

Plain & Valley

Covering Southeast Saskatchewan and Southwest Manitoba

October 2011 • Volume 4, Number 10



Charles Tweed photo

Mark Wotton, Jon Montgomery, Kole Magnowski, Theoren Fleury and Jeff Odgers stop for a photo after the Sportsman's Dinner in Russell. The event helped raise money for the upgraded multiplex in the community.

Russell Sportsman's Dinner and Celebrity Auction

Dinner offers laughs and inspiration

BY CHARLES TWEED

It was night filled with stories, laughter and inspiration as close to 300 people packed the community hall in Russell to listen to some of the greatest athletes the area has ever produced, all the while, helping raise valuable funds to the Russell Multiplex.

"It all started at the Russell Multiplex," said Jon Montgomery, who won gold in skeleton at the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver. "It's where my dream was forged and I got a sense of myself on that sheet of ice and I know what we are doing here tonight is going to create that for people down the road as well."

Montgomery said the road to gold at the Olympics was paved by one of the other speakers in attendance.

"My dream of representing Canada started about the same time a pint sized

local boy named Theo Fleury joined the Flames and from that point forward I was reminded by the sign of the highway, that bore his name, that big things can happen to small guys from small towns.

Montgomery's story took many turns with the only common thread being his unwavering determination to be an Olympian someday.

"I wanted to represent Canada at something and I didn't care what it was," said Montgomery. "It could have been tiddly-winks."

The determination led him to get a tattoo of the Maple Leaf on his chest, a tattoo that he hoped he could add more artwork to.

"I wanted to get something that would never go out of style, never change, it's something I'll always be proud of and

something that I could hopefully add to— hopefully with the five rings of the Olympics," said Montgomery. "And I got that tattoo with my mother."

Montgomery said he was asked during college, when a classmate saw his tattoo, "What sport did you participate in at the Olympics?" He said: "I haven't found it yet, but I am looking."

He also spoke at length of his first time down the track. Montgomery had signed up for a skeleton class in Calgary at Canada Olympic Park, unfortunately the class was full so he added his name to the waiting list. When the class came around, Montgomery was blessed with a -31 degrees Celsius night that forced many competitors to withdraw.

"I'll never forget that night, going down that track for the very first time," said Montgomery. "It was an assault on my

senses. I had no idea where I was or what was happening, and what the pressures were representing but when I crossed that finish line you couldn't wipe the smile off of my face with 40-grit sandpaper. I was grinning from ear to ear like a dummy and I knew I had found something I could be passionate about."

After only four runs that winter, Montgomery set out to build more explosive strength. He read books and hit the gym. The odds of him becoming an Olympic athlete were slim, the odds of him becoming a gold medalist were near impossible.

"Nobody told me it was impossible so I believed it was possible," said Montgomery. "Imagine if we could tune out all of the people that use words like 'can't' and 'never' . . . I believe things are only out of our reach, if we put them there."

Continued on Page 3

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Fleury had to face his demons

Continued from front "The biggest component to my success in 2010 was the preparation that went into the games," said Montgomery. "I came to the starting line knowing

that I had put in the time but more importantly the effort while I was there . . . I had relished the small victories, learned from watching my fellow competitors succeed, controlled my at-

titude regarding situations I was presented with and I was the beneficiary of a great deal of support and encouragement, and not only from my teammates but from my family and



Jon Montgomery signs autographs for kids at Major Pratt School

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my country—you people from Russell."

Montgomery also took a chance to take a poke at his sliding comrades.

"Luge is for lugers," said Montgomery.

The final speaker of the night was Stanley Cup winner and Olympic gold medalist Theoren Fleury. The longtime Calgary Flame began his speech speaking of his childhood in Russell.

"It's a little weird to be speaking in front of people that gave me the strap when I was in school," said Fleury with a laugh.

"What I learned were the core values that this community is based on," said Fleury. "Respect, caring for one another, love and all the important things that when you're six years old you can't get anywhere than playing a team sport."

"Hard work is the only way to be successful in life," said Fleury. "When I lined up against you at the beginning of the game I would look at you . . . I was willing to die for the

win because of my willingness to compete—you have to compete every day and be the best you can be every single day."

Fleury emphasized how important the Russell rink was to his career—how important it was to his life.

"If that rink wasn't there, I'm not here," said Fleury. "Dreams happen. They've happened in this town and surrounding area a lot because the facilities are available."

"You can always reinvent yourself and you can always go in a different direction in your life," said Fleury. "In 2005, I was left with a choice—am I going to live or am I going to die? I chose to live but I had no idea how to live my life."

Fleury, who has also authored the book "Playing with Fire," spoke about the sexual abuse he encountered during his time in the Western Hockey League. "I was left with some deep emotional pain and the only thing that allowed me to get through was drugs and alcohol," explained Fleury. "It got to the point where that stuff wasn't working anymore and I played the victim a lot in my life . . . somehow I had to find how to get from victim to survivor."

Fleury said he's still healing and that he's found his calling in life. That calling is the ability to help others that have been affected by sexual abuse.

"Whenever I'm feeling bad about myself now, I just help someone else and all of sudden I don't feel so bad," said Fleury. "Helping other people is what I've dedicated my life to now."

The night also featured speeches from former NHLer and long time

AHL captain Mark Wotton, from Foxwarren. Wotton was emotional at times throughout his speech, recognizing last year was his last as a professional hockey player.

Kole Magnowski, a Canadian and Pan Am Games champion in waterskiing, spoke about the hardships he encountered growing up, and how the small community helped shape him into the person he is today.

Jeff Odgers may have stolen the show however; his witty stories had the audience on the edge of their seats before dropping a one-liner that caused the room to erupt in laughter. Odgers, a former NHL captain who now farms near Spy Hill, spoke of his many experiences during his playing career.

The evening, which was hosted by the Russell Minor Hockey Association, helped raise more than \$20,000 for the facility.

"We were really happy with the turnout," said Sarah Reichmuth, secretary of the RMHA. "The speakers were so great that we really couldn't have asked for anything better."

Reichmuth was also impressed with the level of commitment the speakers had toward the cause.

"They all told a personal story that really stressed the importance of rinks and places like the Multiplex in the community," said Reichmuth. "They took time out of their busy schedules to make sure there is an opportunity for future athletes. The fact they showed up at the school before the dinner for an autograph session, well, I just know how much that meant to the kids."

