



Judah Wardrope creating a career in country music

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Covering Southeast Saskatchewan and Southwest Manitoba

Two Hutch Ambulance employees participating in Jump for Charity fundraiser

BY ASHLEY BOCHEK

The Jump for Charity is an annual fundraiser that supports the Teddy Bears Anonymous charity in Saskatchewan, and will have two local participants this year.

Jesse Buchanan and Jackie Vennard of Hutch Ambulance in Moosomin are among this year's EMS Saskatchewan participants who will be jumping out of an airplane to raise funds for Teddy Bears Anonymous.

The Jump for Charity is being held in Moose Jaw on September 6.

"The Jump for Charity is on September 6 in Moose Jaw, and it is the Saskatchewan EMS against the Moose Jaw City Police and will be raising money for Teddy Bears Anonymous," said Vennard. "Last year, Saskatchewan EMS beat Regina City Police Service — that is why EMS was invited again this year. It is an annual charity event. Last year, the total raised by Saskatchewan EMS was \$6,611 and we would like to beat the EMS total from last year."

"Whoever brings in the most money for the charity has bragging rights, but it is all about raising as much money as we can for Teddy Bears Anonymous," said Vennard.

The event will be held at the Moose Jaw Municipal Airport and will include a barbecue.

"There will be a bunch of people that will come out to watch — it is like a gathering. There will be a barbecue as well. They will all be at the landing zone cheering us on as we jump out of planes," said Buchanan.

Vennard says Walter Hutchinson notified them about the charity event a few weeks ago.

"We had an email be forwarded to us from Walter, our boss, stating that Moosomin was chosen to send people who wanted to do this to represent Saskatchewan EMS so we both put our hands up and said, 'pick me!' basically."

Teddy Bears in Ambulances

Vennard says the teddy bears help comfort and support children and sometimes elders travelling in ambulances.



Jesse Buchanan and Jackie Vennard of Hutch Ambulance will go to great heights for a cause they believe in—they will jump out of a plane to raise money for Teddy Bears Anonymous this fall!

"We do have the teddy bears in the ambulance. We give them not just to kids, but we also use them for our elderly dementia patients or sometimes our mental health patients. If patients get agitated sometimes the teddy bears are a distraction that helps. The kids always light up when they see a teddy bear and I think it makes the back of the ambulance a little less scary for them, and the teddy bears are sterile. They can go into an OR setting with the kids when usually nothing can because it is not sterile. So, we find that is great for the kids," she says.

Buchanan adds, "I have always found when I give out teddy bears—I try to give them out as much as I can, especially to the kids. A lot of the stuff that we can end up doing does or can hurt, like a needle, and kids aren't too excited for that, I know I wasn't as a kid. It is kind of more of a comfort measure for them. Something for them to focus on like Jackie said. I find it helps them to be more comfortable and focus on the bear it's like a reward as well for letting us do our job and being strong."

"We have had the Teddy Bears Anonymous teddy bears for at least the last five years, but before them we always had some sort of teddy bear in our ambulance," said Vennard. "At one point there was actually a local motorcycle club that donated some teddy bears to us that were wearing little leather jackets — they were pretty cute."

Importance of Teddy Bears

Vennard says the ambulance can be scary for kids, and they believe the teddy bears help calm and comfort the kids through the long ride.

"We want the kids to feel safe, comfortable, happy, and less agitated. It's also an education piece. We are asked where the teddy bears are from, and we can talk about how they are local and the charity that gives them to us is local. I think it is just a comfort measure and that is essentially why we do this job, is to make people feel better. So if we can offer an object that doesn't hurt and isn't scary—like Jesse said there are a lot of things that we can do in the ambulance that unfortunately cause pain or discomfort, it's scary, there are lots of lights and lots of questions, and if we can offer them just something small, it makes us a little more human to them perhaps, not so scary."

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MacLeod School chosen as spring Smile Cookie recipient

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
For three years in a row, Moosomin Tim Hortons has sold the most Smile Cookies in Saskatchewan, and this year From April 28 to May 4 the town is hoping to do that again, breaking its records of \$45,000 last year, \$35,000 in 2023, and \$30,000 in 2022.

This spring's Smile Cookie recipient will be MacLeod Elementary School. The school is raising funds for the south side of the playground in anticipation of kids from the Playfair Daycare using that space as well.

"The playground is going to be beneficial to both the daycare and McLeod Elementary School, so it seems like a great fit and a no-brainer to us to partner with them," said Greg Crisanti, owner of the Moosomin Tim Horton's.

When Tammy Cole, Principal at MacLeod Elementary, applied to the Smile Cookie campaign, she thought it would be perfect timing as the new building for Playfair Daycare is slated to go up on the

south side of the school.

"I actually requested to become the Smile Cookie recipient this year to coincide with the Play Fair Daycare being built on our playground," Cole said. "So when the building begins, we will have two soccer fields that are no longer going to be there that are very old and obsolete. Our hope is to be able to purchase a set of soccer nets that will go in our track area."

The government of Saskatchewan is also providing funding to match community fundraising efforts for school playground equipment up to \$50,000, an announcement that was made in the 2025 budget.

"It's exciting to have the potential to help projects like this reach their goal quicker," says Moosomin-Montmartre MLA Kevin Weedmark. "By providing matching funding, schools like MacLeod Elementary can double their fundraising dollars, giving a big boost to their project."

If the funds allow, there's another project Cole would like to see come to fruition as well.

"One of the other projects we'd like to do if we raise enough funds is to put in a kickball back stop, which would be used for kickball or baseball, which is another thing that we used to have on our play-

ground and then we pulled it out due to it just being really old and not working anymore. So we're just trying to do some replacement of some things."

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McNaughton High School students volunteering to make Smile Cookies during the 2023 Smile Cookie campaign.



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The Redvers Rockets celebrate winning the Senior D provincial championship in Turtleford on March 30.

Redvers Rockets win provincial championship

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI

It's a season of big wins for the Redvers Rockets. First they claimed the Big 6 Hockey League championship, then a provincial championship after facing the Edam Three Stars in Senior D Provincial finals.

Riding high on their first encounter with the Three Stars on March 23 when the Rockets nabbed Game 1 of the best of three series at home, the boys were eager to sweep in Turtleford on March 29.

But Edam was not about to give up a win that late in the post-season so easily. They had risen through the ranks just like the Rockets, and were ready to put up a fight. Edam would open scoring with the lone point of the sec-

ond period from Damon Schaefer, but the final frame was where all the action hit. The Three Stars would build on their lead courtesy Zachary Nedelec's goal for a two-point lead.

Redvers would break the shutout and match the score with twin-tingers from Koltyn Miller and Jordan Miller, but Edam would take the lead once again as Mitch Wall gained the point with just under five minutes on the clock.

Redvers just couldn't match that final point, ending the game with a 3-2 loss and the series tied.

The next night saw Edam first on the scoreboard with a goal from Kendall Fransoo, comprising the only point of

that initial frame.

Second period action saw the Three Stars extend their lead to two unanswered points, this time from the blade of Keegan Tiringier. However, that famous fire of gump-tion seemed to be ignited deep in the Rockets' bones, seeing that middle period come to a close with a deuce from Oliver Poirier plus a single from Kenton Miller to make it a 3-2 Redvers affair.

Edam would come back to tie the match in the middle of the third with a goal from Jared Blaquiére, but two Redvers goals in the last five minutes fired from Drew Hoff and Naton Miller brought the Rockets to a 5-3 final and the provincial title.

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Jump for Charity fundraiser

Continued from front

Feelings about the jump

Vennard and Buchanan say they are both excited for the opportunity and to raise money for a good cause.

"My dad asked me if I needed to see a doctor because he thought I was crazy," said Vennard. "I have also had people say 'way to go' and 'I have to thank you.' You do get a lot of 'you're crazy,' but I am just so excited." Vennard said.

Buchanan added, "My parents, especially my mom, was very nervous about it to the point where she said she might not even come to the jump that day. She says she is going to force herself to do it because it is for a great cause. My dad, kind of a rough go-getter, thought 'Okay!' and was excited and all for it. A lot of my friends thought it was really cool. I see it more as doing it for a good cause and I have always wanted to jump out of a plane whether that be military or skydiving. I always thought that kind of stuff is cool and to do it for a good cause is an even better reason to do it."

They both say they have never gone skydiving before but have always wanted to try.

"I have never gone skydiving. It is on my bucket list so now I am going to do it," Vennard said.

"I'm pretty much the same," Buchanan said. "I wanted to go into the military and that was one of the big things that I looked forward to if I did get in, doing like paratrooper things."

Inspiration for Jump

Vennard said she was inspired by Mikka Heide and her journey.

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Inspiration for Jump

Vennard said she was inspired by Mikka Heide and her journey.

"I am very excited for the jump. I am a hometown girl. I went to school here in Moosomin, my kids went to school here, so I know the family who runs the charity and Mikka Heide, who is the latest one to go through the treatment in her family, she really for some reason inspires me. I think somebody so young that can face something so scary is inspiring, and she is very strong, a very strong young lady, I just want to do this for her. I didn't even have a second thought about it. If she can face cancer and stare it in the face like that and go through a life-altering surgery, I can jump out of a plane."

Buchanan adds, "I grew up in Moose Jaw, so I know quite a few of Moose Jaw City Police and whoever raises the most money, that's great, the more money for the kids and for this cause the better, and that is amazing. My cousin grew up with a condition where his left ventricle is smaller than the other and he has gone to surgeries pretty much all of his life and when I heard this fundraiser is to do with kids, with the teddy bears and why we have them, I decided I am going to do it."

Community Involvement

Buchanan said he is excited to try something new and be part of a great fundraiser.

"I am a little nervous because it is new, but I am excited to support such a great cause and be part of an amazing fundraiser. My big thing is getting to know the community and getting to know more about everything that goes on in our community and show them we are not just here to do the calls, but here to answer questions and talk to us and give back to the community. We are here to help them."

Vennard says she is a little nervous for the unknown but can't wait to get out in the community for the fundraiser.

"I am not young anymore so there are always nerves to it. I think I am more nervous about the unknown, I have never done it."

"I think once we get there, and they go over it with us I will feel more comfortable. As far as the fundraising goes, like Jesse said, it will be great to give back to the community. We haven't had a chance to do that since COVID and since COVID our call volume has pretty much doubled so it is very hard for us to get to the schools, the daycares, and community places so this will be a great opportunity to get out there and touch base with the community members again and the new community members because Moosomin is growing and so I am looking forward to that part of it."



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Job Summary:

The Council of the Municipality of Russell Binscarth is seeking a dynamic and experienced Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to provide strategic leadership and oversee the efficient operation of the Municipality. Reporting directly to the Mayor and Council, the CAO will be responsible for implementing Council policies, managing municipal departments, and ensuring the effective delivery of public services. This is a unique opportunity for a visionary leader to guide the Municipality toward sustainable growth and excellence in governance. Come join us...be a part of it all!

The applicant should possess technical skills in municipal administration, financial management and human resource management. Strong communication, analytical and leadership skills are just some of the requirements of the position.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide strategic leadership and oversight of municipal operations, ensuring alignment with Council priorities.
- Implement and execute policies, plans, and directives established by Council.
- Lead, mentor, and manage municipal staff to foster a culture of efficiency, professionalism, and accountability.
- Develop and manage annual budgets, ensuring fiscal responsibility and long-term financial sustainability.
- Oversee municipal infrastructure projects, economic development initiatives, and service delivery improvements.
- Act as the principal advisor to Council, providing research, analysis, and recommendations on policy and operational matters.
- Promote employee engagement by cultivating a safe, supportive, high-performance work environment.
- Represent the Municipality in dealings with external stakeholders, including government agencies, community groups, and business partners.
- Provide effective advice and support to Council in developing, implementing and executing by-laws, policies and strategies to realize Council's goals and objectives.
- Ensure compliance with all relevant municipal, provincial, and federal regulations.
- Engage with the public to promote transparency, responsiveness, and community involvement in local governance.

Qualifications and Experience:

- A post-secondary degree in a relevant discipline such as Public Administration, Business Administration, Commerce, Political Science or a degree in a related municipal field such as Planning or Engineering.
- A certificate in Manitoba Municipal Administration is an asset.
- A minimum of five years of progressively responsible leadership experience in municipal government or a related sector; or an equivalent combination of training and experience in other relevant settings.
- Strong financial management and budgeting experience.
- Demonstrated ability to lead and manage diverse teams effectively.
- Knowledge of municipal law, governance, and administrative processes.
- Excellent communication, negotiation, and stakeholder engagement skills.
- Ability to think strategically and implement innovative solutions to complex challenges.
- Experience in economic development, urban planning, and infrastructure management is an asset.

How to Apply:

Individuals interested in an opportunity to work in a dynamic and growing municipality should submit a resume and cover letter outlining their qualifications and relevant experience to **Interim CAO Twyla Ludwig** at cao@mrbgov.com with the subject line "CAO Application" or by mail to Box 10, Russell, MB R0J 1W0. Please include salary expectations and a minimum of three professional references.

The Selection Committee intends to review applications as received and interview as early as April 28, 2025, with applications continuing to be accepted until the suitable candidate is found.

For more information on the Municipality of Russell Binscarth and a complete description of this exciting opportunity, visit us at www.russellbinscarth.com. We thank all who apply and advise that only those selected for further consideration will be contacted.



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Former Moosomin Generals player, grew up in SE Sask: Judah Wardrope creating a career in country music

BY ASHLEY BOCHKE

Judah Wardrope, who grew up in southeast Saskatchewan, is embarking on a country music career.

He is currently based in British Columbia and recently released his first single, 'If I Die Tomorrow'.

The World-Spectator interviewed him last week on his music career, and the interview follows:

Tell me a little bit yourself.

I grew up in Carlyle just down the road from Moosomin, but I am actually quite familiar with Moosomin. Besides the fact it is not that far away, I also played high school football for the Generals. I was a town kid that would go out and help on the neighbouring farms sometimes on the weekends, but for the most part I was just your typical small-town kid.

But music was something I always dreamed about as a kid. After high school, I really got into it and now I'm going for it as a career.

What influenced music in your life? Where did the love for it start?

It goes way back as far as I can remember. I grew up in Saskatchewan, but I was born in B.C. I like to tell people I am from Saskatchewan because we moved there when I was eight. One of my core memories I have from the short time we lived in B.C.—country music is my genre and my thing—but I am also very heavily influenced by '80s rock music as well because I remember as a kid my dad got a U2 CD for Christmas from one of his buddies and it was from one of their concerts, and he used to play that for me all the time when I was a kid. So, from the time I could walk, I was always dragging a guitar around and listening to that CD, and then we moved to Saskatchewan, and I was introduced to country music at a young age. I grew up listening to Luke Bryan and Jason Aldean and I just fell in love with the expression, the joy, and I love being able to spread that to people too.

Do you write your own music? If so, where do you find inspiration to write songs?

I do. I have been getting into a little bit of co-writing as well, but I mainly write my own songs. The inspiration kind of just comes. I have been writing since I was 15 as my way of expressing myself. I struggled a lot with mental health in my life and that was kind of my way to express myself and the way I was feeling. I have this thing called my 'Hook Book' and it is basically all of my ideas for songs and catchy ideas. There will be times sometimes when I am out working and think of something that I think is good or a cool song title and I will write it down and then when I actually sit down to write I'll look through my book and pick a title and start writing from there. I tweak it here and there, but I basically just go with an idea and see if something can come of it.

What made you move away from home to live in B.C.?

When I first started really going for it about a year and a half ago, I was working at a cattle ranch for a week and then going on the road for a week and doing that back and forth and I was kind of at a point where things were starting to happen and I was getting bigger opportunities, but I was at a crossroads—I had all these cool opportunities, but as an independent artist I didn't have the money to pursue some of these really cool opportunities at the time. I thought about it and I have family out in B.C. who I knew I could live with for cheaper rent and I could work a trade job that will allow me to take some of these cooler opportunities, so I just really thought and prayed about it for a while and thought I would take a chance. So, I moved in with my uncle and started doing carpentry throughout the day and long-story-short, I ended up putting a song out and it actually ended up getting picked up on radio in Estevan.

Tell me a little about your first single and what inspired you to write it, and the background behind the song.

