

**Report from Texas-based IC<sup>2</sup> Institute**

# **Study provides detailed roadmap for Moncton's potential for tech-based growth**

Civic leaders in Moncton are considering their first steps towards implementing recommendations contained in a rigorous assessment of the potential for boosting the city's high-tech economic growth and employment. The report by the Univ of Texas at Austin's IC2 Institute contains a series of near-, medium-, and long-term recommendations that leverage existing regional strengths, beginning with the creation of a business incubator focused on niches within information and communications technologies (ICT) and life sciences.

The study identified ICT and local research institutes as the region's two "clear asset classes". But it also discovered major challenges — many beyond the scope of the region — that must be addressed if Moncton is to increase its tech-based performance.

Moncton is the first Canadian city to be examined by the not-for-profit IC2, although it has conducted similar studies for cities in the US, Europe, Asia and Latin America since its inception in 1977. IC2 was responsible for the creation of the Austin Technology Incubator (ATI) in 1984, which has been a key instrument in the remarkable growth of that city's tech-based economy.

"The Moncton project was interesting. It is close to one of the smallest cities we've worked in," says Dr David Gibson, IC 2's associate director and a member of the Moncton research team. "We were pleasantly surprised with what we found in terms of R&D to build upon, but commercialization is the big challenge.

The idea for the study was hatched by Douglas Robertson, Moncton city councillor and chair of the Moncton Technology Planning Group, after hearing about IC2 and the ATI at a 2004 RE\$EARCH MONEY conference in Ottawa. Robertson says the experience of participating in IC2's Moncton study has helped focus the city's business, academic and political leaders on the importance of developing technology assets and the underlying research and educational institutes that could fuel their growth and commercial exploitation.

The \$110,000 study contains a plethora of observations and recommendations that will assist regional policymakers in charting a future course for tech-based development. It could be of significant value for other municipalities considering ways to boost their knowledge-based economies.

"Now the work begins with a focus on an implementation strategy and identifying more community champions," says Robertson. "I hope our story may resonate with other communities and with policy makers, especially in Ottawa."

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
1) Accelerate growth in targeted industries
2) Develop Moncton as a centre for tech-based entrepreneurship
3) Foster academic and research excellence linked to local economic development
4) Leverage national and international partnerships and alliances
5) Promote common vision for development

While Moncton does not currently possess a strong brand as a tech-based municipality, its existing assets do hold potential. These include the Atlantic Cancer Research Institute (formerly Beausejour Medical Research Institute), two area hospitals, thin film and wind turbine research at the Univ of Moncton, bioscience activity at Mount Allison Univ and a strong core of ICT firms including several focused on gaming.

Accelerating the development and exploitation of these assets is where the proposed Moncton Technology Commercialization Centre (MTCC) comes in. Modelled on the highly successful ATI in Austin, the MTCC concept is undergoing due diligence and is considered an essential first step to providing value-added services to emerging tech-based firms and bringing the region's players together.

"The MTCC has an early champion and our top priority is to take the time to get it right — start small and modestly like in Austin," says Robertson. "We need to proceed carefully and modestly and private sector and international partnerships could help."

MONCTON TECHNOLOGY PLANNING GROUP
<b>Steve Palmer</b> , COO Whitehill Technologies
<b>Michelle Carinci</b> , CEO Atlantic Lottery Corp
<b>Jon Manship</b> , Chairman Technology Venture Corp
<b>Bob Rybak</b> , VP Gaming Technology GTECH
<b>Rodney Ouellette</b> , Executive Director Beausejour Medical Research Institute
<b>Andrew Paskauskas</b> , Director R&D Mount Allison University
<b>Marc Surette</b> , Canada Research Chair, Cellular Lipid Metabolism Univ of Moncton
<b>Rejean Hall</b> , Director, Innovation Support Office, Univ of Moncton

**Gisele Levesque**, Acting Director, Scientific Park,  
Univ of Moncton  
**Graham Sheppard**, Principal  
NBCC Moncton  
**Doug Robertson**, Chair  
Economic Affairs Committee of Council

The MTCC could provide a focal point for start-ups in the area of informatics and gaming. For the latter, the report recommends that the Moncton-headquartered Atlantic Lottery spearhead a creative learning institute in digital media to be located close to the MTCC.

## **VISITS TO TEXAS AND FINLAND**

The Moncton Technology Planning Group will be visiting Austin to see the ATI in action first-hand. It is also planning to visit Oulu Finland, a city of comparable size to Moncton that IC2 has identified as a successful model.

"Oulu has experienced exceptionally strong technological transformation over the past thirty years from large-scale industries that use natural resources to knowledge-based industries," states the report. "Many of the actions taken by Oulu's network of government, university and private sector initiatives have already been suggested for Moncton in this report."

For some of the report's recommendations, Moncton will have to confront several major challenges. These include the absence of an English-language university, the predominance of inventor-owned intellectual property regimes, limited talent at senior management levels, the migration of talent to other jurisdictions and a decline in high school graduates.

"We are at the front end. We need to share lessons and build networks," says Robertson. "There is unanimous support from the full city council and the mayor ... We will also continue to develop our relationship with IC2."

R\$