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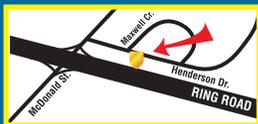
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Theoren Fleury poses for a photo with a Flames fan during the autograph session.

Sask population hits a new all-time high

Saskatchewan's population has hit a new all-time high of 1,057,884 people following the largest quarterly population jump ever recorded since Statistics Canada starting keeping quarterly population estimates.

Between April 1, 2011 and July 1, 2011, Saskatchewan grew by 5,444 people. This growth consisted of a natural increase (births minus deaths) of 1,524, net inter-provincial migration of 1,239 and net interna-

tional migration of 2,681. Saskatchewan saw net in-migration from most other provinces including Ontario (641 people), Alberta (423 people) and Manitoba (147 people).

Over the last four years, Saskatchewan has grown by more than 50,000 people—from 1,007,614 in January 1, 2008 to 1,057,884 on July 1, 2011.

"There were those who said it would be impossible for Saskatchewan to grow by 100,000 people in 10 years, which is re-

ally only growing at the national average," Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall said. "The fact is, Saskatchewan has been growing by far more than the national average for several years now. We're up 50,000 people in just three and a half years, so hitting 1.1 million people by 2015 is well within reach."

Saskatchewan's population is also bucking the national trend by getting younger. The median age in Saskatchewan is now

37.3 years. That's the second-lowest among the provinces and Saskatchewan is one of only two provinces to see its median age get younger in the past year. In fact, since 2007, Saskatchewan's median age has dropped from 38.0 to 37.3.

Wall said this reflects the fact that more young people and young families are choosing to stay in Saskatchewan or are moving back to Saskatchewan.

"That means good

things for our province's future," Wall said. "A growing population and economy provides a growing tax base which allows government to lower taxes and fund important government services like health care, highways and education."

Southeast Saskatchewan appears to be growing quickly along with the rest of the province. Saskatchewan Health released information on the number of people covered

under the provincial medicare plan each year by municipality.

The figures for June 30, 2011 are not yet available, but in 2010 Moosomin's population increased to 2,723 from 2,496 a year earlier, according to information in the health department's database, and Rocanville's population increased to 1,188 from 1,040. Increases were also recorded in 2010 for Wawota at 694, Wapella at 470, Maryfield at 395, and Welwyn at 200.



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Hard hitting derby action



A Gapland player, right, sends a Betties player for a ride.

The Gapland Rollers from Rocanville hosted their first ever roller derby match against the Redneck Betties from Swift Current, beating the Betties 183-149 on Sept. 24. Hundreds of people came out to see the match; derby is entirely new to Rocanville.

Right: A pileup involving three players.



Charles Tweed photos

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Pickup Times
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This shuttle returns home from the casino at 4:00 p.m.

Pickup Times
 Moosomin: 9 a.m. The Uptown Bar
 Whitewood: 9:30 a.m. City and Transit Stop
This shuttle returns home from the casino at 3:00 p.m.

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Ed James photos
Two of eight combines that took off a canola crop for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank at the Cross Borders Community Growing Project at Kola on Friday, Sept. 16.

Cross Borders Community Growing Project: Local project provides help for the hungry

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK
Volunteers gathered in a field near Kola on Friday, Sept. 16 to harvest a crop for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

The annual harvest day at the Cross Borders Growing Project has become a local tradition in the Kola area, with farmers leaving their own crops to volunteer their time to harvest a crop intended to put a dent in world hunger.

The Cross Borders Growing project received a cheque for \$71,737.99 from the elevator for the canola harvested that day. To that total is added the thousands of dollars of cash donations that come in to the project. The total collected is sent to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, and the federal government matches the funds 4:1, with the final total being made available to help address hunger issues in developing countries.

Last year, once the federal matching grants were applied, the Cross-Borders project raised \$600,000 for the Foodgrains Bank.

Jan Neufeld, one of the organizers of the Cross-Borders project, says the funds are always coming in from the project.

"On the day of the harvest, we had about \$3,000 in cash donations, and I just got another cheque for \$2,000," she says. "We really have strong support from across the area—a lot of different entities give of their time and their money."

This year the project had use of a 285 acre field, but because of the wet spring, only 206 acres were seeded.

"We didn't get any of our own canola in," says Neufeld. "All we put in was for the Foodgrains Bank. We feel that it's so important that we need to make sure that it gets done first. This spring, we quit seeding wheat because we had to get some canola in. Because of the wet weather, there was only one day we could plant so we put it in for the Foodgrains Bank."

"Don feels if he doesn't give his first fruits to God, he can't expect to be blessed. Don feels very strongly that this gets done first. Usually this is the first crop in in the area."

Neufeld's husband Don is one of the main forces behind the Cross Borders Growing Project.

"His uncle Harry Neufeld started this years ago, and got his dad Art Neufeld involved," she explains.

"Don and I have been doing this since his dad died. Don was somewhat involved, but wasn't one of the main organizers, but when his dad died of West Nile Virus eight years ago, it was right around harvest time. He was adamant he was going to get out of the hospital for harvest. The harvest took place without him, and he died a couple of days later. Don made a promise that he was going to take care of the project after that."

"He had a dream—an actual dream. He saw just thousands and thousands of people holding their hands out wanting food. He woke up, and he was just in a sweat. He had to make sure these people got fed. Ever since then, it's been his thing."

The Cross Borders Growing Project has been going on for close to 20 years. The acreage has grown in that time, and there has never been a problem finding volunteers who are willing to help, says Neufeld.

"People are very enthusiastic about being part of it. We've always had strong support from farmers and businesses in Moosomin, Virden, Elkhorn and Maryfield—all around the area."

"Now we're getting the machinery dealers involved, and they're all very supportive. There gets to be a bit of a competition out there. Mazer's has been involved, as has Miller Farm Equipment. We're getting Maple Farm Equipment involved now, and it's good to have them all involved."

Jan Neufeld sees a future for the Cross Borders project. "I don't see the project ending anytime soon—not as long as Don has breath," she said. "He is very passionate about it."

From his office in Winnipeg, Jim Cornelius oversees the operations of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, which distributed more than \$38 million worth of food aid last year, helping 2.3 million people in developing countries around the world.

He says local growing projects like the Cross Borders Growing Project at

"Hunger is not a natural phenomenon—it's a product of our social structures and we can fix it."

