

## **Innovation in Encouraging Unique Partnerships**

The Royal Canadian Mint stands as a welcoming focal point at Winnipeg's eastern entrance. People from around the world include the Mint on their itinerary when visiting the area.

"Winnipeggers, however, tend to think the Mint is simply a production facility," says Christian Robin, Supervisor of Tourism Marketing & Sales. "They don't realize it's an attraction well worth visiting."

Determined to change this misperception, Robin has established a methodical approach to increasing local awareness. His first steps included joining forces with as many tourism-related organizations as his time and budget would allow, including Destination Winnipeg, Travel Manitoba, Tourism Awareness Network, chambers of commerce, and of course, MTEC.

After about a year of belonging to a number of associations, Robin identified those he felt would be most effective in helping him achieve his goal of increased local awareness about the Mint. He purchased ad space in their publications where possible, spoke at their events, and set up displays.

"I also invited every organization I joined to use our space for their own meetings. The Mint hosts the seminar, gives everyone a tour, and lets them get on with their meeting," Robin explains. "That way, those who have been here can tell others about the Mint from personal experience."

The Mint was one of 10 attractions participating in the summer 2005 'passport' program. Visitors to one location would receive a half-price admission to any other location in the program.

Shared purchasing of ad space in hotel directories is another way Robin takes advantage of partnerships and creating a visual link between other attractions and the Mint – emphasizing again that it is a destination not just a production facility.

"We have joined Team Winnipeg and we pool our money to buy booths at conferences around Canada and the US for meeting planners," Robin says of another partnership initiative.

Through this arrangement, at least one representative from the participating attractions will attend a conference (travel being paid out of the individual's own organization). The booth promotes the attractions Winnipeg has to offer and its appeal as a good place to host a conference. Materials and information from each of the paying organizations is included at the booth to help illustrate the depth of the attractions in the city.

Finally, one of the innovative 'partnership' opportunities Robin sees is in the growing recognition of MTEC's MANITOBA BEST Service Excellence programs. He requires his staff to wear their MANITOBA BEST pin at all times – not only to promote the Mint's qualification but to help promote other MANITOBA BEST attractions.

"Everyone asks about the pin," he explains. "It prompts more interest in us and in other attractions."

If visitors are learning at the Mint about other attractions because of the MANITOBA BEST pin, Robin is counting on people attending other sites learning about the Mint. It's the kind of two-way recognition and partnership that the Mint is forging ahead with to enhance appeal to visitors from far – and from Winnipeg.