



Canada Business Network

Year in REVIEW

2012-2013


ANNIVERSARY

HELPING BUSINESSES
every step of the way.



ABOUT THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The Canada Business Network (CBN) believes that small businesses fuel the country's economy. After all, Canada is a nation of entrepreneurs. Each year, we celebrate them and recognize the work of hundreds of business service providers across Canada with our Year in Review. This publication brings to life the stories of our service innovation and our commitment to excellence. It also highlights the real results that the Canada Business Network is achieving.

In 2013, we are celebrating 20 years of service to Canadian entrepreneurs. This special edition will look at our past, present and future through CBN's frontline service providers and the entrepreneurs they serve.

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF SERVING BUSINESSES

Twenty years ago, the first three Canada Business Service Centres (CBSCs) opened their doors in Halifax, Winnipeg and Edmonton. Started as a pilot project, the goal was to give entrepreneurs access to federal government services and programs for businesses through a single point of entry—connecting them to information quickly and easily to support their business plans, market intelligence research, exporting activities, and issues affecting their businesses, such as technology and regulations.

The pilot phase offered important lessons. It became clear that a federal initiative would not fully address the multi-jurisdictional nature of services for businesses across Canada. The federal government established cooperative arrangements with provinces and territories to offer entrepreneurs a single point of contact for information from both levels of government. In 1994-95, the CBSCs began expanding across Canada, offering phone and in-person services.

To meet the demand for online information for businesses, the first national website was launched the following year. It marked the start of a focus on service delivery innovation. Since that time, the network has consistently stayed ahead of the technology curve and anticipated the needs of Canadian entrepreneurs in order to remain at the forefront as a business service provider. But the network encompasses so much more than its service entry points. It's all about people serving people.

"The true value of the network is that entrepreneurs discover that they don't have to do it alone," explains Brad Poulter, Canada Business Northwest Territories. "Often, they don't know what they don't know. Once they start asking questions, it's a domino effect. They learn that we offer a full support system. We provide some certainty in an uncertain environment by breaking down their challenges into little pieces. We help them move their business forward."

Between 1999 and 2005, Industry Canada received funding to develop an Internet portal for business services. This period also saw the introduction of BizPaL, an online permit and licence service offered in conjunction with provinces, territories and municipalities.

During this period, the centres started expanding their reach to business clients through strategic partnerships. Today, they boast a network of over 400 local business organizations, such as Community Futures, regional economic development organizations and chambers of commerce.

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OUR SERVICE DELIVERY POINTS

Web: www.canadabusiness.gc.ca

Telephone: 1-888-576-4444 | TTY 1-800-457-8466 (hearing impaired)

In-person: 400 regional access partners across Canada

QUOTE, UNQUOTE



"The most rewarding part of my job is to help entrepreneurs who are full of questions and concerns. We help reduce their stress and we empower them with knowledge. When we finish one-on-one meetings with entrepreneurs, they are fuelled and ready to go. That's exciting for us."

Rolly Gagné, Business Information Officer
Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF SERVING BUSINESSES

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In 2004, the CBCs came together (both online and within Industry Canada) to form Canada Business. Their mandate? To deliver 'click, call and visit' services to entrepreneurs. Canada Business boasted 14 linked websites (one national and 13 regional), a national toll-free telephone and referral service, and 13 service centres across Canada.

In 2008, Canada Business modernized the service and took a new strategic direction to respond to program gaps and improve service. It integrated BizPaL into the suite of online tools offered through the network, and enhanced client service and opportunities to share content and customize products. Canada's Economic Action Plan provided funding in 2009-10 to allow the network to shift to a more client-centric approach. The web was repositioned as the primary service point to meet the changing needs of Canada's entrepreneurs. Industry Canada launched a new amalgamated Canada Business national web site which included enhancements to improve client experiences, such as customized looks, updated search tools and Web 2.0 elements.

