

ACCESS

SASKATCHEWAN

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NEW ADM POST A HOMECOMING FOR TERRY GIBSON

by Bev Fast

Terry Gibson had only been in his Saskatoon office for less than a week, hardly enough time to hang pictures, when he sat down to talk about his new job as Assistant Deputy Minister for Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) in Saskatchewan.

"I'm looking forward to learning about Saskatchewan and meeting the people who make it tick," Terry said.

Terry began his career with Transport Canada in 1969 where he spent a number of years before joining WD for the start-up of the Alberta Region office in 1987. He stayed with WD until 1996, when he went East to become Regional Director General for Transport Canada in Toronto.

"Toronto was a wonderful experience," he said, "but I'm glad to be back home. I'm a westerner. I spent my first 27 years in Winnipeg, then worked for 15 years in Edmonton, and I've been to Saskatchewan many, many times."

His travels took him to every corner of the province and even as far north as Uranium City. This time, though, there's a heightened sense of commitment.



*WD's New Saskatchewan Region
Assistant Deputy Minister,
Terry Gibson*

"The number one challenge, as I see it, is to discover ways to attract and promote economic diversification. I've been in the public service for 30 years, so I've got a good network. I see my role as advocating for Saskatchewan and, in a very positive way, reminding people in Ottawa that we have specific priorities here."

In order to familiarize himself with these priorities, Terry will be travelling the province this fall. "I want to get to know what services are out there," he said, "and to meet the people in the Women's Enterprise centres, Community Futures Development Corporations and Canada Business Service Centres."

He will also get to know his staff. "This is a very people-oriented office, which I like, and I hope to keep that spirit," Terry said. "The staff are motivated and enthusiastic, and I'm looking forward to working with them to develop great opportunities in Saskatchewan. I think that WD has a tremendous role to play in coordinating and assisting economic diversification in this province, and building alliances that will help us move forward together."

Welcome home, Terry. ♣

GREAT EXCURSIONS IN THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES

by Lindsay Formo

Are you bored with your current vacation plans? Do you wish there was a tourism company that offered fun, as well as inspirational and educational travel options? Look no further than the “Travel Company for the Hungry Mind” – the **Great Excursions Co.**

Great Excursions is the result of former CBC reporter-producer Claude-Jean Harel’s vision. While working with the CBC, Harel told compelling tales of life on the Northern Plains. “I was taking viewers and listeners on visual journeys on the Prairies, telling them stories, but also helping to increase their understanding of this place we inhabit.”

The tourism industry allows Claude-Jean to integrate his creativity and storytelling skills with previous travel experiences into a satisfying new career. “With Great Excursions, I am staging upscale and content-oriented tourism experiences, while using the tools of journalism to tell compelling stories.” Great Excursions experiences include everything from hiking, rafting and bird watching, to Aboriginal and French immersion. The one-to-14 day tours provide travelers with a distinctive vacation experience in the pristine Canadian Prairies.

To increase his company’s profile in the international Francophone community, Claude-Jean consulted with **Le Conseil de la coopération de la Saskatchewan (CCS)**, Saskatchewan’s affiliate of Francophone Economic

Development Organizations (FEDO). CCS, a member of Western Economic Diversification Canada’s business service network, is a non-profit organization helping small and medium-sized Francophone businesses thrive. It can provide enhanced services to Francophones, including training, business development assistance and marketing opportunities.



Claude-Jean Harel sees Great Excursions helping to develop the Prairies as a world-class tourism destination.

The CCS helped expand Claude-Jean’s business contact network and promote increased visibility for Great Excursions. “Its role has been to facilitate the integration of my business into the Francophone environment. The CCS has its ear to the ground.”

Harel sees the Prairies developing into a world-class tourism destination, with Great Excursions at the forefront. “Our goal is to become the world’s best stager of tourism experiences.”

In addition to operating unique and educational expeditions, Claude-Jean uses his expertise to teach individuals and communities how to market their cultural and natural resources. Great Excursions Co. operates Canadian tourism workshops on various subjects, including effective Internet communications and developing marketing strategies.

For more information on Great Excursions tours and packages visit www.greataexcursions.com.✻

ENTERPRISING SUCCESS FOR C.W. OLSON

by Lindsay Formo

Hard work, sacrifice and the willingness to risk everything for success – this is Wayne Olson's formula for becoming an entrepreneur.

