Fostering Entrepreneurial Drive

Saint-Georges-de-Beauce, a small city in Québec’s so-called cradle of entrepreneurship, played host to this year’s annual convention of the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec (FCCQ). During the three-day program, attendees discussed various approaches that can be used to stimulate entrepreneurial drive among the next generation. The warm welcome and hard work of the Chambre de commerce de Saint-Georges ensured that the event was a tremendous success. Thanks to the entire team, from everyone at the FCCQ!

Motivating factors

There is a long-standing and widespread perception that Québec, with its pioneering past and reputation for resourcefulness, is at the vanguard of the entrepreneurial world. Based on various indicators, however, we in fact fall far behind the rest of the country in this regard.

There are only half as many entrepreneurs per capita in Québec as there are in the rest of Canada, and opinion polls show that only half as many Quebeckers have entrepreneurial ambitions. Moreover, despite the best intentions of a number of entrepreneurship organizations—of which there are approximately 20 in the province—it can sometimes be difficult to get everyone working together toward the same goals.

In order to encourage entrepreneurial development and cooperation, the FCCQ brought together a number of experts specializing in a wide range of entrepreneurship matters. Through workshops, presentations and on-site visits, convention-goers became more knowledgeable about various topics and learned how to help ignite the entrepreneurial spark in others. In addition to tours of the facilities at Victor Innovatex, Garaga, Maxi Métal, Boa-Franc and Manac, which were greatly enjoyed and appreciated, participants were delighted to get a first-hand look at the work being done at the new École d’entrepreneurship de Beauce. ...continued on page 3
Closing Gala

As part of the closing awards ceremony, the FCCQ once again paid tribute to individuals and organizations that have made their mark within the FCCQ network.

Chamber of Commerce of the Year
Chambre de commerce et d’industrie Saint-Eustache, Deux-Montagnes, Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac
Celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2011, this chamber of commerce, 500 members strong and growing, is a remarkably close-knit group. Earlier this year, it was elected head of the Chambre de commerce régionale des Laurentides.

Left to right: Richard Payette, Michel Guyer, Françoise Bertrand, Éric Duclé and Louis Bernier

Volunteer of the Year
Mireille Bisson de la Chambre de commerce de Mont-Tremblant
The 2010 Volunteer of the Year joined her local chamber of commerce in 1990. With her head for numbers, she has always played a role in managing the organization’s finances. She also served as chair of the board of directors between 2006 and 2010.

Left to right: Louis Bernier, Mireille Bisson, Françoise Bertrand and Richard Payette

Recruiting Award
Chambre de commerce et d’industrie Thérèse-De Blainville
This award is presented annually to the chamber of commerce that has taken a strategic or unique approach to increasing membership, with meaningful results.

Left to right: Louis Bernier, Alain Martineau, Véronique Leblanc, Françoise Bertrand, Stéphane Meloche and Richard Payette

Prix Coup de cœur
Chambre de commerce et de tourisme de Gaspé
This special award is presented to a chamber of commerce for outstanding achievement. This year’s winner has undertaken a major overhaul of its infrastructure and operations. The results thus far have been very promising, although it is still too early to definitively acknowledge their impact.

Left to right: Louis Bernier, Françoise Bertrand, Mélissa Plourde, Robert Dutil and Richard Payette

Jean-Paul-Létourneau Award
This award is given to a permanent chamber of commerce member for outstanding performance and achievement as a CEO.

Left to right: Louis Bernier, Martine Pépin, Françoise Bertrand and Richard Payette

Being part of the solution (continued from page 1)
To address the entrepreneurial gap acknowledged by all economic stakeholders, the Québec government took advantage of the convention to consult with our community and develop an entrepreneurship strategy, which is expected to be made public in the spring. Driven by a fundamental commitment to promote the freedom to pursue entrepreneurial endeavours, the FCCQ and its network of chambers of commerce hope to be part of the solution.

Naturally, there are already many local initiatives under way across the province, but these are not enough. The goal of the 2010 convention was to provide the FCCQ with food for thought so that its contributions at the government level are as balanced and representative as possible. The event also aimed at giving chambers of commerce the tools they need to better support and promote entrepreneurs.

Getting 200 members fired up about entrepreneurial drive
“In Québec, we put skates on our three-year-olds and wake up at five o’clock on a Saturday morning to drive them to the rink. That’s how the hockey culture gets passed on from generation to generation.”

Mario Girard
Fondation de l’entrepreneurship

As Alain Bouchard, founder and co-owner of Couche-Tard, put it as he was being inducted into the FCCQ Panthéon des entreprises québécoises (www.lepantheon.ca), “Persuading young people to become entrepreneurs means giving them the chance to be the authors of their own lives.” What better gift is there?