

Plain & Valley

Covering Southeast Saskatchewan and Southwest Manitoba

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Kevin Weedmark photo

Wawota takes its case to Regina

Members of Wawota's Save Our Beds Committee went to the Legislature recently to try to convince the government to overturn Sun Country Health Region's closure of five beds at Wawota's Deer View Lodge. From left are Heather Birnie, Faye Greenbank, Dale Easton, Ron Hall, and Bob Porter. See story on page 5.

Auditor slams Sun Country

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK
Saskatchewan provincial auditor, Brian Atkinson, has slammed the Sun Country Health Region for its lack of adherence to its own hiring policies and inconsistent practices.

The provincial auditor's report, released Wednesday, included recommendations that come out of an examination of Sun Country's hiring practices.

According to the report, "Officials at Sun Country did not always document the results of interviews, reference checks, and criminal record checks."

"Nor did they document reasons for hiring a candidate who did not meet the qualifications in the selected position description."

"Lack of compliance with policies for hiring management personnel could result in inappropriate hiring decisions."

The auditor also suggested that the Sun Country Health Region needs to establish a relocation policy to control expenses of hiring new employees.

According to the auditor's report, "For difficult to fill positions, Sun Country gives relocation incentives to help attract new employees to the region. However, it does not have policies and procedures for administering such incentives."

"For instance, it has not established policies setting out when to offer relocation incentives, maximum amounts, or the process to disburse payments for such incentives. Lack of clear policies and procedures could result in a loss of public money."

"In 2008, Sun Country

One employee improperly spent \$10,000

Second employee owes region \$15,588, but left province and declared bankruptcy

Region didn't follow its own policies on checking credentials, doing criminal background checks

'Sun Country was having a bit of a bad year.'

—Provincial Auditor Brian Atkinson

agreed to pay a newly hired senior employee a relocation allowance of \$15,000 upon the production of original receipts to support the expenses."

The report continues "The employee used a Sun Country purchase card to pay for relocation expenses and continued to do so for nearly two years after commencing employment. The employee did not submit support for the majority of 2009-10 purchase card expenses until March 2010."

"By March 31, 2010, the employee had charged about \$25,000 on the purchase card for his relocation expenses. The employee repaid about \$10,000 representing the amount in excess of the agreed upon relocation expenses. The employee has since left Sun Country's employment."

The auditor's report doesn't name names, but Hal Schmidt, who resigned over the summer as vice-president of finance for Sun Country, had been hired in 2008.

Atkinson told the *World-Spectator* Wednesday that Sun Country officials never discovered the misuse of the card—it was his

office that discovered it and brought it to regional officials' attention.

"They handed him a credit card and off he went. When we went to check on it, this is what we found."

The auditor's report includes information on another Sun Country employee who left the province owing the region more than \$15,000. In that case, the region again did not follow its own policies regarding reference checks, criminal record checks, and credential verification.

"The employee used the purchase card for personal travel and expenses totalling \$6,080," according to the report.

"When Sun Country became aware of the misuse, it cancelled the card. Sun Country was setting up a repayment plan when the employee resigned, moved to another province, and claimed bankruptcy."

"The employee owes Sun Country this money, as well as relocation expenses of \$7,442 and other benefits of \$2,066, for a total of \$15,588 plus interest. Sun Country has forwarded this account to collection agency for collection."

Continued on page 2

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Auditor finds problems in Sun Country

Continued from front

"Furthermore, Sun Country had no evidence of the reference checks when it hired this employee in May 2009. Nor did it obtain a criminal record check or document evidence of its review of the employee's credentials.

"As we stated earlier, Sun Country's policies require officials to do so before hir-

ing staff."

The provincial auditor's report included recommendations in regard to Sun Country:

"We recommend that Sun Country Regional Health Authority follow its policies and procedures when hiring management personnel." and

"We recommend that Sun Country Regional Health

Authority establish policies and procedures for relocation incentives for new hires."

Atkinson said his office took a close look at hiring practices in health regions because concerns had been raised about hiring.

"We thought we should look at the hiring practices in some of the regional health authorities, and we

chose Regina Qu'Appelle, Prairie North, and Sun Country to examine.

"We took a look at hiring practices in all three, and found all three had adequate policies and procedures. The question is did they follow them. Regina-Qu'Appelle did. Prairie North did. Sun Country did not."

He said the discovery that procedures were not being followed should be disconcerting for those entrusted with running the organization.

"If you're senior management you should be somewhat surprised if your policies aren't being followed," he said.

He said the policies are in place in Sun Country, but management has to ensure they are being followed.

"If you have good hiring policies, follow them," he said. "You can never prevent all bad things from happening—that perfect world doesn't exist—but if you have good policies and your employees follow them these things shouldn't happen as often. Sun Country was having a bit of a

bad year."

Marga Cugnet, Sun Country's acting CEO, said the health region has new procedures in place to ensure hiring policies are followed.

"We reviewed the policies and we made sure everything is standardized and all interviews are documented. They have a checklist to follow to ensure that everything gets done."

Cugnet said she doesn't understand how employees were able to make unauthorized purchases with their credit cards.

"We have a process in place," she said. "You submit your expenses to your supervisor."

"We did actually do a review of that, and if situations come up where a manager has some questions, they can talk to somebody else about it."

Moosomin MLA and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Don Toth said he believes the Sun Country board should take the provincial auditor's report very seriously.

"I would think this would be a major concern

for the board members to have Sun Country singled out in the report this way," Toth said.

"I think the auditor has pointed out the fact that there were some definite inconsistencies.

"I can only assume that a lot of board members didn't know this was going on, but having been involved in municipal council, I know that when serious issues are raised you ask questions to find out what's going on."

"There are no doubt going to be some questions asked about how the board has handled things. I believe board members will see this report and will be asking some questions themselves."

"I think some Sun Country board members are working hard to represent the region well, and I have a feeling more and more board members will be demanding more and more information before making final decisions."

Interviews could not be arranged with Sun Country chair Sharon Bauche or Health Minister Don McMorris by deadline.

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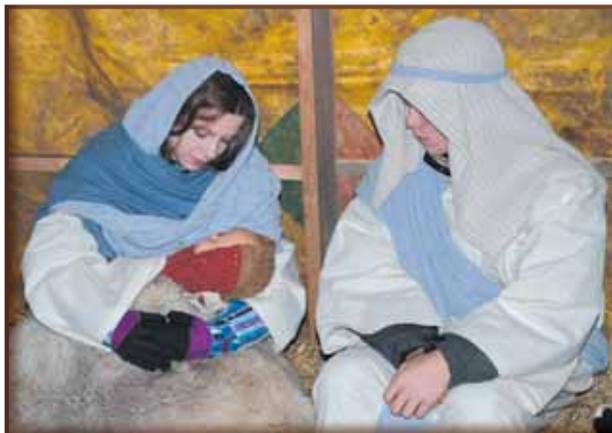
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Kara Kinna photos



Bethlehem Live, the annual live nativity event, was held in Moosomin on Nov. 26 and 27, including hundreds of actors and volunteers. At left: a scene from the marketplace. Centre: A group of bandits ready to attack. Right: The holy family—Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus.

