

# CHAMBER TAKES BOLD ACTION TO INSPIRE COMMUNITY



by Wendy Stephenson

**“T**here are times when we are called upon to make a choice – to stand for something. This is a defining moment. Defining moments are crucial moments – the insight gained has the power to put the rest of our lives in focus.” – Og Mandino, author

For The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, this point in time is a defining moment.

“We have worked hard to grow our membership to where our numbers are the highest in our 135-year history, and for that we have been recognized as one of the Top 10 chambers in North America,” says Chamber president and CEO Dave Angus.

“And we have worked hard to position our organization as the Voice of Business,” Angus says.

“But our membership has told us it’s time that we leverage that growth and credibility to initiate real change and opportunity for our community.”

It’s about being bold, focused and aggressive.

Over the next three years, The Chamber will take a leadership role in developing a vision for our city and in launching a private-sector driven economic development initiative that will serve to attract, retain and create new businesses.

On Oct. 17, The Chamber officially launched its three-year Strategic Plan (2008-2011), which takes The Chamber’s role in the community to the next level.

“We want to engage the entire community in a conversation—to define our city’s role on the world stage and to bolster those elements which will allow us to take our proper place on that stage,” Angus says.

“We’ll be the engine that makes it happen, but we will not and cannot do it alone. We’ll be reaching out to form partnerships in the community.”

The Chamber’s Strategic Plan, developed by its board of directors, identifies four and only four key initiatives or pillars that will guide its every action over the next three years. The four pillars are:

- Vision Winnipeg
- Selling Winnipeg to the World
- Economic Development
- Model of Excellence

Vision Winnipeg will look at different “slices” of our community—from arts and culture to recreation and sports, from diversity and human rights to sustainability and economic opportunity. In so doing, The Chamber’s objective is

to help develop a clear vision for our future that will inspire, motivate and inform our citizens about why our city will prosper.

Chuck Davidson, who will lead Vision Winnipeg for The Chamber, says polling done by Probe Research reveals that close to 60 per cent of Winnipeggers currently believe we do not have a clear vision for our city.

“Vision is not just a statement, it’s action,” Davidson says, adding that a good vision is based on real points of difference and a set of values embraced by the community.

“The key to this initiative is not only the end product, but the process.”

Through its new Vision Winnipeg Web site ([www.visionwinnipeg.com](http://www.visionwinnipeg.com)), The Chamber has issued a challenge to all Winnipeggers—to imagine “the best possible Winnipeg” and make it a reality by signing up and getting involved.

Leadership Winnipeg, a group of 23 emerging community leaders, will also be looking at the opportunities and challenges for our city related to arts and culture, the downtown, our economy, human rights and sustainability. Between now and early summer, they will research these topics and in partnership with the respective communities develop a vision.

Working in partnership is key not only to Vision Winnipeg, but to Selling Winnipeg to the World, one of the other three pillars of the Strategic Plan.

Other cities have an economic strategy and have identified champions to proactively reach out to businesses.

For us, there’s no better time than now to start making such connections and developing a plan for the future. There’s a tremendous momentum building because of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, Manitoba Hydro’s new downtown headquarters and development around the James Armstrong Richardson International Airport.

As a Chamber-directed, collaborative effort, Selling Winnipeg to the World involves the private and public sectors in identifying businesses thinking of opening, expanding or relocating, and convincing them Winnipeg is their best choice, says Bill Morrissey, who will lead this initiative for The Chamber.

“We have looked at the best way to market ourselves and the answer is to start by using the resources we have here at home. The intelligence and expertise of our local business community spans the globe and cuts across all sectors.”

To tap into these leads, The Chamber is recruiting prominent volunteers for a Business Call team, which will meet with the executive of our largest companies.

“Our new Business Call team will be put to work right away. First on its agenda is CentrePort Canada,” Morrissey says.

In early September, the province introduced legislation designating 20,000 acres around the airport as an inland port to serve as a transportation, trade, manufacturing, distribution, warehousing and logistics centre. CentrePort represents a huge opportunity.

While The Chamber is a strong voice for business, it also listens.

For the past six years, The Chamber, in partnership with Meyers Norris Penny and Probe Research, has conducted a survey of 200 Manitoba business leaders. The most recent results clearly indicate Manitoba's business community is concerned that workforce shortages have reached a crisis level.

In response, one of the pillars in the Strategic Plan addresses economic development, an initiative that will be led by Cheryl Baldwin for The Chamber.

This initiative will focus on workforce and trade development.

In addressing workforce issues, the emphasis will be on retaining our youth, linking employers with under-employed segments of our Aboriginal and immigrant populations, promoting overseas missions that target skilled workers, identifying key skill requirements and developing an overall workforce strategy.

One program that falls under this initiative is the Chamber High School Program, which in 2007 saw the establishment of a student council and will result in students being provided career mentors and the opportunity to job shadow as well as access online career information.

With respect to trade development, the aim is to implement a strategy that ensures we are strategic about our markets and opportunities and utilize Chamber and partner resources to the best advantage.

Emphasis will be on education, online business-to-business matching, trade delegations/missions, Chamber-to-Chamber

trade partnerships and collaboration on initiatives such as the Inland Port and North American Trade Corridor.


The fourth pillar of The Chamber's Strategic Plan, to be led by Karen Weiss, The Chamber's vice-president of operations, will focus on The Chamber becoming a model of excellence for its members.

The Chamber will look to establish best practices for small business in using technology, going green and implementing human resource policy. ▲



# STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

## MAYOR SAM KATZ



**The Chamber**  
The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce

Thursday, January 29, 2009  
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
The Winnipeg Convention Centre  
375 York Avenue

Member: \$75.00  
Future Member: \$85.00  
Table of 10 (Members): \$750.00  
Table of 8 (Members): \$600.00

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