FOOD WORKSHOP

Integrating sustainable development into business

This year’s FCCQ convention took place in Victoriaville, considered the cradle of sustainable development in Québec. The four-day event gave attendees an opportunity to discuss solutions for growing their businesses, creating wealth and doing more to foster an accommodating environment for individuals, businesses and investments in Québec. The hospitality and hard work of the Chambre de commerce et d’industrie des Bois-Francs et de l’Érable were key to the success of the proceedings.

A number of prominent guests were on hand to talk with convention delegates about the critical issue of sustainable development, including Lucien Bouchard, president of the Québec Oil and Gas Association and former premier of Québec; Pierre Arcand, ministre du Développement durable, de l’Environnement et des Parcs; and Christian Paradis, Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture).

In the coming years, Québec will have important decisions to make about how natural resources are used and, specifically, about what to do in light of the recent discovery of underground fossil fuel deposits in the province. Sustainable development is key to these discussions, for a harmonious balance between economic prosperity and environmental responsibility is what will make the province an economic force in the 21st century.

To support this position, the FCCQ brought in experts from across the sustainable development spectrum. Through workshops, presentations and even tours of various facilities, participants explored various avenues for prioritizing sustainable development. Visits to Vic Royal, Gaudreau Environnement, Laurentides ressources and Société Laurentide were very popular, as was the tour of the Victoriaville Centre de formation en entreprise et récupération (CFER), an organization that assists troubled youth and provides job training programs designed to help them develop marketable skills.

During the AGM on Saturday, the chambers of commerce in attendance adopted close to a dozen resolutions that will shape FCCQ public initiatives in the coming year. Among these resolutions was one backing the Dave Yards/SNC-Lavalin joint venture in its dealings with the federal government, as well as another to pressure the government to ease the tax burden of entrepreneurs who sell their businesses to a family member. The natural resources management plan to provide government and business with the tools required to make effective use of our resources without adversely affecting our communities, was also adopted at the AGM.
Delegates heard a number of panelists address various aspects of sustainable development and several touched specifically on economic development.

During the days leading up to the convention, the focus of which was sustainable development, and throughout the main event, there was no shortage of related topics to explore. The David Suzuki Foundation made a special appearance to share tips on learning from nature to create greener offices in terms of water, energy, waste management, health, and transportation.

Participants also had the opportunity to hear a guest speaker talk about the importance of effectively publicizing the sustainable economic development efforts of businesses and organizations such as chambers of commerce. Attendees learned about pitfalls to avoid and received other excellent advice.

Several prestigious speakers took the podium during the convention. Pierre Arcand, Ministre du Développement durable, de l’Environnement et des Parcs, outlined the Québec government’s vision of sustainable development. He also talked about Plan Nord, the fight against climate change and the implementation in 2013 of a carbon exchange involving a hundred greenhouse gas–emitting businesses.

Christian Paradis, federal Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), also addressed participants. Mr. Paradis was on his way to Québec City to announce an agreement on harmonizing the GST and QST. His remarks on economic development and job creation were very well received.

Finally, during his address on Friday at noon, Lucien Bouchard urged the Québec government to participate in funding the shale gas industry in Québec to capitalize fully on the benefits it affords. His comments fuelled several discussions during the convention and received several days’ worth of attention in the media.