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Contentious issue may, or may not, be on ballot

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK

The clock has started ticking toward the 2011 provincial election, when voters may or may not have a chance to vote on a topic so contentious politicians don't want to talk about it.

Premier Brad Wall promised during the last election campaign that the contentious issue wouldn't be decided by politicians, but would be put to a public vote during the next election. Now the government is backtracking on that promise and it is unclear whether the promised referendum will go ahead or not.

The issue that's so contentious that politicians are worried about the repercussions of even putting it to a public vote isn't abortion or gun rights, health care funding, capital punishment or the criminal justice system.

This is Saskatchewan, and the issue politicians don't want to talk about is Daylight Saving Time.

Moosomin MLA and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Don Toth said the government isn't sure a referendum is needed, since polls consistently show most Saskatchewan residents are opposed to changing to Daylight Saving Time.

"There is discussion of whether it does go to a referendum," Toth told the World-Spectator last week. "There are a lot of people opposed to it from Regina west. Where I run into support for a change is on the extreme eastern side of the province where there are greater dealing with Manitoba. Even in my own constituency, in the western part, there isn't that same interest."

He said the fact that there seems to be a majority opposed to change, and the cost of holding a referendum, may cause the government to drop the plan.

"What it comes down to is the public saying I think we could spend our dollars a lot more wisely," he said.

"Finances are still somewhat tight. If we know the majority isn't there, is it worth the time and effort to have a vote?"

Toth said he isn't sure if a vote would settle the issue. "I don't know if you will ever come to an end on an issue like this," he said.

I think it's like politics in this province

you have a strong feeling in either one direction or the other."

While he is rarely hesitant to express his views on any issue, Toth didn't want to endorse one side or the other on the DST debate. Asked which way he would vote if a referendum is held on DST, Toth was silent for a moment and then answered "I'd have to reserve judgement on that."

While the rest of the world sets its clocks ahead in the spring and back in the fall to make the summer evenings that much longer, Saskatchewan has stuck firmly to Central Standard time since the provincial government passed the Time Act in 1966. Prior to that, municipalities could decide the time they operated on, which led to a patchwork across the province.

The Moosomin area, being at the far east end of the province, sees the sun go down earlier than most of Saskatchewan, and has a history of lobbying for adoption of daylight saving time. In 1986 the town organized a local referendum on DST, and in the fall of 1993 the town council declared that Moosomin would ignore the Time Act and declare DST locally starting the following spring.

The provincial government reacted angrily and threatened to withhold all provincial transfers to the town of Moosomin if the plan went ahead. The town eventually backed down from the plan.

Polls have consistently shown a majority of Saskatchewan residents opposed to the switch to DST.

Premier Brad Wall had made the promise to hold a plebiscite or referendum on DST during the final days of the 2007 election campaign that made him premier. He said the vote would be held in conjunction with the next provincial election, which is slated for Nov. 7, 2011.

However Municipal Affairs Minister Darryl Hickie now says no decision has been made whether to actually hold the DST vote.

Premier Brad Wall made the promise to hold a plebiscite or referendum on DST during the final days of the 2007 election campaign that made him premier. He said the vote would be held in conjunction with the next pro-

vincial election, which is slated for Nov. 7, 2011.

However Municipal Affairs Minister Darryl Hickie says no decision has been made whether to actually hold the DST vote.

"We have a year before the next election. I think we'll be making a more definitive statement on that as we go on and do some more analysis, some more in-depth polling possibly," Hickie told reporters last week, noting that it is a "very divisive" issue in

the province.

"We don't want to waste taxpayers' dollars... it's one of those things we want to make a prudent decision based on what we're hearing from the public as well."

Since the Time Act came into force, Saskatchewan follows one time year round, with the exception of some western border communities which change their clocks ahead in the spring and back in the fall to remain consistent with Alberta.



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Health minister says closures board's decision

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK

Wawota's Save Our Beds Committee took its fight to the Saskatchewan legislature in November.

The committee presented a 1,400 name petition calling on the government to reopen the three long-term care beds and two respite beds at Deer View Lodge that were closed in May by the Sun Country Health Region.

They ran into a brick wall when Saskatchewan Health Minister Don McMorris refused to intervene, and said the authority to close the beds resides with the Sun Country Regional Health Authority.

While the Health Ministry stepped in over the summer and ordered a review of hiring practices in Sun Country, the minister said he would not intervene on the bed closures.

Then, when it became clear that the health region had hired a vice-president of finance who had been fired from his last job for misrepresenting his credentials and had lent himself \$75,000 in public funds from an earlier job which he failed to repay, the health ministry asked for an explanation from the board, then requested a third-party review of hiring practices in Sun Country.

That review led to the firing of the CEO, Cal Tant. Health Minister Don McMorris said, however, that he can't review every decision made by the Sun Country Regional Health Authority, and he trusts the board to make the right decisions.

"I certainly understand the concerns from the community when they're losing the three long-term beds and two respite beds and the impact that has on the community and the impact that has on seniors. It is a decision of the health region and the decision has been made. I've questioned the health region. Obviously the community has questioned the health region. It's a decision they felt they needed to make at this time."

McMorris pointed out that the Sun Country Health Region has one of the highest bed num-

bers per capita in the province, and needed to make cuts somewhere.

While one board member who has now resigned said the board did not have all the information it needed to make the decision about the Wawota Beds, and while the NDP health critic Judy Junor pointed out that the beds closed in Wawota are among 88 beds that have been closed around the province in the last six months.

"When you look at the Sun Country Health Region and the number of beds per capita it's one of the highest in the province, so they're looking at all ways to run their operation as efficiently as possible. We have told all health regions . . . to look at ways to find efficiencies within their system that doesn't affect patient care directly, so I don't necessarily buy the argument that it's strictly a monetary issue."

McMorris said he feels for people from Wawota who are upset about elderly relatives having to be sent to other communities for nursing care.

"I think any of us from rural Saskatchewan have faced this," he said. "I've faced it. My father living in Fort Qu'Appelle did not get a long-term care bed in Fort Qu'Appelle. He was down the road and they were going to work hard to get him back to that community. That never happened. So I understand the impact it has on families. I also understand, though, that the health region is committed to the facility. They've put in about \$160,000 into repairs into the facility over the last three years. Sun Country has fixed the facility up, it's there for the long term."

The minister said he spoke with Sun Country about the bed closures. "On cases like this I have a pretty constant conversation with either the CEO through the ministry of health or the board chairs through myself," he said.

"I've talked to the board chair herself, Sharon Bauche, on this issue and I can say to them 'are you sure this is what you need to do?' There are concerns, obviously. I've heard them from the

community of Wawota which I met with here in the building . . . I can question the board. Ultimately, though if I am the one to make the decision on Wawota or any other facility then we do not need health boards."

The health minister said he understands Wawota's concerns, but can't intervene in what is the Sun Country Regional Health Authority's decision. "I've heard directly from the community in a meeting that I had with them here in this building. I've certainly heard Wawota's side of it and understand it. I don't have . . . I'm not the one that has to weigh all that and make the final decision. I listened to what they had to say, I talked to the CEO, I brought those issues forward to the CEO, to the board chair, but ultimately it has to be their decision."