The song is called 'If I die tomorrow' and the music video came out last Wednesday. My producer Jesse Weiman, I met him up in Saskatoon when I was doing some shows up there and he came up to me after the one show and asked if I wanted to do a writing session at his studio, so I agreed and he and I wrote it together. Basically, I had this girl I liked over time, and I have always been an overthinker and thought 'should I tell her, should I take the risk?' So we started writing this song.

One of my other big fears in my life is regret and I was at the point where I was scared to take this chance, but also scared to live in regret. It is kind of like that Garth Brooks song, 'If Tomorrow Never Comes.' Whatever opportunity anyone may have in life, it is scary, but heaven-



Judah Wardrope recently released his first single, 'If I Die Tomorrow'. He grew up in southeast Saskatchewan, and currently lives in BC, where he is getting started on a music career.

forbid if you did die tomorrow, could you live with yourself that you never took that big chance or opportunity that you had? That is where the song came from.

Walk me through the process of being reached out to by a music label? How does it happen?

I think there are different ways that it happens sometimes. I know some buddies of mine who have been approached through social media. For me, it was very natural. When Jesse introduced himself to me that night, I recognized him because I remembered seeing his face out in the crowd a couple nights before at a different venue. One of the biggest things for people wanting to get into the music industry is to just get out and see shows whether you are playing or not and just make connections, because that is literally Jesse. He is one of the producers in Saskatoon. He produces a lot of music for a lot of different artists in the city. He came up to me after and told me he loved what I was doing and that he would love to work with me if I wanted. It happened very organically. So, put yourself out there because that night I was playing at an open mic, it wasn't even a paid gig, but I just thought why I don't go out and meet some people and that is when it happened.

What has moving to B.C. done for your career? What have you been able to accomplish from moving out there?

It has been good. I am an artist now with the B.C. Country Association which has just been huge for me as a newer artist. I just found out last week that I am going to be playing at the Cloverdale Rodeo in Surrey which is huge in my career and that is all through BCCA and all the work they do to help artists get their careers started, so I am super excited about that. My music video came out last Thursday. A good friend of mine, Joe Steiner, directed the video and we shot it at Timberline Ranch in Maple Ridge which is a summer camp close to where I am living, and we shot the whole music video there. It turned out really good and I am excited to have it out for people to see. I've also had the chance to network with a lot of great musicians out here in B.C. and got some more paid gigs out here. It has been really fun getting to grow my career in a different province as compared to when I started in Saskatchewan.

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Did you always think of music as something you could dedicate your life to and make a career of?

It has always been the dream and I have always been a dreamer. It has been hard sometimes. I've always known

I wanted to do it but there was a long period that I just thought about it because I was honestly really scared of it—I didn't know I could sing honestly. I was always an outgoing guy and wasn't scared to perform, but just always thought, 'can I sing?' but I got out there and the first time I did an open mic in Saskatoon and I was so scared and barely made it through the set, but fast forward a year and a half later, I just kept grinding and trying to believe in myself and next thing you know all these doors are opening and it is crazy to look back at it now and think if you really stick to it and believe in yourself you never know what is possible.

What are the next steps for pursuing this career? What are some goals you want to accomplish in your music career?

We have so much stuff on the go right now. I have been talking to with my producer on looking to get back into the studio in the next couple of weeks and start working on the next single. Then, once that ball is rolling I have some more shows in BC coming up, but I also am working on Saskatchewan dates to come back home and play for I think the first week of July or end of June somewhere in that time. We are still working on it, but I am really looking forward to coming back home and being able to play for my home province people because I love Saskatchewan with all my heart. It doesn't matter where I go the Prairies will always be a big part of me and what I am passionate about.

The sky is the limit as far as dreams go, but for me right now I am just focusing on taking it day-by-day. We are rehearsing with the band out here and starting to do some more full-band stuff. I honestly just feel so blessed to be where I am at already. I'll see what keeps happening. Even just getting on the Estevan radio was huge. I was so excited about that.

I also just got a branding deal with a company in Nashville. They're called Woodland Wake and we are going to be releasing some merch together and it will be online soon.

If people are interested and want to follow along you can find me on Instagram at Judah Wardrope Music and that is the same for all my social media if people are interested.

What does music mean to you?

It is such a gift to be able to express yourself and my whole goal as an artist—I just want to bring people joy and help them with whatever they are going through in life because that is what music has always done for me. Whether it was a Luke Bryan song that made me be able to sing my heart out and have fun with my friends or whether it was a Morgan Wallen song that almost made me cry, I just related to that and knew I wasn't the only one going through something. That is my biggest goal as an artist. I just hope me sharing stories of my life through songs will let people know they are not alone in the world and that they can cut loose, dance, and have some fun.

Continued on Page 7

PUBLIC NOTICE

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SaskTel

Judah Wardrope creating a career in country music

Continued from Page 6

Did you always think of music as something you could dedicate your life to and make a career of?

It has always been the dream, and I have always been a dreamer. It has been hard sometimes. I've always known I wanted to do it but there was a long period that I just thought about it because I was honestly really scared of it—I didn't know I could sing honestly. I was always an outgoing guy and wasn't scared to perform, but just always thought, 'can I sing?' But I got out there, and the first time I did an open mic in Saskatoon, I was so scared and barely made it through the set, but fast forward a year and a half later, I just kept grinding and trying to believe in myself, and next thing you know all these doors are opening and it is crazy to look back at it now and think if you really stick to it and believe in yourself, you never know what is possible.

What are the next steps for pursuing this career? What are some goals you want to accomplish in your music career?

We have so much stuff on the go right now. I have been talking with my producer on looking to get back into the studio in the next couple of weeks and start working on the next single. Then, once that ball is rolling, I have some more shows in B.C. coming up, but I also am working on Saskatchewan dates to come back home and play for I think the first week of July or end of June, somewhere in that time. We are still working on it, but I am really looking forward to coming back home and being able to play for my home prov-

ince people because I love Saskatchewan with all my heart. It doesn't matter where I go, the Prairies will always be a big part of me and what I am passionate about.

The sky is the limit as far as dreams go, but for me right now I am just focusing on taking it day-by-day. We are rehearsing with the band out here and starting to do some more full-band stuff. I honestly just feel so blessed to be where I am at already. I'll see what keeps happening. Even just getting on the Estevan radio was huge. I was so excited about that.

I also just got a branding deal with a company in Nashville. They're called Woodland Wake and we are going to be releasing some merch together and it will be online soon.

If people are interested and want to follow along, you can find me on Instagram at Judah Wardrope Music and that is the same for all my social media if people are interested.

What does music mean to you?

It is such a gift to be able to express yourself and my whole goal as an artist—I just want to bring people joy and help them with whatever they are going through in life because that is what music has always done for me. Whether it was a Luke Bryan song that made me be able to sing my heart out and have fun with my friends or whether it was a Morgan Wallen song that almost made me cry, I just related to that and knew I wasn't the only one going through something. That is my biggest goal as an artist. I just hope me sharing stories of my life through songs will let people know they are not alone in the world and that they can cut loose, dance, and have some fun.



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The 2024 Alzheimer's Walk in Moosomin.

Second annual Alzheimer's walk May 24 in Moosomin

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Building on the success of last year's inaugural Walk for Alzheimer's in Moosomin, organizers confirmed a second walk will be happening in Moosomin on May 24. Last year around 140 people participated in the walk, with \$140,000 raised for the Alzheimer's Society of Canada.

"This year, we are an actual location in line with Regina, Saskatoon, PA, Swift Current, and Moose Jaw," explained Renee Whelpton during the March 28 Moosomin Chamber of Commerce meeting. "For us to be an in-person walk with the representatives from Regina coming, it's quite an honour. We have a lot more work to do, and we have a

lot more accountability, but we can do it."

Whelpton is a member of the Moosomin Caregiver Support Group that organized last year's walk, which was a 'Walk in a Box' meant for smaller fundraising walks for Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Being the first time the walk was held, organizers weren't certain what the response might look like, but given the success of the first event, the decision was made to go with an in-person walk this year.

"We hope to get a lot of walkers," Whelpton told those gathered at the Chamber meeting. "It affects everyone. I don't think there's anybody that doesn't know someone that's affected by dementia. We also want to promote our group, because

we have an Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group."

There are over 20,000 people in Saskatchewan

living with dementia, and fundraisers such as the local

walk see every dollar stay in the province.

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Playfair Daycare in Moosomin a finalist for BASF giving program



Public can vote for a chance for daycare to win \$25,000

BY KARA KINNA

Out of 612 nominations from across Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario, Playfair Daycare in Moosomin is one of three finalists in Saskatchewan for the Growing Home with BASF 2025 community giving program, giving the daycare a chance to win \$25,000.

Once the finalists are chosen by a panel of judges, the public must vote on who they want to win. First place gets \$25,000, second place gets \$10,000, and third place gets \$5,000.

Playfair Daycare is in the running against Farm It Forward in the Mossbank area, Little Seedlings Daycare in Wilkie.

Online voting is open until April 15.

Playfair Daycare is in the process of raising money for a second daycare in Moosomin that will add 90 new spots. Currently the daycare has a waitlist of over two years. The total cost of the new building is \$4.4 million.

"Winning the \$25,000 prize would significantly aid in completing this new facility, ensuring that more children can access quality care and education," says the daycare. "By investing in this initiative, we can help alleviate the childcare shortage that impacts various sectors, including healthcare and agriculture, and support the growth of Moosomin as a vibrant place for families to settle and prosper."

"Growing Home was launched in 2023 and the purpose of it was to create a marquee giving and investment program. This is our way to give back to the places where our customers live, work and play," says Kasia Kistelski, the external communications manager with BASF.

"The first phase is the nomination phase and that is where we do the call to action to have our farmer and retail customers nominate an organization that's important to the

community for a chance to win the \$25,000 in each province. And then there's the judging phase, and at that point in time that is when we take all the nominations that we have received and then we review them. We narrow it down to the top 20 per province and then we send it off to different subcommittees who help us narrow it down to our finalists.

"Then once we have our finalists, we go into the voting phase where we announce the top three per province and then the voting phase is a two week period where anyone in Canada, regardless of if they are a customer or not, as long as they are the legal age of majority in their province, can place one vote per province."

Kistelski says when looking for finalists they base it on the community story and how great a need there is for the project. The project must also align with BASF's giving pillars of building safe and healthy communities, advancing science, and sustaining modern agriculture. She says they also take into consideration the number of entries received by a community to nominate a project. "This is an opportunity for communities to rally together for an organization that is important to them," she says.

Voting is open until April 15. To vote for Playfair Daycare, scan the QR code and select Saskatchewan.



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St. John Ambulance therapy dogs help in many settings and many communities across the province.

St. John Ambulance: Therapy dogs make a difference in people's lives

BY ASHLEY BOCHEK

St. John Ambulance offers a Therapy Dog program across Saskatchewan, including in Moosomin.

Lisa Schwann, the director of Community Services for St. John Ambulance in Saskatchewan, explains the importance of the Therapy Dog program in Saskatchewan that offers people in need support from furry friends.

The interview follows:

Tell me about St. John Ambulance and the therapy dog program.

We go way back. St. John Ambulance is an international organization—not just Canadian. We are worldwide, which a lot of people don't know. We are the oldest charitable organization in the world. We go back to literally the year 1000 something in the crusades where we provided first aid on the battlefields to anybody. We go back a long way and people don't know that. We are terrible at spreading our story because so much of what we do—for

example, therapy dog and first aid services—is all confidential and private so we can't advertise and talk about it that much.

In Saskatchewan, we started the therapy dog program in 2006 and then we started going out and around communities with visitations in 2007. Our whole purpose is to support communities across Canada and enhance health and well-being through community service. So even though we are Saskatchewan teams we do venture outside the province when they need help and assistance. Our community service and volunteers are out there to improve the quality of life in different care facilities. We are not just in the big centres, we are in Moosomin, Nokomis, Prince Albert, Yorkton, Estevan, Moose Jaw, Regina, and Saskatoon. Obviously, Regina and Saskatoon are our biggest units, but we are spreading out all over Saskatchewan.

Continued on page 16

REMI RHEAULT

SOURIS-MOOSE MOUNTAIN

Remi has a passion for justice for all. He has worked to build bridges between cultures and ethnicities. Remi is an advocate for healing, and equal recognition of First People of Turtle Island as a Nation. Remi has been advocating for the rights of seniors, veterans and spouses rights, liveable guaranteed income, housing, and the protection of Mother Earth.



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Watoto Children's Choir performing in Moosomin

Choir supports women and children living in Uganda and South Sudan

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A choir carrying a message of pure hope is coming to the Moosomin Baptist Church on April 16 as the highly energetic Watoto Children's Choir returns. This particular choir is currently on tour across Canada with their show titled "Better Days: There is Hope" to share their message of God's unfailing love and raise money for women and children in Uganda and South Sudan.

"They're a phenomenal group," says Kerry Coleman, Administrator with the Moosomin Baptist Church. She recalled seeing the choir about 10 years ago during their last tour, which included a stop in Moosomin. "I remember sitting in the audience and getting goosebumps listening to their cause. I brought my kids. My son would have been eight, and he wanted to donate all of his allowance to Watoto because he understood what their cause was like. So for me, I not only 'got it', as an adult, but I watched it in my child's eyes as a parent."

The choir itself is one part of Watoto—the Swahili word for 'children.' The overall goal for Watoto is to provide a safe place for vulnerable women and children in Uganda and South Sudan, tracing its roots back to 1984 when Canadians Gary and Marilyn Skinner began the Watoto Church in Kampala.

"The choir performance is really sharing the hope that has been brought into their lives because of Watoto," explains Johanna Cousineau, Choir Co-ordinator with the Watoto Canada team. "Most of the children have been abandoned or orphaned, and so Watoto has taken them and given them a home with a mom and siblings. It is a permanent home for them, and it raises them all the way through."

Children in Watoto receive all the necessities to grow including love, education, and medical care. Some of the children also audition to be part of the choir where they sing, dance, and share their story and hope for the future.

"Their greatest need right now is for sponsorship," Cousineau says. "Sponsorship is an ongoing commitment for the raising of the children. It goes directly to running the household and providing their education."

During the choir's time in Moosomin, they will stay with local families who generously opened up their homes.

"We can't wait for them to be here! In our congregation, we had eight families offer a place for the choir to stay," Coleman says. "It's not only that they come and they play, but we provide them meals for their next day. We provide supper that night, somewhere that they can do their homework in the afternoon before the show. It's literally a whole church thing, not just a little show that they're putting on."

"For us, it means community."



The Watoto Children's Choir will be performing in Moosomin on April 16.

Legacy of positive change

Those early days of the Skinners' involvement in Uganda setting up a church became a response to a crisis of orphan children in that country as a result of civil war and a burgeoning AIDS epidemic.

"The goal of Watoto back in the '80s when it was started, was to raise up good, honest and not corrupt leaders in their country," Cousineau said. "They're raising up young men and young women who treat their family properly. They're stopping that cycle of abuse. They're teaching them, they're training them, they're raising them with love, but more than that, they're also giving them the vocation and the way to perpetuate that."

Those young boys and girls would grow to be positive role models as men and women striving to make positive change in their country.

"So they are now good moms and good dads taking care of their families, but they also move on to have good jobs," Cousineau continued. "They don't have to be in jobs of leadership to be changing their country, they're your everyday

workers. They are your plumbers and your mechanics, but they are honest plumbers and honest mechanics who have been saved from their life of trauma, and they go forward and make a life. They change the whole of the country. They change Uganda. They have judges. They have police officers. They have lawyers, people who have come through the program and become these things, and that's how they're changing the culture of Uganda."

Cousineau adds that one of the big things that sets Watoto apart is that the children no longer live in poverty, or even knowing what a life in such conditions would be like—a wonderful reality.

"They are given their childhood back," she said. "For example, I overheard a conversation that happened where someone was asking, 'What's it like to live in a slum? Tell me what that's about.' And the child did not know, because they have been rescued from poverty. We are not trying to help them exist in the old, bad place. We are giving them a home."

Continued on page 15

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NEXT ISSUE: MAY 16

DEADLINE: MAY 7

MacLeod School chosen as spring Smile Cookie recipient

Continued from Page 3

Some other suggestions have come from MacLeod students themselves via the school survey where Grade 4 and 5 students are asked for their feedback on how the school can improve within the building and the playground.

"They always ask for more monkey bars, and they ask for a merry-go-round," Cole said.

