

Action Swift Current on the Move

A broad-based group is looking to the most extensive business survey of its kind in the community for ways to grow the local economy.

Action Swift Current plans to survey 275 businesses in Swift Current and in the RM of Swift Current No. 137, during April.

"Certainly, it's going to be very useful. Nothing has ever been done like this before in Swift Current. It's something new. I've been involved in it myself for about the last six months and I see the potential for it being just tremendous," said local Chamber of Commerce President, Gord Budd, who is one of about 160 volunteers trained to help businesses fill out the survey.

"Instead of the traditional way of going out looking for new a new businesses to come to Swift Current, what we want to do is try and retain the businesses we've got and see them grow," Budd said in an interview after the first volunteer training session on March 21.

Action Swift Current is made up of a partnership of business, government agencies, local economic development groups and a Crown Corporation.

Once the survey is completed, the confidential information will be sent to the University of Minnesota, which specializes in analyzing data of this kind. A report will then be prepared with a public meeting tentatively set for September to share the results.

Studies show that 40 to 80 per cent of new jobs are created by existing firms, according to Action Swift Current.

Local business owner, Allan Chilton, who's part of Action Swift Current's Leadership Team, said that while trying to attract new business is important, so too is creating a positive environment for existing operations.

The survey and its results, Chilton said, could uncover previously unrecognized opportunities and help spark new ideas.

"We'd love to find a killer project – the spa, like Moose Jaw did – and hopefully we will. But even if we don't, to move a mountain, I think the saying is, you start a pebble at a time and that's what we're doing," he said.

Doug Howorko, who's with Saskatchewan Economic and co-operative Development, which is a partner in Action Swift Current, said the effort to improve the local economy will require cooperation.

"Participation and volunteerism is so crucial here. What we really want to do is get rid of any kind of defeatist attitudes that we have. We want to change our attitude to a can-do attitude. To grow our economy in our private sector is going to involve everybody," he said.

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