"The web has become a critical business tool. When entrepreneurs call us, they have done their research on the Internet," says Guy Jobin, Vice-President of Montreal's Info entrepreneurs. "They have detailed questions or challenges, so their needs today are more sophisticated. We're meeting those needs. Our staff do the research, saving businesses the time it takes to come to our library. We email our findings to them, which gets the research in their hands quickly."

Today, the network continues to evolve to meet the demand for responsive online services. The Canada Business website now acts as a central resource for all Canadian entrepreneurs, offering blogs on small business topics, RSS feeds to alert them about new content, and customized information by industry or region. CBN's Twitter account has a solid following, and the network uses analytics and social media monitoring to keep the website and collaborative tools responsive to changing needs.

The business model is also evolving, with some centres moving to a social enterprise model to generate revenue. One such centre is Small Business BC. "We started with a mandate to serve start-ups," says CEO George Hunter. "On that foundation, we built a much more robust and comprehensive resource for small businesses at all stages of growth. We're continuously expanding our internal structure to meet this larger mandate."

Linda Chorney, Marketing Manager at The Business Link in Edmonton, has watched the CBN evolve since joining 17 years ago. "I have always thought the network and the individual centres truly make a difference for people," she says. "To be able to help entrepreneurs on their journey is so important for our economy. The network has facilitated that by showing businesses how to navigate their way to success."

THE SUCCESS FILES: MASON INDUSTRIES

ENTREPRENEUR: Jason Mason, Surrey, British Columbia

IDEA: As an avid snowboarder, Mason has always loved wearing denim on the slopes, but one fall would leave him wet for the rest of the day. He didn't like the look or functionality of fake denim outerwear. Mason wanted real denim—fitted, fully lined, water repellent and breathable.

NEED: He created a prototype pant and set to work on a business plan, but he soon realized he needed real market research. "I knew that a detailed business plan would help me stay on track and move in the right direction."

CBN SUPPORT: Mason attended a Small Business BC (SBBC) seminar on market research to discover approaches, resources, who to interview and how to ask the right questions. "I prepared a survey, went to the mountain and surveyed people in the lift line. The results motivated me because I had proof of what Joe Public wanted," says Mason. SBBC provided direction to help him finalize the plan. Mason received a loan from the bank on his first try—a rare feat.

RESULTS: Mason released his Classic Rock Pants in March 2013. They're available in Whistler stores and online. The pants are gaining traction with surfers, motorbike riders and construction workers. He wants to fully establish the brand in Canada before moving on to the U.S. and other markets, including Japan.

MOTIVATION: "I love riding in jeans. I want to evolve the sport's outerwear because it's been stale for a long time. I am so excited about what I've created."

FEEDBACK: "Don't do it on your own. All entrepreneurs should access the professional help that SBBC offers. You'll get ideas, suggestions and useful advice."

masonindustries.ca



2012-2013

THE CANADA BUSINESS NETWORK IN NUMBERS

2,246,614

website visits

78,013

telephone interactions

70,393

group interactions

41,669

walk-in visits

27,093

Twitter followers

20,676

email/mail/fax

1,104

Facebook likes

400

regional access partners

89

blogs posted to
canadabusiness.gc.ca



Front row, left to right: Jim Bradley, NL; Derek Pierce, PEI; Brigitte Gray, Manager; Mark Bastarache, NB. Back row: Ann McGaghey, NB; Susan Evans, NL; Lisa Gautreau, NB; Cindy Allen, NS; Valérie LePage, NB; Erin Walker, NS and Deborah Doucette, PEI.

SEACHANGE IN ATLANTIC CANADA

For Canada Business in Atlantic Canada, 2012-2013 was a year of transformation. The federal managing partner in the region, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, redesigned its service delivery model to address changing client needs and the shifting landscape. After all, the nature of client interactions had evolved significantly in recent years from what was once high foot traffic at walk-in centres and high call volumes to the business information line.