He said overturning the decision would mean the health minister is running the entire health system across the province.

"I think it's a better model having the decision made by people from the area that understand the issues in that area better than me as the minister of health."

He said the issue of people from Wawota travelling on winter roads to see loved ones is a real concern but is not unique to Wawota.

"That's a legitimate concern, but that is a concern that is real for many communities that don't have long-term care facilities that have aged family members who have to go to another community."

Asked about why the ministry intervened by ordering a review of hiring in the health region, but can't intervene in the bed closures, the minister responded "when we hear concerns we raise them with the board. Whether it's me talking to the board chair or whether it's the ministry talking to the CEO or the staff." He said in the case of hiring policy, "procedures probably weren't followed properly as far as we were concerned, we raised those concerns, and the board acted."

Save Our Beds committee chair Dale Easton said he was frustrated by the health minister's response. "There are people who are being moved

to other facilities . . . away from their loved ones, their family, the community where they spent their whole life because of \$110,000 when there is a perfectly good building there. It was functional, it was practical, the staffing's not a problem, the doctors are not a problem. It just seems like it came down to \$110,000 and they won't move off that."

Easton said he hopes the health minister understands that a large number of people are still upset over the bed closures.

"Just the sheer number of people who are upset over this. It was obvious from the petition, over 1,400 names, and not just from Wawota, from surrounding communities. That has to have some bearing on this. It's not just a group of radical people wanting to make a noise, it's lots of people and they're upset by it. And it's rippling over to other communities and it has to be looked at."

NDP health critic Judy Junor pointed out that the beds closed in Wawota are among 88 beds that have been closed around the province in the last six months. She said she doesn't understand with all the information that has come out about the Wawota closures, why the minister hasn't stepped in. "He certainly picks and chooses when to have local decisions made locally," she said. "They do appoint the boards, and I've been there. The boards do not do things that are unpopular with the government." She said the health minister has the power to give health boards direction.

"The people in Wawota have demonstrated that these beds are necessary to the community. I've been there, I've visited. I've heard some of the stories. People are suffering. And when you see that Broadview is opening beds in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region because of the overflow from Wawota, then you understand the beds are needed there. So I don't understand the decision and I don't understand why they can't reverse it. For \$100,000 it's not worth it. It's not worth it to that community, it's not worth it to the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region when they have to open beds in Broadview. It's not worth it."

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College officially opens new Moosomin campus

BY KARA KINNA
After years of holding classes in different locations around Moosomin, the Southeast Regional College celebrated the grand opening of its new permanent location on Park Avenue on Friday, November 19.

Staff, students, dignitaries and the public were invited to attend the event, which included tours of the newly renovated building, a presentation, ribbon cutting, and cake cutting.

"We're all under one roof, people can find us in one location now," said Ken Shackel, Trans-Canada training consultant for the college. "There's just more of a feeling of belonging. The electrical students were always left alone in a separate building, the basic education students were in their own little world over at the high school, but now it's more of a college feel. It's a campus feel."

Southeast College has never had a permanent location in Moosomin. For years the college has been holding its classes in different locations around town. Many of the classes were taught in the high school, and the electrician certificate program was held wherever the college could find space. Office space for the college was rented in the provincial building.

The college finally decided to purchase the former Double Scrub car wash on Park Avenue in Moosomin

and turn it into a permanent home.

The new building is 5,782 square feet and features two large classrooms and one small classroom, office space, a reception area, a student lounge, an exam room, and a classroom and full mock up area for the students taking the electrician certificate program or other trades programs.

The entire project was completed on deadline, and the college began teaching classes in the building in September.

Shackel says the new building has made a difference in how the college can offer its courses.

"I think what's been best about it is that we can keep the training consistent," he says. "When we were sharing space with the high school we had to juggle our scheduling for the labs because we shared space, and the same with the electrical program, we had to go there after hours. Now it still requires some juggling and scheduling but you can keep that continuity going through the program."

Alvin Nixon has been the instructor for the electrician certificate program for the last five years. He says the biggest difference for his students is the atmosphere a permanent location provides.

"We had lots of room and it was good, but this is going to be a lot better because it's more of a school or col-

lege atmosphere than what we had before," he said. "For the students it gives them more of a feeling that they are in a post secondary type of situation. It's quite a bit better that way."

"As far as the training goes, it's going to be very similar. It will probably be a little bit better because before we were in an unheated shop for certain parts of the program, but now we have a heated shop for pretty much everything."

Grenfell's Derek Coderre, a student at the college, said the building works well for the electrical course he is taking.

"It's very easy to get around, it's not huge so you're going to get lost. It's very orientated to what we are taking," he said. "We have a shop we are in an industrial setting."

"Eventually I would like to own my own business and this allows me to be close to home, to be able to go back to school and keep costs as low as they can be. It allows me to go to school in a fairly inexpensive way."

Southeast Regional College in Moosomin offers a number of courses, including basic education, ESL classes, an electrical certificate program, various safety programs, computer training, different agriculture classes, business and entrepreneur training, and televised learning through SCN.

