

May 27, 2008

## Alberta's 2007 Chambers of the Year

Grande Prairie, Whitecourt and Bluffton were honoured with 2007 Chamber of the Year Awards at the Alberta Chambers of Commerce's 70<sup>th</sup> Provincial Conference and Policy Session, which took place in Fort Saskatchewan May 22 to 24.

The annual awards were presented Saturday, May 24, at the Chair's Dinner where 130 chamber of commerce representatives from around Alberta, as well as dignitaries, such as Premier Ed Stelmach, gathered for the culmination of the Alberta Chambers of Commerce's (ACC) three-day conference.

The Grande Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce won the 2007 Chamber of the Year Award in the 300-plus membership category. Alberta's third-largest chamber caters to a diverse mix of members. The Grande Prairie Chamber works hard to keep its members informed and represent them with a strong voice at every level of government. It's spearheaded effective lobbying efforts for the following initiatives: a highway bypass, a new hospital, enhanced local post-secondary education, accommodation shortages, crime prevention education, and pine beetle management. The chamber also hosts successful events and has a strong volunteer base. It is a credible, trusted and important organization in its community.

The Whitecourt & District Chamber of Commerce is the 2007 Chamber of the Year Award recipient in the 101-300 membership category. This growing chamber reached the 200-member mark for the first time in 10 years during a year of internal rebuilding. The Whitecourt Chamber serves a community with a mobile workforce, which presents its own unique challenges. The chamber has taken an active role in promoting tourism and economic development with partnerships that allow it to operate and manage the interpretative centre, visitor information centre and municipal park. The chamber's advocacy work has included expanding the provincial campground, accrediting the tourist information centre, and providing a venue designed to welcome newcomers to the community. This year saw the Whitecourt Chamber re-establish its credibility, enabling it to lay a strong foundation for its future.

The third 2007 Chamber of the Year Award recipient is the Bluffton and District Chamber of Commerce, which won in the up to and including 50-membership category. Over the past year, Bluffton grew its membership, introduced a speaker series, participated in the Rimbey Rodeo, and developed welcome packages for new residents. The busy Central Alberta chamber also ramped up its advocacy efforts by lobbying for street signage, bylaw enforcement, and reducing traffic speed at its hamlet's entrance. Bluffton is particularly proud of a literacy program it introduced to the community that sees public figures visit schools and read to students.

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce is a federation of 127 community-based chambers of commerce which represents more than 22,000 businesses.

Photos of each of the three award recipients are available at [www.abchamber.ca](http://www.abchamber.ca). Click on *2007 Chambers of the Year* to link to a page that will allow you to download the photos, or contact Terri Kemball at 425.4180, ext. 6 (toll-free at 1.800.272.8854). ACC can also provide contact information for individual chambers.

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