put your business on line and ensure that western Canadians share in the benefits of the new economy. The future is here and you can be part of it.

# Access West Gets New Editors During Take Your Kid to Work Day

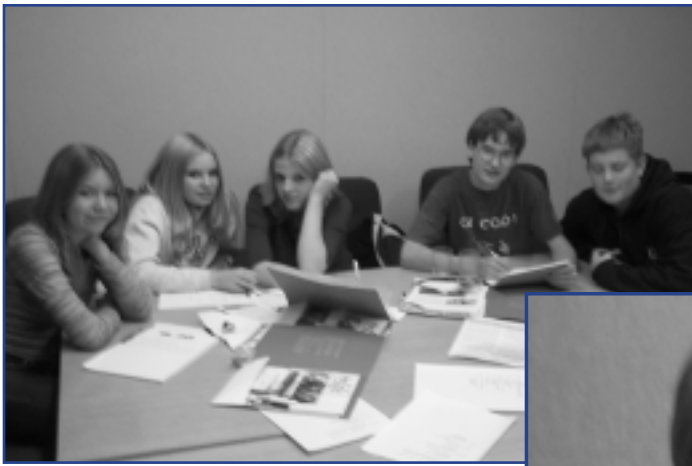
**N**ovember 1st marked the start of **Canada Career Week**. This national event is celebrated annually in over 1,500 communities across the country. Canada Career Week highlights the importance of career planning and making informed decisions in a rapidly changing labour market. In celebration of the week, activities are held to help promote career awareness and provide opportunities for people to explore the world of work and discover career options.

During Canada Career Week, grade nine students across Canada are encouraged to accompany a parent, guardian or other role model to their workplace. This one-day event - Take Your Kid To Work Day - provides students with the opportunity to gain

exposure to the world of work, gain respect for the contributions people make and to strengthen the bonds among parents, students and the community.

Western Economic Diversification's Edmonton office hosted five grade nine students on November 1, 2000, for Take Your Kid To Work Day. One of their challenges was to decide the content and layout for this issue of Access West. They did a terrific job and can be very proud of their issue.

Congratulations and thank you to Pamela, Athena, Aaron, Hilary and Jordan. Here are some of their comments they wrote on the day's activities.



**We're hard at work making the January issue of the Access West newsletter. Left to right: Athena Bush, Hilary Kirkpatrick, Pam McCumber, Aaron Tabin and Jordan Levensconte.**

**Aaron and Jordan learn of some cool new Web sites and learn about advanced Internet search techniques.**



**Here we are checking out the planes at the Edmonton Flying Club at the Municipal Airport.**

**Pamela McCumber, D.S. MacKenzie High School**  
"For the first time in my life, I got to experience what it's like to be at work. We started the day with an introduction meeting to get to know each other and learn more about WD. After the introduction, we got to work. We organized the Access West January–March issue. After an hour of hard work, three Co-op students took us for a coffee break. We spent an hour with Maurice Brunelle on the computer. I would say that was probably the most interesting time of the day. In the afternoon, we went on site visits to learn about the Edmonton Flying Club and Atco Frontecs. At the very end of the day, we spent more time putting together Access West. Although I had fun today, I would rather be a veterinarian."

**Aaron Tabin, Vimy Ridge Academy**  
"As part of this day, I was asked to contribute to this newsletter. The biggest challenge was to reach a consensus on which stories made the cut and which ones took the boot. When considering the Aboriginal article, it was originally dismissed, but after careful review I learned that an article like this has never been published in this newsletter. In my opinion, diversity is the thing that brings us together as Canadians."

**Athena Bush, H.E.B. Catholic Junior High School**  
"I'm not going to forget today. It has been really tiring – it's been very real! I have more respect for my family and friends who work full-time jobs. This experience was good and I am thinking about a government job. People here are so kind, they have provided me with a useful learning experience."