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SPRING 2011 AUCTIONS

<p>April 2, 2011 - Wahl Brothers - Emerson, MB - (204) 327-6678 2005 New Holland Steiger Built T425 4x4 Tractor 2500 hrs; 1991 Case IH Steiger Built 9260 crab steering wheel drive tractor; John Deere 9600 combine complete with outback S-2 Auto steer, green lighted annually and after 2010 harvest</p>	<p>April 16, 2011 - Ryan and Gail Reichert Thornhill, MB - (204) 822-3377 1988 JD 2555 open station and 3oh c/w 240 loader; 2006 BobCat #430 Mini Hoe 0 Swing c/w Thumb and 2 ft. digging bucket; 2006 BobCat #430 Mini Hoe 0 Swing c/w Thumb and 2 ft. digging bucket; 1984 Ford 9000 Cabover Highway tractor; 2406 Cat engine; From neighbor Ray White. (204) 822-3307 1984 JD 4050 3ph; 1000-540 pto; Quad shift, c/w JD 260 front end loader; JD 2420 Diesel SP Swather 21</p>
<p>April 8, 2011 Gerald Dyck Farm Domain, MB - (204) 736-2916 2004 Cat Challenger MT 765 24' HD Tractor; Eze Steer 3 pth Brackets 5672 hrs complete dealer serviced at 5288 hours; SNW01459; 1998 Mac-Don Premier swather two speed w/7 bnh hubs and 962 30 ft. 1225 hrs; SNF120714; 1992 Mack grain truck 350 mack engine, w/13 speed, whewer 19 ft. Midland umboddy grain box and pup trailer.</p>	<p>April 18, 2011 - Dan & Ed Friesen - Elma, MB Dan - (204) 348-7776 • Ed - (204) 348-2711 1989 John Deere 4755 MFDW, Power shift, 3 pth, JD Greenline @ 9178 Hours; 1981 IH 3588 2x2 with 23.1 x 30 Firestone Tires, add on 3pth; 1980 John Deere 8820, 212 pickup head; 1975 Versatile 800 4x4 tractor; 18.4 x 38 duals with only 300 hrs on overhauled engine; 1982 Gleaser L2 Hydro, pickup and chopper; 1989 IH S1900, 466 DT Diesel, 6 speed, 16 ft Box, air brakes</p>
<p>April 9, 2011 - Mervin Dueck Farm - Morris, MB - (204) 746-8893 1983 John Deere 8770 4WD, JD Auto Trac steering 5200 hrs; 1993 John Deere 9600 wired for JD Auto Trac Steer; 9'4 pickup head wheel pickup; 1994 Mac-Don 960 Draper head 36 ft. pickup; new hyd pump; Bourgault 8810 seeding tool 40 ft., 10' spacing, single chute, c/w 3195 seed cart</p>	<p>April 21, 2011 - Ed & Dianne Giesbrecht Oakville, MB - (204) 267-2599 1992 Case IH 7110 MFDW, triple hyd, 3pth, 48042 band duals w/95' all-lead loader; 1986 Steiger Bearcat 1000 4x4; 1000 hrs; Cummins L 10 Engine; 12 speed power shift; 1998 Case IH 2388 Combine, specialty rotor; swath master belt pickup; 30.5 x32 tires; 1674 rotor hrs; 2071 engine hours; SNJJC099111</p>
<p>April 11, 2011 - Mike and Maurice Ditekowski Snowflake, MB - (204) 822-8329 1984 875 Versatile with 5400 hrs; 1986 Massey 3545 MFD, 3ph, 1000/540 pto c/w EZ-On 2106 self-leveling loader; joystick; 1976 John Deere 2130 3ph, add on, cab w/145 loader; 1989 Versatile 4700 diesel 22 ft. swather; 5 New Holland combines TR, 97, 85, 'S 70</p>	<p>April 23, 2011, 10 a.m. - Cantan Farms Ltd. Owner Wes Packham - (204) 267-2097 1997 Duetz 9170 m/w/d, 1000 pto, triple hyd, 18 speed with 3 speed power shift, rock shaft; Duetz 3.7 m/w/d, 3ph, cab, air; SNF Model 77480025; 4697 hrs; John Deere 1120 tractor with 3 pth, and 145 JD Loader; 2002 Massey Ferguson 8780 Combine, will have 1150 to 1200 hrs after 2010 harvest; 30.5 x 32 tires; belt pickup; grain dryer; farm fans AB 120, total 958 hours; seven hopper grain bins</p>
<p>April 12, 2011 - David Henderson Farms Manitow, MB - (204) 242-4060 2005 JD 9860 SP Premium Combine, 1209 engine hrs, 961 Threshing Hrs; JD 615 Belt Pickup; Hopper Topper; JD auto-steer ready; 2001 JD 9400T SNRW9400T900214, front weight package, 24 speed, 36 in. tracks, 4 spool hyd, JD integrated auto-steer with monitor and bubble; 3940 hrs; 2000 JD 9400T, SNRW9400T900349, PTO, 24 speed, new 36 inch retread tracks, mud deflector kit; JD integrated auto-steer (no monitor and bubble); 5045 hrs; 2002 Premier 30 ft SP Swather 2 speed c/w PU reel and platform auger; 1999 JD 4700 100 ft Booms, 800 gal Stainless Steel tank, 2484 hrs, complete JD integrated auto-steer, model 2600 touch screen monitor</p>	<p>Don & Loretta Wood (204) 267-2307 Hobbs Farm Auction immediately following the Cantan Farms Auction 1 mile north, 1994 John Deere 8200, cab, 18.4 x 30 rear, 3 pth, dual hyd, with quick tach 640 loader, joy stick, 7 ft. bucket and grapple fork, only 3887 hrs; Simplicity 20 hp; Landlord DLX Lawn tractor with 50' belly mount mower, cruise, diff lock, power steering, 1020 hrs, 40" rear mount tiller may sell after tractor</p>
<p>April 15, 2011 - Henry Toews Farm - Elma, MB 1983 IHC 5088, triple hyd, 795 Quick tach Allied loader; IHC Model 4586 4 WD tractor; 1979 Case 970 Diesel power shift, 3 pth; 1993 Case IH 1688 Combine; AFX Rotor, super 8 Pickup; Bourgault 40 ft model F-H seeding tool w/cat</p>	<p>Partial listing only. See website for complete listing and photos. WE ARE NOW BOOKING SPRING AND SUMMER AUCTIONS CALL (204) 325-4433</p>

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\$5 million project: Apartment complex to move forward

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK

A group of local investors has decided to go ahead with the first phase of an apartment complex between Wright Road and Henry Street in Moosomin.

The development is being co-ordinated by Bridge Road Developments, which has developed similar projects in similar-sized communities across Manitoba and currently has a project under construction in Redvers.

Twelve local investors have signed on to the Moosomin project, and Bill Thorn, head of the invest-

tors group, said the decision was made to move forward with that number. "We need three more investors, but we think we will find them soon," he said. "There were 12 of us sitting there, and we decided that we can move ahead with this, and we're sure the rest of the investors will come along."

"We thought that if we can get something going now, we can have the contractors looking at stuff in January."

Thorn says he is happy with how the project has come together to this

point.

"Overall I'm quite happy with the interest we've had from investors," said Thorn. "In a short period of time, we've had 12 people come forward and commit to the project, and we've got several more thinking about it."

The current plan is to build 24 units in the first phase, but the plan may be expanded to 30 units if enough tenants come forward before ground is broken in March.

"If we have a really good response we could go to 30," said Thorn. "We'll be making a final decision within the next month."

The local shareholders are hoping people interested in the project come forward soon. Tenants who come forward now still have a wide choice of suites, since the suites are assigned on a first-come first-served basis.

The initial phase will cost \$5 million to build. The plan is to eventually develop three phases.

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<p>VERN'S 6'X16' STOCK TRAILER <small>Heavy Duty Features Throughout Brakes All Wheels</small></p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$200 lbs. Axles</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$4,295</p>	<p>HEAVY DUTY 14' DUMP TRAILER <small>16" 10 Ply radials, 3 way gate ramps, scissor lift, 2 each 7000 lb. axles, power up and down.</small></p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$5,995</p>
<p>20' HD FLATBED TRAILER <small>Dovetail, Brakes, & Two Axles, Spare Tire Mnt., Square HD Jack, 5,200# Axles</small></p> <p style="text-align: center;">9,900 GVW</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$2,745</p>	<p>7'X16' V-NOSE INTERSTATE CARGO <small>Stone guard, ramp door, side door, LED lights, dome lights</small></p> <p style="text-align: center;">3 V-NOSE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$4,463</p>

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2006 MF 7495	\$105,900
175hp, fwa, CVT, front suspension, fully loaded, 1300 hours	
2007 MF 7480	\$104,900
140hp, fwa, CVT, self level loader, fully equipped, 750 hours	
2008 MF 7480	\$119,000
140hp, fwa, CVT, self level loader, 350 hours	
2003 Agco DT200	\$89,000
200hp, fwa, loader, grapple	
1989 Deutz Allis 9130	\$18,000
135hp, fwa, 18 speed ps	
2001 MF 1225	\$18,900
24hp, fwa, hydro, loader, mower, snowblower	