Currently, there is not a firm number on what all the items on the school's wish list for the south side will cost, but Cole noted they're looking into estimates.

"That's the exciting thing about it is the more we make, the more options we will have and be able to put in place," she said, reflecting on the significance of the 2023 campaign. "That jump started our fund. Without something as big as that, we would be so far behind. So the Tim Horton's Smile Cookie campaign makes a huge difference to anybody who's doing that fundraising. It is impactful."

Fundraising bar set high

Last year, the local Smile Cookie campaign reached an even higher bar than the year before, while once again claiming the number one spot for sales in the province. In 2024, \$45,000 was raised for the Play Fair Daycare.

"We always try to do our best, no matter what we set forward with," Crisanti said. "We're getting a head start already, our pre-sale forms are out, our pre sale online applications are open, and we're pounding the pavement as we speak to start selling some cookies because we're looking forward to a busy week for a great cause!"

Pre-orders are important not only to raise money, but so the restaurant can better gauge how much stock to order.

"It helps our bakers, it helps us with our inventory for ordering, and then we give the recipients—which is MacLeod Elementary School—a breakdown earlier of how much funds they've actually raised to date before the week's even over because those are pre-sold," Crisanti said. "So it's great to know what's coming in, and it helps everybody. We never want to run out of cookies and want to have them available no matter what, if someone needs five dozen, six dozen through drive thru, you just never know. But like I said, 100% of the proceeds are going to the school, so we need to make sure we're prepared as far as having the cookies ready in our kitchen and then having our volunteers help and have them decorated so we can sell them."

Paper copies of the pre-order forms are available at the Moosomin location and online at timhortonswestman.ca.

Volunteers a key ingredient

A large part of what makes the annual Smile Cookie campaign a success is the volunteer base that pitches in. As Cole explained, there are a variety of people from around Moosomin taking part again this year.

"We'll have a combination of people," she said, confirming MacLeod students and teachers will be in attendance. "We will also have our school community council members and they're going to decorate cookies for us. We take our student leadership team, so that's some of our older Grade 4 and 5 students."

The students especially seem to have fun during Smile Cookie week.

"The last time we did it, we had an absolute blast cheering people as they went through the drive-thru lane," Cole said. "We had kids inside decorating while some were cheering people on, and it works fantastic because kids, they sell things for being cute and being kids! It's amazing what they do. And you get so excited to get behind it. It's really awesome."

The school is actively seeking sponsors for each day, and volunteers are always welcome to join in the fun.

"We have groups of people within our community that just love to come and help, that sign themselves up or just show up to come and do decorating of cookies," Cole said. "It's amazing who comes out that just always wants to help with it, no matter whether they're really connected to



Volunteers decorating Smile Cookies.

the school, they literally show up.

"The community spirit to support whatever organizations getting that fund is amazing because they just literally all want to help. That's Moosomin. Everybody just wants to help. That's why we have such success with any kind of fundraising we do in our community."

Fundraising continues for north playground

The playground on the north side of MacLeod Element-

ary was the target of funds from the 2023 Smile Cookie campaign. Currently, there's over \$87,000 raised for the revitalization of the north side playground, which is in more need than ever of an update, given the condition of one piece that didn't fare so well over the winter season.

"We have a slide that is actually currently broken," Cole said. "Over this winter, it cracked and it's blocked off. We cannot use it, so it is truly aged out."

A recent boost for the north playground came from Jeannot Electric, who held a matching dollars fundraiser to mark Alyssa Jeannot's birthday.

"We were going to donate to the playground in the spring anyway, and this was kind of an easy way to double down on that donation," Jeannot explained, crediting the idea to former Home Hardware owners Robert and Rose Mullet, who held a similar campaign for donations to the Moosomin Airport in 2024. "Robert and Rose are great friends of my parents, so I have to give them a little bit of credit for planting that seed with their idea last year, inspiring me and our business to look for ways to implement that."

Jeannot was able to present the school with \$6,190 in funds raised, bringing the total number to \$87,483.52.

"It's a good fundraiser to get behind," Jeannot said. "I feel like it kind of did get a little bit forgotten there for a bit. I've got three little ones at home, and they're excited about it, so it's hard for me to forget about it, because they're in my ear all the time!"

Cole called the donation from Jeannot Electric "heartwarming," noting that it's a great way to keep the continued fundraising efforts on the radar.

"We are grateful for the Jeannot family and Jeannot Electric," Cole said. "She challenged everyone to donate and she would match it. It was really heartwarming that she wanted to initiate that for us and to try to raise some more funds and awareness."

Cole pointed out that it's not just the MacLeod students that enjoy the playground, but high-school students and visitors to Moosomin as well.

"Our playground is so well trafficked and utilized," she said. "In the summer, it's a hub. There's always kids over here all times of the day. We have tons of traffic in Moosomin that are not our local people, tourists that come, stop, and look for that great place to let the kids and their families relax and get out of the vehicle."

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Federal election candidates in ridings around the region

The federal election takes place on Monday, April 28. Here's who is running in ridings around the region.

Souris-Moose Mountain

Steven Bonk is the Conservative candidate for Souris-Moose Mountain. Bonk—the former MLA for Moosomin—chose not to run in the provincial election last fall, and instead run for the federal Conservative Party.

Rémi Rheault is the Green Party candidate in Souris-Moose Mountain.

Sheena Muirhead Koops is the NDP candidate.

As of press time there were no Liberal or PPC candidates in Souris-Moose Mountain.

Yorkton-Melville

Cathay Wagantall will be seeking re-election as the Conservative candidate in Yorkton Melville.

Michaela Krakowetz is the NDP candidate.

Valerie Brooks is the Green Party candidate.

Luke Guimond is the Liberal candidate.

As of press time there was no PPC candidate in Yorkton-Melville.



Brandon-Souris

Former Spruce Woods MLA Grant Jackson is the Conservative candidate in Brandon-Souris. Incumbent Larry Maguire announced suddenly at the start of the election that he would not be running again in that riding due to health reasons, and Jackson stepped in to run as the Conservative candidate.

Quentin Robinson is the NDP candidate. Ghazanfar Ali Tarar is the Liberal candidate.

Darcy Robillard is the Green candidate. As of press time there were no PPC candidates in Brandon-Souris.

Riding Mountain

Dan Mazier is seeking re-election as the Conservative candidate in Riding Mountain (formerly Dauphin-Swan River-Neepawa).

Jim Oliver is the PPC candidate. Terry Hayward is the Liberal candidate.

Liz Clayton is the Green candidate. As of press time there were no NDP candidates in Riding Mountain.

Revenue sharing increase will make a difference

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

The provincial budget includes a record \$362 million in municipal revenue sharing—an increase of \$22 million, or 6.3 per cent, from 2024-25, with municipalities saying the increase will make a big difference for them in the year ahead.

The money is dispersed to Saskatchewan municipalities as a way to share in the economic success of the province.

Moosomin-Montmartre MLA Kevin Weedmark stressed the importance of the municipal revenue sharing program—something unique to Saskatchewan.

“That revenue sharing program is not something that every province has, it’s something that no other province has,” he said. “In other provinces, municipal groups often are lobbying their governments for something like what we have in Saskatchewan, where we can provide municipalities with a strong, stable, predictable source of funding that in many provinces they simply don’t have.”

Since inception in 2007/08, the program has delivered over \$4.6 billion in provincial funding.

“This model that they’re using is fantastic,” said Moosomin Mayor Murray Gray. “How you can count on it every year, and going forward, you know you’re going to get it.”

This year, Moosomin is set to receive \$819,751 as its share of the municipal revenue sharing funding, an increase from last year of \$50,089. In 2024 Moosomin received \$769,662. In 2023 the town received \$672,231. In 2022 the town received \$567,166. And in 2021 the town received \$617,181.

In total Moosomin has received an additional \$202,333 in municipal revenue sharing over the last four years.



Esterhazy Mayor Randy Bot, left, and Moosomin Mayor Murray Gray, right, say the extra municipal revenue sharing dollars are appreciated in their communities.

“The bump up partly is due to inflation. Because the cost of goods go up, the PST is then increased because of a larger cost of that item,” Gray explained.

“Even in these unsure economic times, things still seem to be rolling along pretty good in Saskatchewan and in our area. It is good to be diverse and have lots of different revenue streams in your communities and in order to move forward.”

Money received from the municipal revenue sharing can be used however the recipient communities choose, expanding what those centres can deliver to their residents.

“It’s not really earmarked for one particular project,” Gray said of the municipal revenue sharing funds. “We probably have three or four projects that are larger than that sum of money that we need to do in the next couple of years for sure. It just helps when you’re trying to find budget in order to do some of those big projects. It just helps, in order have a little bit of extra revenue that you maybe weren’t expecting.”

Looking at some of the projects around town, Gray listed the creation of a transfer station at the landfill, decommissioning the dump, putting a water line under the tracks, and work at the lagoon as examples of where municipal revenue sharing funding could be spread around.

In Esterhazy, Mayor Randy Bot is pleased with their increase as well with a total of \$708,913 this year—an increase of \$43,300 from the year previous. Esterhazy has seen an increase of \$145,563 in revenue sharing over the last four years. In 2024 Esterhazy received \$665,613. In 2023 the town received \$568,584. In 2022 the town received \$500,804. And in 2021 the town received \$563,350.

“I am very excited about this increase in municipal revenue sharing, as it provides valuable support for our community,” he said. “Right now, we are in the midst of creating a budget that not only focuses on the year ahead, but also considers the long-term needs of Esterhazy. Our approach will be responsible and strategic, ensuring that this funding is used effectively to support ongoing success.”

and working to establish a clear vision for this council.”

Esterhazy also has a long list of projects where that extra money will come in handy, and the injection is especially timely when municipalities are looking at their own budgets.

“I am grateful for this additional investment, and we see it as a positive step for municipalities across Saskatchewan,” Bot said. “We are only one budget meeting in, so it’s still very early to have any dollars earmarked. We are currently reviewing everything

and working to establish a clear vision for this council.”

Allocations are as follows for other local communities: Redvers - \$299,165, Maryfield - \$93,702, Rocanville - \$264,086, Spy Hill - \$53,022, Tantallon - \$26,787, Stockholm - \$99,008, Wapella - \$97,240, Wawota - \$165,629, Yarbo - \$16,175, Kipling - \$319,211, Kennedy - \$31,503, Fleming - \$22,660, and Whitewood - \$280,299.

Rural Municipalities also receive the funding

The allocations are as follows for local RMs: RM of Moosomin - \$279,921, RM of Martin - \$260,495, RM of Fertile Belt - \$396,552, RM of Rocanville - \$223,620, RM of Walpole - \$297,891, RM of Spy Hill - \$183,451, RM of Maryfield - \$258,120, RM of Hazelwood - \$332,556, RM of Kingsley - \$333,108, RM of Antler - \$330,087, RM of Silverwood - \$312,362, RM of Willowdale - \$366,499.



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- Ensure compliance with environmental and safety regulations
- Respond to emergencies, including weather-related events and infrastructure failures

Qualifications:

- A college or university degree in civil engineering would be an asset; however, the Municipality is willing to discuss relevant work experience
- A minimum of five years' experience supervising in a Public Works environment, or an equivalent combination of education and experience
- Experience in public works, construction, or municipal services
- Experience and/or understanding in the operation of heavy equipment
- Familiarity with Asset Management planning would be considered an asset
- Strong management, record-keeping, organizational and problem-solving skills
- Excellent communication skills, and the ability to handle sensitive and confidential information
- Positive and professional attitude to keep building a strong team
- Valid Class 5 driver's licence
- Class 3A (or willingness to obtain) would be considered an asset.

Submit your resume including three references and cover letter with salary expectations to:

Municipality of Russell Binscarth
Attention: Twyla Ludwig, Interim CAO
Box 10, Russell, MB R0J 1W0
Email: cao@mrbgov.com
Phone: (204) 773-2253

Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Only those candidates chosen for an interview will be contacted.

For more information, visit www.russellbinscarth.com.

See Plain & Valley online any time at
www.plainandvalley.com

Therapy dogs make a difference in people's lives

Continued from Page 10

How does the therapy dog program work?

For all therapy dogs there is a team—the handler and the dog—and they're all tested and evaluated to be a therapy dog team. You have to apply to get into our program and then we do interviews and three different evaluations and if you pass all of that then you become a therapy dog team that we constantly monitor to make sure everything is okay and that the dogs are being checked by a vet every year and make sure you have your criminal record and vulnerable sector check every year, stuff like that to make sure everybody is safe. We visit so many different people that are vulnerable we have to make sure that everybody is safe.

Our main mission is to promote wellness and alleviate isolation which is huge for senior homes and care facilities. We provide essential comfort to basically whoever needs it. So people will send in a request to us and we will send it out to our team to see who can cover it. That is either on a regular schedule or on a one-time stop, sometimes businesses might have us in for conventions or for wellness weeks—we have been doing more and more of that as businesses and people recognize the importance of people's mental health and in the workplace, so it is cool.

How is the program funded?

We are a non-profit charitable organization, and we rely on donations to run, and we have people who take our classes, and all the money from those classes go 100 per cent back into the communities, but we need government support and people to donate because if not, we can't run our community service programs. We are in everything from hospitals, in senior residences and care facilities, vaccination clinics, big schools, universities, and all high schools who request us to come in, and community events. Our therapy dogs are out in the community every single time they need. At hospitals our dogs are there every day and at multiple wards in the hospital and we have been doing that since 2006 without any funding. Last year, we got a bit of funding from the General Hospital in pediatrics, but we need help because we can't expand or continue without financial assistance.

Do you think it makes a difference?

People benefit physically and mentally from petting and seeing our therapy dogs. It is the unconditional love from a dog you cannot get from anything else. It is a really unique experience for the dogs that love it and our handlers that love sharing their family dog with other people with them in the community.

We have 140 therapy dogs in the province of Saskatchewan, but if there are any emergencies we do try to help as we can. For example, during the Humboldt Bus Crash we were there in the hospital with the kids and the families. We go back every year and visit the hospital. We usually have a mental health convention we go to every year there too and some of the families and billets will come and visit. One of the worst things about emergencies is after it is over people feel forgotten, so we make a point of going back just so they don't feel forgotten.

Manitoba needed assistance in the Carberry bus crash so I brought a team of therapy dogs with me, and we went for week for the families and the senior communi-



St. John Ambulance therapy dogs help people in many different settings across Saskatchewan, and in many different communities, including Moosomin.



ties that were affected by that, and we still maintain communication with those guys today and we are quite close to Dauphin.

We do wildfire evacuations all the time as well. When they evacuated to Saskatoon and Regina a few years ago we were there providing comfort for those guys. Suicides as well we are there in senior homes or facilities and hospitals too. We are part of the treatment plans at hospitals—therapy dogs—they are actually written in the treatment plan. Whether it be the oncology units, mental health units, or addiction centres that have asked—we are a regular part of their therapy and I saw everything from the emotional support to the mental health support and physical benefits from petting a dog—there is well documented of physical benefits. I can tell you about the social interaction and companionship it goes on and on, the benefits of a therapy dog.

Do you have volunteers in those communities, or do they come out from the city?

Moosomin, Nokomis, PA, Moose Jaw, and so on all have teams there. Some go every day to different facilities in the community. Wolsley requested a therapy dog team to come for visitation and it costs a lot of money in gas to go there and back, and we can't go unless we are somehow

funded to go out there.

I did go out there on my way to Moosomin because we regularly check our teams—so I drove out to Moosomin and my dog, Dexter, came with me and we stopped in at the Wolsley integrated health facility there and spent a couple hours there and then continued on to Moosomin.

We try to build it in so if people request it and they were really good at Wolsley—that we would try to get them in when we can and if they can try to make a donation that would be great and if you can't that is okay too. We are all about serving the community.

What does your day-to-day schedule look like for you?

I am a volunteer as well as a director here, so I am the director of Community Services. In my director job, I coordinate the entire province, I work with our national office on our community service programs and making sure everything is running efficiently.

On the volunteer side, every day I usually go out and volunteer somewhere. It depends, we are out in Moose Jaw this week, we are at the hospitals once a week, we are in care homes and senior facilities. The other day I took a day off work and went to Nokomis to check on our dog

team and then we went to Humboldt during the day to visit with people in the hospital, the staff, and patients. We are always somewhere. We usually volunteer after work. I am also a medical first responder so we will actually be at the legislature this week. So, we also do that as well we serve the community offering first aid services because events can't happen unless you have that medical response there. We train people to be medical first aid responders.

