

# Access Alberta

## Innovation Centres Help Bring Advanced Technology Concepts to Reality

By Karen Kisser, Communications Consultant, WD - Calgary

It's a fact: Alberta's advanced technology sector is a hot bed of activity and it's going to create more energy in the first few years of the new millennium.

For entrepreneurs and small science and technology-focused companies seeking to make the most of these up-and-coming opportunities, the **Calgary Innovation Centre (CIC)** and **Edmonton Capital Region Innovation Centre (ECRIC)** are excellent resources for advice and assistance in venturing into this exciting new world.

Over the past two years, the CIC and ECRIC have been helping entrepreneurs, scientists and other innovators bring their ideas to fruition. Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) has been a strong supporter of both centres.



Jason Guenther of Virtual Solutions presents his I-DEAS virtual modeling software at the '99 Technology for Success trade fair in Edmonton.

WD provided \$75,000 to each organization for initial development and another \$675,000 in combined federal/provincial funding under the Canada/Alberta Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA) to further develop and broaden the centers' services.

The aim of both centres is to encourage the development of technological ideas, discoveries, products and services that can be commercialized. However, the organizations take different approaches to achieving their missions.

"Our differences reflect the needs of the communities we serve and the people we help," says Lawrence Bremner, Executive Director of the CIC. "The Calgary centre serves areas in southern Alberta and is focused on life sciences or bio-science. While, Edmonton's centre targets high technology enterprises. We both provide access to financing, marketing and management advice and information, as well as connections to a network of private and public institutions that can assist these kinds of companies. All client support and services are held in the strictest confidence."

Virtual Solutions ([www.vscanada.com](http://www.vscanada.com)), an Edmonton-based company which markets a line of virtual modeling and prototype software, is one such company which has benefited from ECRIC support. In addition to obtaining business advice and counseling through the centre, Virtual Solutions rents office space in the Innovation Business Centre, an ECRIC facility offering common business services and space to emerging technology companies. "Hooking up with the Innovation Centre was one of the best things I could have done to get my business up and running," says Jason Guenther, President, Virtual Solutions.

For more information on services provided by each centre, please contact:

Calgary Innovation Centre  
100 Discovery Place One  
3553 - 31 St. N.W.  
Calgary, Alberta  
T2L 2K7

Telephone: (403) 284-6411  
Fax: (403) 282-1238  
E-mail: [lbremner@crda.calgary.ab.ca](mailto:lbremner@crda.calgary.ab.ca)  
[www.crda.calgary.ab.ca](http://www.crda.calgary.ab.ca)

Edmonton Capital Region  
Innovation Centre  
9797 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 1N9

Telephone: (780) 917-7669  
Fax: (780) 917-7668  
E-mail: [bguthrie@ede.org](mailto:bguthrie@ede.org)  
[www.innovation.ede.org](http://www.innovation.ede.org)



# Accessing the Reward in Award: What's the Value of Business Awards?

By Karen Kisser, Communications Consultant, WD – Calgary

As a small business owner or operator, you've probably noticed the multitude of ads, brochures, web sites and other promotions encouraging you and others to enter business award programs in the hopes of becoming a "Winner of the Year." However with so many choices available, how does one decide which to enter, or if it's even worth the effort?

Gwen Hetherington, Chair of the Calgary 2000 Small Business Week Committee, a small business owner and a winner of a 1999 Alberta Venture Business 2 Business Marketing Award, agrees that the number and variety of business awards available can be quite daunting. "People who consider submitting nominations really need to look at the criteria, nomination process and expected outcomes of each award, to access which ones are right for them and their company. Spending this time up front usually generates a better understanding of what the evaluators will be looking for, a stronger submission and a more satisfying experience for the nominee."

While all award programs are not created equal, many offer similar returns on a small businessperson's investment. Recognition of a job well done, publicity and prestige top the list. However, some award organizers believe it also broadens a company's financing opportunities with prospective lenders.

"It all adds to a company's credibility," says Karen Wright, Chief Executive Officer of the East Central Alberta Community Futures Development Corporation and organizer of the area's annual small business awards. "Our program also offers \$500 to \$1,000 in training or gift-in-kind paid by the award's sponsor. It's a very attractive piece of the package for those who submit nominations."

Large or small, local or national, industry-specific or entrepreneur/small business of the year, many nominees consider the award submission process a worthwhile endeavor. Neil Oberg, Chief Executive Officer of Compak Forestburg Inc., a strawboard manufacturing company, says competing and winning the East Central Communities of Alberta 1999 Small Business Award in Community Development was a learning experience. "It not only provided us with recognition by our peers in the business



Oryssia Lennie, Deputy Minister, WD congratulates Mel Pitz, a representative from Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc. Alberta-Pacific is the winner of the 2000 Western Economic Diversification Export Award of Distinction, a category of the Alberta Business Awards of Distinction presented in Calgary on February 23, 2000.

community, but also affirmed that we were on the right path in our business activities. That means a lot when you are a small start-up company."