Used Combines

2008 MF 9790	\$249,000
18.4R42 duals, 16.9R26 rears, MAV, swathmaster, 207 hrs, warranty to 2011	
2004 MF 9790	\$161,900
900/65R32, 16.9R26, chopper, chaff spreader, fieldstar, 1005 hrs	
1999 Case IH 2388	\$94,000
Axceller, specialty rotor, chopper, spreaders, rock trap, swathmaster pu, 1865 hours	
1997 MF 8780	\$69,000
chopper, chaff spreader, swathmaster	
1997 NH TX66	\$64,500
chopper, PU	

0% for 2 years

Used Combine Heads

2005 MF 8000	\$28,000
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1991 MacDon 960	\$10,000
25' pur	
1996 NH 973	\$12,500
30' flex, pur	

Used Swathers

2009 Westward M150	\$109,000
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2007 MF 9435	\$94,900
36', U2, skid shoes, guage wheels, 650 hours	
2006 MF 9220	\$74,900
30', U2, guage wheels, skid shoes, 650 hours	
2003 Westward 9352	\$62,000
30', pu reel, 1400 hrs	
1999 MF 220II	\$46,500
26', DS, pu reel, sch drive, 253 hours	
1995 Case IH 8820	\$19,500
25', pu reel	
1992 CI 722	\$12,000
26', batt reel	

0% for 2 years

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Used Hay Tools continued

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1999 Case IH SC416	\$12,500
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1996 Case IH 8380	\$8,500
16', s/s rollers	
2004 MF 220AH	\$12,900
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2005 Bale King 3100	SOLD
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Used Compacts L & G

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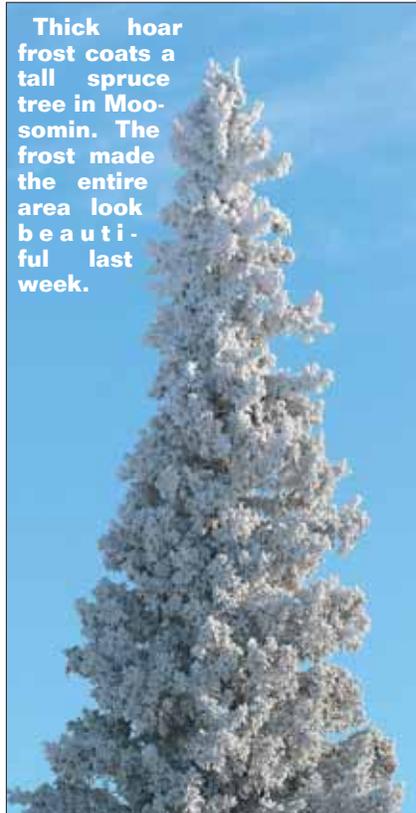
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Thick hoar frost coats a tall spruce tree in Moomin. The frost made the entire area look beautiful last week.

Manitoba axes tax

Manitoba is getting rid of its small business tax.

Businesses in the province will save more than \$422 million annually when the tax measures are combined with tax cuts previously announced by the government.

Finance Minister Rosann Wowchuk credited small businesses for their contributions to Manitoba.

She says they invest in the economy, grow communities, support families and keep Manitoba's unemployment rate one of the lowest in the country.

When the NDP took office in 1999, the small business tax was at eight per cent.

That number has dropped over the past decade, sitting more recently at one per cent before the phase-out was announced

Wednesday.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business voiced support for the move.

"This is a day to celebrate but it doesn't end here," said spokeswoman Janine Carmichael.

"I think the next thing for small businesses is really on the personal income tax side—that's really an area where Manitoba is losing some competitiveness."

The province, however, said it does not have current plans to change that.

The Canadian Taxpayers Association wonders where the government will try to recoup the \$9.5 million shortfall it will face by axing the small business tax.

The government said it has not yet determined how it will make up for the shortfall.

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M any T hanks

There are no words to express our sincere and overwhelming gratitude, appreciation and thanks to our communities that came together to help carry and support us and our families through this tragedy. We cannot even begin to attempt to individually thank everyone who contributed and were involved.

It is an honor to our boys and an unbelievable comfort to our families knowing that we are part of an extended community so full of love and support.

We are so very proud and blessed that we live in this community. Riley, Brody, Chad and Cody can rest in peace knowing that their families and friends are surrounded by love.

In this holiday season it is our hope and wish that you will continue to love and support each other and have a Merry Christmas.

With our love and gratitude,
The Grainger, Parker, Taylor
and Wilson Families



ND poker tournament gets larger every year

Poker Mania starts December 29 as over 1,800 poker players are expected to begin arriving in Minot, North Dakota for the annual ND Texas Hold'em Championship™. The annual tournament, now in its seventh year, is held at The Vegas Motel of Minot and is the largest charity poker tournament in the United States. Last year 1,491 players competed for the \$115,000 prize pool payout. The coveted first prize payout of \$37,500 was awarded to the new ND state champion, Eric Hanson from Lisbon, North Dakota.

The state poker tournament held Dec. 29 to Jan. 1 is hosted by The Vegas Motel and Sevens Bar and Restaurant. It is now in its seventh year and continues to grow and draw national and international attention. This year's total prize pool is expected to be over \$138,000, with \$40,000 awarded to the first place player and new state champion.

The tournament draws a majority of its players from across the nation and Canada.

"Every year the tournament draws more players from a wider area," said Wendy Rupert, The Vegas Motel manager and event organizer. "Every year since the inception of the tournament, it has broken attendance records for the largest state tournament and set a record for having the largest charitable poker tournament in the United States."

In addition, Rupert said the management team for the tournament adds new features every year to closely mimic the World

Series of Poker™ events. "We want all of our players to feel the same excitement and energy just as if they were playing in a World Series event, just on a smaller scale," said Rupert.

In previous years, players have traveled great distances to compete in the tournament, traveling from over 39 different states as far away as New Hampshire, Florida, California and Alaska. International competitors from Norway, Germany, Vietnam, England and Canada have also taken part in past tournaments. This year's tournament will be no exception; many Canadian players have already registered. The number of Canadian players has steadily increased year after year to reach over 200 players in

the previous tournament.

Rupert said the tournament was conceived to draw tourism and fill a void in activities after the holiday season. "We wanted to create a marquee event for the community at the time of year when things were slow and the rural community was having some down time."

When the tournament was created "poker was a growing craze," said Rupert. "We wanted a family event—Dad can play in the tournament, Mom can catch the after Christmas sales, and the kids can enjoy the motel's swimming pool." However you may see Mom also playing in the tournament, since the number of women playing in the tournament is growing steadily. Four women

competed in the first year; 36 played in 2007, with one woman reaching the top 20. In 2008 Chastity Askvig of Carpio, ND was the first woman to finish in the top 10, walking away with the third place paycheck of \$9,000. In 2009, 164 women competed in the tournament.

One of the exciting reasons players cite for playing in the local state championship tournament is that the tournament gives players the opportunity to sharpen their skills and develop the confidence to move on to the larger WSOP events held annually in Las Vegas. Many of the tournament players have placed in the WSOP of events and taken home cash prizes.