—Jim Cornelius, Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Kola are important to the Foodgrains Bank.

"They are absolutely vital. Much of our program is built on those types of projects. We did a calculation, and found that 60 per cent of the donation revenue we get in a year comes from these types of projects."

"It's also a key part of our identity. We are connected to these grassroots efforts."

The amount of land seeded to Foodgrains Bank growing projects across Canada has remained relatively stable over the last few years.

"There are some projects that have a life cycle to them, but new ones emerge elsewhere to replace ones that may die off," said Cornelius. "We have some projects, like Kola, that have just become institutions in the community. They are just an ongoing part of the community and community life."

"We are seeing new things arise too, from apple orchards to virtual growing projects. That's where they get people across the country to make a donation to sponsor an acre or partner with farmers to actually grow a crop."

Why does he believe people volunteer their time and donate their money for Foodgrains Bank projects?

"I think there are two primary motivations," he says. "At one level, people have a sense that they have been blessed themselves. They feel that they are very fortunate and they have an obligation to give back in some way."

"They know that there is a farmer or a mother somewhere on the other side of the world who they think of as their neighbor, and just like they would help a neighbor down the street, they feel an obligation to help these people, who are also their neighbors."

"The motivation is very much linked to people feeling blessed and wanting to share, and also understanding that someone on the other side of the world is part of the family, and everyone should be

able to eat from the family table."

He said the community growing projects are also a success because of the involvement of the entire community.

"Working to alleviate hunger is a good thing, and doing it together in community is also a lot more fun than doing it alone. It's always more fun to do things together. Everyone enjoys the harvest day and seeing the results and bringing the community and the kids together."

Why has Cornelius himself spent a lifetime working to alleviate hunger through the Foodgrains Bank?

"I have a personal sense that hunger is a deep scar on the human family and it's not inevitable and we need to do something about it and we can do something about it," he says.

"I grew up in Africa and I'm aware of the circumstances that people find themselves in. The causes of hunger are something we can deal with. Hunger is not a natural phenomenon—it's a product of our social structures and we can fix it. I sense a deep calling from God about the repair of the world, and that's what I'm responding to."

Cornelius says it's always heartening to see the results of harvest days like the one at Kola.

"It's not just another day at the office when we see these results," he says. "It's received with a sense of joy—I am constantly heartened by the degree to which people are prepared to step out from their lives and make a difference in the world."

"There's nothing like going out to a harvest celebration with some of the volunteers at the Foodgrains Bank to restore your faith in the human species. This is where I get my energy from, meeting the volunteers. They are tremendous people and their enthusiasm lifts your soul. Our staff try to get out to as many growing projects as possible, and they always come back excited and thrilled at what

they're seeing.

"On the other side of things we spend time in the field, where the aid is being delivered, and you see what a difference the growing projects are making."

"We have an annual study tour that we run that takes key volunteers to see some of people overseas who receive food aid from their growing projects."

"They stay in local people's homes so they actually get to connect in a real way with people who are benefiting from the program. While they understand that these are their family members—extended family members—after a trip, they know it deep in their hearts. These are very transformative experiences for people."

Harold Penner is the regional co-ordinator for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank for Manitoba. He says the Cross Borders Growing Project at Kola is one cross-border growing project.

"Kola is one of our larger acreage projects," he said. "There has been very strong support from the community there, and it's been a very successful project every year."

Each of the Prairie provinces has about 30 growing projects, which are among the 225 Foodgrains Bank projects across Canada.

Why does Penner think there is such strong support for the Foodgrains Bank?

"I think that there are

probably two aspects to it," he says. "For a lot of people, it's a Christian response to hunger. Our base is in the churches, and a lot of the people who support our projects are motivated by the fact that Jesus taught us we have to look after those in need."

"We also have a lot of people who simply join in because they see it as the right thing to do, whether they're church people or not."

What is his personal motivation?

"I've been a farmer all my life and I spent six years of my life working for the Mennonite Central Committee in India and Bangladesh. When I decided to do that, I was trying to follow the example of Jesus and help those in need."

"Those six years have had a real impact on my life. I wasn't quite 20 when I went to India the first time. I think when you do something like that, your world view is affected for the rest of your life. I'm sure we are all shaped by our experiences and I was shaped by my time in India and Bangladesh."

Penner says he gets a lot of personal satisfaction out of his work with the Foodgrains Bank.

"I just love my job," he says. "To me it's a very important mission we are doing as a Foodgrains Bank and I feel very fortunate to be a part of this organization. I meet such wonderful people who are willing to participate and donate to help people they will never meet."

"To go to a place like Kola and meet all these people, I get a lot of encouragement."

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Things coming together for 'Joseph' production

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK
 Sherrie Meredith, Sandra Poole, and Raven Wood have a vision. They would like to bring together a group of people to perform an Andrew Lloyd Webber musical on stage in Moosomin, and they're starting to see that vision take shape.

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat has been performed everywhere from Broadway to London's West End, and the three women, who have set up Creative Vision Productions, are bringing the musical to Moosomin.

Meredith will direct the group's first production, Poole is the musical director and Wood is the producer.

With seven practices under their belts for the Nov. 25-27 production, the cast and choirs are starting to come into their parts, says Poole. "The choirs are starting to sound good," she said. "It's great. They have more volume, they are more confident. It's really starting to come together."

She said more people can still come on board and join the musical production.

"The character roles are filled, but anyone interested in singing can still join," she said.

In addition to the choruses and soloists on stage,

music will be provided by a band under the leadership of David Dahlgren.

The band includes piano, trumpet, tuba, and clarinet, and could use a flautist, a drummer, and three guitar players.

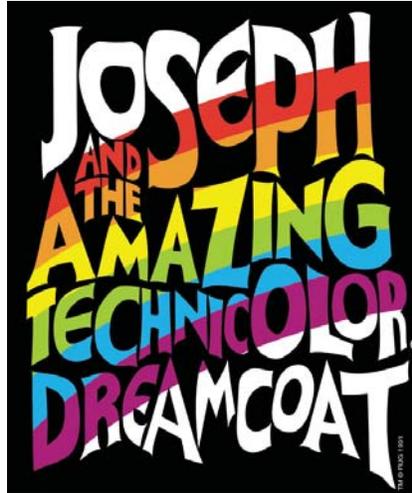
Poole says the production is something that has been in the back of her mind for a long time.