Why is this program important to you?

I was a teacher and I also taught for St. John Ambulance on the side. So they knew I was going to eventually retire from teaching and coming out of COVID, I already was a volunteer with the therapy dog services and they asked if I would direct it. One of the reasons why I stay here—I work seven days a week running this program—is because I firmly believe in what we do. I am in therapy dog, first responder, and emergency response. With Dexter, my dog, we responded to emergencies for example, in Dauphin with the Carberry bus crash where you have people whose lives have been completely destroyed and they don't want to talk to the media or a counsellor, they just want to be held and loved. They want people there that don't want anything from them except to just be there and that is what we do. We provide that unconditional love and we do not want a thing from them other than to help them to get better. To watch somebody come from a state where they are absolutely destroyed to feeling there is life tomorrow and life will go on is amazing.

When we were in Wolsley, one of the most remarkable things I had seen I think, there was a lady comatose sitting a table with her head down and hadn't done anything for months just sat there and we walked into the room and Dexter went right to her and touched her and she moved and her eyes opened and saw Dexter and she sat up and petted Dexter, and that hadn't happened in months. That is an example of what our dogs do, it is all our dogs. They will jump up on a bed in a hospital and people will just cry and hold them and tell us anything. It makes such a big difference in people's lives it is phenomenal. We do it because we know we make a difference, and we want to help and serve and that is what St. John Ambulance is all about—serving the community and helping.

What kind of response do you get from people when they get to be with the dogs?

Just a big thank you or a hug—we get hugs all the time and tears of joy. Just a thank you is big. We are just there to see a smile on their face, and their eyes literally light up. When I take my dog into a patient's room you literally see their eyes change and light up, their whole-body language changes, and to see that in any care facility or addiction centre is amazing.

How does it make you feel doing this?

It just makes me feel great. I believe every person is here to make a positive difference in our world and I think we should do whatever we can to help each other.

We live in a world where we constantly hear negatives, but there are a lot of good things happening too and I want to be part of helping people.

I grew up in a family that always gave back to the community. When you have really long days at work and can go out and see that look on people's faces the whole weight of the world is off your shoulders and that is the best way to describe it.

It's like 'Oh my gosh, I just made a massive difference in someone else's life' and every trouble you have in the world, you forget about, and it is just makes your heart smile. I believe we are here to help each other and help each other be better and get through tough times.



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Moosomin gearing up for national Communities in Bloom competition

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

It's been awhile since Moosomin has competed at the national level of Communities in Bloom—2004 was the last time—but that's about to change. This year, the local Communities in Bloom committee has its sights set on the national competition on the heels of two highly successful provincial entries.

This year will be the seventh time Moosomin has entered the contest, initially appearing in the years 2000 through 2004. After a 19-year hiatus, the 2023 provincial entry resulted in a win for the 2,001-3,000 population category and an award for five blooms. Last year resulted in another five-bloom accreditation, and the invitation to return to national competition.

"They're more extensive as far as judging," said Moosomin's Parks and Recreation Director, Mike Schwean, comparing the national competition to the provincial competition. "The last two years, we've had the town, the lake board, and the golf course. This year, we're including the RM of Moosomin, so we have a fourth pillar in-



involved."

Having multiple partners involved in an entry to Communities in Bloom is unique, but seems to be a large part of what makes the Moosomin entry such a success.

Planning for the 2025 Communities in Bloom entry is still in the early stages, with Schwean noting committee meetings will be taking place shortly.

"It's a good program," he said. "It's a lot more than people realize. Beautification is obviously a large part of it, but there's a lot more that goes into it. So it's certainly a good promotional tool for the community."

Comments from past years' judges have been helpful, presented to communities in detailed reports.

The 2024 Communities in Bloom committee members with their 2024 Communities in Bloom Awards. From left are Alice Abrahamson, Pansy Taylor, Andrew Exelby with the Saskatchewan Parks and Rec Association, Ann Norgan, Larry Tomlinson, Casey McCormack, Mike Schwean, Lyla Smart, Chris Davidson and Carol Adair. The town received five blooms in 2024 qualifying it for the national contest in 2025.



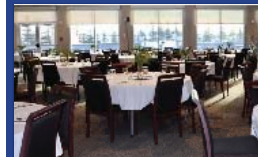
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The program is expected to take place from May to October 2025.

Visit www.cn.ca/vegetation for more information or to make an inquiry, contact the CN Public Inquiry Line at contact@cn.ca or 1-888-888-5909.

CN.CA



Left: An example of some of the Reston and area veteran memorial banners. May 1 is the deadline to sponsor a banner this year. The banners will be hung in the Memorial Park.

Deadline nearing for Reston & area veteran memorial banners

Thursday, May 1 is the deadline to sponsor a banner this year for Reston and Area Veteran Memorial Banners.

If interested, the committee says they need a photo, a short biography and the sponsor form along with the \$250 required.

There has been lots of interest and inquiries again, and the committee says they look forward to honouring new veterans this fall in the Memorial Parks in Reston and Pipestone.

Plans going forward will be for the banners to be hanging by July 1 each

year through to Remembrance Day. How appropriate the new home for the Reston veterans will be in the Memorial Park that plays such an important role in the community. It will be a lovely stroll on the walkways in the park to get a close up look at the banners.

Once spring arrives the Banner Committee in consultation with the Memorial Park Committee will begin preparations on the installation of the placement of the poles needed to hang the banners. This change of venue brings an

extra cost to the project. If anyone is interested in making a contribution towards the costs, it would be very much appreciated by the committee and a tax receipt would be issued.

For more information on sponsoring or donating visit the Reston and Area Veteran Memorial Banners webpage by scanning the QR code on this page or sponsor forms are available at the RM of Pipestone office.

This will be the final major campaign for the banner project. Going forward sponsors will be on an

received basis.

The committee would be more than welcome to assist with any inquiries. Members are: Derek Millard, Kim MacKenzie, Sharon Simms, Garnet Williamson, Shawna Millard, Cathy Williamson, Clayton Jago, Sherrill Berry, Kelly Flannery, Bree Russell and Geordie Anderson.



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Pipestone Homecoming set for July 11-13

There are less than 100 days to Pipestone Homecoming 2025. There are many, many activities planned. Some will take place all weekend. Here is a brief outline:

Friday, July 11 the fun begins with the barbecue supper and live entertainment uptown by Travis Barre. Visit the memorabilia display that will be open all weekend in the Drop In. Finish off the evening with fireworks on the Rec Grounds. Food will also be available all weekend at the canteen on the Rec Grounds where the annual Pipestone Fun Days Slow Pitch tournament will be taking place as well.

Saturday, July 12 morning, vendors are being invited to set up at the Homecoming Market Garden. We can learn a little about Pipestone pioneers with a Cemetery Walk, then get your exercise walking around town to discover the history of the lots. A mini school reunion will be held Saturday afternoon, followed by a delicious roast beef supper, then social with music by Armadillo. Tickets are sold separately for the supper and social.

Sunday morning there will be a pancake breakfast and parade at noon. After the parade join us for the opening of the new park followed by the celebration of the Pipestone Lions Club 45th anniversary.

There are many things planned for the little ones as well, a bouncy castle and Par Rec activities will be onsite Saturday and Sunday as well. A more detailed weekend itinerary is to come.

We look forward to you not only 'coming home' but participating in the activities planned. Get your team ready for slow pitch (Aaron 204-522-0084), your float ready for the parade (Mel 204-851-1383), any contribution for the memorabilia displays (Jean 204-748-5409) or just getting your dancing shoes on!

To help with fundraising if you wish to make a donation with a prize for the raffle table that would be appreciated. Or if you just want to help by taking a shift at the



raffle table or in the Drop In greeting visitors, that would be great as well.

Sales for supper and social tickets are now available. Tickets are limited and on a first come basis. Information on how to order can be found on the Pipestone Homecoming 2025 Facebook page. (Wiley 204-264-0273 or Kim 204-851-1421)

Tickets for the 50/50 are selling well. There are only 3,000 tickets at \$10 available for a prize of \$15,000 so be sure to get your name on one. The draw will be made at the social Saturday, July 12 at 11 pm. You don't have to be present to win. (Nancy 204-522-0263)

The committee is ready to answer any questions and be sure to follow the Pipestone Homecoming 2025 Facebook page for updates and to see some great photos being shared!

The Pipestone Homecoming Committee consists of Wiley Gilliard, Chris and Kim Davis, Nancy and Glenn Elliott, Brian and Sharon Zarr, Barry and Marnie Hodgins, Jean Byer, Kim MacKenzie, Tabetha Edwards, Kim Flannery, Greg Campion, Mel and Penny Edwards, Erickka Patmore and Malina VanBuuren.

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Plain & Valley

April 2025 • Page 21

Covering Southeast Saskatchewan and Southwest Manitoba



Farmland near Moosomin, Saskatchewan.

Kevin Weedmark photo

Canada's farmland values continued to climb in 2024, FCC reports

The average value of Canadian farmland continued its steady climb in 2024, increasing by 9.3 per cent, slightly less than the 11.5 per cent increase reported in 2023, according to the latest FCC Farmland Values Report.

"The increase in Canadian farmland values in 2024 reflects an enduring strength in demand for farmland amid some pressures on commodity prices," said J.P. Gervais, FCC's chief economist. "The limited supply of farmland available for sale combined with lower borrowing costs resulted in an increase in the average price of farmland across the country."

The highest increases were observed in regions with strong agricultural activity and favourable growing conditions. In 2024, Saskatchewan again led with a 13.1 per cent gain in average farmland values, and British Columbia recorded growth of 11.3 per cent.

All other provinces experienced growth in the single digits. New Brunswick's cultivated land values grew by 9.0 per cent, Quebec reported a 7.7 per cent change and Alberta was close behind at 7.1 per cent. Manitoba

had a growth rate of 6.5 per cent and Nova Scotia reported a 5.3 per cent appreciation in value. Ontario's cultivated average farmland value increased by 3.1 per cent and Prince Edward Island had the most stable values with an increase of 1.4 per cent.

Only three provinces reported higher growth rates in 2024 than 2023: British Columbia, Alberta and New Brunswick. There were insufficient publicly reported sales in Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon to fully assess changes in farmland values in those regions.

Recent dry conditions across the prairies have led to a robust demand for irrigated land, with interest growing each year. Market availability of irrigated land is very limited. "With persistent dry conditions, the value of irrigated land continues to rise, reflecting its critical role in boosting production and farm profitability", said Gervais.

Gervais points out that while farmland value appreciation is slowing, farmland affordability relative to farm income continues to deteriorate. This makes it

challenging for those aspiring to grow their land base including young producers, Indigenous peoples and new entrants.

In 2024, total Canadian principal field crop production is estimated at 94.6 million tonnes, up 2.7 per cent from 2023 and 3.3 per cent above the five-year average. Lower prices for grains, oilseeds and pulses resulted in an estimated decline in main field crop receipts of 11.8 per cent in 2024. "The profitability pressures combined with the current uncertainty with regards to trade disruptions create significant headwinds for farm operations looking to invest," mentioned Gervais.

"Overall, the increase in farmland values is a testament to the strong outlook for the demand of agricultural commodities and the high-quality food produced in Canada," said Gervais.

FCC has reported a national trend of increasing farmland values for more than 30 years and 2024 extends the streak. The overall trend reflects the ongoing strength in demand for quality farmland and limited supply of farmland available for sale.

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SARM wants strychnine back for gopher control

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

As the spring melt begins, a familiar sight will emerge from the ground—one that those who make a living off the land consider a scourge. Gophers are notorious for causing widespread damage to crops and pastureland. Previously, the use of strychnine was a powerful and effective tool for gopher control, but a federal ban on the pesticide in 2024 halted all use. One group in particular has recently called for the reintroduction of strychnine to control gophers, calling it “a crucial tool used by farmers to control growing gopher populations in rural municipalities.”

“It has been a year since the ban came into full effect and our farmers are struggling to find a practical and effective method to control the Richardson’s Ground Squirrel populations. SARM is asking the provincial government to use The Saskatchewan First Act to reintroduce the use of strychnine specifically for gopher control,” says Bill Huber, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities President.

Strychnine was banned due to secondary mortality rates as predators became ill from consuming gophers that had ingested strychnine, but SARM feels that when applied according to label instructions, the pesticide is “an effective and low risk method” for gopher control. SARM is calling for the provincial government to use the powers of The Saskatchewan First Act to reinstate strychnine use in the province.



Gophers have long been a problem for landowners.

“In 2020, the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) cancelled all uses of strychnine for burrowing rodent control in Canada, particularly Richardson’s Ground Squirrel, with the last permitted use being March 2023,” said provincial Agriculture Minister, Daryl Harrison. “The Ministry of Agriculture submitted a notice of objection which did not prompt any changes to this decision.”

Conditions may be right for a gopher explosion this year, as Harrison noted the pest’s abundance last year.

“RGS was a significant pest in several regions of the province in 2024, most notably in seedling canola,” he said. “It is likely that slow stand establishment contributed to movement of ground squirrels deeper into fields than is normally seen.”

Timing is crucial in terms of gopher control

as early spring is optimal for applying rodenticide. Adult male gophers tend to emerge first, usually mid-February to early March, followed by adult females in early to mid-March. Juvenile gophers usually emerge early to mid-May.

“Both crop and beef producers are certainly used to strychnine. They found it very effective and convenient to use,” Harrison said. “It’s the old standby, but there are other products out there, and they are effective, but what really is hard for producers is the timely application of that product. It’s important to get it out there before the grass starts to green up for it to be fully effective. That’s what the producers miss, is that flexibility. I think if they keep learning and understanding on the product, they’ll find an effective control.”

Strychnine sales were permitted until March

4, 2022, a year after the PMRA’s decision to de-register the pesticide. It was allowed to be used for a further year, then not allowed after March, 2023. By nature, strychnine is highly toxic, causing respiratory failure and has no antidote if consumed. It was sold in the form of two per cent liquid concentrate, requiring mixing with grain to achieve an application concentration of 0.4 per cent.

“The Government of Saskatchewan continues to be disappointed with the de-registration of strychnine for RGS control,” Harrison noted. “We believe the science indicates that this product, when used according to label instructions, is effective and presents the best option for controlling RGS populations in the province and mitigating the significant impacts on agriculture operations.”

Zinc phosphide is an

effective alternative that affects the central nervous system, found in ZP Rodent Oat Bait AG and Burrow Oat Bait. There are also anticoagulant pellets, which require re-baiting after two days.

“Zinc phosphide has been called a new gopher control product. It is not, it was first synthesized in the 1700s,” explained Dr. James Tansey, Provincial Specialist, Insect/Pest Management, Production Technology, Crops and Irrigation Branch, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture during last week’s SARM conference in Saskatoon. “Once you get to about 50° C, it will break down. Sometimes the inside of a shed can heat up, and you need to be aware of that.”

Much like strychnine, zinc phosphide is a quick killer.

“It shuts down cell energy production,” Dr. Tansey explained. “So what

this causes is necrosis in the heart, brain, kidneys and liver, and it works quickly. It can kill in 15 minutes, so they need to get an adequate dose of it. There’s also evidence now that it can act as a neurotoxin, so much like strychnine, where you get that convulsive reaction to poisoning, this can result in that too.”

As for the anticoagulants, Dr. Tansey noted application before gophers are literally surrounded by the antidote is crucial.

“Plants, grasses, legumes are full of vitamin K, so gophers after green up are basically surrounded by the antidote,” he said. “If they can take in enough of this plant material, they’ll get the antidote for this toxin, so that can be problematic.”

Of all the methods, anticoagulants are the slowest in terms of mortality.

“One potential downside for this is it takes a long time to kill, and it is a multiple feeding product,” Dr. Tansey said. “It can take seven to 10 days to kill, and in that time, residues are building up in that animal and can present a hazard to non targets like scavengers and predators. Once again, multiple feedings and that residue issue.”

In terms of cost, liquid strychnine averaged around \$13.28 per acre, compared to the oat bait, which cost \$8.46 per acre for the Burrow Oat Bait and \$6.74 per acre for the rodent oat bait.

As for the anticoagulants, Rozol RTU Field Rodent Bait came in as the most expensive at \$21.86 per acre, and Ramik Green at \$12.34 per acre.

