

<b>Red Deer Advocate (Red Deer, AB)</b>			Order/Commande
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# Local:First campaign making headway

**NEXT PHASE IS TO GET FACE-TO-FACE WITH CONSUMERS**

**BY LAURA TESTER  
ADVOCATE STAFF**

A Central Alberta initiative to boost business and consumer confidence in the midst of a sagging global economy will likely continue into the second half of 2009, says a spokesman.

Red Deer Chamber of Commerce executive director Tim Creedon said Local:First has made headway since its January launch towards promoting economic strengths to area businesses, but more needs to be done to raise community awareness.

The campaign, co-ordinated by the chamber, was created when news of a worldwide economic downturn was pervasive and there were concerns consumer spending would drastically drop locally.

"We believe we have quite strong awareness in the business community of what Local:First stands for," Creedon said on Monday.

"We have had the ads in front of the

consumers for the last four months and now we're moving to get closer to the consumer in this next phase."

Local:First representatives will greet shoppers at Bower Place Shopping Centre's Block Party which runs from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 23.

This is the first step towards reaching consumers face-to-face.

"We intend to work on other initiatives of a similar sort," Creedon said.

"The campaign will last as long as we believe, and our funding partners believe, that it needs to be there.

"I don't think a sudden upturn will completely take away the need for a Local:First message."

Creedon said the campaign will be seeking more funding from its partners.

"We've been given informal indication from several of them that they're happy to give us another round which will take us into the second half of the year."

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## **CAMPAIGN:** *Municipalities contributed \$5,000 each*

The chamber enlisted funding partners: Canadian Home Builders Association — Central Alberta, Central Alberta Realtors Association, Red Deer Regional Economic Development, Tourism Red Deer and the City and County of Red Deer.

The two municipalities contributed \$5,000 each.

REaction Marketing Solutions Inc. did pro bono work when it came to creation of the website and Local:First brand.

A number of media outlets supplemented Local:First's initial budget of \$57,500, bringing the total advertising budget to \$250,000.

Bus benches, billboards and other means of advertising were used.

"The message was if you are going to buy something, try and buy it where you live first," Creedon said. "If you can't buy it where you live, that's fine. . . there are some very serious things going on in the global economy, however Red Deer while not insulated, continues to do well."

Creedon said some businesses are finding sales softer when it comes to fringe services or products.

"Core business seems to be holding up."

Businesses can register on the website, [www.my-localfirst.ca](http://www.my-localfirst.ca). About 170 have done so far.

It allows them to use the Local:First brand for free.

The website provides "good news" stories including interviews with prominent business people. A job directory is planned.

A group of 10 builders recently did a Time to Move promotion using the Local:First brand.

Art Anastasi, president of Abbey Master Builder, said the brand was used to help encourage people to buy a home in Penhold, Red Deer, Sylvan Lake and Blackfalds.

Through the promotion, show home visitors would have their "passports" stamped at each location for the chance to win. Kris Poliakiwski of Red Deer won a 2009 Pontiac Wave through Kip Scott Pontiac Buick. Lorna Molander of Sylvan Lake, Dallas White of Red Deer, Claudia Doyle of Stauffer, Brooke Parker of Red Deer and Brennan Tallack of Red Deer each received a \$3,000 travel voucher through Sylvan Lake Travel.

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