

## **THINKING OUTSIDE THE TANK OPENS BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES.**

Local businesses in Southeastern Alberta have tapped into a unique opportunity offered by CFB Suffield at an information session called Thinking Outside the Tank . As a direct result \$566,000 of new contracts were awarded within the Palliser Economic Partnership (PEP) region.

On September 25 and 26, 2006 Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry (formerly Alberta Economic Development) and Palliser Economic Partnership hosted Thinking Outside the Tank to educate local businesses on the process of bidding for tenders within the Federal Government. The sessions were part of a larger partnership, the Defence Industry Development in Eastern Alberta Project, a collaborative effort between Palliser Economic Partnership (PEP), Battle River Alliance for Economic Development (BRAED) in east central Alberta, Northeastern Alberta Information HUB and eastern Alberta CFDCs aimed at capitalizing on the economic development opportunities available to regions near the three Canadian Forces Bases in Alberta.

According to Keith Crawford, Base Technical Services Officer for CFB Suffield, they spend approximately \$28 million per year locally on goods alone. Last year, between 12,000 and 14,000 purchases under \$5,000 were made in Southeast Alberta through direct contact with businesses. Any purchases over \$5,000 were contracted through the Government of Canada tender system.

Additionally British Military procurement opportunities are increasing. Currently, they spend about \$100 million annually, and only seven million of that goes to businesses within our region. Crawford is working on a trial project to increase local procurement to nine million. The items included on the list for the trial include everything from tools to vehicle parts to diesel fuel to small batteries. Crawford believes much of these goods could be supplied through local companies.

Economic Development Officers (EDOs) and local businesses attended the Thinking Outside the Tank sessions to learn about the opportunities available at the three military bases along Alberta's east corridor. BRAED and HUB also ran similar sessions in their local communities.

As a result of Thinking Outside the Tank, a new sandwich company located in Medicine Hat was awarded a \$400,000 contract with CFB Suffield, a Brooks company took advantage of a contract with the Drumheller Penitentiary, and a company in Hanna won a contract with CFB Suffield. Due to the success of the project, PEP, BRAED and HUB plan to hold similar seminars in the coming months of 2007.