



March 2015 Issue

Increasing Competitiveness and Growth in Rural Western Canadian Communities

Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) plays a key role in supporting business development in rural communities and promoting economic stability across the West through the work of Community Futures (CF).

As part of WD's [Western Canada Business Service Network \(WCBSN\)](#), the [90 CF locations](#) operating across the West deliver tailored planning, program and resources that support the growth of small communities and businesses.

Championing Workplace Safety

Theo Heineman had a vision: "that we could have an impact on sending workers home safe at the end of every day and help fellow entrepreneurs protect and grow their businesses". Today, she is living that vision through her company—1 Life Workplace Safety and Health in Winnipeg.



Theo Heineman believes safety comes first.

As a paramedic in Brunkild, Manitoba, Heineman witnessed firsthand the dangers faced in many workplaces. The former Community Futures client started a company specializing in

safety management system evaluation, design, implementation and continuous improvement.

Her company provides safety management system development, assistance with the Certificate of Recognition (COR) process, audits, gap analysis, consulting, coaching and training courses. "I love going into business, putting good standards into place and helping to create more profitable, sustainable businesses," says Heineman.

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Heineman has become the go-to person related to issues of on-the-job health and safety and leverages technology to help employers comply with Workplace Safety and Health requirements. 1 Life clients include manufacturers, car dealerships, contractors, as well as city and provincial agencies.



In the beginning, she contacted Community Futures Triple R Morris, located in Morris, Manitoba, for help getting her company off the ground: "Triple R was the start of that," she said. "I took accounting and marketing courses. They set me up with a business plan and helped me write it and I ran it out of my home".

Starting out of her home in 2009, she now employs 15 people and runs an award winning company in Winnipeg. Awards include the BBB Torch Awards, Canadian Society of Safety Engineering, and 2011 Woman Entrepreneur of the Year.

Safety procedures help workers get home safely.

Supporting Technology to Benefit Agriculture

Rural and small-town Saskatchewan hosts numerous manufacturers, such as Commutron Industries Ltd. (Commutron) across a variety of industries. Commutron is a custom printed circuit board (PCB) manufacturer, in Elbow, Saskatchewan, 60 minutes south of Saskatoon.




Commutron Industries Ltd.'s printed circuit board (PCB). Photo credit: Commutron Industries Ltd.


A PCB supports and connects electronic components in all but the most basic electronic products. Commutron, which employs 26 staff, has created and tested PCBs that range from gas-control systems that reduce emissions in the oil industry to seed-flow monitoring products that help in agriculture production. Most of its contracts come from Western Canada and Ontario. The Commutron components are part of larger products that are shipped all over North America.


Bryan Cafferata, Commutron's General Manager, says it was beneficial for the company to work with MidSask Community Futures as well as valuable to get the financing it needed in a timely way during the company's expansion four years ago. "It had a significant effect on our production in terms of being able to get the equipment we needed. We were able to increase production with the new equipment."


Commutron also benefits from a labour pool with flexible work schedules, a lower cost of living, and lower occupancy costs by being located in a smaller rural community. "They have consistently grown the number of employees over the life of the company," explains Russ McPherson, MidSask CFDC Manager. In turn, Commutron helps diversify the local agriculture-based economy and provides stable long-term employment.


The banner features a light blue background with a dark blue footer. On the left, four social media icons (Twitter, LinkedIn, RSS, and News Releases) are stacked vertically. To the right of each icon is a corresponding text link. On the far right, there is a stylized compass rose graphic with labels NW, W, and SW. The footer contains the Canadian flag, the organization's name in English and French, and the Canada wordmark.


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