"I've been dreaming about it for a few years," she says. "This is the year it seemed to fit with people's schedules, and with Bethlehem Live taking a break this year, we're filling a void. The beauty of Joseph is that it is set in Biblical times, so we can use a lot of the costumes and some of the sets from Bethlehem Live, and whatever we create for our production they may be able to use as well."

The Bethlehem Live group advanced some seed money to Creative Vision Productions so they could pay up-front costs like royalties and get their show under way.

"Their committee has been fantastic," says Meredith. "They've been very helpful in getting us started."

The women are hoping to make their musical productions an annual or bi-annual event, so Creative Vision



Productions has been set up as a non-profit organization.

"We may hold back some funding for future productions, but any surplus funding will go back to the community," said Wood.

The group has lined up a few sponsors. The women had initially hoped to hold their production at the Community Theatre, but the theatre is booked for movies every weekend, so it will be held at the Moosomin Convention Centre as a dessert theatre.

There will be some additional costs at that venue, as Creative Vision will have to rent some equipment such as stage lighting.

The production includes participants from several local communities—

Moosomin, Rocanville, Wapella, Maryfield, and the Welywn area among them.

"We have a lot of community members involved and we're hoping to make this a real community event," said Meredith.

There will be 90-100 people involved in the production, including cast, crew and volunteers.

The production will feature people on stage from age four to their 70s, but will rely heavily on school-aged youth.

The production includes an elementary age choir, a high school age choir, and a teenage dance ensemble.

"There are some entire families involved," says Wood. "It's nice to have those family connections—it's something that families can do together."

Poole says the practices have been going very smoothly so far.

"I'm really surprised how well it's going," she said. "People are coming out, they're getting hooked, and they're having fun."

Is she enjoying it? "I feel like I've come home," she says. "I absolutely love doing this."

The production will play to up to 1,000 people in total over three performances—

evening shows on Friday, Nov. 25 and Saturday, Nov. 26, and a matinee performance on Sunday, Nov. 27—which the women promise will be over before the Grey Cup starts.

Wood says the group is still looking for volunteers for various jobs, from rounding up props to helping with costumes to working at the door to set up and teardown of the equipment and sets.

Meredith says she is looking forward to using a whole new venue—the convention centre. "Because we are at a whole new venue we can have some interaction with people at the tables and see how that works," she said.

Poole says she is happy with the response of the community to the production so far.

"We're thrilled with the response," she said. "We're thrilled with the people who have come out and with their enthusiasm. We had a lot of encouraging comments from people the first time it hit the newspaper—it sounds like a lot of people are looking forward to it."

Anyone who is interested in helping out with the musical production in any way can contact the organizers at creative.vision.productions@hotmail.com

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Manitoba Conservatives fail in Winnipeg

BY CHARLES TWEED
The more things change the more they stay the same was the theme in Manitoba as voters elected an NDP government on Oct. 4, the first mandate for a Selinger led government.

In rural Manitoba, seats were dominated by conservative candidates but blue leader Hugh McFadyen failed to make inroads in the city of Winnipeg, resulting in the fourth NDP government.

"We were quite happy with the way things went in Arthur-Virden," said Conservative MLA Larry Maguire. "We had a successful campaign and we won with a bigger majority than we had in the past and we welcomed four new municipalities into Arthur-Virden."

The results in the rural ridings were strong for both Maguire and Leann Rowat, who easily won Riding Mountain constituency for the Conservatives. But Maguire admitted he was frustrated by the party's inability to gain more seats in the legislature.

"Disappointing from point of view that we didn't gain any more seats in Manitoba," said Maguire. "Our leader has announced he will be stepping down and I guess that's not a surprise to me considering the number of seats we have didn't increase in this election so when that happens normally the leader steps down."

Maguire felt the conservatives took a balanced approach to the election but really felt the NDP attack

ads played a big role in the final outcome.

"(Hugh McFadyen) felt he had worked hard to bring a balanced agenda for the election and the NDP were very effective in regards to their retaliatory ads that tried to position us in a place we weren't at," explained Maguire. "No one was indicating privatizing Hydro except the NDP and I'm very concerned with the situation facing rural Manitoba. I've spent most of my life trying to bring together rural and urban people and the government is using rural Manitoba as a scape goat to promote their agenda and win seats in Winnipeg."

"The negative ads from the NDP were very straightforward," said Maguire. "We put forward a very balanced platform . . . but it wasn't enough to overcome the scare tactics and fear mongering of the New Democrats."

Maguire is also worried what the next four years will bring the province. He believes Bipole 3 will be one of the biggest mistakes any government has ever made

in Manitoba, and he doesn't see an end in sight for deficit budgets.

"I think people will see in the next four years, Winnipeg will still be the crime capital of Canada," said Maguire. "They will learn the province continues to have the biggest debt in our history and Mr. Selinger was the finance minister that put us there, but we weren't effective enough in making those points."

"(Selinger's) mistakes will continue to bring more obvious to citizens of Manitoba as we move forward particularly if the economic climate becomes tougher across the country," said Maguire.

Maguire was happy with the fact the Tories increased their popular vote by close to 30,000 votes since the last election in 2007. Those votes might not have translated into seats this election but the Arthur-Virden MLA felt it is part of a bigger picture, a picture that indicated the NDP's popularity is diminishing.

"We tied the NDP in popular vote in the province and never changed any

seats in the province," said Maguire. "There are 11 seats in the province that we were within a 1,000 votes of winning and if we would have had two per cent more in popular vote, Mr. McFadyen could have been the premier as opposed to resigning."

"We have some momentum to build on and people are looking for a change," said Maguire.

After the election Conservative leader Hugh McFadyen indicated he would step down as party leader. Maguire has served vari-

ous capacities since being elected, including deputy leader, but is a run at the top job in his future?

"That's something we'll have to consider down the road," said Maguire. "At this point, no, but you never know."

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A gift from above

"I have something for you," said my mother over the phone.

I hear this phrase often and it has come to mean a variety of things to me. Usually it's a birthday, anniversary or "just because" gift, but sometimes it's a plant to water (which I inevitably kill), a piece of clothing that was a "steal of a deal," or most often, it's some tasty delicacy like fresh-baked apple pie, homemade tourtière or a platter of zucchini quiche (yes, my mother is an exceptional cook which makes the fact that she lives just down the street a stroke of unbelievable luck).