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Farm succession workshop draws large number

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

It's a topic many people would rather not broach, but an extremely important one. Although farm succession is not an easy item for people to talk about, events like the Bridging the Gap workshop held in Regina certainly help open that conversation.

Around 130 agriculture producers attended the day-long information session on March 17, a number facilitated by Trevor McLean—who is a National Lead with TransitionSmart, MNP—is pleased with.

"It's great to have attendance, but it's better when you have engaged attendance, which is using my gauge of how successful and needed the service is," he said. "They're asking questions, they're scribbling, they're following along in the workbook, they're taking pictures of your slides so they want to be able to take the information back and share it with the people that they need to share it with."

The statistics are not flattering with only 12 per cent of Canadian farmers in possession of a transition plan. Of those 12 per cent, a further 13 per cent are actively working on that plan.

"That's a scary thought because, again, if transition

plans reside in somebody's head, what happens if something happens to that person? Now where do you turn?" McLean asked, adding that without a plan, the entire farming operation that took decades to build is placed in a dangerous situation.

In the next decade, 75 per cent of current farms will trade hands, something McLean told his Regina audience. "Agriculture is the largest wealth transfer opportunity in Canada over the next decade," he said.

Current factors

Of course, one factor weighing heavy on agricultural producers is the uncertainty caused by the U.S. tariff situation, and transition planning is not immune to those pressures.

"Tariffs definitely have a part to play, because one of the greatest risks that we have today and going forward in our world of agriculture is geopolitical risk, and tariffs are going to have an impact, because it is a new and different type of risk that farms are going to have to adapt to," McLean said. "If you were planning on planting canola, which a large part would be exported to the U.S. or exported to China, both of those countries now have tariffs. So do you plant an alternative crop, or do you continue to



Trevor McLean speaks to a group of 130 producers in Regina at a farm succession workshop titled Bridging the Gap. The workshop was held during Canada's Farm Show on March 17.

plant canola and hope that a new market emerges for that crop in the meantime. Does your farm have the ability to plant, harvest, and hold that crop until some of this tariff or geopolitical pressure falls off, where the market can then rebound, but where you can get a better or fairer price for that commodity?"

Dealing with these unknowns underlines the benefit of having all stakeholders at the table on the same page.

Continued on Page 27 ^{ESP}



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Sask extends 4R nutrient stewardship agreement with Fertilizer Canada

The Government of Saskatchewan has renewed its ongoing collaboration with Fertilizer Canada to support education, training and expansion regarding 4R Nutrient Stewardship in the province through the signing of a new three-year Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC).

Extending the joint effort based on previous agreements, the Ministry of Agriculture will work with Fertilizer Canada to continue advancing the implementation of 4R Nutrient Stewardship in Saskatchewan. This approach to crop nutrient management and environmental stewardship follows the four "Rs" of fertilizer use: Right Source @ Right Rate, Right Time, Right Place.

"Healthy soil means healthy crops, and that is part of the reason Saskatchewan enjoys a reputation as a major global producer of quality agri-food products," Agriculture Minister Daryl Harrison said. "The 4R approach is fundamental to a responsible, sustainable agriculture industry driven by producers who set the bar for best practices, and we are very pleased to continue working with Fertilizer Canada to enhance 4R Nutrient Stewardship in our province."

"Saskatchewan is a cornerstone of Canadian agriculture,

demonstrating industry leadership through its commitment to responsible nutrient management and science-based farming practices," Fertilizer Canada Interim President and CEO Catherine King said. "With 40 per cent of Canada's cropland, the province is a key driver of the national economy. The Government of Saskatchewan's commitment to the 4R Nutrient Stewardship framework reflects its dedication to balancing environmental responsibility with economic growth in agriculture, strengthening Canada's global competitiveness. Fertilizer Canada values this strong partnership and the province's ongoing efforts to promote best practices on the farm, ensuring the long-term success of the agricultural sector."

Areas of collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture and Fertilizer Canada outlined in the new agreement focus on progress toward achieving shared objectives, including data and information sharing and knowledge transfer activities. The ministry has promoted 4R practices to a broad audience of producers and industry through

events such as the Crop Diagnostic School and the Agronomy Research Update, as well as publications, webinars and research and demonstration initiatives. The percentage of agricultural land in Saskatchewan under a 4R stewardship plan has experienced steady growth, increasing by over 20 per cent from 2022 to 2023.

Pursuant to the agreement, the ministry and Fertilizer Canada have co-chair roles on the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Steering Committee, which includes representation from industry partners - the Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers, Canola Council of Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Prairie Certified Crop Adviser Board, and Agriculture-Applied Research Management (Agri-ARM) sites and the University of Saskatchewan.

More information on 4R Nutrient Stewardship and sustainable farming practices in Saskatchewan is available at <https://fertilizercanada.ca/our-focus/stewardship/4rs-cross-canada/saskatchewan/>



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Positive ag reaction to provincial budget



Deputy Agriculture Minister Bill Greuel explains highlights of the provincial budget as they pertain to

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
The final day of Canada's Farm Show in Regina kicked off with reaction to the provincial budget from an agricultural perspective. Finance Minister Jim Reiter tabled the 2025/26 budget—titled Delivering for You—on March 19.

"I'm happy to say that it was a record budget, \$625 million for agriculture," said Deputy Agriculture Minister Bill Greuel. "We have fully funded business risk management, so that's the provincial government share of crop insurance premiums, accounting for agri-stability payments as well, and \$89.5 million for strategic initiatives, a large portion of which is dedicated to research and innovation funding that we support at the Ministry of Agriculture."

When asked if there might be anything missing in the budget for the ag sector, Greuel noted a couple of areas, but said overall it seemed producers were top of mind in making budget decisions.

APAS President Bill Prybylski meets with reporters after participating in a panel on the provincial budget, held on the last day of Canada's Farm Show in Regina.

"Our stakeholders are always looking for enhancements to crop insurance and maybe more support for business risk management, but I think given the fiscal situation of the province, we've taken everything into consideration, and we've delivered a budget that meets the needs of producers, meets the needs of agribusinesses, while contributing to a strong and resilient agriculture economy in this province."

Bill Prybylski, President of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, was also part of that panel. He was also positive about the budget.

"We're always hopeful that there's going to be incentives in the budget for producers," he said. "We like to support reduced taxes, those types of things. So we didn't necessarily see any of that in the budget, but we did see some areas that we're quite happy with. The increased

funding for BRM programming, increased funding for research, particularly the U of S the College of Veterinary Medicine, got some additional funding. So those areas that are very important issues. Overall, we're pleased with the budget."

Tariff talk seemed to dominate budget day. With the potential for agriculture to be deeply impacted by tariffs from the U.S. and China, that discussion seeped into the panel reaction as well.

"I feel a lot of empathy for producers," Greuel said. "I really feel for the canola crush industry that's facing these 100 per cent tariffs on canola oil and meal that are the direct result of the federal government's tariffs on electric vehicles."

Threats from China on canola seed are certainly not out of the question.

"If we back up in time, we all have to recognize that the government of China has looked at an anti-dumping case

against the Canadian canola seed into China, and there is a threat that tariffs could be placed on canola seed at any time," Greuel explained. "So that's really hampered the sale of canola seed into China. And so for all intents and purposes, seed hasn't been moving to the level that it has been in the past. We need to recognize that there's two sets of tariffs—there's the 100 per cent on oil and meal and there is the threat of tariffs on the canola seed that has already slowed seed sales into China. And that's why we've repeatedly said that the federal government needs to make trade with China a priority for Saskatchewan producers."

The challenging times have not played a factor into Prybylski's seeding decisions this spring.

Continued on page 27

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My homecoming after a month away from home and the farm was met with a swat across my arm as my cat, perched on the desk, felt the need to say, "I didn't appreciate you taking off for so long." As for our oldest granddaughter, I'm not sure she was all that excited to know we were back as it meant returning our half-ton to us. The heater on her car works rather sporadically if at all, so methinks she was loving driving the truck and staying warm wherever she went. She dutifully had it parked in our driveway though by the time we came to the end of our 2,000-mile journey home.

Amidst a lot of desert that we traveled through on our trip south, there was so much beauty – the red cliffs of Sedona, Zion National Park and the canyons near Palm Springs. And I was, as always, over-the-top in awe of God's amazing creation as we drove through Montana's mountain passes near Helena, one of my favourite areas to drive through. Hubby, another one of those 'men of few words' that some of my family is noted for never once asked me to stop saying, "Look, over there, isn't that beautiful," or "Oh my goodness, look at that!" My guess though is he might have thought a time or two, "Would she stop already!?"

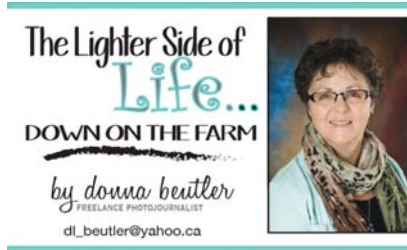
When we left the very warm and beautiful Palm Springs area where we had enjoyed nothing but wonderful-ness (if that's a word) and where I had loved shopping (for hours) with my friend at Hobby Lobby, visiting new restaurants and seeing friends and family (including our nieces from back home) or simply reading on the patio, I was excited about the road trip home because I oh so love the scenery (and even the lack thereof at times).

A little snag in some plans at home caused my phone to light up (repeatedly) as we left the California highways and headed north through Nevada. My Elections Canada office space (booked last spring in preparation for this year's federal election) was not necessarily going to work out. That first text consisted of just three words, "You sitting down?" I knew the news to follow was not going to be good. A stop for gas at that moment allowed me to get out into the warmth and sunshine, make some phone calls, re-think my plan, and pace. And pace some more. Until hubby pointed to the car and without a word spoken, it was clear it was time to hit the road again. With or without a new Elections location.

Hubby continued our drive through the rest of Nevada and southern Utah that day as I began my search for another temporary office space in Whitewood. I have to say, regardless of the problem at hand, the miles certainly passed quickly that day although I may have missed some of the scenery I was so looking forward to seeing. Long story, short, new office space located!!

Despite the Idaho snowfall that gave us pause a time or two, the large wet flakes and the resulting snow cover was so incredibly beautiful. The bonus was that the just-above-freezing temperatures meant the highways were only wet, not slushy, so we just kept on rolling onward towards the dry roads of Montana.

As we got closer to the Canadian border, hubby says, "I think we'll spend a couple of nights in Great Falls (MT)."



What I heard however, was, "You will be able to spend all the time you want at Hobby Lobby in Great Falls." Ahhh, what a fitting finish to a beautiful vacation.

Back at home, one granddaughter turned our lemons into lemonade – literally! We were fortunate to be able to bring back a bunch of freshly-picked lemonade and Kam was able to make the tastiest drink from them! As for the California oranges? You guessed it. Sierra turned them into the yummiest orange juice ever.

One day before we had left on vacation and the grands were over for lunch as is the norm, our then 15-year-old granddaughter was on a mission to create a 'pina colada' slushie for her teacher and her classmates as part of an assignment she had done on another country. As it was a nice day and we only live a couple of blocks from the school, I responded to her question of whether I would drive her and her jug of juice back to the school by saying it was nice out and she would be fine carrying the jug. I was in a hurry to clear the table and get to my hair appointment but as I was putting my coat on to leave the house, my phone rang: "Grandma, I tripped and the jug broke and I lost all my pina colada."

Talk about feeling awful. Why didn't I drive her and leave the dishes on the table? Why didn't I just take five minutes to do this one little thing for her? And on went the questions in my mind. "What about your assignment, Sierra?" I asked. "Do you have to re-do the pina colada part? Will you lose marks?" She assured me there was about a tablespoon in the bottom of the juice jug for her teacher to be able to have a taste but the jug itself was a write-off. Well, that was the least of my worries as I hurried over to the school to see for myself that she was doing okay. What a huge letdown to an assignment that she had worked so hard on, only to have the final part of the project in pieces out on the snow.

What a calving season it has been on the old home farm! We left before it began and arrived home when it was all over. To be fair, even if I was home, my days of calving cows or bottle-feeding calves ended years ago and the new generation now gets to do all that kind of stuff. What is wonderful though is to get out to the farm and see all those little calves bouncing around in the sunshine. This always warms my heart and it is, to me, the start of new

life both in the corrals and on the land (though it may take a bit longer to notice new life on the land!)

When I see a new crop of calves I think back to our move from NW Ontario to here (me at the age of 12) and the very first calf we ever had. Likely premature. Unexpected. Bitterly cold. Near death. But it's interesting what a determined, brand new-to-the-farm family will do. We carried her into the old inhabitable house with the old wood stove and though it took some time, we warmed that baby up, fed her and she became the most spoiled, always-looking-for-attention calf who grew up to be a wonderful, albeit somewhat needy, cow that would go on to give us many more calves. It was the start of a season of cattle farming for our family and many a calf who got their start in the main house, right next to the register with the dog by their side and, along with a blow dryer, old towels for a good rub-down, and a bottle of milk, got them off to a good start. If you've seen the tik tok video of the farmer who finds the calf lying on the ground with the amniotic sac over its nose and how he removes it and does mouth-to-mouth and gets that calf breathing and back up on its feet, you will understand the heart of a cattle farmer.

The twins (13), when not busy in the barn, have enjoyed the winter season as usual. While not in hockey this past season, they've enjoyed curling and snowmobiling and ice fishing. Lots and lots of ice fishing. I remember those days when ice fishing was part of my family's winter fun time outings, no doubt because the twins' dad when he was a kid loved (and still does) those days on the ice. Personally, what I remember is sitting on an upside down five-gallon-pail, eating cold sandwiches and frozen rice krispie cake and sipping hot chocolate to stay warm. Did someone say ice tent/shack? Lol, nope, just three half frozen kids, one excited hubby and me, the maker of said snacks and sandwiches. While it brings back warm memories, the memories are technically of the cold.

Now that we are back to 'our' reality, meaning cold days and no sign of green grass yet, we are sort of into routine. The grands and company come for lunch most days and enlighten us with their excitement and chatter and fishing videos via u-tube. Don't they ever get tired of fishing? Our cats are happy we are home for the most part, though I sense the 'swatter' seems rather entitled. Even 'our' farm kitty who survived winter very well with his little warm room and a steady diet of canned cat food that not even our housecats get, was so happy to see hubby by one day, he wouldn't stay off his shoulders. That might have been worth videoing, seeing hubby trying to feed the cat who wouldn't get off his shoulders.

And now we await the warmth of spring and the time when we can get the crop in the ground. Hubby is constantly scribbling numbers and clicking away on the calculator so methinks the price of canola has him in deep thought. So to all you farmers penciling things down and figuring it all out, take care, be safe and have a safe seeding season (if you actually get on the land before the next column comes your way!) Until next time!



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Cutting-edge USask chickpea research thrives through cold temperatures

By MATT OLSON,

Amid the snow and the slush of frigid Saskatchewan winters, one place on the

University of Saskatchewan (USask) campus always remains warm and green: the greenhouses.

USask's 13 signature greenhouses are situated in the northern part of campus and are home to a variety of crops, including wheat, barley, beans and chickpeas.

"The greenhouse is a good way to beat the winter blues," said Dr. Tamanna Jahan (PhD), a post-doctoral fellow in USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources. "It's sun-

ny in here ... and I can control the environment."

Jahan's research focuses on chickpea breeding. Inside one of the greenhouse buildings, wide swaths of Jahan's chickpea crop fill massive hydroponic systems in rectangular planters that can slide on rails, offering researchers access to the plants for study, watering and fertilization.

Jahan is part of the research lab led by Dr. Bunyamin Tar'an (PhD), the Ministry of Agriculture Strategic Research Program (SRP) Chair in Chickpea and Flax Breeding and Genetics. Her work focuses on nutrient levels in chickpeas, increasing the quality of crop yield. Jahan's PhD

research focuses on the idea of biofortification of chickpeas—essentially, growing lines of chickpeas with a greater amount of a particular nutrient.

Her latest research revolves around phosphorus, a critical element for the fertilization and growth of crops. Jahan is using genetic editing tools in combination with field techniques to identify and create lines of chickpeas that require less phosphorus to thrive. The project received support from the Agriculture Development Fund (ADF).

