

Metro hits big time in Big Apple

Moncton, Fredericton among finalists for Intelligent Community of the Year Award to be presented in New York

The pilgrimage from Canada's smartest province to the streets and avenues of New York City has begun.

Today and tomorrow, delegations from Moncton, Fredericton and the Province of New Brunswick are all headed to the world's capital to spread the lesson this area has already learned, that former have-not regions can embrace the potential of the broadband economy and come out on top.

Already Moncton and Fredericton are on top of the world -- at least according to a New York-based think-tank, the Intelligent Community Forum, which has named the two cities among the world's seven "smartest" in the area of information technology.

Equally on top of the world is Premier Shawn Graham, who has turned this impressive performance by two New Brunswick cities -- chosen from among 400 communities around the world -- as a once-in-a-lifetime marketing opportunity.

"We are travelling to New York City to spread the word about the competitive advantages of doing business in New Brunswick, and to show the world how proud we are of Moncton and Fredericton for being named to this prestigious list," Graham said. "We are telling New York and the world that New Brunswick is Canada's smart province, with two of seven top intelligent communities in the world."

As two of Moncton's three main cities compete in the final stage of the 2009 Intelligent Community of the Year award, the Province of New Brunswick will lead a trade mission of IT and knowledge industries to New York, in hopes of bringing the all-important personal networking to the Internet experience.

The award will be bestowed on Friday as the ICF's 10th annual Building the Broadband Economy conference wraps up, but Mayor George LeBlanc said this week, "being named to the Top Seven from an initial group of over 400 applicants means we've already won, and I'm certainly proud to be the mayor of a community that is so dedicated to our region's continued success."

The City of Moncton delegation includes Mayor George LeBlanc; Catherine Dallaire and Don MacLellan, assistant city managers; Dan Babineau, director of Information Systems; Ben Champoux, business development specialist; Paul Thomson, director of Communications.

The City of Dieppe is sending Mayor Jean LeBlanc, Marc Melanson, city manager; and Roger Melanson from the Economic Development Corporation.

Also in attendance from private industry are Chuck Bridges, vice-president of stakeholder relations of Atlantic Lottery Corporation; André Wilson, assistant manager of CapAcadie.com; John Thompson, CEO, and Denis Melanson, director of Business Development, of Enterprise Greater Moncton; Rodrigue Savoie of the National Research Council; Sean Adams, chief marketing officer, and Blain Adams, chief operating officer, of Red Ball Internet.

From the education sector, Dr. Brian MacArthur, the president of Atlantic Baptist University; Dale Ritchie, president of McKenzie College; Dr. Robert Campbell, president of Mount Allison University; Dr. Viktor Frieman, professor, Faculty of Education and Linda Schofield, director of University Relations of l'Université de Moncton, will attend.

The ICF website (www.intelligentcommunity.org) will offer free live web streaming of the awards luncheon, to be held on Friday at 2 p.m. The public and business community are invited to Moncton city hall to watch the ceremony in council chambers.

Eight New Brunswick companies are accompanying the premier on the provincial trade mission to build new export opportunities for IT firms. The companies will make business calls organized by Business New Brunswick and attend some ICF functions.

Graham will begin his visit to New York City on Thursday with private business meetings, and then attend a reception hosted by Canadian Consul General Dan Sullivan at his private residence.

Following the reception, the New Brunswick delegation will attend a Top Seven Intelligent Communities reception hosted by the Government of New Brunswick and the Canadian consul general. The event will celebrate recognition of communities named to the Top Seven Intelligent Communities list.

On Friday, Graham will address an IT trade mission breakfast prior to introducing a panel discussion highlighting New Brunswick's IT strengths and partnership opportunities with New York companies.

"This visit will give us a chance to share our vision for economic development, self-sufficiency and population growth with the New York business community," Graham said.

"Opportunities for investment and partnership between New Brunswick and New England businesses continue to grow in our province, and we feel there is no better time for them to take advantage of New Brunswick's innovative technological solutions."