

ACCESS

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GROWING THE FUTURE: Inspires Upbeat Attitude

by Bev Fast

Ralph Goodale, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, appeared in Saskatoon in early March to launch an innovative new marketing campaign on behalf of Western Economic Diversification's Secretary of State Stephen Owen.

Growing the Future takes aim at rural attitudes. Since the Great Depression, rural residents have tended to underplay, minimize, even deny, their successes. And, despite the setbacks of recent years, Saskatchewan boasts many success stories in both traditional and diversified agricultural enterprises. The campaign will shine a light on these stories and inspire others to seek their own prosperity.

The campaign consists of four one-hour radio documentaries and shorter vignettes that profile success and diversification in Saskatchewan's farm economy. Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) and the Government of Saskatchewan each contributed \$218,500 to the initiative through **Saskatchewan Agrivision Corporation**.

"WD and the Government of Canada are committed to building a stronger, more competitive West through

innovation and access to the necessary tools and resources," Minister Goodale said at the March 8, 2002, launch. "Many Saskatchewan rural entrepreneurs are already agents of change and innovation, building a broader, deeper rural economy that can attract new investment and jobs. We need to celebrate and assist them, while assuring other businesspeople that they can do the same."

Dr. C.M. (Red) Williams, president of the Saskatchewan Agrivision Corporation, said, "We hear about the decline of traditional agriculture on a daily basis, but very little about the emerging 21st Century agriculture that will make rural Saskatchewan flourish. There are many success stories in rural communities, both in agriculture and non-agriculture. We must recognize and celebrate this growing number, because they are the seed of our future prosperity."

Growing the Future complements WD's involvement in other proactive agricultural business development projects undertaken with Saskatchewan Agrivision Corporation. ♦

Saving Our Elevators

by Diana Ireland

South Central Community Futures Development Corporation



A converted elevator at Chaplin finds new life as Mainline Pulse Inc.

When the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool announced the closure of 184 grain elevators in January 2001, 16 communities within the **South Central Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC)** area were affected and rallied to meet the challenge.

Closure of the elevators would mean a decline in the rural population and municipal tax base of communities across south central Saskatchewan, from Avonlea to Woodrow. It also meant higher transportation costs for farmers, higher road and highway maintenance costs, and a general deterioration of services throughout the region.

To assist communities in addressing the crisis, Assiniboia-based South Central CFDC engaged a consultant to assess the condition and viability of the elevators. The assessment included evaluation of the elevators' physical condition, rail facilities and rail services, as well as the communities'

highway and secondary road systems. Alternative and adaptive elevator uses were also identified.

Support from Western Economic Diversification Canada, through the **Community Economic Development Opportunity Initiative Program**, made this work possible.

As a result of the assessment, local leaders began organizing cooperatives, new generation cooperatives, limited partnerships and shareholder companies in order to save their elevators.

Their determination is paying off. As of March 2002, 11 of the 16 elevators have been purchased, two are under negotiation, two have been taken off the market, and one is past its useful life and will be torn down.

Two of the elevators are being converted to pulse crop cleaning and processing facilities. Others are being used to provide storage, clean grain to export standards, load producer cars, buy/sell feed and livestock products, process livestock feed, and distribute chemicals and fertilizers. Some are being restored to primary elevator status. The elevator scale is one of the most valuable assets to trade in rural areas. When a farmer sells a load of hay to his neighbour, for example, he almost always scales it at the local elevator.

To date, elevator conversions have resulted in an investment of \$10.5 million in the region. The 35 jobs lost by the closures have been replaced with 43 new jobs, and more than 100 potential new jobs expected.

For more information, contact South Central Community Futures Development Corporation at (306) 642-5558. ♦

Encouraging Entrepreneurship as a Career Option

by Bev Fast

Good news travels fast, especially in rural Saskatchewan. This explains the phenomenal growth of the **Youth Business Excellence (YBEX)** program first introduced in the province by the Northwest Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) in 1997 and now spreading to other CFDCs.

