

# Regina Regional Opportunities Commission



## 2009 Annual Report



# Introducing the Regina Regional Opportunities Commission

2009 was a year of exciting change and growth as Tourism Regina and the Regina Regional Economic Development Authority (RREDA) merged to become the Regina Regional Opportunities Commission (RROC).

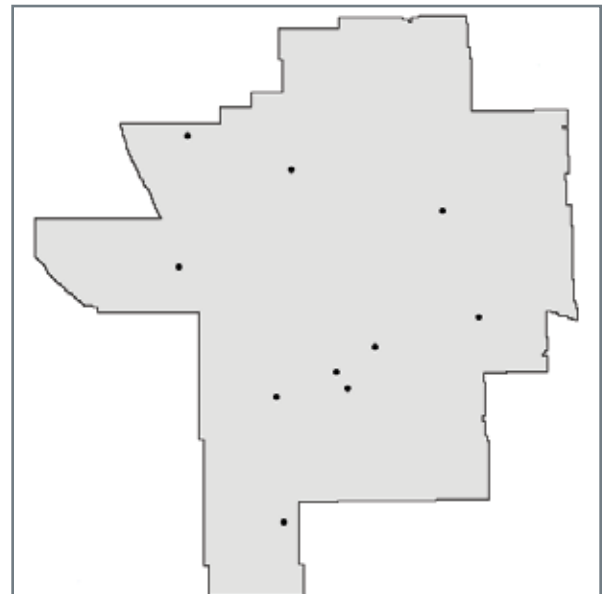
RROC was formed because Tourism Regina and RREDA were working independently towards the same goal – to ensure the Regina region is a vibrant hub of activity. Together we will be more effective in creating a climate where businesses, residents and visitors can thrive.

RROC is continuing the functions of both previous organizations, while working to make the transition as smooth and seamless as possible. The former organizations joined on July 1, with roles for all previous staff members. All RROC staff are now working out of the same downtown building on 1900 block Rose Street, with plans in place for staff to move to the same floor in the new year. RROC's Board of Directors (formed from the Tourism Regina and RREDA boards) appointed Larry Hiles as President and CEO. Hiles had been RREDA's President and CEO.

RROC is a stakeholder-based organization that works to enhance the Regina region's economy for all who live, work, visit and invest here. While RROC is a brand-new entity, it has a solid foundation and is committed to building on the great work Tourism Regina and RREDA started. We are excited about all the possibilities ahead for RROC and for our region. RROC is always open to input on the economic opportunities in our region and welcomes public feedback at any time.

## Our region

In 2009, RROC became responsible for the Regina Enterprise Region under Enterprise Saskatchewan's Enterprise Region Program. Under the program, our region has expanded to cover an area three times larger than the previous region. The region now reaches north past Strasbourg, east past Indian Head, south past Milestone and west past Lumsden. RROC also promotes tourism development throughout the region and makes tourism marketing opportunities available to all.



## Mandate

The following mandate for RROC was established by Regina City Bylaw # 2009-20:

- Create and implement an economic development strategy to grow and sustain prosperity in the Regina region.
- Encourage the retention, development, attraction and growth of the business and tourism products and services for those who live, work, visit and invest in the Regina region.
- Market and promote the Regina region for business and tourism.

# Mission

RROC fosters economic prosperity for the Regina region by identifying, developing and selling opportunities for those who live, work, visit and invest in the Regina region.

# Vision

Regina region is a centre of economic prosperity that ensures a vibrant sustainable community.

# Guiding principles

- Seek out and incorporate partnerships into our activities whenever feasible.
- Be responsive to our stakeholders and results driven in our efforts to serve them.
- Take a holistic approach by considering the implications of our actions on all stakeholders.
- Embrace the concept of a representative workforce and incorporate this into our activities.
- Take an abundance approach to economic development.
- Behave in a nonpartisan manner in all our activities.

# Year in Review

## 2009 Strategic Choices

To ensure careful focus and successful execution, RROC managed its 2009 activities as project and initiatives. The innovative ventures RROC pursued through 2009 are outlined in the five strategies below:

- Increase business investment and startups
- Increase tourism opportunities
- Develop energy and environmental opportunities
- Attract and retain talent
- Improve regional economic infrastructure

RROC achieved success by working towards the development and implementation of many of the above strategies via multiple initiatives. The progress of these initiatives is outlined in the Economic Highlights section.