**Hilary Kirkpatrick, Hardisty Junior High School**  
"I got to my dad's work today around 8:30 a.m. and the first thing we did was have chocolate milk and doughnuts, then we got straight to work. Along with four other grade nine students, we put together Access West, figured out what articles should be put in it and then we went on the Internet. Although I had fun being an editorial person, I want to be a fashion designer or lawyer when I get older."

For more information about career learning and employment planning, check out the **Youth Resource Network of Canada** Web site at [www.youth.gc.ca](http://www.youth.gc.ca). This site is designed and managed by youth, and is an initiative of the Youth Employment Strategy of the Government of Canada and its partners. The site helps prepare youth for a career with the help from a group of existing programs and services. It offers a multitude of information on the employment world, such as the choice of careers, training and education, jobs offers, and links to provincial government career development centres.



# Business Incubators:

## Another Location Choice for New Small Businesses

**F**or many individuals considering starting a small business the high costs of renting a location can stop them before they ever get started. One option for new, small businesses is to be home-based, but this has its drawbacks too. While usually more affordable, the lack of traffic and image portrayed by being home-based can reduce sales so much that it is not a viable option. There is, however, one other option – partner with other complementary small businesses under one roof, usually referred to as a business incubator.

The idea can work very well for many types of business, from retail, to commercial, to light industrial. The main idea of the incubator is to provide affordable rent, but also a more professional image, better location and many features that you wouldn't be able to afford if located alone. Typically, once the new business has an improved cashflow, they will move out to larger facilities, opening up space for other new businesses in the incubator.

Many incubators share the following resources:

- Central reception and receptionist and/or cash desk and cashier
- One phone system
- A photocopier
- A fax machine
- Washrooms
- Meeting room(s)

The interior is set up usually with free-standing walls or partitions that can be moved to accommodate the needs of each new tenant. Rent is usually charged on the basis of square-footage occupied.

When located in an incubator the benefits gained go beyond sharing expenses and an enhanced image. It gives the new business owner a "place" to go to work. One of the drawbacks of being home-based can be separating work and personal life, such as being distracted by the dishes, the housework OR always working because it is right there. Having a location out of the house forces the business to have more structure, usually forcing the owner to take the business more seriously. Another benefit is not working entirely alone. There may even be a possibility of sharing other resources with the other businesses in the incubator, such as: helping to handle sales calls when one person is out of the office, or answering customer questions that voice mail could never do!

Of course, the downside to an incubator is the fact that you probably won't be able to stay there forever, so you may have an added expense of moving at some point. But the fact that the business was more likely able to establish itself more quickly should offset this expense. The only other problem with incubators is that in reality there are not many of them. However, there is nothing stopping new businesses from joining together and forming their own "incubator" of sorts.

If you are unsure of where to start to find other new businesses that may need an incubator, there are several places to look. Contact your local Chamber of Commerce and tell them your needs, check with your local real estate office, your local commercial bank manager, attend courses targeted at new small businesses or contact the Canada Business Service Centre in your area.

# Research - A Wise Investment

**R**esearching a new business is the most important aspect of business start-up. Doing research can save time and money, as well as lots of frustration. Before investing money, invest your time. Find out if the idea is really viable. Your research will tell you this, along with the sales and financial projections you create from the research.

The first step of research is often the most difficult – knowing where to start looking for information. One of the most helpful sources is usually someone else who has done, or is doing, the same thing. Many people will dismiss this source, as they feel their competition will not want to talk with them. While sometimes this is true, many successful entrepreneurs want to share the difficulties they have come upon. Some may even welcome new competition into the marketplace. Choosing a competitor that is a distance away, but has a similar consumer base, will likely be the most helpful.

Another place to start sourcing information for many businesses is the government. You will want to make sure that there are no regulations prohibiting you from operating your business the way you are intending to operate. Be sure to check all orders of government (federal, provincial and municipal). The type of business you are planning on opening will determine with which government agencies you may need to speak. This is where someone who is already in the business will likely be able to help you the most. Often many new businesses find out too late that they are required to set things up according to health or safety regulations, and then end up spending many dollars that were not in the budget. This can jeopardize the business' success by using up cash that was earmarked for other areas, such as advertising and promotion, or was intended to cover operating expenses in the first few months.

