

GLOBAL BUSINESS CENTRE ELEVATES CALGARY ADVANTAGE

By Gary Slipp

As the global economy continues to change, the need to offer a competitive business advantage becomes more vital. One of the goals of Calgary Economic Development's 10-year Strategy, is to enhance international business development and connections to increase exporting and diversification of target markets. For many small and medium sized businesses (SME's) in Calgary and southern Alberta, this can be a challenge as they may not have the resources or connections to grow their organization globally. Opening in the first quarter of 2010, the Global Business Centre (GBC) aims to offer southern Alberta SME's these resources and connections, while fostering the attraction and retention of international investment. As an initiative of Calgary Economic Development (CED) and other key stakeholders, the GBC is a highly visible, easily accessible, "one-stop shop" designed to centralize and increase international trade activity in southern Alberta.

The GBC is located in the newly redeveloped Neilson Block on 7th Avenue between the Hyatt Hotel and the North Building of the Calgary TELUS Convention Centre. For potential investors, the Global Business Centre acts as a landing pad to assist international companies with path finding, access to local connections, experienced local knowledge and space offerings. The Centre also provides access to professional boardrooms and meeting rooms for presentations/meetings, teleconferencing and videoconferencing.

For southern Alberta companies, the programming offered by the Global Business Centre allows the business community to engage with leaders who have extensive global perspective and experience. The programming is tailored to address key sectors in southern Alberta and capitalize on the unique competitive advantages inherent to those regions – additionally, the programming is offered via videoconferencing and on-site.

The programming sessions include (but are not limited to):

- International Business Opportunity Identification – Proactively seek international opportunities for local companies to access, including expansion of foreign operations into Alberta or new business trends emerging in foreign markets that match the technology or service niche of southern Alberta companies;

- Mentorship Program – Connect successful companies who have experience in foreign markets with early stage exporters;
- Business (B2B) Matching – Arrange one-on-one meetings between international and local companies to discuss opportunities for business partnerships;
- Breakfast Club – Breakfast event with guest speaker (government representative such as consulate/embassy or business leader) to provide information on relevant trade and international issues;
- Joint Venture Opportunities – Identify joint venture opportunities to service international clients, with representatives from the GBC acting as facilitators between companies;
- Investor Aftercare – Host networking events for companies recently relocated to Calgary to understand the local business environment and meet key influencers/stakeholders.

With a broad range of programming, regional and international networking opportunities, the Global Business Centre is poised to be a hub for southern Alberta companies to take the first steps into international business development, providing them with an experienced support network and valuable resources. For international organizations, the GBC provides an extensive knowledge base and experienced individuals who will be available at every point in the journey in setting up business in Calgary, from opportunity identification to opening day.