Today, businesses want information quickly and easily—right at their fingertips. They are asking questions via email and requesting more sophisticated information and services online. To adapt, the new service delivery model focuses on web-based content and services, phone and email inquiries, and outreach. It moves away from walk-in and library services to a new approach which offers two tiers of service:

- The Tier 1 service, located in Campbellton, New Brunswick, serves as a first point of contact for all Atlantic Canadian businesses. The Campbellton team handles incoming inquiries through a centralized, bilingual phone, email and mail service for program referrals and basic research requests.
- At the Tier 2 level, CBN provides a bilingual service in each Atlantic province to support complex client inquiries which need in-depth business development support, research information services, and provincially-based program and service referrals. The Tier 2 teams work proactively on partnership development, promotion and outreach. They also support the Canada Business website and other platforms by providing specific government and non-government program content from each province in the region.

"The new Canada Business service delivery model demonstrates an innovative approach to client service delivery because we are operating as a pan-Atlantic, virtual team," explains Brigitte Gray, the Canada Business Manager for the region. "We're working closely together from province to province and I'm pleased to see everyone's commitment to ensuring that we continue to help businesses start, grow and prosper."

As part of the transition, the Canada Business team in Atlantic Canada is establishing a strong infrastructure to support quality client service for years to come. They have set up the Canada Business Management Committee to oversee operations and coordinate among regions. The Committee helps to ensure a high and consistent standard of service for all clients throughout Atlantic Canada.

A Client Service Review Committee was also created to examine best practices in quality management across the national network and to establish standard procedures for all Atlantic offices, both at the Tier 1 and Tier 2 levels.

"We have a skilled and dedicated team," says Gray. "Our employees range from highly experienced to new and enthusiastic self-starters. We're looking forward to seeing what we can all achieve together in the service of Canadian entrepreneurs."