Continued on Page 37

Farm succession workshop draws large number

Continued from Page 23

"Everybody in the farm has to understand what the financial picture is," McLean said. "Some farms may not have the ability to hold off because they need the cash flow for debt service purposes, or they need the cash flow because they have a share redemption schedule in play where the owners that are exiting need that money to do what they need to do. This is why it's so important to share what the ideas are and to share the plans with multiple people, so that everybody's aware."

Having presented Bridging the Gap across the country, McLean has been able to see how different sectors in agriculture are affected, with many commonalities present despite the product being harvested.

"I've been very fortunate to be able to do these workshops in New Brunswick where they're talking about supply management and lowbush blueberries, poultry, potatoes, those are their crops," he explained. "You move to Alberta and you have very different crops. You have the irrigation infrastructure that they don't have quite built out in Saskatchewan, that takes one of those major risks away. Going across the country does present me an

opportunity to listen to the needs, demands, and challenges in each of the geographic regions, and it has to be considered."

These unique markets mean tweaking the workshop somewhat, but the general theme remains the same.

"I definitely don't have a cookie cutter approach," McLean said, adding the relatability to the people in each different geographic region is required.

Canada's Farm Show a draw

Aligning the Bridging the Gap workshop with Canada's Farm Show in Regina is no accident. McLean says tacking the presentation onto an attraction is fairly common.

"We always try to do it in conjunction with other events that are happening around agriculture in the regions, so that it's not a burden on the families to come to the workshop," he said. "So we try to tack it on to the front end or back end or the middle of other events that are happening."

An added incentive is free tickets to Canada's Farm Show when participants signed up for the succession

workshop.

What makes Bridging the Gap so unique is the diversity of content, drawing from the experience of several backgrounds. Presenting partners include MNP, AFSC, Alberta Canola, FCC, Ritchie Bros., and RBC.

"The reason we do it that way is because we need to show the audience that this is not a singular advisor service," McLean explained. "You need multiple advisors from different professional lines in order to support families through this very critical piece of transition. As professionals, we have to respect that we cannot fully service all of the needs of a family going through this particular point in a business's growth cycle."

In some presentations, lawyers have even been brought in to go over the importance of wills and other legal documents people ought to consider as part of the transition plan. Experts on life insurance and inviting lenders to speak are other examples of utilizing professionals to complement the presentation.

"We have to be able to stand up there as professionals and recognize that you do need a team of people around you to get from beginning to end," said McLean.

Positive ag reaction to provincial budget

Continued from Page 25

"On our farm, no," he replied when asked if the current situation in China has him second-guessing what to seed. "We've developed a rotation over the years that works on our farm, and we will stick to that same rotation. I think some of the producers that may be thinking about it are in areas that maybe have been considering getting out of canola anyway because of the drought."

Those producers on the transition areas beyond prime canola country might be tempted, though.

"Obviously, canola doesn't do well compared to other crops in those drier areas of the province," Prybylski said. "If there's any question in their mind whether or not you grow canola, I think this may have been the straw that broke the camel's back, in terms of switching to something away from canola."

Threats from other countries still have producers on alert, with a close eye on markets.

"Anything that causes any delays in the supply chain, whether it's our canola going out to market—all the other crops that we grow in Saskatchewan are primarily for export," Prybylski continued. "So anything that can be done to help expedite that process, to get to market quicker and more efficiently, less expensive, that's all to the benefit of producers. As more value is added to our commodities, it's a benefit for the province. We would like to see significant investment in infrastructure so that we can get our product to the market, whether it's to Egypt or India or China, we need that commitment to those investments in infrastructure."

One criticism of the provincial budget was the lack of a contingency plan taking tariff threats into account. Other places have baked this into their budgets, but Saskatchewan chose to forego that measure.

"It depends on the approach that the province wants to take, and I think

we've taken a very prudent approach to this," Greul said. "If you look at the impact that tariffs will cause, we need to understand three things. We need to understand the product that's being under tariff, we need to understand the value of that tariff, and we need to understand the duration of that tariff that leads to the impact on the industry. Today, none of those things are known. Yes, we could have put in a contingency in the budget, but Minister Reiter and the Department of Finance I think rightfully chose not to do that because any action that we do take will have to be funds that are borrowed. We don't know what that quantum is going to be."

Prybylski also pointed to another big unknown, the length of time the whole tariff issue will be in play.

"I am concerned about it," he said on the topic of

no tariff-related supports. "But I guess my thought is what sort of supports do we need? We don't really know that yet. We don't really know the total effect of the tariffs, and if we ask for something, and then realize those tariffs will last for a week or 10 days or whatever and then they're resolved, well, obviously that's different than if we have ongoing tariffs for China. If the U.S. tariffs come into effect on April 2, that's, obviously going to compound that problem."

More important to Prybylski is knowing the provincial government has the back of agriculture producers.

"What I think producers are looking for is just some reassurance from our government that they are there," he said. "They're looking at the situation. They'll be consulting with industry groups and farm groups to determine ex-

actly what the effects are, and then develop a plan to address those effects. There's no doubt there's going to be some need for support from both levels of our government if the tariffs do drag on any length of time."

South of the border, American farmers realized some programs after the 2018 tariffs from Trump's first time in office—a historic marker that could be worth analyzing in our country, according to Prybylski.

"We can't compete with the farming programs that exist in the States," Prybylski said. "But certainly we would like to know that our federal government will be looking at those programs in the States, seeing how effective they are and using that as maybe a bit of a starting point to see what we can develop in this country."



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Spring runoff well underway

On April 3, the Water Security Agency (WSA) updated its spring runoff forecast.

Runoff is well underway across most of the southwestern and the southern areas of Saskatchewan.

Warmer daytime temperatures combined with freezing overnight temperatures over the past month have resulted in a slow melt so far this spring.

Snowfalls in late March brought 10 to 20 cm of snow from the Lloydminster area through Saskatoon and toward Yor-

ton however, it is not expected to significantly increase runoff.

For most of the snow-covered areas in southern and central Saskatchewan, much of the runoff has seeped into the soil, and with below normal precipitation for the past month, runoff is expected to be near normal.

In the area between Regina and Saskatoon, heavier snowpack remains with above normal runoff expected.

The runoff forecast can quickly change with heavy spring precipitation or rapid

rises in temperatures causing fast snowpack melt.

Current reservoir levels at Lake Diefenbaker are more than one meter higher than average for this time of year as a result of the limited drawdown and early runoff in the southern prairie region.

As part of its overwinter operations

plan to retain water supplies, WSA expects to exceed the recreational target of 552 meters by May 15.

Under this plan, WSA is well-positioned to support community supply, recreation, irrigation and industry as the reservoir is already ahead of the May 1st irrigation target of 551.5 meters.



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Companies in AgTech Accelerator's Cohort 4 announced

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

This year's lucky 15 were officially announced during Canada's Farm Show in Regina March 18-20, the latest in agricultural innovation from Cultivator powered by Conexus Cohort 4 of the AgTech Accelerator.

"I love the global excitement that we get around the AgTech Accelerator, it just really reinforces how special it is that we're building here in Saskatchewan," said Laura Mock, Director of Cultivator.

Launched back in 2019, the purpose of Cultivator powered by Conexus was to assist local tech start-ups through a hub fostering resources, mentorship, funding, and even the room to make that growth happen. Conexus Credit Union is the nation's first credit-union-led tech incubator, based in Regina. As for the AgTech Accelerator side of things, there's an annual cohort comprised of Canadian and UK companies in the pre-seed to seed stages of their development. AgTech Accelerator focuses on key areas of big data and predictive analytics, supply chain, traceability, and sustainability, precision agriculture, farm management, IoT (Internet of Things) sensors, software and hardware, and animal health.

"Going back from the very first cohort, we've had a partnership with Innovate UK," Mock explained, adding that the mix is usually 10 Canadian and five UK-based. "We're seeing a lot of diversity in terms of the technology and ideas, and that's part of the beauty of having a global program is the ability to cross-pollinate with founders in the industry that are trying to solve very similar problems and to create partnerships and allow that peer to peer mentorship."

Cohort 4's companies

Being one of those fortunate 15 young companies in Cohort 4 is an enviable position. Since Cultivator has begun, they've supported 47 agtech companies. Over the first three years, the program has created 193 new jobs, raised \$119.2 million in private capital, and generated \$72.1 million



Carla Vipond, Show Director, answers media questions on the first morning of Canada's Farm Show.

in revenue. Cultivator has also received \$44.4 million in public funding.

Representing the Saskatchewan-based companies are AgScouter Agronomy who work with cloud-based software built by agronomists for anyone with a passion for agriculture; ClearCost Ag which is focused on supply and demand discovery for farm inputs; Combine Settings where farmers find their ideal combine settings for their crops and geographies; and Super GeoAI Geospatial Artificial Intelligence (GeoAI) which offers platforms for automating laborious manual observations in agriculture and supporting rapid, informed decision making.

Ontario-based companies include

Chariot Command Corp who determine the mechanical health of your farming equipment using thermal imaging, additional sensors, and data analysis; Circulus Agtech who turn manure and compost into an odourless, pathogen free, directly available organic fertilizer rich in microbial activity and behaving like a fast-acting synthetic fertilizer; and Spornado where farmers find their ideal combine settings for their crops and geographies. Chick Pick is from New Brunswick and specializes in poultry processing and utilizes cutting-edge technology to streamline poultry hatcheries. TerraWave in Manitoba is keen on revolutionizing soil analysis for a sustainable future. Alberta-based

Threshold AUV is in the business of building drone software for ag, powering weed mapping, prescription mapping, and terrain mapping.

On the UK side of Cohort 4 are AgSense Ltd. from Lancaster which offers the program HerdVision, which uses 3D imaging to automatically monitor cow health and provide real-time data to help producers optimize animal care. Antler Bio from Great Shelford introduces Epiherd, which helps you identify and address factors limiting your herd's full potential. They blend gene expression data with actionable insights to unlock your herd's capabilities.

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Breaking barriers: Women in Canadian agriculture

BY BETHANY LIPKA

Women play a critical role in Canadian agriculture but also face significant participation barriers. Lack of resources and lack of recognition lead to under-representation among farm operators and in leadership roles within agriculture businesses and organizations. The growing skills gap across the agriculture sector makes it imperative to grow gender equity and lift women's participation in all aspects of farming.

We estimate that achieving revenue equity—with female farm operators earning on average revenues in line with male farm operators—would add an additional \$5 billion to agriculture's GDP contribution. Achieving gender parity in the number of farm operators would magnify these economic benefits. Recognizing existing contributions of women could attract more women to the industry, which itself is a function of elevating the status of women's contributions equal to men's. We estimate that almost 88,000 additional female farm operators will need to be counted to achieve gender parity by 2026 – 75% of which are already farming but unrecognized as operators, and 25% of which will need to be new entrants.

The status of women in agriculture today

In the 30-year period spanning 1991 to 2021, the percentage of female farm operators in Canada increased from 25.7% to 30.4%. This upward trend is expected to continue, with the proportion of female farm operators expected to reach 31.1% by 2026. While encouraging, it's important to note that this trend is largely explained by men leaving the industry not by more women joining. Farm consolidations and an aging farm population have reduced the total number of farm operators across Canada over time, with the number of men falling faster than the number of women. So, while the proportion of women farmers has been steadily on the rise, the actual number of women in



of male farm operators, based on the most recent census data from 2021. Conversely, only 17.9% of female farm operators were employed on farms with revenues of \$500,000 or more, compared to 21.9% of their male counterparts. Women have gained some ground in recent years in high value markets for products like beef, poultry, and eggs. Men continue to dominate the grains and oilseeds market.

In their own words: Barriers faced by Canadian women in agriculture

In the fall of 2024, FCC interviewed women working in Canada's agriculture sector to learn about their experiences. Overall, these producers felt that things are slowly changing for the better. Yet, women still face barriers to full participation in farming.

1. Industry gender norms

The public still expects farmers to be male. Stereotypically, in many farm families the man is labelled as the "farmer", while the woman is labelled a "farm wife". Girls growing up in farm families may not feel encouraged from participating in the more operational aspects of farming. This early socialization can shape how women perceive their roles on the farm, and their confidence in engaging in all aspects of farming as adults. Women also tend to be expected to take on more household and childrearing responsibilities and often provide economic stability for their families through off-farm employment, making it more difficult to engage in production work.

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SaskTel launches Smart Ag at Farm Show



Heather Clair, Marketing Manager in charge of SaskTel's Smart Ag, answers questions from reporters during Canada's Farm Show in Regina.

BY RYAN KIEDROWSKI
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

A lot of smart ideas tend to float around Canada's Farm Show every year, and SaskTel told attendees last week about their latest plan—SaskTel Smart Ag.

"We're really excited to be launching SaskTel Smart Ag here at Canada's Farm Show," said Heather Clair, Marketing Manager in charge of Smart Ag at SaskTel. "We couldn't think of a better time of year and place to start talking about SaskTel Smart Ag on this large scale."

She explained how Smart Ag is an ecosystem of companies based in Saskatchewan and around the world.

Xact Agriculture is based in Saskatoon, using advanced AI-powered algorithms to process multi-spectral data captured by satellites. What that means is they can provide detailed soil analysis to help farmers make more informed decisions to optimize their operation.

In tandem with the dynamic brain power at Regina-based Kvale Informatics, the result, as Clair describes, is "a war room management system for your farm."

"They have this great enterprise grade dashboard that can pull from APIs or your login credentials, to connect the information from your tractors, from your weather stations, from Xact Agriculture, and it creates a very holistic look at your farm," she said of Kvale's offerings. "That kind of information can be combined with your seeding data, your spraying data, your traceability data. Start to finish, it starts to layer upon itself and give you some really great analytics on the back end to be able to make better decisions."

There's also room for more partners to join the SaskTel Smart Ag realm, according to Clair.

"We're very interested in talking to any companies that are wanting to take part in this," she said. "One of the key features within our ecosystem, though, is we want to make sure that everybody that we work with understands that the farmers own their data. This is an open data sys-

tem. Everybody can use the data to create tools, but the ownership of that remains on the farm."

This includes places like Cultivator powered by Conexus and Saskatoon-based Co.Labs, both of which have been in communication with Smart Ag.

"The companies that are coming out of those programs are phenomenal, and that's one of the reasons that I'm really excited about SaskTel Smart Ag, because it's allowing those startups to get a foothold into the community," Clair said. "You don't have to be approved for the big plat-

forms. This is a platform that can take whatever those great up and coming tools are and integrate it with some of the more long-standing systems within agriculture."

Solar-powered ear tags

A perfect example of how all the technology comes together is found in the Australian-based Smart Paddock livestock management system. At the centre of the system is a solar-powered ear tag for livestock, which provide real-time GPS monitoring of each critter wear-

ing the fancy earring. The tags have a 10-year lifetime, can be applied using tagging equipment producers already have at their fingertips, and can be transferred to different animals.

The company also offers SmartTrack trackers for equipment, SmartFence monitors for voltage levels on electric fences, and updates on water levels through SmartWater.

"We want those companies to be able to build off of what we're providing, to be able to reach their own needs," Clair said. "We want to support them."

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Companies in AgTech Accelerator's Cohort 4 announced

Continued from page 29

Oxcel Ltd of Great Yarmouth promises to boost livestock farming efficiency, sustainability, and environmental impact by enhancing water for better growth, feed conversion and reduced costs. London's Messium uses actionable nitrogen analysis for any wheat farm at the click of a button. Phero-Syn of Harpenden harnesses sustainable insect pheromones for natural crop management.

Future goals

Cultivator has also set some ambitious targets to encourage more Saskatchewan companies with yearly recurring revenues of \$1 million, cultivating 35 companies by 2030 and 250 companies by 2050.

"We knew when we set those targets, this is a big commitment, but it is attainable if we start to be a lot more intentional and very focused," Mock said. "All of our business decisions are anchored around, 'is this going to help the company grow? Will it help them get there faster? How do we remove roadblocks? It is attainable, but it takes having a clear vision, a clear pathway, and sometimes you have to be a little bit ruthless."

Another change is when the AgTech Accelerator holds their illustrious Finale Week. Traditionally, it has been in conjunction with Canada's Farm Show, but with the move of that event from June to March, that can no longer happen.

"Finale Week is going to be based out of Saskatoon, and that's aligned with Ag in Motion," Mock explained. "We're really excited about the changes that will be happening in terms of the Finale Week, and some of the industry that will be there that are able to participate and connect with founders. There's just such a great opportunity to increase exposure and support."