But on this September day, the package she brought over was neither steaming hot from the oven nor adorned with a "sale" tag.

This delivery was wrapped in Christmas paper and was four years old.

I knew it would be a tear-jerker the moment I read the handwriting on the gift tag—it was from my grandmother "Meme" (pronounced MayMay—as we call her in our French/slash/English version of Mémère [yes, I know the accent is supposed to be the other way on the second é, I just couldn't find it on my keyboard, and believe me, I tried]. It's all not very bilingual of us, René Lévesque is turning in his grave as we speak).

I wondered why my mother hadn't given the gift to me at Christmas, but when I opened it, I immediately knew why. Being that Meme passed away four years ago, it felt



Christalee Froese

like a gift directly from above.

This gift was hand-knit by my grandmother and it came in shades of pink and blue. It was for a baby—a baby that we have been waiting on for five years now.

With our tickets now booked for China, and our dear little girl waiting for us in an orphanage near Nanchang, it was time for Meme to bestow on us the precious gift that she must have completed nearly a half a decade ago.

The pattern is a beautifully intricate series of wave-like stitches in velvety soft wool. The variegated yarn is white, pink and blue, creating a unique pattern of its own and forming perfectly spaced stripes on the blanket's border. And, it's nice and big, not like those tiny square blankets for newborns. I think she must have made it extra large, knowing that our baby would be about a year old by the time we got her. It is an amazing piece of craftwork.

But for all I cared, it could have been two gunny sacks sown together, with "baby blanket" written across in black marker.

The fact that she had knit it especially for our little girl, wrapped it, signed it to us and had given it to my mother four years ago was enough to bring tears to my eyes.

When we travel across the ocean this November to get our precious daughter who was left in a box at an orphanage the day she was born, we will not have this blanket with us.

It is too precious to be dragged across the Pacific in a suitcase. This blanket will be reserved for special occasions, but it will be used, as my Meme never liked the fact that something she made should be hidden away in a closet and "saved" for goodness knows what.

We will use this blanket, and we will think of Meme every time we do.

This is one lucky baby, to be loved many years before she was even born, and we are one lucky family to be welcoming her into our lives.

"I have something for you," said my mother over the phone.

Who could have guessed it would be a gift from above?

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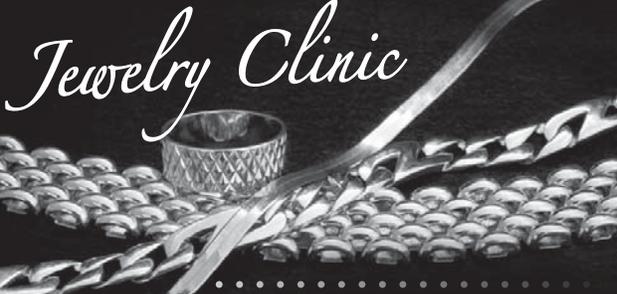


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Moose Mountain Meats Co-operative: Abattoir will open in Wawota next year

BY CHARLES TWEED

It was three years in the making, but after a lot of hard work and determination Wawota's idea to have a community co-operative abattoir has been transformed from a dream to a standing structure that will house a new abattoir in the community.

"There was an abattoir in Wawota for years and it was in conjunction with the grocery store and when the new owners took over the store they decided they didn't want to be in the custom meat processing business," said Ken Wilson, chair of Moose Mountain Meats Co-operative. "A few of us got together and decided we'd see if we could start one up ourselves."

Wilson said the first order of business was calling a public meeting to see if there was enough commu-

nity support for the project and he said the group was overwhelmed by the number of people who supported the idea.

"We're building right now and it's taken about three years to get it all sorted out," said Wilson. "We had to round up enough money to proceed. It's close to \$500,000 and we started construction about six weeks ago and the contractor said we should be ready to be open for the first part of January."

The group learned a lot about the regulations they would need to adhere to in order to build an abattoir. They also wanted to make sure they were prepared in case demand changed in the future.

"It is a community co-operative," said Wilson. "We went through all the hoops from the health inspector

and we built it in mind so we could be licensed by provincial and federal inspectors without any major upgrades. We worked close with the department of health to make sure everything is state of the art."

"When you're dealing with health inspectors it's best to work with them to make sure it's done right."

The new abattoir is a community co-operative in every sense of the word. Wilson said he worked hard with a passionate group of people who wanted to see the business move forward on securing funds for the abattoir.

"Our group went out and sold \$1,000 shares," said Wilson. "Anyone can buy a share and you can have as many shares as you like but only one vote per member."

Wilson said the abattoir

was supported from near and far.

"We have shareholders as far as Calgary," he said.

Undoubtedly, cattle will make up the biggest percentage of the abattoir's business but Wilson said there was also a demand from hunters who had to previously drive several miles to get wild game butchered.

"Our mandate was to get it up and running to process all live animals—both wild and domestic," said Wilson. "There are quite a few hunters in the area that will use the facility and are quite keen on it as well."

Moose Mountain Meats Co-operative will be housed in a 1,200 square foot building and Wilson said it will serve a greater area than just Wawota and Kennedy.

"When we built it we

felt it would service an 80 to 100 mile radius of Wawota," explained Wilson. "There is a successful (abattoir) in Maryfield and in the past there has been two so we felt there was room for another one."

The new abattoir also means jobs, something that keeps young people in small communities.

"The business will employ two and half employees," said Wilson. "We need a manager, a butcher, a meat cutter and any combination of all three."

"We've advertised for employees and have gotten quite a few inquiries and are getting close to the process where we are ready to short-list and interview," said Wilson.

He felt it was important to continue to offer services in a small community and was proud of how the com-

munity came together to accomplish their goal. Wilson said the abattoir is situated on three lots and the two additional lots will be given to the RM of Wawota as part of an agreement that saw the RM invest \$80,000 in the project. The two lots are also serviced and the RM is hoping to attract other businesses to the area.

"The RM had some economic development money and we gifted it to the abattoir committee with terms and conditions," said Wawota Administrator Debbie Saville.

"Once the lots were serviced the RM would end up with two of the three lots. Once they have been serviced they will be put up for sale in the idea of attracting more business."

"It's the lifeblood of the community," said Wilson, "people working together."

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OHS says still too many farm accidents

BY CHRISTALEE FROESE

While farm machinery has become safer over the years, Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) said accidents are still occurring in the agricultural sector at an alarming rate.