The third area to research is costs. Determine what are all of the costs associated with the type of business you are interested in? Be sure to include EVERYTHING! Include: insurance (liability, fire theft, disability, etc.), hook-up costs, security deposits, renovation costs (be sure to always get three estimates and use the highest one in your forecasting, even if you go with a lower one) and phone (including: cell phone, Internet costs, yellow pages and other phone features that may cost extra). If you are hiring employees, include costs for your share of their government deductions. Don't forget things like bank charges, interest on loans and credit cards, licences, fees, permits, lawyers, accountants, consultants or things like meals and travel costs when doing research.

Another area to research is your customer, and this shouldn't necessarily be your last area to research, because without proof of a viable customer base, the rest of the information you research is useless! When doing your initial contacts with

competitors and government, always include questions about your potential customers. Ultimately you will need to observe and contact potential customers to verify that all the other data you received from secondary sources is indeed accurate. A survey is often the most effective way to achieve this. This information will be the basis for your sales estimates.

So go ahead and make that investment. But make it a wise investment by first doing the research and making sure it will truly be the business of your dreams!

# Partners in Business

## ALBERTA 2001

**L**a **Chambre économique de l'Alberta (La CÉA)** is organizing the first-ever provincial Francophone economic development conference - **Partners in Business** - to be held in Edmonton on **March 2 & 3, 2001**. This conference will provide Francophone entrepreneurs across Western Canada, with valuable business opportunities.

Partners in Business will promote the sustainable development of minority-language communities by providing western entrepreneurs with a venue to forge new partnerships with other entrepreneurs, business leaders and government representatives. It will facilitate access to programs and services offered by federal organizations, make them more visible and allow federal representatives to assess what Francophone entrepreneurs require in terms of services and programming.

The opening sessions on March 2nd at La Cité Francophone, Edmonton's Francophone cultural and community centre, will provide participants with an opportunity to network with other entrepreneurs, members of the community and government representatives.

The formal conference will begin on Saturday, March 3rd, at the Ramada Inn Conference Centre. The conference program will feature presentations by government and business leaders on the Francophone tourism potential of Western Canada and Alberta's provincial economic development strategies.

Workshops will be held throughout the day and will cover such topics as the MERX bidding system, the impact of technology on small businesses and youth entrepreneurship. The conference will also provide participants with access to business development information from Western Economic Diversification and other federal/provincial departments. La CÉA anticipates 250 participants from across Alberta and the other western provinces.

Call now to get more information or benefit from early registration rates. Call 1-888-414-6123 or (780) 414-6125, or e-mail us at [cea@lacea.ab.ca](mailto:cea@lacea.ab.ca)



La CÉA was established in 1998. Its mission is to promote, facilitate and coordinate the development of economic and tourism activities for Francophones in Alberta. It accomplishes this task by:

- developing incentives to have Francophones participate in economic development;
- bringing awareness to the French community and to Albertans on the added value of providing bilingual services;
- guiding business people with advisory services in the start-up and the expansion of their businesses, and offering support services in the development of the tourism industry; and
- encouraging networking between business people.

# New Agreements to Boost Economic Development in Western First Nations

**W**estern Economic Diversification is helping to ensure that business services are accessible to Western Canada's Aboriginal peoples.

Aboriginal entrepreneurs face the same issues as those faced by other Canadians who want to start or expand their businesses. However, special circumstances faced by Aboriginal entrepreneurs make it difficult for them to access capital, markets, information and business services.

A recent survey by Statistics Canada of 100 Aboriginal businesses shared that 55 per cent of Aboriginal businesses reported inadequate access to capital, including equity and debt. This research clearly shows there is a need for additional capital for Aboriginal businesses and entrepreneurs. It is part of WD's mandate to ensure all small businesses in the West can access what they need to grow and expand.

