

Botting helps build Cluster excitement

A near capacity luncheon audience highlighted the growing momentum behind a regional clusters initiative in the southwest.

Dale Botting, Executive Director of Strategic Sector Development for Saskatchewan Industry and Resources, spoke to a capacity audience at the Entrepreneurial Centre on May 7.

Botting has tracked the success of economic cluster initiatives and feels the southwest is an ideal location to utilize the existing regional advantages which clusters build on to succeed.

"It's really a very simple approach – it's called teamwork. It's a fancy way of saying, from an economic development point of view, that disparate groups in the community that are not used to working together think about themselves as an organized team; you get training institutions, you get supply chains, not just the single companies in the same business, but all the suppliers as well around that business.

"You start to get them focused together on each of the sectors that are most meaningful and sensible from an economic future for the community, and rally around the table and think about what are the gaps, what are the projects that we could pull off – the quick wins and the longer term successes – and then how as a team can we integrate our thesis, put them together and make something happen."

Clusters have enjoyed high profile success in areas like Silicon Valley, but successes are also occurring in Saskatchewan thanks to a bio-innovation cluster in Saskatoon, along with emerging cluster strategies in Regina. There is also a new cluster forming around the Humboldt farm implement community, where they are exploring ways to share equipment and infrastructure to meet production quotas and share resources.

Botting feels the province is ideally positioned, with both resources and people, to launch successful cluster initiatives.

"In fact it might work better here because people here in the prairies we have a habit of knowing how to work together, and we are very cooperative and collegial."

"We have jigsaw puzzles that are just ready to be fit together, and out of that synergy comes some pretty amazing opportunity."

Work is currently underway to launch a business clusters growth initiative in this region. The Action Southwest project is slated to be unveiled in the coming weeks.

*Press Release Date:
The Southwest Booster
May 15, 2004*