The charity tournament consists of a \$100 buy-in. In

each of the first two days, the top 100 qualifiers advance to the championship round on January 1. Anyone who does not successfully advance on the first day may also buy in on day two.

On the final day of play, an estimated 200 players will compete for the coveted estimated top prize of \$40,000. The top 100 players will receive a portion of the prize payouts. All registered players are invited to enjoy a lavish buffet supper at the motel sponsored the Sevens Bar and Restaurant. "It is a very large buffet, created after the famous Las Vegas buffets," said Rupert.

A portion of registration proceeds is used for tournament costs, such as trophies, advertising and

staffing, with the remainder being donated for college scholarships at Minot State University.

The Vegas Motel is located at 2315 North Broadway, across from the Minot International Airport.

Pre-registration is recommended, since it guarantees that a player will have a spot in the tournament and it speeds up registration on game day, but players will be accepted up until play begins on the first two days.

Texas hold 'em is now the most-played poker game in U.S. casinos. Its popularity has been attributed, in part, to extensive television exposure of hold 'em tournaments. The World Series of Poker in Las Vegas culminates with a \$10,000 no-limit hold 'em main event.



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January 1st

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Previous North Dakota State Champions

2009 Eric Hanson, \$37,500
1,491 entrants

2008 Sam Dickson, \$35,000
1,341 entrants

2007 Sonny Lehman, \$30,000
1,103 entrants

2006 Curtis Langford, \$25,000
667 entrants

2005 Lyle Kirmis, \$20,000
483 entrants

2004 Jeff Nehring, \$19,000
387 entrants

For motel reservations, tournament information or registration call
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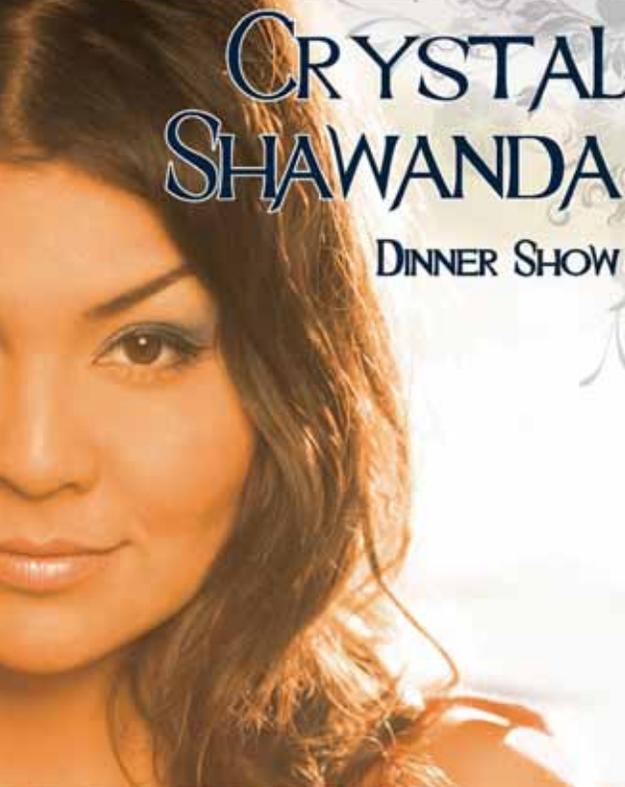
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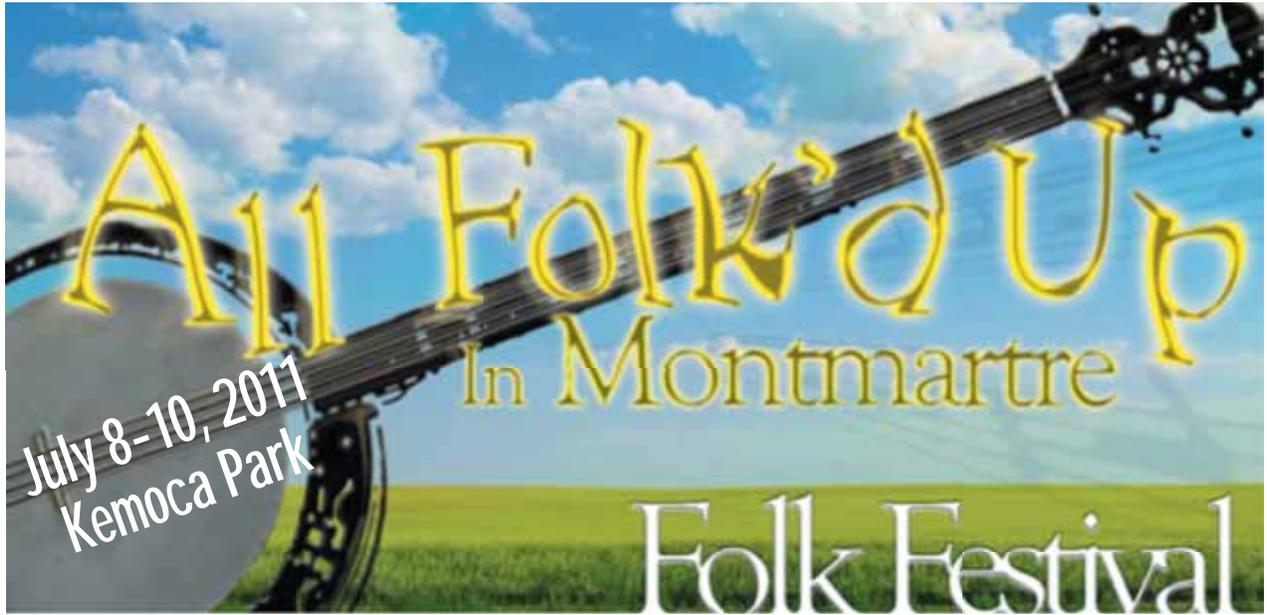
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MS treatment gives Hendrick hope

BY HELEN SOLMES
The controversial MS Liberation procedure has given an Esterhazy man new hope that, with time and a physiotherapy regime, he will be able to shake some of the debilitating symptoms of muscular sclerosis.

Myles Hendrick is cautiously optimistic that, now that the two collapsed veins in his neck have been ballooned back into shape and now that blood is flowing as it should, he will find the physical strength to manage his disease. It will require diligence on his part and a 45-60-minute a day physiotherapy program, but, as he said: "At least I am now pointed in the right direction."

Every day since his treatment in Costa Rica in October, Myles Hendrick has noticed small but encouraging improvements.

The numbness in his leg is gone, the numbness in his right hand is 50 per cent gone, and he has regained bladder control.

He is no longer dependent on a walker. He is standing taller, walking with less of a gait, and he is back in the saddle. Only time will tell whether he will be able to farm again, but, for now, he is back up on the tractor, and is actually enjoying being able to clear snow from his farm yard north of Esterhazy.

