



Dave Angus

# Business conference first for province

BY COLLEEN COSGROVE

Manitoba will host its first international business conference this fall, an event that has piqued the interest of local business owners.

During a small luncheon yesterday, Centrallia 2010 organizers rallied a group of a dozen business owners who are poised to broaden the scope of their business internationally.

Designed to be the signature business conference attached to the Manitoba Homecoming 2010 festivities, organizers say the two-day Winnipeg event that kicks off on Oct. 20 will be the most significant business conference ever held in the province.

Based on the successes of Futurallia, a similar conference that began in France in 1990, Agence Nationale et Internationale du Manitoba is organizing the event in collaboration with the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce.

Brandon Chamber of Commerce president Chris Griffin says he hopes the initiative and confidence the Winnipeg chamber has demonstrated in organizing an event of this scale will inspire local businesses to dream bigger.

"There are a number of businesses (in Brandon) that are already working internationally, and I think a conference like this would only benefit those relationships and obviously, create more," he said. "Businesses from all over the world are essentially coming to Manitoba and I think anytime that happens, there is a huge potential there for everyone in Manitoba to benefit."

The unique conference features hundreds of pre-arranged one-on-one meetings among decision-makers from more than 500 small- and medium-sized businesses based around the world.

The secret to its success — the events have been held around the world for 20 years — is its proprietary match-making software. Participants fill out questionnaires about who they are and what they're looking for, and the software links them up with the most appropriate potential partners for head-to-head meetings.

ANIM president Mariette Mulaire says the conference will definitely put Manitoba on the map as it will help business owners make literally dozens of important connections globally in just two days.

Winnipeg chamber president David Angus agreed.

"This is a comeback year for the economy, the timing of this event will really be at an important point in time that will launch us back to where we need to be," he said.

"We've heard before ... Canadian companies now need to be much more international and we need to reach out to new markets, and I think (Centrallia is the) kind of conference that ... makes that easier for small-medium-businesses."

Angus says the involvement of businesses from Brandon and across the province is integral to the success of the event.

"(Their involvement) makes us look better as a province and will ... really help brand the province."

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