

Connecting to Edmonton: What a year 2007 was!

2007 was an incredible year for Connect to Edmonton (C2E). The first full year of existence saw membership grow explosively from 885 members to 2, 682. The community also established itself as a great resource through the “Ask Ed” forum to its topical information on everything Edmonton. Goggle searches for Edmonton material invariably have a C2E thread in the top-ten— very impressive for such a new commodity! Mostly C2E established itself as a community of Edmonton enthusiasts. From **The_Cat** "I think the one thing that C2E has done well is that it has invited members to participate in dialogue on Edmonton-related issues. It is great to hear other opinions and viewpoints. C2E has also helped encourage communication on various issues, giving Edmonton a greater voice. Thanks to C2E, I'm looking forward to Edmonton's future."

Highlights

Highlights of Connect2Edmonton in 2007 include: the release of the **top-ten list**; the one year **anniversary** of C2E in March; a “**Meet and Greet**” of C2E members also in March had over 60 people gather; June 21 saw a C2E “**Summer Solstice**” gathering at the beautiful Fairmont Hotel McDonald; “**Ask Ed**” continues to garner unique questions and queries; to the first “**Snap Edmonton**” photo contest and the **Edmonton Election forum** which gave all candidates and the C2E community an opportunity to engage each other in a manner never attempted before.

Top-10 “great ideas”

2007 on C2E began with the announcement of the top-10 “great ideas” for Edmonton. The hundreds of ideas submitted to the contest were overwhelmingly focused on six areas (in alphabetical order): art and architecture; cleaning up the city; downtown development; river valley development; tourism; and transportation. **Robert Parks** of Edmonton was chosen in a random draw from among 164 entrants to win round trip airfare for two to London, England courtesy of Edmonton Airports.

Top-ten list

1. Redevelop Rosedale
2. Clean up the city
3. Launch Winter Festival / World’s Fair bid
4. Expand the LRT
5. Enhance Edmonton’s national image
6. Improve roadways
7. Build a new downtown arena
8. Build an architectural icon
9. Encourage more public art
10. Celebrate the High Level Bridge

City-focused forum marks first year

“A year after its launch, an Internet-based forum focusing on issues affecting Edmonton bears the hallmarks of being a success, says one of its founders. **Richard Skermer**, co-chair of Connect2Edmonton, says the site has been living up to its goals (Hanson 8)”.

C2E Meet & Greet

Well attended and **24karat** expressed it best with “It was such fun to meet so many people who are so passionate about our city. Edmonton is a great place that's even greater because of you. Let's do this again.”

Summer Solstice

DebraW posted afterthoughts “A dozen or so people at different points of the evening, lively conversation...23rd AVE, SLRT, SEC, Sask. Drive hairpin, bridges, Federal Building, World's Fair(!) to mention just Edmonton centric thoughts.”

Ask Ed

The “Ask Ed” information forum proved to be popular to anyone considering moving to the GEA or area residents who just wonder “does anyone know...?” and there has yet to be an information request that has totally stumped responders!

blayne posted his thanks and appreciation “Just wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone who answered our questions and gave us so much invaluable advice on this site. We have been here 2 months now and are loving every day. Once again thank you all.”

Snap Edmonton

This new photo contest helped our popular online community attract approximately 19,000 unique visitors; new registered members and saw photographers’ explore and share Edmonton vistas with our world-wide fans.

C2E’s Snap Edmonton was an innovative online contest that invited regional residents to submit their most interesting photos that portray life in Greater Edmonton. The contest was designed to support amateur photographers in capturing Edmonton’s diversity and vitality through new and unique images.

The 'Best in Category' Snap Edmonton Contest Winners

Kim Doyle Thorsen - Pure Summer: Best in Category - Play Life

Loreli Madiuk - 21 Gun Salute at the Leg: Best in Category - Work Life

Seann Childs - City Sky [at Night]: Best in Category - City Landscapes

Seann Childs - Friday Night on Rice [Howard Way]: Best in Category - Urban Life

Alana Oldfield - [A] Day at the Market: Best in Category - In the Neighborhood

Seann Childs - Reflections [of the Leg.] - Best Overall Photo

Election Edmonton Forum

This forum proved to be animated and (very) passionate. Great support was shown from candidates and constituents alike. **Mayor Stephen Mandel** personally addressed questions and was a popular choice for Edmontonians wanting to “hear” his vision.

“Connect 2 Edmonton (www.connect2edmonton.ca) has launched an electronic public forum. It's an unprecedented way for candidates to get their platforms out and for voters to see exactly where these people stand.

The online forum on the site is structured so that every electoral candidate has been assigned a discussion thread - with some questions waiting for them. Members of the public can then comment and ask candidates more questions. Great idea (Diotte 8).”

Mayoralty candidate **Dave Dowling** created a firestorm though an erroneous letter addressed to media and his blog. Reaction was swift and successful to dispute his claims. Despite Dave’s emphatic claims that he would have nothing to do with C2E he nonetheless posted a “connect2this” poll a sampling of responses showed how this poll went.

lux “So, I hope it is not your only post here because they're pretty good for a laugh. That's my democratic opinion as a fellow citizen, and I'm not a moderator, or a campaign worker, or a martian, or a CIA operative.”

RichardsS “Sorry you did not find a sympathetic audience here Dave, however, if you would have utilized the opportunity instead of falsely attacking the constituency, the outcome may have been different in your thread.”

DebraW “Open communication channels are essential to not only democracy but to the success of any community. That is the only purpose of the Connect2Edmonton (election) forum.

