



DEED commissioner encourages quality, innovation in business

By Kelly Virden
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Minnesota is in the midst of a cold-water crisis, or a period of great opportunity, depending on how you look at it.

That's the message that Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) Commissioner Dan McElroy brought to the Cass County Economic Development Corporation meeting Nov. 1.

McElroy talked about how the competitive world is changing and the challenge of adapting economics in this country.

Just like a frog sitting in gradually warming water (eventually boiling), Minnesota's economy may struggle to respond quickly to the changing global conditions: outsourcing, mass production, cheap labor, etc.

However, local businesses can compete with global competitors like China and India by focusing on quality and innovation, he said.

Improving cycle time is also important, McElroy stressed. Businesses can compete by reducing the time from an idea's origination to a product's production; the time to distribute a product should also be reduced to stay competitive.

McElroy cited Arctic Cat in Thief River Falls as an example of a company that's able to change manufacturing specifications quickly in response to demand.

Science, technology and mathematics are particularly important to teach in schools, McElroy added. He recommends that schools have career days for younger students, interactions with business leaders and tours of businesses.

Furthermore, parents, grandparents and businesses need to have greater involvement in students' lives, he said.

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