“There is a lot of excitement about YBEX in our region,” says Holly Marshak, YBEX Coordinator at **Sagehill Development Corporation**. “This is our third year and the participation rate has almost doubled. We have over 222 students this year compared to 166 in 2001. The feedback and comments we’re getting from young people, teachers and parents are excellent.”

Although individual CFDCs have variations in their YBEX programs, all share the same purpose: to recognize the outstanding entrepreneurial achievements of young people in Grades 6-8 and Grades 9-12.

“We have young people participating through their schools and also on their own,” Marshak says. “We’re proud of them all.”

Sagehill’s YBEX program has a “Dreamer” category that encourages applicants to enter business ideas, a “Taking the Plunge” category for business plans, and a “Seasoned Pro” category for established youth-owned and operated businesses.

“YBEX gives young people an opportunity to participate in entrepreneurial projects,” says Dianne Olchowski, CEO at Sagehill. “It also provides an opportunity to increase awareness of entrepreneurship as a career option.”

YBEX Awards are presented in each category during an annual banquet held in the spring. The diversity and calibre of ideas, business plans and operating businesses up for awards is eye-



(L to R) Nicole Longmoir, Reba Brataschuk, Donna Dyok, Chris Holter and Hope Hannah – 2001 YBEX participants from Quill Lake School.

opening. Last year, Sagehill applicants included a 15-year old making \$1,500 to \$3,000 a month operating a Web-based snowmobile parts replacement business, and a 17-year old running a successful sheep operation. There were also many imaginative ideas, including shoes that turn into inline skates and a doghouse with electric door openers ... operated by the dog.

“We encourage these ideas because they’re innovative,” Olchowski says. “We believe innovation is what gets you where you want to go. Innovation isn’t the destination, it’s the road.”

At the entrepreneurial level, encouraging innovation among young people could lead to exciting future opportunities for rural Saskatchewan.

CFDCs are funded by Western Economic Diversification Canada. For more information about YBEX awards and programs, contact your local CFDC office. ♦

Pan-Canadian Community Futures Group Reaches Out

by Brinley Werrett

Entrepreneurs from across Canada can click into stories about other successful Canadian businesspeople at www.communityfutures.ca, a new Web site launched by the **Pan-Canadian Community Futures**



Group at the third annual Connectivity Conference held February 21st in Saskatoon. The conference was co-hosted by Community Futures Partners of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Economic Developers Association, Saskatchewan Economic and Co-operative Development, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and Communication Canada.

The Web site spotlights local success stories from the group's 259 Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) and Community Business Development Corporation (CBDC) members across the country. It offers useful business tips and business programs and services information for entrepreneurs, and acts as a link for the pan-Canadian group members to trade ideas and interact.

The Pan-Canadian Community Futures Group is a coordinating body that brings together the various provincial and territorial CFDCs and CBDCs to share information, coordinate plans and raise the profile of the Community Futures program.

Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) provides core funding assistance to the 90 CFDCs in Western Canada. These grassroots organizations are actively engaged in numerous activities that foster and support economic

development, mainly by providing a range of business services to potential and existing entrepreneurs.

Available on the Web site is the group's new annual

report, "*Dedication to Local Prosperity*", which was also released on February 21st. The report provides an overview of the group's mandate, financial information, members and future plans. St. John's, Newfoundland, was announced as the host of the 2003 Pan-Canadian Community Futures Conference.

"The Pan-Canadian Conference is an excellent opportunity for CFDCs and CBDCs from all over the country to get together and share ideas," said Bill Matlock, chair of Community Futures Partners of Saskatchewan. "When you are trying to reach out to so many different communities, information and teamwork can play a key role in your success. Networking not only promotes success as a group, but passes that success on to each of our members."

"Community Futures Development Corporations bring together talent, experience and wisdom to cooperatively build a community's sustainable future," says Stephen Owen, Secretary of State for Western Economic Diversification. "They make a significant impact on the lives of western Canadians; the results speak for themselves. WD is pleased to be a partner in this process."

For more information, contact your local CFDC or log on to www.communityfutures.ca. ♣