By entering into new relationships with Aboriginal peoples, the federal government is helping Aboriginal organizations operate more effectively, enhance their lending portfolio and make a positive contribution to the success of their organizations and communities. For this reason, WD entered into partnerships with seven western **Aboriginal Capital Corporations (ACCs)** to provide western aboriginal communities with the benefits of membership in the Western Canada Business Service Network.

Presently, the ACCs provide lending services to their small business clients, but do not have the resources necessary to deliver business advice or counselling. The partnerships helps ACCs better meet the business service needs of their small business clients.

Currently, throughout the West there are seven "Aboriginally exclusive" Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs) and seven others where the majority of their clients are Aboriginal. Many of WD's network partners provide comprehensive sets of business services to Aboriginal communities and clients located within their geographical boundaries.

For example, in Saskatchewan, the CFDC offices work closely with Tribal Councils in their areas. Community development is done at the grassroots level, offering workshops that strengthen working relationships by bringing together the key leaders to look at ways to develop new Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partnerships.

Although there is business support readily available to rural clients, Aboriginal entrepreneurs living in large urban centres do not have access to the services provided by CFDCs. WD is working to establish Aboriginal business development centres in urban areas that can extend business services to Aboriginal communities.

Last year, the Aboriginal Business Development Centre (ABDC) was launched in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The centre provides a range of services to strengthen existing Aboriginal businesses, as well as create new opportunities for Aboriginal people. What is especially unique about the ABDC's business is that its programs are delivered by Aboriginal people who bring with them an understanding of Aboriginal life experiences, traditions and business aspirations.

For more information call WD at 1-888-338-WEST (9378).

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## Does your business need a health check?

The marketplace is changing. Sales are down; costs are up. E-business is causing competition from areas that didn't exist in the past. As a businessperson you're struggling to figure out how to fix your balance sheet.

You don't need a bandage to quickly fix the problem, what you need is a health check – someone who can discuss ideas that can help put your business back on its feet.

Or, you may have a very healthy, growing business, but an annual visit to a business physician for a diagnostic check-up could also help you manage your growth more effectively and ensure you remain competitive in the marketplace.

There is an old adage that the best things in life are free. Well, if you're a businessperson looking for someone to perform the check-up, then you need only look as far as your closest office of Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD).

Client Service Officers are available to help you at no cost. They can hook you up to the WD diagnostic equipment and help you determine how to improve your business' health. They will take the pulse of the business to learn about what makes it tick, listen to your symptoms, perform a business diagnosis, and recommend solutions and a course of recovery. Sometimes their diagnosis may be a bitter pill to swallow. And, like medicine, they can't guarantee that their prescriptions will be successful.

A WD "business physician" can review your business plan and recommend areas that require work in order to access the financing your business may need to get started or to expand.

The assistance may be as simple as pointing you in the right direction of a specialist for the assistance you need. WD has formed expert associations with numerous professionals who may be just what the doctor ordered. A Client Service Officer

may be able to direct you to other government programs and services that might be the answer to your problem.

You may think you need to open new markets, when all you may really need is to take advantage of the market you're already in. You may think a business loan will heal a wound, when it may only cause complications for your business. A natural remedy may be as simple as reducing your inventory.

As international markets open up and e-business takes an increasingly important role in the way people do business, WD can help you explore export market opportunities and discover whether or not exporting is a viable option for your company. Or, they can help you access government procurement opportunities.

WD can recommend whether hiring a recent graduate would help your company in the area of developing international markets for your products or services. They may help provide your company with valuable scientific and technological expertise that will help to level the playing field so your business will have better opportunities to keep competitive and profitable in today's marketplace.

And, that's not where WD stops. They follow up with their clients when they can and continue to provide business counselling and a listening ear when you need to brainstorm new ideas.

WD is dedicated to helping business in Western Canada succeed. One phone call could make the difference in whether or not your business gets the right solutions for its continued good health and prosperity. If you would like to schedule your business check-up or would like more information about WD's programs and services, contact 1-888-338-WEST (9378) or visit our Web site at [www.wd.gc.ca](http://www.wd.gc.ca).

**1-888-338-WEST (9378) [www.wd.gc.ca](http://www.wd.gc.ca)**

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