

City already a winner at smart city forum

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NEW YORK -- When it comes to the Intelligent Community Forum, Stratford means business.

Just ask Mayor Dan Mathieson, or economic development director Larry Appel, or Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance IT director John Brennan, or Rhyzome Networks business development manager Paul West, or Festival Hydro board member Doug MacDougald, or RBC regional vice-president Tom Parisi, or any one of the more than 15 people who have come to New York City to support Stratford's bid to be named as one of the world's smartest communities.

"I think that sends a very strong signal to the ICF," said Mathieson, pleased by the show of support from the community. "It sends the message that we're serious, that this is not a passing fad for us. It's a real change in direction for Stratford in the way it has turned to ICT (information and communication technologies)."

The high-profile three-day forum kicks off in Manhattan today with a workshop on health in the intelligent community -- a theme for this year's event -- followed by a panel discussion highlighting each of the seven finalists in the running for the title of Intelligent Community of the Year for 2011.

Mathieson will be joined on the panel by representatives from Eindhoven, Netherlands; Windsor-Essex, Ont.; Issy-les-Moulineaux, France; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Riverside, Calif. and Dublin, Ohio.

"That's pretty stiff competition," said the mayor, noting that those communities have committed significant resources to carving out a space in the increasingly important broadband economy. "And Stratford needs to compete."

The international exposure the city will receive at the forum will be "invaluable," he said.

In addition to keynote addresses on the intelligent community movement, the Building the Broadband Economy summit will feature a number of opportunities for Stratford to showcase itself to a global audience.

A reception Thursday night hosted by the Consulate General of Canada in New York, where Stratford and Windsor-Essex will be featured, as representatives gather at the hi-tech Samsung Experience at the Time Warner Center to receive their Top 7 awards.

The ICF Intelligent Community of the Year for 2011 will be announced Friday afternoon, and while Mathieson said he would love to hear Stratford's name called, being selected as a finalist among hundreds of communities from around the world is a victory itself.

"In a way, we've already won," he said. "What we've achieved so far is huge."

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