In each of the last five years, an average of 14 farmers lost their lives in farm-related accidents in the province, according to statistics gathered jointly by OHS and the Canadian Centre for Health and Safety in Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan. In addition, about 200 farmers required hospitalization due to agriculture-related incidents over that same time period.

The most dangerous situations involved power-mobile equipment, electricity and confined spaces, said OHS director of safety services Jennifer Fabian.

"Anything with moving parts presents a danger, but power takeoffs are particularly awful."

In 2010, a variety of accidents led to deaths including a farmer who was engulfed in grain, farmers who were run over by tractors and one farmer who was killed when a towing line snapped.

With a wet weather during seeding this year, Fabian said it is more critical than ever for farmers to be aware of the dangers that getting stuck

and pulling out equipment can present.

"A tow configuration can break at the hook or on the line, so you need to make sure the tow rope or tow chain you're using is properly graded for that task.

"The other portion is the hook and that has to be rated for what you're using and our regulations require it to have a lock on it."

If farmers are using a chain or rope to pull out machinery, OHS recommends that two rubber tires be placed through the towing line so if a break occurs, the line will snap back with less force due to the weight of the tires. Another important thing to remember is to turn off a tractor or vehicle before exiting.

"It's surprising how many farmers have been seriously injured or killed by being running over by their own equipment," said Fabian. "Even a slow-moving tractor is extremely dangerous."

In most industrial settings, workers are required to take a minimum of 16 hours of prescribed training to operate power-mobile equipment. The course includes a combination of classroom and hands-on instruction. While these regulations do not apply to farm operations, Fabian recommends that all farmers access this training because of the safety information that is

provided. "I know that many farmers have lots of experience operating equipment and they might think it's silly to suggest getting training . . . but it's not the operating, it's the training as it relates to the

safety aspects." One of the most basic safety measures to employ is a walk-around whenever equipment is being used. Fabian said this one small step can prevent people from getting run over and can identify problems

with equipment that might lead to an accident. In addition, OHS suggests that farmers take time to explain to their children what the rules of the farmyard are. "You have to make a clear separation between your

home and your farm," said the OHS specialist. "The farm is an industrial worksite so if children go into that worksite, they have to be supervised and they have to know where they can go and what they can touch."



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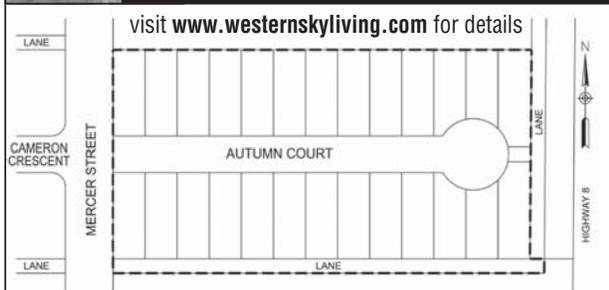
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Borderland, Whitewood Co-ops approve merger

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK
The story of Borderland Co-op is the story of a series of mergers of individual retail co-operatives over the years, and Moosomin-based Borderland is set to grow with another merger next year.

On Feb. 1, 2012, Whitewood Co-op will become part of Borderland. Members of the two co-ops had a chance to vote on the merger last week.

Whitewood members voted 82 per cent in favor of the merger, and Borderland members voted overwhelmingly in favor—there was only one vote against the plan.

"The vote went pretty much as we expected," said Borderland general manager Jason Schenn.

"There were obvious benefits to both co-ops, so we didn't expect a lot of opposition," he said.

"They've got their year end at the end of October, they will wrap up their stuff, and they will join us February 1 after our year-end.

"Right now, we're just doing all the budgeting and planning that we normally do. All of the day-to-day business will remain

the same. All the different things that are going to happen will be administrative."

Borderland has a food store, home centre, and C-store in Moosomin, a food store and home centre in Rocanville, a location in Maryfield, and a bulk fuel service. The Whitewood Co-op operates a food store and a home centre with cardlock and gas pumps in Whitewood.

Borderland has grown greatly over the last few years. It will gross about \$40 million this year, up from \$18 million when general manager Jason Schenn arrived just four years ago.

Whitewood grosses about \$7 million a year, so the combined co-op should take in close to \$50 million in its first year.

Schenn says combining the two multi-million dollar businesses is simpler than it sounds.

"It's actually pretty simple," he says. "We do a lot of work with Whitewood already. We haul fuel for them, so we maintain separate books for them, and it will be simpler to have it combined."

"Every retail co-op pays a service fee to Federated Co-

"There were obvious benefits to both co-ops, so we didn't expect a lot of opposition."

—Borderland Co-op GM Jason Schenn

op which can be reduced based on the amount of business they do. There's about \$70,000 in savings right there.

There are other benefits outside of the financial side, says Schenn. "We can provide some services that they haven't had in Whitewood," he says. "We have a human

resources department, we have a member relations department—those are little intangible things that will improve things for Whitewood."

Jeff Haubrich, a former manager within Borderland, is now the general manager at Whitewood. He will remain as branch operations

manager in Whitewood.

The new nine-person Borderland board will include three members from Whitewood. "Our situation is pretty good as far as branch representation," says Schenn. "Our branches have always been very well represented at the board level."

"Out of the eight we have currently, there are two from Maryfield, three from Moosomin, and three from Rocanville. We have one vacancy, and to make room for three directors from Whitewood, one of our directors

from Moosomin, and one from Rocanville will be stepping aside. We will maintain a nine-person board, and after this year, any directors can stand for election."

Could there be further mergers on the horizon for the local co-op?

"Nothing that is immediately on the horizon," says Schenn, "but in our system situations change for retails around us sometimes. The potential is out there for mergers, fuel agreements or any other type of service agreements."

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Spring water leaves lasting imprint on farmers

BY CHARLES TWEED

Wet. To properly sum up the spring farmers' dealt with, only one word applies. The spring waters that ravaged the area took too long to recede for most farmers to even entertain the idea of seeding some land. And when the water finally did recede it left several residual effects, including ruts, and dragged precious nutrients away from the soil.

"It was excessively wet," said John Gilbertson. "We sowed about 60 per cent of our crop. We were fortunate because on the Manitoba side I probably sowed 85 per cent of my land (2,000 of 2,400 acres) and on the Saskatchewan side, we tried one quarter with an air seeder and then we ended up using a plane to fly in some Canola. In Saskatchewan I sowed about 900 out of 2,200 (acres)."