# 2009 Economic Highlights in the Regina Region (aided by RROC)

The following highlights reflect the strategies, initiatives and activities that have contributed to RROC's success in 2009. In many cases, they also provide the groundwork for ongoing and future efforts.

Please note that while many of these efforts were undertaken by Tourism Regina and RREDA prior to the merger, RROC is now responsible for these initiatives. For the sake of brevity, we will refer to all of our 2009 developments as RROC efforts.

## Strategy: Increase business investment and startups

The **Saskatchewan Business Succession pilot project**, which was launched in the fall of 2009, matches those selling businesses in Saskatchewan with targeted buyer groups to ensure successful business transitions. The pilot is a partnership between RROC and the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority, with support from the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

2009 saw the following major developments to the **Global Transportation Hub** (GTH):

- The **Global Transportation Hub Authority** (GTHA) was formed this year to offer potential tenants support for their land, servicing and pricing questions and needs. RROC continues to support this project, working with the GTHA to market the hub.
- Construction of **Loblaw Companies Ltd.** regional distribution centre is well underway. The centre will ultimately be a one-million square-foot facility and will employ up to 1,500 workers. The facility is expected to be operational by the end of 2010.
- Work has commenced on the **Regina West Bypass**, which will connect Highway 1 and Highway 11 outside the city with direct access to the GTH.
- In partnership with a **Chinese project** team from the University of Regina, RROC undertook a Chinese research project focused on attracting Chinese heavy machinery operations to the GTH. We identified target leads and produced Mandarin marketing materials.

## 2009 Economic Measures

Even during the economic downturn, the Regina region economy remained strong throughout 2009. According to the latest CIBC World Markets Metropolitan Economic Activity Index, Regina ranked second in the country for economic momentum, meaning that our economy continued to grow at a faster rate than other cities across the country.

GDP

**Up 1.4%\***

(Our GDP is predicted to be one of the highest among Canadian CMAs.)

Retail Sales

**Up 3.4%\***

Personal Income Per Capita

**Up 1.8%\***

Unemployment Rate

**5.0%\***

Up 1.1%

Population

**Up 1.8%\***

Homes Sold

**3,078\*\*** (ytd)

Up 16% from 2008

Avg. housing price in Regina

**\$247,159\*\***

up 3% from 2008

Value of building permits

**\$402.7 M\*\*\*** (ytd)

up 29 % from 2008

\* Source: Conference Board of Canada Metropolitan Outlook – November 30, 2009

\*\* Source: Regina Realtors – MLS Numbers

The fourth annual **Progress2Capital Business Planning Competition** ran during 2009, offering eight finalist teams individual mentorship opportunities and an enhanced educational boot camp. Applications for the 2010 competition will be accepted beginning in January.

RROC is developing a strong working relationship with **Enterprise Saskatchewan** as they grow their own investment attraction division. This cooperative approach has resulted in a broader network, more active leads and the conceptual development of a full-service investment attraction team.

RROC recently took over management of the operations of the **Canada - Saskatchewan Business Service Centre**, and is utilizing the centre to support businesses and entrepreneurs.

## Strategy: Increase tourism opportunities

The tourism component of RROC's website was revamped in 2009. The **website** now contains new material, an upgraded database system, a new events calendar and additional content to promote the Regina region as a premier destination.

### Conventions, Meetings and Tradeshows

Throughout 2009, RROC submitted numerous **successful bids** for upcoming conventions, meetings and tradeshows to take place in Regina. This past year, RROC secured 2,717 room nights for 2010 and 2,950 room nights for 2011, with additional bids under consideration.

RROC and the Regina Convention Team attended the **Canadian Society of Association Executives (CSAE)** conference and showcase in Toronto and participated in the Tête-à-Tête tradeshow in Ottawa, which is organized by CSAE. While the CSAE is mostly for executive directors, Tête-à-Tête is a tradeshow specifically for meeting and conference planners of national associations.

In March of 2009, RROC and the Regina Convention Team went on a **sales call mission** to Ottawa. Ottawa is one major market the Regina Convention Team focuses on, as the majority of headquarter organizations for national associations are housed there. The team met with clients from the client pool created at the CSAE conference in 2008 and the Tête-à-Tête tradeshow in 2009, establishing 16 of the clients as hot leads to follow up with.