With the move to Ag in Motion for Finale Week, the hope is to make even more connections.

"We're representing Canadian agriculture, and we just happen to be located in Saskatchewan," Mock said. "By breaking up our kickoff weekend, finale week, and spreading them between our two major centres, it gives us a chance to connect with a broader range of producers, and to see some of the different challenges."

Female founders rising

Throughout Cohort 4, one third of the companies have female founders—an important number that Mock would like to see increase in time. While women make up 51 per cent of the population in North America, representation in the tech market shows women founders only receive two per cent of venture capital funding. This is despite the fact that women actually return a higher revenue per dollar than their male counterparts.

"Being a female leader in ag tech, it is still very much a male-dominated industry," Mock said. "It's super exciting to see that women are continuing to push forward and to build innovations and strong companies. We would like to see more female founders, more Indigenous founders, more new Canadians. We do want to invest in those equity-deserving groups."

One of those companies in Cohort 4 is AgScouter, created by co-founders Jill Sharko and Kara Annand.

"It's an app for field scouting," Sharko explained. "It was originally designed by agronomists for agronomists because we have a parent company up in Nipawin. We actually run our parent company, Ag Grow Consulting, in the Nipawin area and the Moose Jaw area."

Co-founder Annand is from Moose Jaw where her family continues to farm, and around eight years ago the quest began for a program to make life easier.

"We had scouts out in the field trying to record their observations and make their recommendations to their growers and send those reports off," Zarko recalled. "Everything was either too cumbersome or didn't have the right information, and in the end, they were going home and creating a lot of manual reports, which obviously added to their time in their day. As a company, we were just losing a lot of time."

While there were programs out there, Zarko says finding the right fit for Ag Grow Consulting was the challenge. Ultimately, the team decided to build their own app with the assistance of a web development agency out of Montreal, culminating in a working product in 2017, which Ag Grow used internally.

After three years of using the program, Covid hit, which led Zarko and Annand to decide on taking AgScouter to the people.

"We just knew that as a tool for creating reports and being

able to view that historical field information, it was saving us as a company one full time agronomist a year," Zarko said. "It really adds up. It means that we can scout approximately 20 to 25 per cent more acres per year. That's important, because at the end of the day, the information that an agronomist or a farmer that's collecting out in their field, they're using that information to make critical decisions down the road, and I mean now, more than ever, economically, it's important to be making the right decisions and to be doing the right things in your field."

Fast, easy, and doesn't add to the job are the key benefits Zarko noted of AgScouter.

"The job should be scouting the field, not putting it into your program," she said, adding that the app can create a professional, branded report that can be sent right from a

phone before even leaving the field.

"That way, the farmer gets that information in their phone, it's an instant thing," Zarko said. "Everything's cloud based, and then they can start doing what they need to do. They can go out and spray their crop or do whatever the action item is."

"There's a chat feature there that comes directly to my phone," Zarko explained. "We also have an option to sign up for a free trial, a free demo. Then we are available for free download on the iOS App Store. We know we have a great program, and as soon as people have it in their hands and on their phones, we know that they're going to see why we get so excited about it. It's just fast, easy, efficient, and it's just making sure that they can get their data in there and at all tech skill levels. We made sure that we kept it really simple."



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FCC launches Trade Disruption Customer Support program for ag and food industry

To support the Canadian agriculture and food industry as U.S. tariffs are implemented, Farm Credit Canada is providing \$1 billion in new lending to help alleviate financial challenges.

"There is no relationship in the world like the one Canada shares with the United States, and that certainly extends to our agriculture sectors. Our supply chains are highly integrated, and our producers rely on fair access to the U.S. market. These unjustified tariffs will have a direct impact on them," said the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. "Building on our Team Canada response, FCC will be providing financial support to the sector as we adapt to the challenges ahead, so our farmers can keep their operations going and continue producing the best products in the world."

"We know that agriculture and food producers across Canada are bracing for uncertainty," said Justine Hendricks FCC president and CEO. "Agribusinesses, farm operations and food processors are key drivers of our economy and FCC is ready to provide meaningful and immediate support to keep the industry moving forward at this critical time."

Hendricks said that FCC will rapidly deliver solutions for the industry to adapt to the changing trade and economic conditions. Initially, the focus is on assisting the industry in addressing cash flow challenges so that businesses can adjust to a new operating environment.

Through the Trade Disruption Customer Support program, FCC will provide relief for viable customers and non-customers who meet the necessary lending criteria. This includes access to an additional credit line up to \$500,000 and new term loans. Current FCC customers have the option to defer principal payments for up to 12 months on existing loans.

FCC customers and non-customers should contact their local FCC office or call 1-800-387-3232 to discuss their individual situations and available options. Lending due diligence will be carried out on all appli-

cations.

"Supporting the industry will also take strong collaboration as part of a team Canada approach," said Hendricks. "FCC has served as a strong, reliable, and trusted industry presence for more than 65 years, and this current situation is no different. We will be working in partnership with industry associations and other financial providers to offer the solutions needed by the agriculture and food industry to take on the challenges ahead."

"Canadian agriculture and food businesses supply high value and quality

products to U.S. buyers and a positive trade relationship benefits both countries," said J.P. Gervais, FCC chief economist. "Despite this latest challenge, FCC will continue to provide capital solutions and be a catalyst for value creation to advance Canada's leadership in agriculture and food production."

FCC continues to evaluate the economic impact of tariffs implemented by Canada's largest trading partner on the Canadian agriculture and food sector to ensure that we are best able to support the industry.



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Breaking barriers: Women in Canadian agriculture

Continued from page 30

2. Devaluation of women's knowledge, skills and contributions

Women reported that they often feel like they must prove that they are as knowledgeable, skilled, and capable as their male counterparts, and often feel judged to be less competent because of their gender. And that non-production roles dominated by women—like accountant, or finance manager—are often deemed not as important as operational roles that tend to be male dominated.

3. Resource accessibility

Men are more likely to inherit the farm over women, as tradition dictates that these resources be passed from fathers to sons. Women are often excluded from succession planning, and in large part are still expected to marry in to farm families if they want to participate in farming.

4. Physical barriers

Many aspects of farming were not designed with women in mind. For example, most farm equipment has been tailored to the male physique, and these design limitations can make it more difficult for women to engage in the physical side of farming.

5. Lack of representation

Many women shared that their views on their own potential were shaped by what they saw represented as they grew up—which typically was men as decision makers on the farm, and women in supportive roles. A lack of representation of female leadership in agriculture can make it difficult for younger women to feel confident that they can take on leadership roles.

6. Lack of networks and support

Women in farming are more isolated than their male counterparts, and have less access to networking, mentorship, and support. As agriculture continues to be a male-dominated industry, most executive and board positions within agriculture continue to be held by men. Women generally have less access to a network of like-minded peers sharing similar struggles who they can lean on for support and advice, and often have the experience of being the only woman in the room. This can be both challenging and intimidating. Women also face barriers to attending in-person networking events, as they are often juggling childcare and off-farm work.

Women are well positioned to be future leaders in Canada's food system

The labour needs of Canada's agriculture sector are changing. In this era of digital agriculture and data-driven decision-making, there is a growing need for highly skilled farm labour. Reflecting this need, there has been an overall upward trend in educational attainment in the agriculture labour force in recent years – with a declining number of workers having no formal qualifications, and an increasing number of workers with college and university degrees. This trend is even more pronounced for women, who are more likely to be highly educated than their male counterparts. In 2021, nearly one-quarter (23.5%) of female farm operators possessed at least a bachelor's degree, compared to only 14.5% of male farm operators. And the proportion of female farm operators without any formal education was only 9.3%, notably lower than the 18.2% observed among male farm operators. The current gap in educational attainment between female and male farm operators is greatest for operators aged 30-39; within this age cohort, 36% of women have a university education, compared to only 17% of men.

A high level of educational attainment makes it easier for women to take advantage of new tools and technologies of farming as they emerge. Many of these innovations are making it easier to overcome some of the physical and social barriers that women in agriculture have faced in the past. A growing number of female farm operators are adopting new production technologies—things like automatic guidance steering, and GIS. These tools can make it easier for women to achieve work-life balance. Women who are highly educated are also well positioned to be thought leaders and champions of the agriculture industry, playing a leadership role beyond the farm level.

Women working in agriculture also continue to demonstrate a strong entrepreneurial spirit, leveraging their skills and expertise to enhance the value of what they produce. Women have been driving the emerging trend of direct to consumer sales of farm goods, with farms run exclusively or jointly by female operators being much more likely to adopt this marketing strategy. And there are a growing number of women working on farms producing organic goods, and using sustainable energy sources and technologies. Women are also carving out space for themselves in growing niche markets, like sheep and goat production.

Achieving gender equity in Canadian agriculture: Some possible steps forward

There is a lot of work that needs to be done to achieve gender equity in Canadian agriculture. Currently we fall behind wholesale and retail, finance, education, health care, and several other industries in terms of women's participation.

Women in agriculture today are highly educated and driven, with strong business acumen. They are well equipped to foster innovation and accelerate new methods, tools, and technologies on the farm. At a time when productivity growth in Canadian agriculture is stagnat-

ing, leveraging their skills and entrepreneurial spirit will reap significant economic benefits.

Here are some potential strategies to consider:

- **Increase the visibility of women in agriculture.** Recognizing the important work that women are already doing on farms and in boardrooms across Canada is critical.

- **Enhance mentorship and networking opportunities.** This will help to reduce isolation and build community for women navigating the agriculture and food space. Programs like AgriMentor, that pair new and established women farmers with experienced mentors, and events like Advancing Women Conferences, can foster useful connections for women, helping to address time and cost barriers women often face when engaging in networking. Virtual initiatives can also help to make networking more accessible. The National Women in Agriculture and Agri-Food Network Project is one example of a growing network that connects women in farming through both in-person and virtual initiatives.

- **Ensure that women have equal opportunity to take on leadership roles.** This requires not only reducing gender bias in promotion and hiring, but also ensuring

women are supported in stepping into leadership roles when the opportunity arises, through access to things like flexible work arrangements and childcare accommodations.

- **Improve access to resources.** Women have historically been excluded from succession planning and equal access to land and capital. Programs that support women in accessing the resources they need to start their farm businesses are essential moving forward. FCC's Women Entrepreneur Program is one example of this. A broader cultural shift toward including women in succession planning is also needed to break this inter-generational cycle of exclusion. We are slowly seeing progress in this area, with more women being involved in farm transition planning.

- **Embracing the strengths and potential of women in agriculture can unlock \$5 billion in economic benefits for the agriculture sector.** Achieving gender equity can drive innovation, improve productivity, and foster sustainability, leading to a more resilient and prosperous agricultural industry. Together, we can cultivate a future where everyone can contribute and thrive, creating a dynamic and inclusive farming community that benefits all.



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Grazing lease rate formula amended to support livestock producers

The Ministry of Agriculture has amended the Crown land grazing lease rate formula, effective for 2025.

The revisions to the grazing formula will offer relief to producers renting Crown land and contribute to affordability and stability for the livestock sector in the face of rising production costs. Amending the rental formula provides a transparent and straightforward calculation for producers to understand while increasing the stability and predictability of the annual rental rate.

"We have listened to feedback from producers and, as a result, these changes will contribute to the further growth of the province's livestock sector," Agriculture Minister Daryl Harrison said. "Additionally, this new formula provides a fair and transparent pricing structure for producers and a fair return for a public asset back to Saskatchewan taxpayers."

"We have been requesting changes to the formula for a while and are pleased

where the province has landed," Saskatchewan Cattle Association Past Chair Keith Day said. "The 20 per cent ceiling on fee increase will help producers and community pastures better plan for any possible changes to the rates."

In 2024, the ministry conducted consultations with livestock producers and industry associations to determine what changes to the grazing formula would provide more predictability for producers. As a result, the ministry has introduced an amended formula that uses price averaging of cattle marketed between October 1 to November 30 of the five preceding years, as opposed to the previous formula based on fall cattle prices from the previous year.

The ministry also introduced a 20 per cent cap on annual rental rate increases. These changes ensure rates are less vulnerable to sharp fluctuations and provide more stability to help producers budget for the coming year.



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Manitoba: Budget seeks to grow rural economy

Manitoba's government says Budget 2025 meets the challenge of the current historic moment with the largest capital investment in Manitoba's history to grow the rural economy, protect jobs, continue the government's commitment to rebuild rural health care and lower costs for rural Manitobans and producers, Finance Minister Adrien Sala announced on budget day on March 20.

"This budget comes at a critical time for agricultural producers, the backbone of our rural economy, and it rises to the occasion with historic funding for municipalities and record investments in capital projects that increase access to rural health care and education," said Sala.

"Rural Manitobans are asking for a government that has their backs. We didn't start this trade war but we are making sure that our rural economy is protected. We are Building One Manitoba."

Budget 2025 invests a record \$3.7 billion in capital

projects, which includes new schools, emergency rooms (ERs) and personal care homes, and strategic infrastructure to keep Manitoba's economy moving, noted the minister.

The budget will grow Manitoba's economy and add nearly 18,000 new jobs, said Sala, with investments in strategic infrastructure including Manitoba Hydro upgrades, 600 megawatts of wind energy in partnership with Indigenous nations, the Port of Churchill and Hudson Bay Rail Line,

Phase 2 of the North End Water Pollution Control Centre, twinning the east Trans-Canada Highway, the Lake St. Martin and Lake Manitoba outlet channels and the Wasagamack Airport.

Budget 2025 builds on the two percent increase in municipal funding in last year's budget with a further two percent increase in base operating grants—plus a dedicated four percent of gas tax revenue through the new One Manitoba Growth Revenue

Fund.

A strong rural economy needs a strong health-care system, added the minister, and the budget continues to make progress on rebuilding rural health care for Manitobans. Budget 2025 commits to put shovels in the ground this year on the new emergency room in Eriksdale, continued funding for the Minor Injury and Illness Clinic in Brandon, funding for The Pas clinic, new personal care homes in Lac du Bonnet and Arborg and a new

mobile MRI for the north.

The budget lowers costs for farmers and producers by continuing the freeze on Crown lands lease rates, lowering Agrilnsurance rates, providing permanent gas tax relief and increasing the Young Farmer Rebate to support the next generation of Manitoba farmers, noted the minister.

Budget 2025 also supports the opening of two new Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation (MASC) offices in Virden

and Shoal Lake, a down payment to secure three new made-in-Canada water bombers and the new Alamos Gold mine in Lynn Lake. Budget 2025 includes a tariff contingency with hundreds of millions of dollars in support to help businesses and agricultural producers pivot to new markets, help workers skill up and find good jobs, and support Manitoba's canola farmers and pork producers facing tariff threats from the U.S. and China, added Sala.

APAS outlines election priorities

In advance of the federal election, the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) has announced a strategic agenda aimed at rejuvenating Canada's agricultural landscape.

The agenda, titled "Unleashing Agriculture for Canada's Growth," articulates a set of priorities designed to solidify the future prosperity and resilience of the nation's agricultural sector amid a fluctuating global trade climate.

With trade tensions escalating among the world's largest economies, APAS underscores the imperative for the Canadian government to adopt forward-looking policies that bolster the competitiveness and robustness of Canadian agriculture.

APAS's Priorities Include:

- Enhanced International Trade and Market Access: Substantial investments in the nation's transportation and logistics infrastructure, including improvements to rail, ports, and roadways. Additionally, a review of the Rail Freight Policy is deemed critical for optimizing these infrastructure enhancements.

- Advancement of Finance and Tax Policy: A permanent increase of the Advance Payment Program (APP) interest-free cap to \$350,000 and rebalancing the repayment framework. APAS also calls for an extension of farm roll-over tax provisions.

Continued on Page 38

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Cutting-edge USask chickpea research thrives through cold temperatures

Continued from page 27

Jahan said this would mean fewer fertilizer inputs would be required by producers, which would be more environment-friendly due to less phosphorus remaining in the soil, and these chickpea lines could be used to grow crops in less nutrient-rich environments around the world.

"This phosphorus is non-renewable, and it's coming only from phosphate rock," she said. "A huge amount of phosphorus is used by the agriculture industry, and across all crops, pulses like chickpeas need more phosphorus because of the ways their roots grow ... If we find the chickpea genotypes which require low amounts of phosphorus, we can reduce our input cost."