It was the first time Gilbertson had used a plane to seed, but he said it's an option he wouldn't be afraid of using again in the future.

"I was surprised. I would use a plane again in the future if it warranted it," said Gilbertson. "It all germinated and we harrowed it afterward, which helped, and the cost was comparable too."

The water has residual effects on the land; the unseeded land has ramifications for the farmer; and farmers experiencing a down year leaves service companies and implement dealers reeling.

"There was very little crop that was put in around here so there wasn't much of a harvest," said Chris Davidson at Sharpe's Soil Services in Moosomin. "Really we only combined for a couple of days and a lot of guys probably wished they



A farm near St. Lazare is besieged by water this spring.

didn't put anything in because it didn't turn out all that well in a lot of cases, but what are you going to do. It's weather related."

"It was so wet there really wasn't a season," said Tim Lincoln at Lincoln Farm Supply in Wawota. "It was extremely wet and it's not good for farmers and it's not good for dealers. You just hope you don't have to repeat it."

"A good percentage of farmers had there (fertilizer) bought for last year and guys will be planning ahead for this year, sitting on it and waiting for next year," said Davidson. "It's really going to affect us next year because most farmers bought their fertilizer for this past year and they didn't use it so they'll still have it and will ship it out for them next year."

"We basically miss a year," said Davidson. "We figure 15 to 20 per cent of the crop got in around the immediate area, so that means only 20 per cent of the fertilizer got used so 80 per cent of it will still be in bins and they won't have to buy much fertilizer for next year. It'll be a slow year for

us but you just carry on. When you're in agriculture you get some good ones and some bad ones and you have to be able to ride it through."

Many farmers in the area looked at winter wheat as an option for land that was unseeded this spring. Gilbertson, who farms near McAuley, Manitoba said winter wheat doesn't translate into a successful crop.

"I just can't make (Winter Wheat) work," said Gilbertson. "I would still rather do barely or spring wheat. I don't sow winter wheat because it just doesn't work economically."

Gilbertson said he prebuys his seed and fertilizer, trying to stay ahead of market swings. This year he has excess canola seed, and seed companies are requesting the seed be returned. In some cases the seed will be blended and sold back to farmers prompting some farmers to hold onto their seed but Gilbertson said that could put the farmer in a tough situation if there are any problems with the seed next year.

"There is some risk in keeping Canola seed," said Gilbertson. "If it doesn't

germinate or for some reason or it loses its germination I don't know what would happen if an issue came up because I know (the seed companies) were asking for back."

Farmers with insurance were eligible for \$70 per unseeded acre from the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation with an additional top up of \$30 per unseeded acre from the Excess Moisture Program, which is jointly funded by provincial and federal governments.

"Any insurance money farmers receive is taxed in the year they receive it," said David Ablass from Meyers Norris and Penny in Moosomin. "For crop insurance payments, they can defer them if they haven't already received a cheque. The payments they received for excess moisture funding, that is a disaster payment, and they have to claim it in the year they receive it, which is this year."

Ablass said it's about strategic long term planning in the farming industry and he had no doubt farmers will once again demonstrate their resiliency. "It's all about planning,"

said Ablass. "The biggest problems farmers will face is in cash flow and managing that cash flow because they would have had inventory from last year that would have carried them through this year but they're going to have a reduced cash flow when it comes to next spring."

"It's been a bad year but crunch some numbers to figure out next year before it's too late," said Ablass. "This year it's all about communicating with your creditors and banker and knowing and understanding your risk management—your farm income programs—that is a very important tool."

The flooding also took its toll on RMs in the area that were trying to plan and fix infrastructure on an ongoing basis. Those plans were washed down the road.

"There was just a pile of water this spring and it was unprecedented in recent

history as far as water flow goes," said Moosomin RM Reeve Kit Bell. "Some culverts were washed out five times and of course we saw very poor seeding."

"Our budget went to repair and replace culverts that were ripped out," said Bell. "Thousands of dollars digging out the soft spots in the road and any plans to do any road rebuilding was over with and we have lots of areas where we need to clay cap roads because they are getting heavy traffic. Those roads weren't built for that and we need to rebuild them but those plans went down the road for next year or the year after."

If there was a silver lining for the RM, it's that the water showed them what areas need work.

"It helped us get some culverts replaced," explained Bell. "It showed us where the weak spots in our road system was but it was a learning experience."



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Pipestone Villas on track for spring opening

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK

A year ago, Pipestone Villas in Moosomin, Sask. was just an idea. Today, a 24-unit apartment building—the first of three buildings—is taking shape, and by next spring tenants will be moving in.

The project got started when developers Bridge Road Developments attended a Moosomin Chamber of Commerce meeting last year, explained their proposal and asked for local investors.

Within a couple of months, 15 investors had stepped forward with \$100,000 each, and the project was on its way.

"It was the middle of October last year that Bridge Road made their first public presentation, so to have come this far this fast is pretty amazing," said Pipestone Villas president Bill Thorn.

Two of the 15 investors are also tenants, while the rest are simply involved with Pipestone Villas as a business investment.

Tenants in the project put up \$50,000 to help cover the capital cost of the building, but receive a return of three per cent on that money. "A lot of the tenants like the idea of getting some return on that \$50,000," said Thorn. "Three per cent isn't a lot, but it's better than the stock market right now."

There are other factors that are leading people to sign up for Pipestone Villas as well, says Thorn.

"People seem to like the location of the building a lot. The heated parking I think is really important, a lot of people like that. As well, I think people realize that the value of their present real estate is spiking and it's a good time to sell."

There are 17 units now spoken for, says Thorn, and only seven left. "I

think we'll have them all spoken for by the time it's completed in the spring. I can see us having a waiting list by that point, which will help with the next phases. Our intention is to build two other phases, once this gets up and operational."

The building project is on schedule, Thorn said.

"We've got the asphalt down, the roof is going on by the end of the month, the windows are going in after that. By the end of November or early December it will be sided and then there's just the work inside."

Colette Branigan of Bridge Road Developments says tenants will be moving in to Pipestone Place by April or May.

"Everything is coming along on schedule on the construction, and there's a lot of interest in the units," she said.

"I met four individuals this morning—there are a lot of people who are very interested in this project. Most of our tenants we have signed up are from Moosomin, a few are from out of the area, and are moving back because they've got family in the area."