After 25 years experience, Olson quit his job as the manager of an equipment dealership to pursue self-employment. He decided to remain in the industrial equipment industry and approached the **Canada-Saskatchewan Business Service Centre (CSBSC)** for help. For six months he spent eight hours a day at the CSBSC examining global trends in the industry, sharpening his entrepreneurial skills and putting together an impressive business plan. Olson's substantial planning and research ensured success for his new company, **C. (W.) Olson Enterprises Ltd.**, and allowed him to take back his independence and become an entrepreneur.

"I appreciated the help of the people at the CSBSC. They gave me upbeat, positive direction and access to every resource I needed. They were a god-send for their abundance of information and support," commented Olson.

Olson used his severance pay to create C. (W.) Olson Enterprises. The company began as an equipment appraisal, sales and marketing firm, but Olson quickly realized the environment in Saskatchewan was more favourable towards the repossession of heavy equipment rather than sales.

Olson approached several banks to determine if repossession and appraisal services were jointly available. He realized the combination of the two services was not common, but would be useful to financial institutions. Soon C. (W.) Olson Enterprises changed its focus and began offering repossession services, in addition to appraisals and sales.



C. (W.) Olson Enterprises recently formed a joint venture to provide liquidation services with PBR Auctions of Saskatoon.

To continue expanding the company, Olson needed additional financing. He approached the CSBSC again, where he learned about the **Saskatoon Credit Union Micro Loan Program**. He applied for a loan through the program and received \$25,000 to fuel his small business.

C. (W.) Olson Enterprises' business is growing at a staggering pace. In one short year, it has bloomed into a successful

appraisal, sales, marketing and consulting firm, and has recently formed a joint venture with Saskatoon's PBR Auctions to provide liquidation services.

The Canada-Saskatchewan Business Service Centre is a joint initiative of Western Economic Diversification Canada and the Saskatchewan Department of Economic and Co-operative Development. It offers entrepreneurs information on starting a business, developing a business plan, marketing strategies, financing and regulatory matters. ♣

LOGGING FOR SUCCESS

by Ray Yang

Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) and three Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs) in Saskatchewan have partnered to set up the **Community Development Forestry Initiative**, encouraging business development in the northern forestry regions of the province.

WD announced a \$1.5 million repayable contribution in September 2000, to be divided equally among Beaver River, Prince Albert and District, and Visions North CFDCs. The initiative will assist the expansion of the forestry industry in Saskatchewan, and support the proposed Canada/Saskatchewan Forestry Accord.

The forestry initiative is intended to position the three northern Saskatchewan CFDCs to better assist with the demand for loans and ensure that northern communities realize the benefits from the opportunities that will result from forestry expansion. It will also support specific opportunities in the forestry sector, as well as provide spin-off opportunities for small businesses. Loans will be available to businesses directly involved in forest harvesting, transportation, value-added processing and agroforestry, or businesses providing services to the forestry industry.

Danny Ross of Ross Logging Ltd. is one of Visions North CFDC's clients who has benefited from the Forestry Initiative loan program. Wood harvesting has been a family affair for Ross, whose father was in the industry 25 years ago. Danny

is now the sole proprietor of the business that provides wood-harvesting services for Weyerhaeuser Saskatchewan Ltd.

Incorporated in 1984, Ross Logging has slowly, but continually, moved from a manual operation to increased automation. Employees use equipment such as skidders, a mechanical limber and a feller buncher to do the harvesting. With the loan assistance, Ross was able to expand his business from one skidder to three, and add a feller buncher. He also recently purchased an additional 7,000 cubic metres of wood, running the total production to about 38,195 cubic metres annually.

"They (Visions North CFDC) have helped me a lot. Without them, I wouldn't be where I am today. They wouldn't turn me down, and I would definitely go to them again if I needed help," says Ross. His long-term goal is to have a fully mechanized wood harvesting operation.

CFDCs are members of the Western Canada Business Service Network. In Saskatchewan, the Network also includes Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan Inc., Canada-Saskatchewan Business Service Centres, Conseil de la Coopération de la Saskatchewan and WD offices.

For more information on the programs and services available through the Western Canada Business Service Network, contact your local CFDC office or call WD at 1-888-338-WEST (9378) or visit our Web site at: www.wd.gc.ca. ♣