In partnership with the Regina Hotel Association, RROC hosted the second annual **Craven Familiarization Tour** in July of 2009. Eight clients participated in the three-day tour showcasing what Regina has to offer. Their responses were incredibly positive.

A new **bid package** has been designed that will make it easier for RROC to customize bid packages specifically to the needs of each client.

### Special Events

RROC determined a **sales strategy** to attract events to the Regina region. The strategy includes development of a sales pipeline, criteria for eligibility of prospects, a tracking system and a tool to determine the economic and social impacts individual events offer.

RROC was successful in getting approvals for **funding applications** totaling over \$1,000,000 to assist in securing and enhancing future events in Regina. This funding was provided by the City of Regina, the Province of Saskatchewan, the Regina Destination Marketing Fund and Tourism Saskatchewan.

RROC participated at the annual Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance (CSTA) **Sport Event Congress** in Ottawa with the Regina Hotel Association. This resulted in 8 leads for national events. RROC also attended the **Sportaccord Conference** in Denver with Team Canada. Hosted by the international Olympic committees, this is the most prestigious sport tourism conference in the world. RROC's participation at these conferences further raised awareness of Regina as a premiere event destination.

RROC **provided support to over 30 events** occurring in Regina in 2009 and 2010. RROC is actively involved in three national event bids and five international event bids.

RROC supported the bid team which won a bid for Regina to host the **2011 World Men's Curling Championships**, April 2-11. We estimate this event will have a \$15 million economic impact for Regina.

### **Leisure Tourism Marketing**

RROC hired a **Leisure Marketing Manager** to focus specifically on enhancing the leisure market in the Regina region and on developing mechanisms to market and track consumers from that segment. This position will begin in January, 2010.

RROC coordinated a successful seven-month **Stay & Play** marketing program that brought together Casino Regina and six downtown hotel properties in a joint marketing package, which increased sales at the participating hotels and at Casino Regina.

## **Strategy: Develop energy and environmental opportunities**

RROC facilitated the establishment of a group of firms to focus on the potential to provide land-based **wastewater treatment** to produce **biomass energy**. While conventional treatments use water, land-based treatment on willow plantations would allow the wastewater to be put to use to grow willows. Willow is a highly-productive biofuel source for large-scale commercial and institutional space heating.

RROC continues to work with a Netherlands-based technology startup that is developing tethered gliders to produce low-cost **high altitude wind power**. RROC is currently working to define a commercial arrangement whereby a wind farm could be established in the Regina region as the North American technology development centre for this company.

In recent years RROC has supported developers interested in advancing the sustainability of their housing. Interest among private developers increased dramatically in 2009, and institutional developers have also embraced the potential for advanced designs. RROC is now working closely with the University of Regina on the conceptual design of a **green subdivision** that could be a flagship project for energy and water efficiency and could be a learning facility supporting education for sustainable development.

## **Strategy: Attract and retain talent**

RROC partnered with the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour to organize participation in a **national career fair** to address employers' concerns about a shortage of skilled labour in the region. RROC facilitated Regina region involvement at the National Job Fair and Training Expo in Toronto in the spring. The

mission was so successful, we participated again in the fall.

RROC promotes the Regina region as a great place to live, work, visit and invest. We have been working with the City of Regina and other partners to develop a community branding strategy to better promote all Regina has to offer. The **Regina brand** is currently in the final stage of development and will launch in February 2010.

## Strategy: Improve regional logistics

RROC has been proactively **engaging community leadership** throughout the Regina Enterprise Region to identify and pursue joint community planning leading to development of economic development strategies that will have a significant positive impact on the regional economy.

RROC and the White Butte Regional Planning Committee have employed the services of a consultant to lead the committee through the process of forming a **White Butte regional planning** district and creating a regional development plan.

RROC and the South Central Enterprise Region have been actively building stakeholder support in the Moose Jaw – Regina corridor to develop a vision and plan to create a **Regina – Moose Jaw industrial corridor**.

RROC is working with the South Central Enterprise Region and the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority to complete a long-term review of water-supply capacity for **Qu'Appelle Watershed** household, business and recreational users. This review is vital as potential industrial development and population growth in the region represent a major new demand that will impact infrastructure investments and possibly efficiency programs.

## 2009 Regina Region Economic Activity

### New Construction

Construction activity surged in 2009 with the total value of building permits sitting at \$402.7M at the end of November. This year's building permits set another record and represent a 29 per cent increase from the same period in 2008.