She said Pipestone Villas is intended for older adults as opposed to families, but younger individuals or couples could be considered. "It's adult living, but if someone younger wants to apply it goes to the board for a decision," she said.

Branigan said the project could move on fairly quickly to phases 2 and 3, depending on interest.

"Once phase 1 gets close to being full, if we have a certain number of cheques for deposits for phase 2 then we would start moving forward with phase 2."

What is attracting people to Pipestone Vil-

las? "The people who are moving in, a lot of them are looking for the safety of a community within a building," says Branigan. "For a lot of them, security is an issue and they feel this will be a very secure environment." The units range from 1,036 to 1,342 square feet. The smaller ones are one bedroom, one bathroom, the larger ones are two bedroom two bathroom.

Branigan said tenants will have finishing options if they make a deposit on a unit soon. "They can meet with an interior decorator, choose their carpet and linoleum, and decide if they want to upgrade cabinetry or anything, so they can customize it to their own liking," she said.

Tenants began moving into a similar Bridge Road building in Redvers three weeks ago.



The Pipestone Villas apartment buildings as they looked last week. Construction on the three-storey building is well underway.

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Seed Hawk expansion officially open

BY CHARLES TWEED

It's small town Saskatchewan innovation at its best as Seed Hawk officially opened its doors on a \$7.5 million expansion in Langbank.

"It's really the innovative spirit of the Canadian farmer that has allowed Seed Hawk to grow and become a major player in the global direct seeding market," explained Beaujot.

About 300 people were in attendance to cut the ribbon on the new facility including Premier Brad Wall.

"It's a great day for the province," said Wall. "This is important for Langbank, and for the economy in this area, to have 120 people at a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility, but it's good for the province because it further solidifies our position as a leader in the world in terms of dry land farming technology, in equipment innovation and we're increasingly seen as an important player in a world that needs food security."

"We've experienced tremendous growth over the past 20 years but more specifically over the past five," Brian Dean, vice president of Seed Hawk. "We joined with Vaderstad in 2007 and since then we've experienced a great deal of growth and success."

Beaujot spoke about how his parents first started farming in the area in 1945 and were innovators in their own right, practicing zero-till in the area before it had become a common practice.



Charles Tweed photo

Premier Brad Wall cuts the ribbon as Seed Hawk president Pat Beaujot and vice president Brian Dean hold the ribbon.

"We talk about auto steer but dad said if you had a good team of horses and you turned them around and put them on the line you didn't really have to steer them, they knew where to go," said Beaujot with a laugh. "So they had auto steer back then."

Seed Hawk technology has been instrumental in changing the way farmers do business and Beaujot was especially proud of one of the side benefits of the technology. He estimated with 16,000 Seed Hawk seeders on fields next spring they would capture one million tons of carbon dioxide.

"A side benefit of zero till is the carbon dioxide were getting from the air and storing in the soil is greenhouse gas and it's good to store it in the soil and take it out of the air," said Beaujot. "Saskatchewan farmers store between four and five

million tons of carbon dioxide into the soil every year, which is a great environmental story and we're influencing others around the world to do the same."

"There may no greater lab in the world in terms of agriculture innovation than the home quarters in the province of Saskatchewan. Where farmers in Quonsets come up with ideas that change the world," said Wall.

It was also very important for Beaujot to stay true to his rural roots. Planting his business in Langbank and watching it blossom into a business that employs 120 people and is still looking for more.

Lionel LaBelle, from the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, commended Seed Hawk on their expansion and said STEP would work hard to ensure Saskatchewan

products are championed around the world.

"STEP plays a role in marketing Saskatchewan products around the world," said LaBelle. "The world and agriculture is changing and Saskatchewan is a global leader in dry land farming technology."

"People need to understand that people don't leave rural Saskatchewan because they wanted to, they moved to the city because they needed jobs," said Beaujot. "If we can offer careers and good jobs here then they'll move here and that's what has happened."

The new facility will add 55,000 square feet of shop and office space, bringing the total square footage to 100,000.

"It is a continuous flow production," said Beaujot. "We go from raw steel ... to assembly."

"Saskatoon has innovation place and so does Langbank," said Beaujot.

Wall was impressed with the innovation the company has demonstrated as well. He said one of his favorite jobs is telling people around the world of the success stories in rural Saskatchewan.

"To the extent we've had success in the province of Saskatchewan over the last number of years has little to do with the government and a lot to do with people like Pat, Brian and the team here," said Wall.

"(We're) celebrating at least two of the most important strengths of the

province of Saskatchewan, number one is agriculture. No one does flat land farming better than the people, the producers, the province of Saskatchewan—I'm talking about crop science innovation," said Wall.

"In a world that increasingly wants food security and energy security, they want to hear our story . . . The second strength were celebrating is innovation and more specifically entrepreneurship."

The Premier focused on the work ethic of people in the province and the notion that people aren't afraid to take a risk.

Continued on page 21

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P10.1c

Seed Hawk continues to innovate

Continued from page 20
 "Everything we see here today and 120 people now employed, many from outside of the country, come from an idea," said Wall. "There are a lot of people that have ideas but it seems in Saskatchewan we have a good habit of acting on those ideas."
 "Everything (the government) wants to provide in this province in terms of quality of life—health care, education, better roads and we've got some work to do—it comes from somebody prepared to risk, someone prepared to create a job, someone prepared to expand the tax base a bit and hopefully do it in a

way that adds value to the economy," said Wall. "For that I say thank you Pat, to you and your team."
 Wall said it was also important to offer companies incentives to start a business or take an idea to the next level. He said his government would continue to look at the taxation system in the province but cautioned with an election looming he had no intention of getting into a battle of unrealistic promises.
 "Our growth agenda has always included things like more competitive tax rates," said Wall. "We've undertaken historic personal income tax rate reduction which I think helps

companies like Seed Hawk attract workers . . . from an agricultural standpoint there is no tax that is more insidious than the education tax and we have dramatically reduced that burden on farmland and we think that helps producers and large businesses like this."
 "There is an election coming up and we think we need to continue with affordable tax relief and tax competitiveness so that we can see more Seed Hawks around the province," said Wall. "If the next election is going to be a bidding war we're not going to participate. . . . What we need is a steady approach."



Charles Tweed photo
 A look at part of the new Seed Hawk manufacturing facility in Langbank. The expansion will add 55,000 square feet of shop and office space.

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