Every day since the Chronic Cardiospinal Venous Insufficiency (CCSVI) procedure in Costa Rica in October, Myles has noticed small improvements

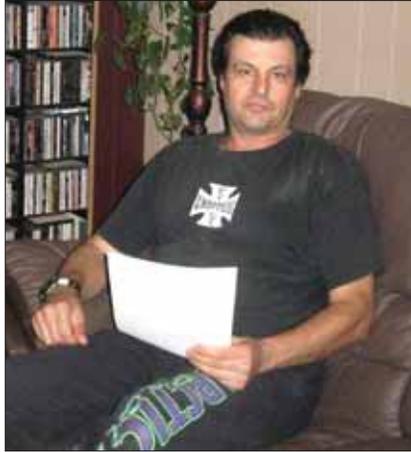
For Hendrick, life has always been a series of small steps toward achieving his goals. "I like to have a game plan," he said. "If things don't go right, then I like to reassess and move on to Plan B."

In the past three years, Myles has had to seriously rethink his life plans. In January, 2008, he was diagnosed with primary progressive muscular sclerosis (MS), the type of MS that left him weak, tired, and plagued with debilitating symptoms and with a prognosis that made the near future look bleak.

Primary progressive MS is one of two forms of MS, the other being relapsing remitting—similar, but different in that, unlike relapsing remitting MS patients, Myles could not count on any relief from the numbness in his arms and legs, nor from the fatigue, bladder problems, blurred vision, and loss of balance.

Unlike relapsing remitting MS, primary progressive MS offered few, if any, breaks from the symptoms. They just keep getting worse. Myles knew that, without some intervention, he would be in a wheelchair within two years.

Hendrick is 48 years old. By his mid-forties, he was married, he was farming his own land north of Esterhazy, he was a partner in a contract business, and he was an ardent hunter and angler. He was enjoying life. In 2007, he began feeling numbness in his left leg that



Myles Hendrick of Esterhazy reviews the literature that he received in preparation for a Chronic Cardiospinal Venous Insufficiency (CCSVI) procedure that he underwent in Costa Rica on Oct. 22 to alleviate the debilitating symptoms of primary progressive multiple sclerosis (MS).

progressed into one arm then into the other.

Then came the diagnosis. So much for Plan A.

When he was diagnosed, he rented out his land, and, rather than taking an active part with his business partner in the underground grouting operations at Esterhazy Mosaic potash mine, he relegated himself to office work.

On Oct. 20, Myles and his

wife Tracy headed to Costa Rica where Myles underwent a Chronic Cardiospinal Venous Insufficiency (CCSVI) procedure to inflate the two collapsed veins in his neck. Within two days of the treatment, he started an intensive physiotherapy program to teach him a set of daily exercises that he could do on his own, at home, to restore the muscle tone and balance that he had lost.

The procedure is a controversial one that the Canadian medical society has yet to fully endorse. Yet, more than a thousand Canadians have travelled to foreign countries such as Costa Rica. The testimonials have been overwhelmingly positive. "There has to be something to this," Myles said. "People are saying that within hours of the procedure, they felt warmth in their feet. Tracey can tell just cold my feet are."

Myles was cautious not to set his expectations too high. "The results have been more than I expected," he said. "I noticed warmth in my feet right away. I was actually sweating. That was pretty neat."

"Some people who were confined to a wheelchair were able to walk again. It can't be just a placebo effect. MS patients can't will themselves to get up and walk anymore than they can will themselves not to walk."

However, the full impact of the procedure can't be determined overnight. Anyone who has undergone MS Liberation has been told that it could take up to six months before doctors can fully assess the success of the treatment.

The Costa Rica procedure was not be much different than routine coronary angioplasty procedures that have been administered worldwide, including Canada, for a multitude of vascular conditions, according to Myles. He struggles to understand why the controversy. "Somewhere in the

research, the experts got to thinking that MS is a neurological condition, and not a vascular condition," he said. "I understand. These are smart people who have invested a lot of themselves in a line of thinking."

However, the theory that MS is a condition brought on by collapsed veins can't be ignored, according to Myles. The angioplasty treatment of collapsed veins has brought undeniable relief for many MS patients. Its success rate is overwhelming. "I also understand how MS could be a vascular problem," he said. "There were times when I got moving too quickly. I felt faint. My vision was blurred, but, if I stopped and settled down, I could feel the blood flowing again and I was able to keep going. Now I can walk straighter and further and people comment on how much better my skin color is."

There were times in the past three years when Myles has felt that he had no options other than to accept and give in to a life of more and more medication, more setbacks, and more disappointments. He has faced enough disappointments in the past few years to know that he can be only cautiously hopeful that the CCSVI procedure will make a difference. As Tracy said, "There are no guarantees in life, but, if there was any hope that Myles could regain some of his strength instead of steadily losing ground, then we had to try."

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Fleming to get a new, old elevator

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK

On a cold February night, Fleming's dreams went up in smoke.

The community had worked for years to restore its vintage grain elevator, the oldest elevator on its original site in Canada.

Then, tragically, a few months before it was to open as a tourist attraction, the Lake of the Woods elevator burned to the ground.

As the elevator burned to the ground on the night of Feb. 9 of this year, many thought that Fleming's hopes for the future were razed as well. So many in the community had poured their heart and soul into fixing up the elevator, many questioned how the close-knit community could recover from the loss of the uninsurable wooden elevator that had taken so much effort, and so much money, to restore.

Half a year later, however, Fleming has a new project to rally around.

The community wants to bring a new, old elevator to town to fix up.

Canada's smallest incorporated town, with a population something less than a hundred, is raising \$75,000 to move the Doonside elevator to the site of the former Lake of the Woods elevator, along the CP Main Line next to the Trans-Canada Highway.

Fleming Mayor Phil Hamm explains.

"Last spring Alex Burke saw me at lodge and said 'you wouldn't be interested in another elevator, would you?' He said 'well, we've got one and it's on our farm.'

"They had bought it when it closed. Everything's working on it, the leg, all the scales and everything. Nothing's corroded like it was on ours because of the fertilizer storage. This one has a manlift to go up top. It has excellent tin on it, and we've had it checked out and it's in really good shape."

The elevator was originally built at Dumas, west of Wawota, in 1925 and was moved to Doonside in 1962. The Fleming Historical Preservation Society now plans to move it again. The drive-through addition will be removed and the elevator will be moved in two pieces.

Hamm says it will take some volunteer work to prepare the elevator to be moved.

"The mover said he could do it for \$75,000 as long as we got some volunteers and brace it so it's ready for us to move," said Hamm.

Fleming is getting some support from surrounding municipalities for its elevator project.

The RM of Maryfield has promised \$10,000 over five years, the RM of Archie, Manitoba has contributed \$1,000 and promised another \$1,000 over the next two years, and the RM of Walpole, where the elevator currently sits, has agreed to widen the road between the elevator and the nearest grid road so the building can be moved, and will level the site afterwards.

Dwayne Boon, the farmer whose land the elevator is on, wants nothing for the building, other than requesting that the site be levelled.

In addition to the elevator, Fleming's Historical Preservation Society has secured a vintage boxcar to sit on the siding next to the elevator.

CP Rail had offered a vintage boxcar to Fleming in 2008, but after some staffing changes the railway could no longer locate the boxcar.