Western Economic Diversification proudly supports entrepreneurial and small business awards. Some of the award programs that WD sponsors include: the Alberta Business Awards of Distinction, the Alberta Science and Technology Leadership (ASTECH) Awards, the Calgary Emerging Enterprise and Small Business Owner of the Year Awards (as part of Calgary Small Business Week) and the Rural Education and Development Association's Entrepreneur's Competition for Best New Food Product in Western Canada.



## Small Biz Facts

# Did you know...?

- Alberta has 323,438 small businesses – more than the total number in Saskatchewan (120,744) and Manitoba (98,656) combined.<sup>1</sup>
- From 1995 to 1998, Alberta's small business share of total employment in the provincial labour force increased from 44 per cent to 48 per cent.<sup>1</sup>
- Together offices of Western Economic Diversification Canada, the Canada Business Service Centres, Women's Enterprise Initiative and Community Futures organizations provide 100 points of service for small businesses across the West to access information.<sup>2</sup>
- Small businesses account for half the jobs in Western Canada: 29 per cent of these are small businesses with less than 50 people, and 22 per cent of these are self-employed people.<sup>1</sup>
- The top three small business industries in Canada include: services, with 360,265 firms; agriculture, with 157,462 firms, and trade, with 144,011 firms.<sup>1</sup>
- Chartered bank loans to Canadian small and medium-sized businesses reached almost \$54 billion in the first quarter of 1999, approximately the same amount as in the first quarter of 1998.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada

<sup>2</sup> Western Economic Diversification Canada

<sup>3</sup> Industry Canada

# Lethbridge Small Business Conference and Info-Fair a Success! March 3, 2000



The Honourable John Manley, Minister of Industry, speaks to conference attendees at the Lethbridge Small Business Conference and Info-Fair. Minister Manley spoke to more than 250 attendees about recent initiatives of the Government of Canada and on the wide range of programs and services that are available to small businesses.

Hundreds of small business owners in the Lethbridge area had an opportunity to speak with representatives from over 22 federal government departments and agencies at the Info-Fair.



The event's seminars were well attended by existing and prospective small business owners in the Lethbridge area. The seminars covered a variety of topics relating to small business including access to financing, revenue and tax information, and exporting.



# Upcoming events....

## Here is information on upcoming events of interest to Albertans:

If you're a woman in business, policy-maker, business service provider or entrepreneurship educator, you will want to attend the conference entitled: **"Women in Business: Spanning the Globe."** The conference will be held April 24-26, 2000, at the Winnipeg Convention Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This conference will cover topics ranging from business growth to technology to marketing, all with a focus of interest to women. For more information, phone **1-888-338-WEST (9378)**.

If quality management is key to your business, you should consider attending the Quality Council of Alberta Conference entitled **"Quality Just Makes Sense (cents)."** It will be held on May 4, 2000, in Edmonton, Alberta, and features speakers who will share their experiences and results in applying aspects of quality management to a wide range of organizations. The second annual Alberta Quality Awards will also be presented. For more information, contact Glenda Palmer at **780-449-0610, ext. 225**.

For small business owners in the aerospace industry, the **Western Aerospace Conference & Trade Show** will be held May 23-25, 2000, at the Jasper Park Lodge in Jasper, Alberta. Entitled "Opportunities 2000," the event will focus on National Defense contracts and opportunities in industry and government. There will be presentations from the Department of National Defense, U.S. trade commissioners from Seattle, Los Angeles and Dallas, and includes as a trade-show component. For more information, contact Ken Beleshko at **780-413-9917**.

Alberta businesses in the Information, Communications and Technology sector will have an opportunity to showcase new products to potential investors from across Canada and the northwestern United States at a venture capital fair entitled **"Venture North 2000."** This event will take place June 21-24, 2000, in Banff, Alberta, and is hosted by the ICET\* Alliance. For more information contact Keith Gylander at **780-440-5190**.

\*(Information Communications, Electronics and Technology), formerly known as the Electronics Industry Association of Alberta.

## WD's Calgary Office is Now on Third

WD's Calgary office has taken a further step in melding with its co-location partners. Early in the new year, the staff moved offices from the fifth floor to the third floor of the Standard Life Tower in the city's downtown core. WD - Calgary is now on the same floor as Industry Canada's International Trade Centre, Aboriginal Business Canada, Alberta Economic Development and the Calgary Economic Development Authority. This arrangement offers enhanced opportunities for the three levels of government to provide coordinated and integrated services to business and industry.

### WD Calgary's new office is located at:

Office address: 250, 639 - 5th Ave. SW  
Mailing address: 400, 639 - 5th Ave. SW  
Calgary, Alberta T2P 0M9  
Telephone: (403) 292-5458  
Fax: (403) 292-5487

To enter Calgary's new office, visitors are encouraged to go to the Calgary Business Information Centre reception located on the second floor of the same building to gain entrance to the third floor.