It is regretful you have chosen to not be part of this unprecedented election forum and it is regretful that you cannot get past your own preconceived (and mistaken) bias against this community -- as transparent democracy is a wonderful thing to witness and be part of.”

Election wrap up and kudos from **DebraW** “Big congratulations and grateful thanks to the “behind-the-scenes” people who put together the Election Edmonton forum— this unprecedented opportunity to bring together candidates with constituents was a logistical challenge that you met with unparalleled success.

I want to express kudos to all C2E members for wholeheartedly embracing this vehicle to engage in civic change with your impressive questions, spirited involvement and obvious passion!”

There has been discussion to utilize a similar forum in the provincial and federal elections. Speculation on which election writ will be dropped first is rife and if an Edmonton MLA or Edmonton MP C2E Election forum comes to fruition it will no doubt be as engaging as the Edmonton (Municipal) Election was.

Milestones

Milestones were many and significant... C2E has over **2,680 members** and a quick perusal of the top posters show a nice mixture of moderators and the community-at-large. There are two members who have posted over 6,000 threads, one over 5,500, one over 3,100, one approaching 2,500 and about a dozen with over 1,000! **DebraW** wrote “The passion of C2E (members) is explosive and energizing.” 2007 saw an astounding **78, 000 + posts** and on September 17 there were **200 people online** “Connecting to Edmonton”.

One thread asked what people liked (and did not like) about C2E. Below is a cross section.

kcantor “Having a wide range of participants in terms of age, backgrounds, occupations and experience etc. although sometimes frustrating, this continues to be a large part of what makes the exchanges vibrant and keeps the site interesting. I guess what I’m trying to say is that the site's impartiality and broad appeal is something I like - it is not an industry group or a service club or a specific charity or a professional organization etc. that all necessitate - or at least "encourage" - a greater degree of homogeneity. It is the wide spread exchanges between non-like minds and life-styles - even when they want the same things at the end of the day - that I find interesting and that forms a large part of the site's "value added" appeal.”

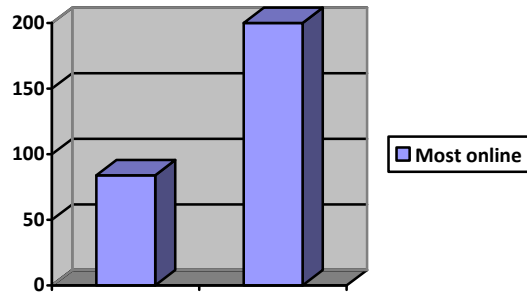
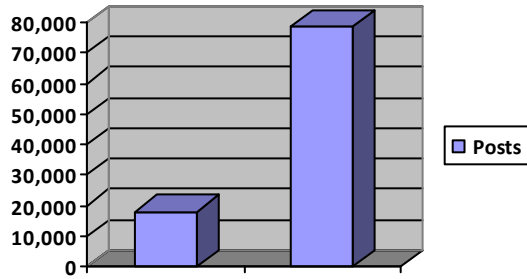
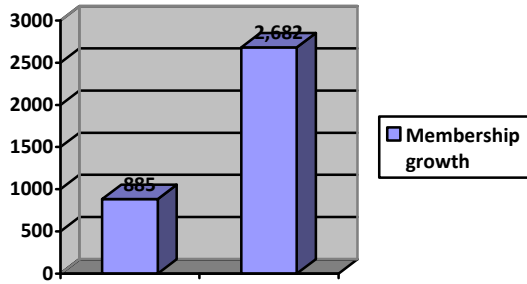
Sweetcrude “Reading alternative viewpoints. Getting current news and relevant opinions on matters that are not only important to me, but important for the future of this city, region and province.”

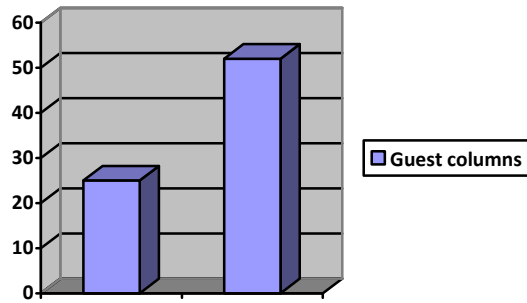
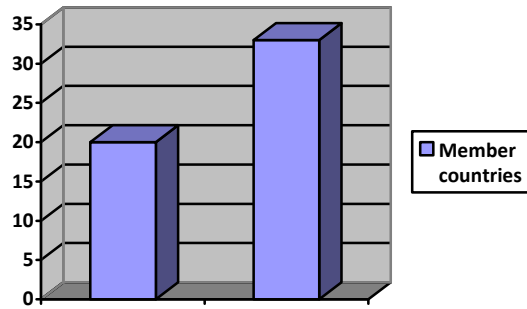
C2E is an invaluable resource and a great place to look to for a plethora of information, passionate discussion, speculation and “wishing”... the list goes on. Connect to Edmonton is like taking a regular temperature, distinct and localised, of the daily reality of Edmonton.

C2E by the numbers

Then / December 31, 2006

Now / December 31, 2007





Then / December 31, 2006

Now / December 31, 2007

Membership growth	885	2,682	1,797 new members.
Posts	18,000 +(nine month period)	78,432 (actual)	60,432 more posts.
Most online	84 (December 08 2006)	200 (September 17, 2007)	116 more people.
Member countries	20+	33	13 more countries.
Guest columns	25	52	27 new columns.