

Ready for action

The Action Southwest Business Networks Coalition (ASBNC) released a final report June 28 that outlines 30 projects on which industries in the southwest region can begin to take action.

The report, "Engaging Industry Innovation", was compiled after consulting with 120 community and industry leaders in the southwest. It breaks down the main concerns and growth areas of Manufacturing, Energy, Tourism and Agribusiness sectors in the region.

Doug Howorko, Project Officer for Action Southwest and Regional Development Manager for Saskatchewan Rural Development, said this report paves the way for Saskatchewan's major industries to make significant progress in a number of areas.

"This strategy has been designed to reflect agreements by stakeholders on building the next generation economy," said Howorko in a prepared statement. "Its fundamental goal is to launch a permanent change in how the southwest region does business now and in the future."

The goal, said Howorko, is to get people in the southwest thinking regionally – not just about the development of their own community, but the development of the entire region as a whole.

"We've got to think of southwest first, and where you're from second," he said in an interview. "Where ever economic development takes place, if it takes place in Maple Creek, Shaunavon, a municipality it's good for all of us because the more growth the more people, the more business, the more services...it's regional thinking. You're not just thinking of your own community or municipality; it's regional in that aspect."

The 174-page report, available at www.actionsouthwest.com, outlines how businesses in the region have the opportunities to grow. Those who contributed to the project identified that manufacturing must be made a priority in the region, that pre-employment training programs with a focus on the energy sector should be developed. It stressed the branding of the region as a whole, the importance of awareness programs in tourism, and the increase of value-added agriculture products.

"There's a lot of great positive attitude out there," said Howorko. "We are a unique region where people are seeing things in a positive light and want to take an opportunity. There's a lot of excitement out there, so that's been a real positive for us."

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