



Mike O'Connor

Better Together

Many reasons for Grande Advantage

Does our city have the Grande Advantage? New Chamber of Commerce president Mike O'Connor thinks so.

O'Connor made his first speech as chamber president Saturday night at the annual President's Ball at the Grande Prairie Inn.

"There's a combination of things that give us the Grande Advantage," he said.

His list included quality of life, positive attitude and community spirit.

He also praised some local entrepreneurs who never said never and sold Grande Prairie outside the city. And he pointed out some of the positive things that have happened in the community in the last year or so — like Kmart, Superstore and Earls moving into the area and businesses like Canadi-

an Tire planning major expansions.

"We have planted the seed that Grande Prairie is something special," he said.

I have to admit I was a little taken aback by O'Connor's impassioned speech. I know Mike as a funny, carefree kinda guy. I didn't realize he had such a serious, down-to-earth side to him. I like the combination. I think he'll do a good job as the new chamber president. He's another Grande Advantage.

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As I looked around the room of 250-plus on Saturday night at the chamber ball it became apparent to me what the Grande Advantage is.

It is people like Darrell Radbourne, Rob Neil, Charles Longmate and Grant Menzies. They are all Grande Prairie born and raised young men who have taken the business torch from their fathers

Business Beat

Don Moon



and kept it burning in our city.

It's also veteran businessmen like Bill Bowes. Bill has earned the right to retire in some sunny far-away spot, but his name continues to show up as a volunteer whenever there is an important local event, such as the Canada Games, taking place.

And the Grande Advantage is people like Lloyd Steeves, another long-time local, who has worked his way up the ladder to become a key management person at Weyerhaeuser.

Our grandest advantage is our

local people.

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A new chamber award was unveiled on Saturday night - the Citizen of the Year Award.

Chamber president O'Connor announced the first-ever winner as all 7,000 1995 Canada Games volunteers.

"We don't have it in the budget to give them all something," O'Connor said, so the plaque was given to Grande Prairie's most prominent volunteer — Canada Games president Tom Thompson.

Thompson has worked on the Games longer than just about anyone — six years.

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