

Roundtable set for budding entrepreneurs



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New Brunswick business veterans are gathering with the next generation of entrepreneurs in order to brainstorm on methods to increase the number of successful home-grown enterprises in the province.

The New Brunswick Business Council and the Wallace McCain Institute of Business Leadership are hosting a closed-door two-day roundtable on entrepreneurship at the Fairmont Algonquin hotel in St. Andrews today and Saturday.

Bell Aliant is sponsoring the roundtable, a recommendation of the New Brunswick Securities Commission's past FullSail conferences.

The gathering brings together 18 members of the business council and Wallace McCain Institute management committee members and fellows as well as 18 entrepreneurs.

They will discuss how the province can support the creation of more New Brunswick-based businesses as well as how to raise awareness about how important entrepreneurship is to the province's future economic well being.

"This roundtable will be the first time that we've combined and bridged entrepreneurial leaders in this way," said Nancy Mathis, executive director of the Wallace McCain Institute.

"The combined group will discuss the issues facing entrepreneurs in New Brunswick. They will also review a series of existing recommendations and prioritize them."

Mathis said the recommendations that will be reviewed come from the past two FullSail summits in the province and the roundtable will send its ideas and prioritized recommendations back to the securities commission for the upcoming FullSail summit in the spring.

The roundtable will also provide business leaders with a chance to help refine the programs the Wallace McCain Institute is putting in place to help entrepreneurship in the province, said Mathis.

Don Dennison, executive director of the New Brunswick Business Council, said the group outlined the importance of entrepreneurship in its paper on self-sufficiency last year.

As part of that paper, the business council identified four areas, one of which was entrepreneurship, which are crucial to future prosperity.

"The council wants to see, first off, more attention and awareness paid to the importance of entrepreneurship in the province," said Dennison.

"Certainly the business council believes that it is important that we engage in attraction of business from outside the province, such as the premier and the minister of Business New Brunswick were doing in Toronto, but that we can't put all our eggs in that basket."

Robyn Tingly, spokeswoman for Bell Aliant, said the regional telecommunications firm was eager to sponsor the roundtable.

"We think there is tremendous value in supporting an entrepreneurial culture in New Brunswick," she said. "We think that organizations like ours, who have the resources and the means, have to be more deliberate about reaching out and ensuring we provide an environment where more of these businesses can succeed and grow."