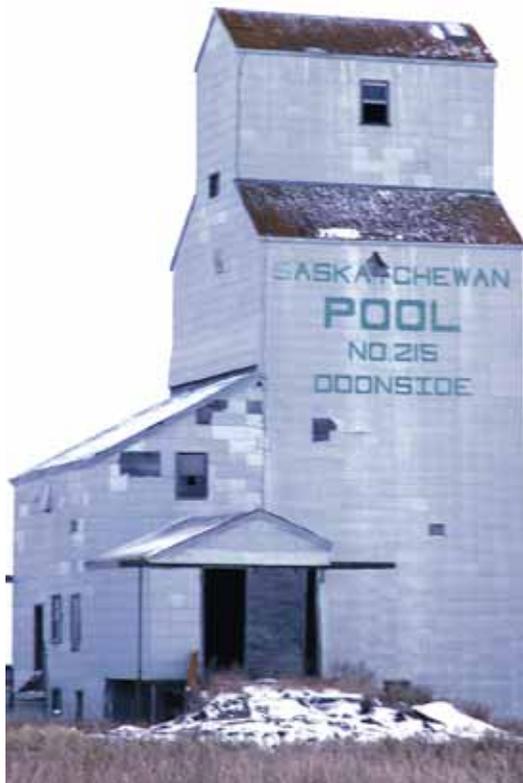
Recently CP notified Fleming they had located the boxcar they had been offered in the Ogden yards in Calgary, and the rail car should be on the siding at Fleming within 30 days.

The exact plans for restoring the elevator aren't finalized yet. "It was a Wheat Pool elevator, but we would like to put the Lake of the Woods name on it," said Hamm. "It may have Lake of the Woods on one side, Wheat Pool on another."

The first priority for Hamm and the historical group is fundraising. "Right now we're trying to raise some money and we're hoping to raise enough money that we can approach one of the financial institutions for a loan to get the thing moved over," he said. "The movers could do it in December if we can get the money together."

The historical society is having a silent auction and fundraising turkey and ham supper at the Fleming Hall on Sunday, Dec. 12.

Hamm is confident that tiny Fleming can raise the money and bring an elevator back to its skyline.



Above: The Fleming Historical Preservation Society plans to move this elevator from Doonside to Fleming.

Left: The partially restored Lake of the Woods elevator.

Right: What was left of the elevator on the morning of Feb. 9.



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Left: Accommodations in the middle of the desert.
Bottom: Large House at Dandan Oilik



Moosomin native first Canadian to visit ancient city

Dandan Oilik is located in the Taklamakan Desert, Xinjiang Province, China. It has no airport, no roads, and no river. To get there one has to travel three days on the back of a camel, in the company of an official from the Archaeological Institute of Xinjiang. Dandan Oilik is a protected site and access is closely guarded. No Canadians had ever ventured here.

In October, Moosomin native Susan Trimble, daughter of the late Bill Brown, was the first Canadian to set foot into Dandan Oilik.

Accompanied by her husband Bill and lifetime friend Kathy from Kingston, Ontario, Susan and her group circled the Taklamakan Desert, first following the route of the Northern Silk Road to Kashgar, and then swinging southeast to follow the old Southern Silk Road. On the southern route, passing through Yengisar and Yarkand, they provisioned in Khotan (renowned for its mountain and river jade) and then went northeast past Kheriya to Darya Boya. Here they met with their camel train, made up of 25 Bactrian camels, and started their journey.

The Taklamakan Desert is not one of the largest deserts in the world, but it is one of the deadliest. In the local language, the name means 'he who enters does not return'. While many deserts are gravel and small stones, the Taklamakan is a 'shifting sand' desert, composed of very fine grain sand particles which move with the constantly blowing wind. It is this movement of enveloping sand dunes that causes rivers to dry up and cities to disappear.

After three days on camels, averaging about 12 kilometres a day, they reached the site of the ancient city. Originally populated about 2500 years ago, it became an important centre along the oasis trail through the desert. The name Dandan Oilik means 'Houses of Ivory'. It became a Tibetan army outpost about 500 CE, but the river started to dry up shortly thereafter. The Muslim invasion of the eighth and ninth centuries sealed its fate and it was abandoned in the ninth century.

Originally discovered by Sven Hedin in 1895 and extensively surveyed by Sir Aurel Stein in 1905, Dandan Oilik remained unknown



Susan, second from left, Kathy fourth from left, and Bill, at left in back, at Dandan Oilik for the 40th Anniversary of Canada-China Relations

until its re-discovery by Christoph Baumer in 1998. Since then it has been under the scrutiny and care of the Chinese Archaeological Institute. Perhaps part of the reason that Canadians were allowed to visit at this time was because this year is the 40th Anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic Relations between China and Canada.

Over the decades and centuries, the sands cover parts of the city while the winds expose other parts. The Chinese archaeologist wanted to show the Trimbles a cemetery that he had helped excavate three years ago—but to his surprise, it

has since been buried under the shifting sands of the Taklamakan.

At another location Susan found several Buddhist fresco artifacts amongst several small rows of wattle-walls. The archaeologist indicated that this was a newly exposed site, probably a small shrine.

He took many measurements and photos of this new find—the artifacts were packaged, marked, and stored for the return journey to the Archaeological Institute. Canadians had added to the knowledge about Dandan Oilik.

Being comfortable in the desert is as much a frame

of mind as it is ensuring all the things needed are brought—because there is nothing available, save sand and some dried ancient wood. With 35C afternoons, the greatest need is for water, which can be assuaged by bringing tomatoes and watermelons as food supplements. Since a basic camel load is about 100 kgs (220 lbs), the water, foods, other supplies and support for fifteen people (but only nine riding camels) fully necessitates twenty-five 'ships of the desert' for this group. Happily the camels carried tents as well!

Being the first Canadians allowed to visit Dandan Oilik was a great honour as well as a voyage of discovery. But too soon it was time to leave. Three days on a camel were needed to visit the site, but also three days would be required to return to base camp at Darya Boya.

In fact, the return journey only took two days. During the first night of the return trip, a wild sandstorm (locally called a 'chong buran') struck and the group was awake all night trying to stop their tents from

blowing away. In the process, the wind blew sand into almost every nook and cranny of all things and all people. Three digital cameras were clogged beyond repair. Then, just before first light, it started to rain (in a desert where it rains less than once a year!). An hour later the weather turned colder and for a short time it snowed. The decision was taken to push on and complete the return trip in two not three days.

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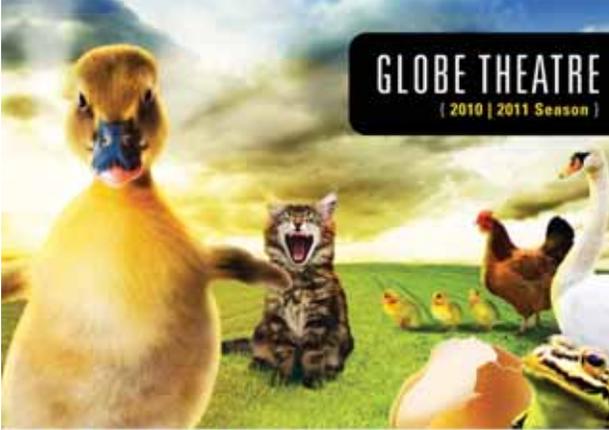
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