- The commercial sector soared during 2009, as permits for commercial construction and commercial alterations rose 119 per cent from 2008. The growth in the industrial sector was even more pronounced as industrial construction and alterations grew by 304 per cent.

- Although residential construction was down 13 per cent to \$129 million from last year's record breaking pace, activity in the sector remained strong. Offsetting the drop in residential construction was the growth in residential home sales. 3,078 homes have sold in the city in 2009, up 16% over 2008. YTD dollar sales volume in the city was \$760.8M, which is a new high and an increase of 19% from the previous record of \$637.0M set in 2008.

## Major projects for the Regina Region

### **Consumers' Co-op refinery/upgrader expansion (\$1.9B)**

Believed to be the largest capital project in Regina's history, the expansion will employ 2,500 workers during peak construction activity. The entire project is expected to require about six million person-hours or 3,000 person-years of labour.

### **Harbour Landing residential and commercial development (\$1B)**

This new subdivision located in Southwest Regina will eventually be home to as many as 10,000 residents, and will include an 83-acre commercial development. Construction has already begun on a Wal-Mart Supercentre that will act as the anchor tenant for the commercial development.

### **Mosaic expansion at Belle Plaine facility (\$920M)**

Mosaic's Belle Plaine expansion is part of \$3.15 billion in expansion projects the company is doing in Saskatchewan.

### **Loblaw Companies Ltd. distribution facility (\$350M)**

The distribution facility is the first project underway at the Global Transportation Hub development. When completed the new facility will be a million square feet. It is expected to generate 750 jobs within two years and as many as 1,500 jobs by 2017.

### **Evraz Place redevelopment (\$172M)**

This redevelopment project includes upgrades to the Brandt Centre, as well as the new Co-operators Centre, which will feature six hockey rinks.

### **Regina Centre Crossing commercial and office development (\$20M)**

The Regina Centre Crossing project is a redevelopment of the old Superstore location in the Warehouse District. The project will feature leasable commercial space. Plans also include a boutique hotel and stand-alone restaurant.

### **Saskatchewan Disease Control Lab at Regina Research Park (\$52M)**

The new laboratory will meet Saskatchewan's future needs by improving testing capability and speeding up intervention in the event of a public health crisis such as SARS or an influenza pandemic.

### **University of Regina Research and Innovation Centre (\$60M)**

This state-of-the-art building features 150,000 square feet of research labs, office and meeting space, lounges and student study areas. The project was completed in 2009.

### **Plains Hotel redevelopment**

Regina-based Westgate Development has announced plans to redevelop the Plains Hotel site located on Albert Street and Victoria Avenue. Plans call for an eight story Hilton Garden Inn hotel and a nineteen story condominium tower. The development has been approved under the City's downtown revitalization project.

### **Wastewater treatment plant upgrade**

The City of Regina is choosing an engineering partner firm to lead the design and construction of an upgrade to their wastewater treatment plant. The upgrade is estimated to cost more than \$100M. Construction is planned for 2012 and 2013.

# 2010 – 2013 Key Strategies

Looking forward, RROC's 2010-2013 key strategies will build on the successes we achieved throughout 2009. There are multiple projects or initiatives included under each strategic choice. For more information regarding these choices, please see our 2010-2013 Strategic Plan. The 2010-2013 Strategic Plan is available online at [reginaroc.com](http://reginaroc.com). To request a hard copy, please contact RROC's Communications Manager at 791-1816.

## **Increase business investment and startups**

RROC fosters a strategic set of business opportunities in the Regina region. We are focusing on establishing the Regina region as a vital hub in North American supply chains, increasing domestic and foreign investment, supporting existing businesses and encouraging startups.

## **Increase tourism opportunities**

RROC works to ensure the Regina region is competitive in providing tourism services and to promote the Regina region as a great destination. We are reviewing our overall tourism strategy to enhance our existing services and supports.

## **Develop energy and environmental opportunities**

RROC's goal is to establish the Regina region as a centre of global energy and environmental expertise through pursuit of flagship projects that serve demanding markets, have business investor interest, or have an adequate base of potential research and development infrastructure.

## **Attract and retain talent**

RROC's goal is to ensure the Regina region is a vibrant community full of opportunity that is competitive in attracting and retaining talented people.

## **Improve regional economic infrastructure**

RROC's goal is to ensure a vibrant regional economy through a collaborative approach to regional planning.

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