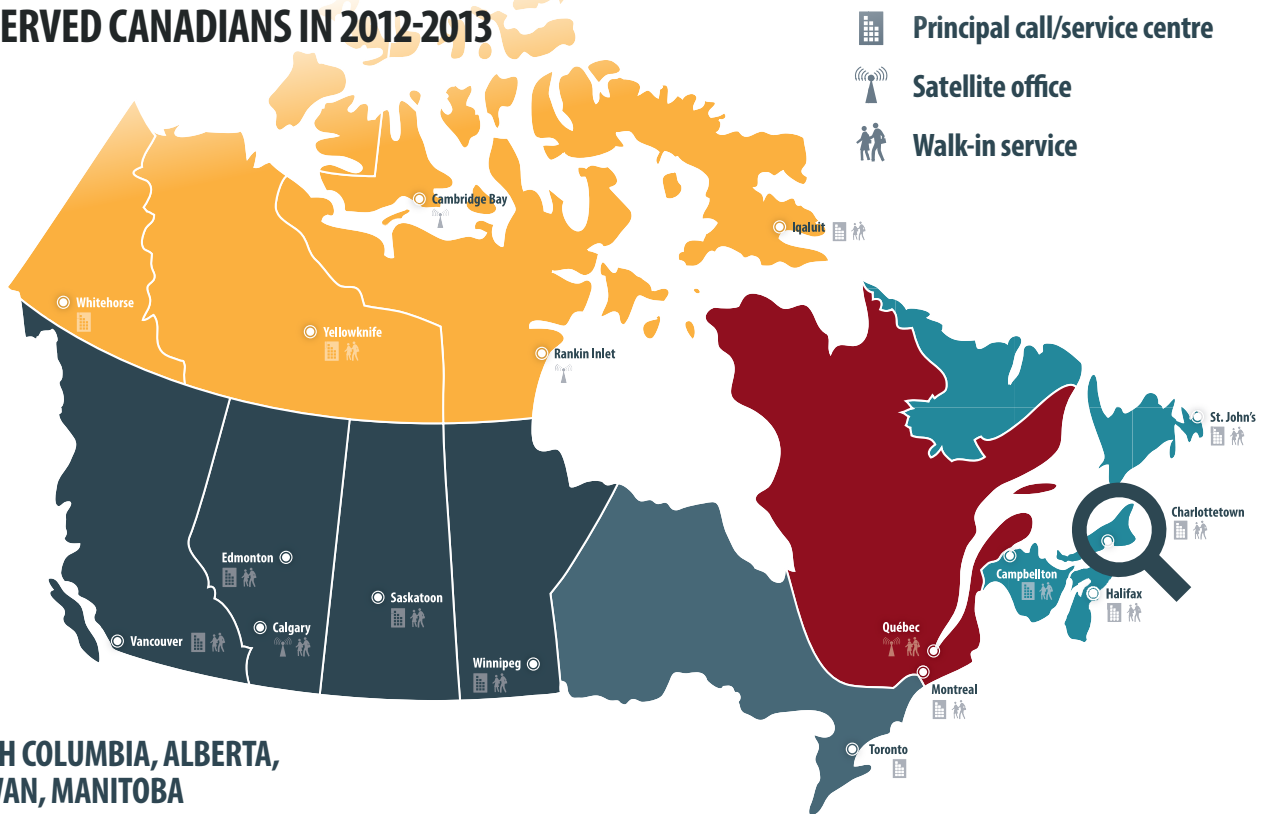
SPEED DATING FOR ENTREPRENEURS

For many Canadian entrepreneurs, financing their business ideas or their company's growth is essential for start-up and long-term success. In another example of innovative service delivery, Montreal's Info entrepreneurs and Quebec City's Ressources Entreprises have found a unique way to answer that need by putting experienced entrepreneurs in front of investors and financial services providers.

The approach, known as the Funding Meet and Greet, is much like speed dating for business owners. Forty growth firms with earnings ranging from \$1M to \$5M, along with 15 public and private investors and financial institutions, participate in the half-day event. Entrepreneurs take part in round table discussions on topics such as financing service companies, financing manufacturing businesses, and risk capital financing. Then, the speed dating begins. Each business owner takes part in up to eight 15-minute private meetings with investors and financial institutions. The event usually wraps up with a networking lunch.

"We took the time to identify the gaps and establish a program that responds to a need in Quebec's entrepreneurial community," explains Guy Jobin, Vice-President at Info entrepreneurs. "This program is such a huge success that we plan to offer it in other regions of the province. It proves that we're achieving results for our clients."

HOW WE SERVED CANADIANS IN 2012-2013



WEST: BRITISH COLUMBIA, ALBERTA, SASKATCHEWAN, MANITOBA

- ➔ 888 outreach activities, including tours and presentations
- ➔ 803 business learning sessions
- ➔ 1,467 trade shows, conferences and networking events
- ➔ 281 unpaid media mentions

ONTARIO

- ➔ 32 partnership development activities
- ➔ 117 trade shows, conferences and networking events
- ➔ 1.05 million client interactions (phone, email, website and events)
- ➔ 27,477 pieces of collateral distributed
- ➔ 1.5 million clients reached through NewsCanada campaign

NORTH: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, NUNAVUT, YUKON

- ➔ Promotional events, presentations and visits
- ➔ 42 videoconference learning sessions
- ➔ Online services increased for businesses in the North
- ➔ Small Business Week activities

QUEBEC

- ➔ 41 workshops and seminars (Québec)
- ➔ 110 presentations, networking and outreach activities
- ➔ 520 Small Business Week participants (Montreal)
- ➔ 291 Guest Advisor sessions (Québec)
- ➔ 1 million promotional brochures distributed to partner contact centres

EAST: NEW BRUNSWICK, NOVA SCOTIA, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

- ➔ 75 trade shows and events
- ➔ 30 workshops and presentations
- ➔ 160 hours of Guest Advisor support and business advice
- ➔ 6,220 client interactions at events and outreach activities

OUR PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE

THE CANADA BUSINESS NETWORK INCLUDES SIX MANAGING PARTNER DEPARTMENTS:

- Industry Canada www.ic.gc.ca
- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency www.acoa-apec.gc.ca
- Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions www.dec-ced.gc.ca
- Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency www.north.gc.ca

- Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario www.feddevontario.gc.ca
- Western Economic Diversification Canada www.wd-deo.gc.ca

WE WORK IN CLOSE PARTNERSHIP WITH:

- Federal departments and agencies
- Provincial and territorial governments
- Not-for-profit entities
- More than 400 regional access partners

QUOTE, UNQUOTE



"As a small business owner exploring the idea of expanding my business, I was unsure of where to start. I was pleasantly surprised with Canada Business. I would recommend it as a first place to start for anyone starting or expanding their business."

