

## Action Swift Current's Expansion Committee Busy

Swift Current businesses considering expansion now have a place to turn for advice and support thanks to Action Swift Current. The Firm Expansion subcommittee of Action Swift Current has 17 members working to help remove obstacles so expansion plans can be successful.

Chuck Thomson, chairman of the Firm Expansion Committee, said this was a key area for action following Action Swift Current's initial business survey. He noted that of 200 businesses surveyed last year, a full 42 per cent (84 businesses) indicated they were considering expansion of staff, facilities or product lines.

Their committee operates with a simple mandate: "If you are considering expansion, is there anything that is standing in your way? Are there any threats, or challenges, or opportunities that Action Swift Current can help with?" Thomson said.

When the committee contacted all businesses who thought expansion was an option, some had backed away from expansion plans but many were still weighing the pros and cons of expansion.

Others had specific problems which are currently being worked on. Concerns about specialized training issues are being addressed by communication with Cypress Hills Regional College and Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), plus cooperation with Job Start – Future Skills, which provides on the job training right with the employer.

Some businesses were concerned about the property tax implications of making building or property improvements. "As a result of those conversations we've actually drafted a proposal for a tax incentive for expanding firms, new or

existing, as long as they are going to expand," Thomson said.

On Feb. 18, the Firm Expansion Committee will be making a presentation to City Council. They are proposing a phased-in tax increase on improved properties. This break for expanding businesses would clear a major hurdle for many ideas. "That would be a very positive sign that the city can help a person that's thinking about expanding a business."

The committee is also active in helping businesses plan expansions properly. "For people who are thinking of expanding, is there anything we - the business community, or the city, or economic development agencies - can do to get out of the way or to help them expand their business?"

The committee is thinking about hosting an Expanding Business Trade Show, featuring workshops, financial institutions, strategic planners and fellow entrepreneurs.

The committee is addressing concerns and issues with government and other agencies. There is also an aim to offer a business to business mentorship so entrepreneurs can bounce ideas off another business person. "A lot of these businesses have a concept, but they haven't been able to take the time to flesh it out."

Plans are underway to develop a resource book covering financing, business plans, strategic planning, regulations and training, for those thinking about expansion.

"Really the whole reason why Action Swift Current was created is that if there's going to be growth in this region, it's probably going to come from the enterprises that are already in this region. For the businesses that are in this city, that are thinking about expanding, let's do

everything that we can to help them expand.”

The 17 members on the committee are: Chairperson Chuck Thomson, Karen Bonesky, Glen Budd, Matt Noble, Mary Salberg, Karen Richmond, Blair Clark, Stan Bacon, Barry Neigel, Dwight Lemon, Pat Parrott, Dawn Odegard, Doug Howorko, Dianne Sletten, Glen Moore, Vim Parmar, and Bernie Wienbender.

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