



# SMALL Business BIG Success

Celebrating the 2003 Calgary Small Business Week. By Nancy Weddell

**Small businesses are generating big success in Calgary, and Small Business Week recognizes this fact. This October event, a collaborative effort of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, the Development Bank of Canada, and Mount Royal College, has found very fertile ground in Calgary.**

According to a recent report entitled "In Search of Canada's Small Business Hotbeds," Calgary emerged as Canada's small business leader out of 25 Canadian Metropolitan areas (populations of over 100,000). Calgary has the highest number of small enterprises per capita; there are nearly 40 small businesses for every 1000 Calgarians. Between 1999 and 2001, the number of businesses in Calgary with less than five employees grew by an impressive eight percent. It is fitting that this year's theme for Small Business Week is "Calgary, the Entrepreneurial Capital of Canada".

The entrepreneurial spirit of the city has a positive impact on the economy. Not only are entrepreneurs leading innovators in business, they fuel the economy in their mere presence. Nearly half of the seats in Calgary restaurants at

noon are filled with people involved in small business. Seventy-three per cent of businesses in Alberta have less than five employees and each year thousands of new jobs are created by small enterprises. Canada-wide figures show that these small businesses provide employment for 40 per-cent of Canadians; making a significant impact on the economy. That Calgary is a leader in embracing these types of businesses is a fact not unnoticed by the city's economy, nor the greater business community. It is for this reason that the Calgary Chamber of Commerce and the Development Bank of Canada is committed to the support and encouragement of small business.

"Calgarians are idiosyncratically suited for entrepreneurial business with their pioneering spirit" says David Saxby, chair of this year's Small Business Week. This personality garners a certain "try anything" attitude, one where business owners are willing to put themselves out there, indeed as "pioneers" of innovative business concepts and models.



**Stephen Farrell**  
Veda Tech

Past and present finalists of the RBC Small Business of the Year Award and the Emerging Enterprise Award all seem to engender the adventurous spirit that Saxby alludes to. In fact, this

spirit may be the common factor that draws them to small enterprise, as nominees have traditionally come from a wide array of industry and have diverse approaches to business. The finalists for this year's Small Business of the Year category are just as diverse – an IT company specializing in e-waste recycling and electronic Asset Maximization, a Sportswear firm focused on cresting, and a building company that specializes in interior railing and staircase design. The diversity of these companies offers a glimpse into one of the realities of small business. These enterprises can cater to specific, niche markets. Smaller enterprises are responsive to changing demands and emerging markets, giving them a competitive edge.

Another tendency shown by the Emerging Enterprise finalists is a more technological focus – a characteristic which points to some other advantages of small business. These are: flexibility, adaptability, and originality. This year the finalists cover the industry of oil and gas, global positioning, and energy management. They don't fit the mould. The old business model assumed that most businesses would require at least 5 years before making a profit. Yet these businesses prove otherwise. They've all generated profits within three years since their inception. This impressive feat attests to the competitive edge that can be realized by small enterprise.

The leaders of new enterprises and small businesses in Calgary attest to the entrepreneur-