Jennifer Prinz
City View Bakehouse, Charlottetown, PEI

"I am eternally grateful to the Info entrepreneurs team for the help they provided me and for their ongoing support in my company's launch, both in Canada and internationally."

William Diouf
DIMEXnet Inc., Montreal, QC

EDUCATION EQUIPS ENTREPRENEURS

Across the Canada Business Network, there's a firm commitment to providing entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Each year, the network offers hundreds of different workshops, training sessions and learning activities—in-person, by videoconference and online.

"Through webinars, our clients gain another avenue to access learning sessions. That's important for people in smaller remote communities without centres," explains Brad Poulter, Canada Business Northwest Territories.

The sessions cover a vast range of topics, from accounting to social media, market research, networking, promotion, business growth and much more. "The majority of our seminar leaders are either small business owners or professionals who deal exclusively with entrepreneurs," says George Hunter, CEO of Small Business BC.

Serial entrepreneur Greg Gazin is one of those professionals. Based in Edmonton, the technology columnist and small business and technology speaker attended many sessions (and still does) at The Business Link before being recruited as a seminar leader. "Offering courses has helped me improve my presentation skills immensely, which led to paid speaking engagements and other opportunities," Gazin explains. "It also a way to help me to give back."

Like other CBN locations, The Business Link in Alberta has seen in-person attendance drop and online participation increase. "We've kept up with this fundamental shift by building a professional production studio for our webcasts," explains Executive Director Brent Bushell. "Webcasting truly is a tool of choice for entrepreneurs. If they can't attend the webcast, they have 30 days to watch it online."

Other centres are following suit, expanding their webinar capacity and offerings to allow thousands of entrepreneurs to participate in training across Canada every year. "All of that is backed up by our expert counselling service," says Hunter. "If they have further questions, they can call us and we have professionals who can give them advice."

Training, backed by expert advice. That's the power of the Canada Business Network.

THE SUCCESS FILES: CARE AND FUN CHILD CARE



ENTREPRENEURS: Ayman Elhefnawi and Hoda Ibrahim, Halifax, Nova Scotia

IDEA: The husband and wife team put his business development know-how together with her 20 years of child care experience in Canada and the Middle East to open a child care centre in an underserved area of the city in 2012.

NEED: Elhefnawi prepared a proposal for the centre, which included a five-year strategic plan and detailed hiring and training practices. To ensure success, he needed data to back up his business plan.

CBN SUPPORT: The couple felt that 90% of their business' success would depend on choosing the right location. They contacted Canada Business Nova Scotia. The centre provided market research, including demographic and competitive data. The information allowed them to make a location decision based on population, income, competition and access to main routes for commuting parents.

RESULTS: They set a goal of breaking even with 35 children nine months after launching the business. They had 40 children within four months. Today, they employ 13 full-time staff, including early childhood educators and a cook. They plan to open three to four other centres within five years, and to franchise the operation.

MOTIVATION: "I enjoy seeing the parents every day. The children, parents and staff enjoy the positive environment. Whenever we see our children improve, we all feel rewarded," says Ibrahim.

FEEDBACK: "We definitely recommend Canada Business Nova Scotia to our entrepreneur friends," says Elhefnawi. "They offer excellent demographic data and competitive analysis. We are very fortunate to have this service."

carenfun.ca



QUOTE, UNQUOTE



"The level of professionalism I received from your business information officer was appreciated. Moving to a new city to start a business can be stressful. This office should be very proud of the people who help entrepreneurs like me find out the correct information."

