



THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
OF THE CARIBOO

KAMLOOPS, BRITISH COLUMBIA

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For Immediate Release--February 9, 1999

Russian Interest in UCC Business

KAMLOOPS-A group from The University College of the Cariboo (UCC) is banking on shared Canadian business expertise in a ground-breaking mission to Russia with an aim to improve management practices and training in that country.

Even a brief look at Russia's economic problems is enough to make Canadians feel better about our own economy. Our devalued dollar and merging banks may make us nervous, but Russia's bottomed-out ruble, absence of banks and harsh entrepreneurial climate are impoverishing the Russian people. Some world experts even predict a move back to the "bad old days," as people reject teetering Russian free enterprise to clutch at the seeming stability of the old socialist regime.

Some Canadians with an aim to help Russia forge a solid foundation in free enterprise believe that the rest of the world can help that beleaguered country find practical ways to take advantage of progress in economic terms. This March, a group from UCC will visit Russia with just such a mission in mind. Economic instructors Jim and Zena Seldon, management consultant Sandy Abraham of the Cariboo Management Centre, international management specialist Ivan Somlai, along with public policy expert Jim Matkin of the Law Society of BC, will participate in an economic conference, funded by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), and held March 25 to 27 at the School for Management Consultants (SMC) in Moscow.

The SMC trains people to help improve the management of organizations, and will benefit from discussion on business curriculum development, improvement of institutional capacity, and enhancement of management practices and teaching skills. The conference, titled "Doing Business in the 21st Century: The Importance of Trust," will comprise three days of intensive collaboration between Canadian and Russian partners, focusing on the significance of establishing and maintaining trust as a precondition for ongoing economic and democratic development. The Conference and related activities bear directly upon the practical interpretation and implications of trust as a factor of vital importance in the ongoing transfiguration of Russia and other Central and Eastern European nations into market-based economies.

It's not just a case of transplanting traditional North American methods to new soil, explains team member Jim Matkin: "Our goal is to help our Russian partners develop methods and institutional structures appropriate to the Russian context." Member Sandy Abraham adds that Russia is currently in a state of 'learned helplessness.' "Formerly," she says, "the state provided trust, and entrepreneurs were seen as bandits." Training centres like the SMC hope to foster entrepreneurialism and, hopefully, more national economic stability by learning and applying practical ways to take advantage of progress in economic terms.

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