

**Chamber of Commerce Executives of Canada**  
**Conference and Annual General Meeting**  
**Hamilton, Ontario**  
**September 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012**

**“The Challenge to Change”**

I would like to thank the bursary selection committee for awarding me the bursary that provided me with the privilege of attending the CCEC Conference in Hamilton, Ontario. I would like to congratulate the CCEC and the Conference organizing committees on an excellent conference and AGM. My experience in Hamilton was both worthwhile and very rewarding. The opportunity to network with Chamber representatives across the country was an extraordinary experience for me. This experience will certainly assist me in managing my chamber.

One of the most valuable lessons learned at the conference, is that I'm not alone in this world of Chamber executives. The Portage la Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce is a small Chamber with only one full time employee and almost 220 Chamber Members. Our challenges and struggles are not unique. And whether you're a veteran or new to the Chamber world, we all have more to learn and share. The programming of the CCEC AGM was a great reminder that we need to continually develop and change as professionals.

The first session on Thursday evening, Why Chamber Accreditation makes Sense, was a very informative talk about the merits of having your Chamber become accredited. The process to move forward was outlined and we were introduced to Chambers that already have been accredited and those who are working towards this goal.

Thursday evening the Hamilton Chamber hosted an opening reception at their new offices. It was our introduction to many of the great people we were to spend the next couple of days with. The evening finished off with a Peer Networking dinner. It was a great way to start the conference. It was such a great opportunity to get to know some of our peers.

Friday proved to be a full day of learning and sharing. Dr. Chris Bart started the learning off with “Aspiring Towards a Culture of Great Governance at a Canadian Chambers of Commerce”. I learnt what it takes to be a great Director and why boards don't do what needs to be done to provide outstanding Governance. I'm looking forward to sharing his information with my board. One of my favorite events took place Friday morning, the Bare Pit. Anyone who wants to can go to the mic and in sixty seconds share one of their great ideas. Wow....I can't believe how many great ideas I came away with!!! I can't wait to try some of them in Portage. Friday afternoon's sessions included Joe Pampena discussing Leadership Effectiveness and Eloise Pasianotto speaking on “How Effective Communication Can Positively Impact Your Volunteer Board”. Both were great speakers with great information. By the end of the day, I wanted to get back to Portage to implement some of the great ideas and strategies I learnt!

Friday ended with the Awards Gala at the Art Gallery of Hamilton. Where yet again, I met some new people that shared great ideas. The night was fantastic! Emcee James Cunningham kept us laughing and we had the privilege of taking part in honouring some great Chamber employees! Fantastic Friday!

Saturday morning started bright and early with breakfast and the Annual Meeting. Following the Annual Meeting, Mick Fleming, President and CEO, American Chamber of Commerce Executives, spoke about Chamber of Commerce Mega-Trends. It was interesting to hear where Chambers are going globally. It made me realize that it doesn't matter where you are, Chamber's play the same role in all Communities.

Saturday morning continued with the session "The Old Bull and the Young Bull Shoot the Shit" with Derek and Eric Johannson from Winnipeg. It was a look at the Chamber from a member's point of view and how young member's needs are different from "old" members. This was a great reminder that we need Change as our member's needs change. They ended the session by sharing some ideas with us, through the eyes of a member.

The last session on Saturday morning was led by Eloise Pasianotto. She talked about managing change. Eloise was great because she gave us workbooks and made us think! I gained a better understanding to why people resist change and the critical ingredients for successful change. Before I knew it, the CCEC conference was over and we were moving on to the CCC AGM.

This experience was more than I could have imagined! I met such great people and the best part is that we all share common challenges, passion and understanding. I'm taking my renewed energy, new ideas and new understanding back to Portage la Prairie to help my Chamber to thrive and prosper!!! Looking forward to next year in Kelowna!!!