Stanton-Johnn Lowe
Key West Soap Box, Huntsville, ON

"It's very motivating when entrepreneurs tell us how much they appreciate the services we offer them. We love hearing that we have saved them time, giving them more time to focus on getting their business idea off the ground. Our services allow business owners to be so much more efficient."

Cindy Desmarais, Head - Business Information
Info entrepreneurs, Montreal, QC

ENTREPRENEURS IN THE HOT SEAT

When it comes to putting entrepreneurs through the pressure cooker of the fast-paced business world, The Business Link has found a winning formula. The Canada Business service centre in Alberta has partnered with Green Hectares, a non-profit organization committed to fostering sustainable rural communities, to offer their Entrepreneur Exchanges program across the province.

The program provides entrepreneurs a chance to present their business questions, proposals, or ideas to a panel of experts. The panel members share their advice, counsel and connections so participants can learn from them and advance their business ideas.

"The format is similar to Dragon's Den, except the panellists do not invest," explains Brent Bushell, Executive Director at The Business Link. "We've found that participants leave the room with an average of 7 references and 14 business ideas. In half an hour, they discover about 20 ways to improve their business."

Here's how it works: Up to 10 entrepreneurs take turns presenting the business or idea. They get to ask the panel specific questions. A facilitator takes notes and logs suggestions, which include business resources (websites, organizations and books) and business ideas. The atmosphere is supportive and collegial.

"It's rewarding to participate on a panel," says Bushell. "There's so much personal experience at the table. The synergy starts to build and panellists feed off each other to provide advice that is absolutely priceless to the entrepreneurs."

As for how participants feel about the program? "This experience is something you would normally have to pay thousands of dollars for to get this kind of advice," says entrepreneur Yiran Cao. And, according to Barb Hanzenveld, "I feel like I have just won the business lottery!"

Bushell has become a champion for the program. He actively recruits private sector sponsors. His next steps? He plans to help expand the program and support as many entrepreneurs as possible by placing them in the hot seat.

THE SUCCESS FILES: CHOCOLATIER CONSTANCE POPP



ENTREPRENEUR: Constance Menzies, Winnipeg, Manitoba

IDEA: An environmental manager by trade, Menzies loved making chocolate at home. She went to Montreal, the 'epicentre' of Canada's chocolate industry, to learn the craft at the Chocolate Academy. "I thought I was on to something unique that I could turn into a business in Winnipeg," she explains. That was six years ago. Today, Chocolatier Constance Popp (CCP) sells fresh premium artisan chocolate using Manitoba-produced ingredients and exotic single-origin chocolate.

NEED: Menzies wanted to create a solid business plan to get her first loan. She had questions: How many chocolate bars do people buy? What percentage of their disposable income do they spend on confectionary? She needed reliable information.

CBN SUPPORT: She found it, and much more, at the Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre. They helped her create her business plan, which she used to get her first loan. They became a trusted partner. "For four solid years, I picked up the phone and asked them questions."

RESULTS: CCP's award-winning chocolate has received huge accolades. It was featured on the menu at the Toronto International Film Festival, the Golden Globes and the 2010 Olympics. Menzies even made chocolate for the Queen. The business recently moved into a new location in Winnipeg's French district.

MOTIVATION: "I love everything about chocolate. It's complex, mysterious and international. I use my professional background in natural resources to integrate unique products, such as northern Manitoba birch syrup, into chocolate making."

FEEDBACK: "I feel extremely grateful that an organization like the Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre exists. When you approach them and tell them what you don't know, so much help comes your way. They are really good at what they do."

artisanchocolates.ca



QUOTE, UNQUOTE



"Canada Business Nunavut helped me find loans and grants to apply for, which I needed to start up. They helped steer me in the right direction for the services I needed. They even put me in contact with a terrific supplier and helped me get me a line of credit. Their business officers are very calming and reassuring. I learned that starting up a business doesn't have to be intimidating at all with them on my side."

Sadie Vincent-Wolfe
I like CAKE, Iqaluit, NU

FINE FUTURE AHEAD FOR CANADIAN BUSINESSES

One of the key ingredients to the Canada Business Network's success is its constant focus on the future. After all, the network always strives to look around the corner to offer Canadian businesses the services and support they need to start, run and grow.

In the year ahead, the National Office will review the CBN service delivery model with our changing clients' needs in mind. We will refine our approach in order to provide better and more efficient services starting in 2014-15.

Across the country, our centres will continue to develop and strengthen their partnerships with Community Futures Development Corporations, chambers of commerce, Aboriginal business centres, economic developers and industry partners, among others. Alberta, for example, will leverage partnerships to enhance small business content and to offer strong connections to clients.

In Atlantic Canada, where the service delivery model has changed significantly, the priorities for the year ahead will include training employees, implementing a quality management program, and introducing a new client relationship management system.

Nunavut will work with its satellite offices to update resource materials in their libraries, while British Columbia plans to add to its best-in-class offerings for clients and dramatically increase revenues from existing and new products, services and activities. Quebec will enhance its online services by offering web-based matchmaking for entrepreneurs. It will also introduce videoconferences for learning sessions.

Manitoba and Saskatchewan are moving to not-for-profit delivery models, so the focus in the year ahead will be on maintaining quality service for clients during the change.

Ontario is taking on a new and important responsibility. The Toronto office will work with the National Research Council of Canada to provide a new national telephone service in 2013-14. The service will provide referrals and assistance to innovation-minded firms. "We're planning to maximize CBN practices, knowledge and infrastructure to expand our service offerings to growth and innovation clients," says Sarah Powell-Smith, Acting Director at Canada Business Ontario. "Even more so, we will become a one-stop shop to support the business community across the country."

OUR AWARD-WINNING HISTORY



Together with our network of service centres, the Canada Business Network has been recognized for leadership, innovation and quality service delivery over the years. We're proud of our award-winning history. Here are some highlights:

- **2012:** Alberta Chamber of Resources Rewarding Partnerships Award, presented to The Business Link and its partners for the 881 Business Incubation Centre for rewarding industry-Aboriginal partnerships.
- **2012:** Outstanding Business Community Partnership Award given to the New Brunswick Regional Network Coordinator for dedication and sharing expertise with the Saint John Multicultural & Newcomers Resource Centre.
- **2012:** Canada-Nunavut Business Service Centre Kivalliq awarded, for several consecutive years, a certificate of appreciation for its contributions to the Kivalliq CEDO (economic developers) Annual Conference.
- **2011:** ACOA Outstanding Achievement Corporate Award to the Atlantic Canada Business team for fostering teamwork to improve client service delivery.
- **2010:** Government Technology Exhibition and Conference (GTEC) Gold Medal, New CanadaBusiness.ca, for Service Delivery to Citizens and Business.
- **2007-2009:** National Quality Institute (NQI) Silver Award of Excellence for Quality, Canada Business Ontario.
- **2007:** Don Rennie Memorial Award from The Canadian Public Relations Society Inc. awarded to the Canada Nova Scotia Business Centre for outstanding team achievement in government communications.
- **2005:** ACOA Outstanding Achievement Award to Newfoundland and Labrador's team of Business Information Officers.
- **2005:** Quality Council of Alberta, Quality and Excellence Advocate Award, presented to The Business Link for its contribution to advancing Excellence and Quality Practices in Alberta.
- **2004:** United Nations Public Service Award, Improvement in Public Service Results Category.
- **2001:** GTEC Bronze Medal, Business Start-Up Assistant for Serving Canadians Better through IM/IT Innovations.
- **1999:** The Head of the Public Service Award, Canada Business Service Centres for Excellence in Service Delivery Category.
- **1999:** GTEC Silver Medal, Distinction for the Interactive Business Planner Project Team.
- **1997:** GTEC Distinction, Canada Business Network, for Cross-Jurisdictional Service Delivery.

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

The Canada Business Network Year in Review is published by the Canada Business Network National Office, located at Industry Canada.

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