And much of this research is taking place in sub-zero temperatures in USask's greenhouses. Each greenhouse can be controlled for temperature, lighting and humidity. Despite the cold temperatures outside, Jahan can continue her research program through the coldest months in Saskatchewan.

She noted that agriculture is a large industry here in Saskatchewan, and being able to continue to explore those agriculture and bioresource-related research questions even through the dead of winter was a tremendous boost. Jahan is also able to manage her inputs – water, nutrients, fertilizer – with great precision in the controlled environment of the greenhouse.

With the tools of the greenhouse at her disposal Jahan can mimic any environmental condition she needs to confirm if her more phosphorus-efficient chickpeas are producing a greater yield. She initially tested this line of chickpea seeds using a hydroponic growing method to more closely examine the plant roots before planting these crops in more traditional soil.

Jahan has plants ready to be harvested and more that are still growing, but she hopes to develop more hardy chickpea lines that can grow in the most inclement of conditions.

"When I'm testing 200 lines of chickpeas, where will I grow them? Research is a continuous process," she said. "Whether or not the outside is extremely cold temperatures, I cannot stop my research."

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SARM supports Sask's move to become a fully carbon tax free province

The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) welcomes the Saskatchewan government's announcement to eliminate the industrial carbon levy, making Saskatchewan a fully carbon tax-free province. This decision aligns with SARM's long-standing advocacy for a practical approach to addressing environmental challenges, one that supports the economic vitality of rural communities and the agriculture sector.

"Today's announcement is a significant step forward for rural Saskatchewan," says Bill Huber, SARM President. "By eliminating the industrial carbon levy, the province is taking a crucial step to reduce unnecessary costs for our municipalities and agricultural producers.

This move will help maintain the competitiveness of our rural economies and support the well-being of our communities."

SARM has strongly advocated for the need for environmental policies that recognize the unique challenges and contributions of rural Saskatchewan. The association believes that federal carbon taxes are not the solution, and a made-in-Saskatchewan approach is essential for ensuring that any environmental initiatives do not disproportionately burden rural residents and businesses.

"SARM appreciates the provincial government's commitment to addressing environmental challenges

through methods that respect provincial autonomy and support local economic development," added Huber. "We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the government to ensure that our rural communities remain strong and resilient in the face of changing environmental policies."

This decision is seen as a positive step towards fostering economic growth and stability in rural areas, where the impacts of federal carbon pricing have been particularly felt. SARM remains committed to advocating for the interests of its member municipalities and working with the government to promote the prosperity of rural Saskatchewan.

USask industry chair to advance forage research

In a move to strengthen research into crucial livestock production systems, Dr. Flavia van Cleef (PhD) has been appointed as the new Beef Industry Integrated Forage Management and Utilization (IFMU)

Chair at the University of Saskatchewan (USask).

As the industry chair, van Cleef will bridge disciplinary boundaries, lead systems-based forage and pasture management, and utilization research to address the needs of all levels of the agricultural sector.

"Working with researchers, industry and producers, Dr. van Cleef will develop innovative tools and resources to improve forage management and use," said Dr. Angela Bedard-Haughn (PhD), dean of the College of Agriculture and Bioresources at USask. "We are excited to have Dr. van Cleef join the college to deliver the collaborative, interdisciplinary research needed to support a sustainable livestock and forage sector."

Forages are plant systems that act as high-quality livestock feed

with potential benefits for soil health, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity. Established to address a gap in forage research, the IFMU chair will explore the soil-plant-animal interface to help maximize the agronomic, economic and environmental benefits of forages.

"Productive pastures and forage crops are key to maintaining a strong and competitive beef industry in Canada," said Craig Lehr, the Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC) chair and Alberta beef producer. "The investment Canadian producers have made to establish the chair in IFMU will contribute to improved forage and grazing management strategies as well as training of new expertise to serve Canada's beef cattle and forage sectors."

van Cleef joins USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources with a joint appointment between the Department of Plant Sciences and the Department of Animal and Poultry Science. As the industry chair, she will work to advance forage utilization by



Dr. Flavia van Cleef (PhD) is the new Beef Industry Integrated Forage Management and Utilization Chair at the University of Saskatchewan.

enhancing system health, productivity and resilience.

"My goal is to bring together the latest research and practical solutions that work in the real world, ensuring they are locally relevant and aligned with global sustainability demands," said

van Cleef.

"Identifying new technologies through applied research will be key to improving forage use and, therefore, profitability in forage-based livestock production systems. Through collaborative research, I am committed to helping the agricultural community adopt innovative strategies for a more sustainable integrated forage management."

van Cleef completed her bachelor's and master's degrees in animal science at São Paulo State University – UNESP in Brazil. In 2021, she obtained a PhD in agronomy from the University of Florida.

Prior to joining USask, van Cleef was a post-doctoral research fellow at the Center for Nuclear Energy in Agriculture at the University of São Paulo in Brazil. Her studies focused on evaluating the greenhouse gas production of various arid and semi-arid tannin-rich plants.

For her research at USask, van Cleef will focus on the development and evaluation of agronomy strategies that optimize

forage establishment, yield, quality, and longevity. She will also explore feeding and grazing strategies that optimize animal performance while also contributing to improved soil health and environmental sustainability.

The industry chair position is jointly funded by the Beef Cattle Research Council, the Saskatchewan Cattle Association, the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP), and the Global Institute for Food Security at USask.

Sustainable CAP is a five-year, \$3.5 billion investment by Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments that supports Canada's agri-food and agri-product sectors. This includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5 billion commitment that is cost-shared 60 per cent federally and 40 per cent provincially/territorially for programs that are designed and delivered by provinces and territories.

APAS outlines election priorities

Continued from page 36

• **Regulatory Agency Competitiveness:** Emphasizing a competitive policy landscape, APAS seeks the integration of competitiveness considerations within regulatory agencies such as the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) and champions repositioning the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) under the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

• **Modernization of Grain Services:** Emphasizing transparency and fairness in the grain market, key proposals

include transparency for grain export sales data, contract modernization, and enhanced producer payment protection.

• **Rail Freight Policy Reform:** Reviewing railway costs, enhancing transportation data transparency, and advocating for extended interswitching zones to encourage competitive grain shipping rates. • **National Supply Chain and Data Strategy:** A cohesive national data strategy to support investment in technology, alongside measures to fortify the agri-food supply chain against disruptions.

• **Animal and Soil Health Policies:** The establishment of a national testing centre for foreign-trained veterinarians and enhanced financial support for soil health practices highlights APAS's commitment to addressing critical health gaps.

Through the execution of these priorities, APAS envisions a transformative growth path for Canadian agriculture, ensuring the sector remains at the forefront of the national economy while navigating international trade complexities.

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Blu Beach Band kicks off tour with concert at Maple Leaf Theatre

BY SHAYNA ZUBKO

The Blu Beach Band performed at the Maple Leaf Theatre in Esterhazy, on Friday, March 28 to kick off a month long tour. This local talent had a full audience at the Maple Leaf, which was a real full-circle moment for the band.

"It starts where it all began, in Esterhazy at the Maple Leaf," lead singer Carter Vosper said.

The last time that the band performed at the Maple Leaf Theatre was in 2022.

The band is excited for a Canada-wide tour, with 12 shows scheduled in ten cities. They are excited to be performing in new cities, with new music, and with another band, Nick Stone & The Gems.

The Blu Beach Band has a new album coming out in early summer, which they are recording and producing entirely on their own. A new song and music video called "The Walking Dead" was released April 4, while they were performing in Calgary.

"We shot the music video at our parents' farm in Langenburg with our videographer friend Eric Cox. We had a blast doing it and it's essentially a low-budget horror movie. Our moms are going to hate it," Vosper said with a laugh.

With new music on the horizon and their tour, the



The Blu Beach Band performing at the Maple Leaf Theatre in Esterhazy, one of the first places they started performing.

band is starting to see success. They have been gaining in popularity throughout Saskatchewan, as they have had opportunities to perform at music festivals and some awards nominations as well. They were nominated for Rock Artist of the Year and Music Video of the Year through SaskMusic last year. All of these opportunities made it possible to book a tour and hit the road.

The members of the

band—Carter, Eric, Riley and Remi—are spread across the province, living in three different cities, so they have to make sure that when they get together they are productive.

The week before the tour was supposed to start, Remi had his car stolen along with all of his music gear. Fortunately "friends, family and fellow musicians truly had our backs, and we raised \$5,000 to replace all of the gear in

exactly one week, which blew our minds. So, we really owe this tour to everyone who supported us in any way through that," said Vosper.

"Esterhazy has always been super supportive of us from the beginning, and some of our first shows where we played our own original music and felt like a 'real band' were at the Maple Leaf Theatre," says Vosper.

"We've played there

many times over the years and it has a special place in our hearts."

"These young performers had the crowd dancing on a non-existent dance floor with all of their original songs. We cannot wait until they return to the Maple Leaf again," said Maple Leaf Theatre's Jeannine LeSann.

The Maple Leaf hopes to host more live music and live theatre events in the future.

Watch for new music from the Blu Beach Band, with their new album tentatively called "Mulligan."



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Manitoba providing \$150 million for ag producers

Province announces \$10 million in additional matching funds for federal AgriStability program

The Manitoba government will provide farmers and producers with more than \$150 million in supports, including \$10 million to match federal AgriStability funding, Premier Wab Kinew announced on April 2.

"We're standing up for Westman and Western Canada, and protecting your jobs," said Kinew. "With \$150 million in supports for agriculture, we're making sure that farmers and producers can weather the economic uncertainty we're facing and protecting jobs in the agriculture industry."

The Manitoba government will provide \$10 million in additional matching funds for the AgriStability program, as well as

\$140.8 million for business risk management programming including AgriInsurance, Wildlife Damage Compensation and AgriInvest.

The premier noted the province is also working with farmers, producers and businesses to protect jobs, strengthen Manitoba's economy and respond to tariffs from China and the United States, in addition to working with Keystone Agricultural Producers toward a number of shared goals to support Manitoba agriculture including:

- identifying opportunities to remove regulatory barriers to grow value-added food processing businesses;
- advancing trade work in Manitoba's interest including collaboration with other

provinces and engagement with key U.S. states critical to Manitoba's trading relationship that will be hurt by potential tariffs; and

- advocating to the federal government and working to deliver policies and investments in value-added processing, improvements to business risk management programs and access to the capital producers need.

"As Manitoba's general farm organization, advocating for the interests of all Manitoba farmers is our top priority," said Colin Hornby, general manager, Keystone

Agricultural Producers. "We are committed to working collaboratively with the Manitoba government to have the perspectives of all Manitoba farmers reflected in any government efforts to address today's trade challenges and we thank them for giving us a seat at the table."

Budget 2025's tariff budget sets aside contingencies to support Manitobans in the face of U.S. tariffs, including \$100 million in support for farmers and producers, bringing Manitoba's total support for agriculture producers to as much as \$250 million, the premier noted.

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Above: I'm proud of my constituent Brady Goldfinch-Bali from Glenavon who placed first in the men's rifle relay, final and super final at Canadian Airgun Junior Nationals. His teammate, Sasha Krakowka, the Women's Rifle athlete from Saskatchewan and Junior National Champion, and Brady finished first in the rifle mixed team final. Four Junior National records were set during the competition. Two of them were set by Saskatchewan athletes. The women's rifle record and men's rifle record were set by Sasha and Brady. Saskatchewan won eight gold medals, six in the rifle category and two in the pistol category. The CBC was there and interviewed the men's pistol champion, also from Saskatchewan, as well as an official from the Saskatchewan Target Shooting Association (STSA).



The Northern Plains Grass Dance Championships in Regina. Above is Chief Evan Taypotat speaking at that event, and at left is one of the dancers.



Left: Myself and former chief Cadmus Delorme at the Round Lake Bears vs Kenaston Blizzards provincial game on Ochapowace First Nation. Above is the puck drop.

Making life more affordable

It was another incredibly busy week for me March 29 to April 4.

Saturday

Saturday I was pleased to be on the Ochapowace First Nation as the Round Lake Bears played in the Senior A Final game against Kenaston. It was incredible to see the energy in the rink. I had a chance to visit with many chiefs of various First Nations, as well as former chief Cadmus Delorme of Cowessess, who was working the merch table that night. Great to see the crowd and the spirit in the rink that night, but unfortunately Kenaston edged out our Round Lake Braves in that game and in the series.

Monday

Monday was my first day of estimates in standing committee. I serve on the standing committee on the economy, and Monday evening, after the House adjourned for the day, I was part of committee meetings that went until 9:30 pm, with ministers explaining specific initiatives and line items in their department budgets. It is a great way to learn the internal workings of government

Tuesday

Tuesday I toured Santa Maria Nursing Home in Regina in my role as Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Health. It was great to meet the wonderful staff members who make this facility work. I delivered a Member Statement that day, in advance of Autism Awareness Day, also known as Autism Acceptance Day.

Autism spectrum disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder which presents in many ways, including repetitive patterns of behaviour and sensory issues. ASD is a spectrum, and it behaves differently in everyone. People living with autism can face challenges, including educational and employment problems and higher rates of depression and self-harm.

Our government recognizes these challenges, which is why the Ministry of Health is investing \$9.7 million to support people living with autism, including support workers, rehabilitation therapists, diagnostic services, and community-based supports.

This includes \$686,000 in annual funding for Autism Services of Saskatoon and \$235,000 for the Autism Resource Centre in Regina.

Sensory issues that people with autism might face include sensitivity to light, sound, or touch, which can lead to overstimulation. This is why multiple SaskTel stores have been offering sensory shopping hours with dimmed lights, music turned off, and scanners silenced to provide a more comfortable shopping experience.

It's important for us to recognize people living with autism, the challenges they face, and the disinformation and

Report from the Legislature

KEVIN WEEDMARK
MLA for Moosomin-Montmartre

stereotypes that surround autism and its causes. In my statement in the Legislature, I invited all members to join me in recognizing Autism Awareness Day and committing to helping build a world where everyone is accepted and supported to succeed.

Wednesday

Wednesday was a very long day. It started at 7:15 am with a breakfast hosted by a group called Leading Influence at the Conexus Arts Centre, where I met a lot of great people. That was followed by a House Leaders Meeting, Caucus meeting, session, a reception hosted by the Energy Industry, and meetings of the Standing Committee on the Economy, which went until 10:30 pm. So a long day, from 7:15 am to 10:30 pm—almost as long as the days at the newspaper!

Thursday

Thursday was a big day for me, as it was the first 75-minute debate since the election, and I was one of three Saskatchewan Party MLAs selected to take part in the debate, on the subject of affordability. It was a different experience, speaking for 10 minutes then being questioned by the Opposition. Affordability is an issue close to my heart. Here is the script for Tuesday:

The Saskatchewan government has delivered affordability measures that have made life more affordable for every individual and family in the province. Our province is the most affordable place to live in Canada. A family of four pays no provincial income tax on their first \$63,000 of combined income and this threshold will increase each year for the next four years, bringing it up to more than \$71,000. This will mean an additional 54,000 residents of our province will no longer be paying provincial income tax.

Keeping life affordable improves the quality of life for Saskatchewan families, and this government continues to

make life more affordable.

Our government introduced the Affordability Act, which takes 13 measures to improve affordability in the province.

Our government included affordability measures in this year's budget, which will help the budget of every single person in this province, that will help the budget of every single family in this province.

And we marked Carbon Tax Freedom Day April 1st. We have removed the carbon tax on everything for everyone. When living costs are manageable, families can thrive.

And our government's Fiscal Responsibility is the reason our government can offer these affordability measures.

The Finance Minister delivered a balanced budget that allows us to deliver these affordability measures because of the strong Saskatchewan economy.

And that is thanks to the resourcefulness, resilience, and drive of Saskatchewan people.

As MLA for Moosomin-Montmartre, I'm proud to be part of a government that delivers affordability for Saskatchewan.

I highlighted many affordability measures during the debate, including measures that make life more affordable for families, for students and young adults, for seniors, for homeowners, and for people with disabilities.

Thursday afternoon I took part in a Cardiac Crash program hosted by the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and Thursday evening I attended part of an education conference hosted by Kahkewistahaw First Nation. It was an honour and privilege to view the Northern Plains Grass Dance Championships as a VIP guest, and great to chat with Chief Evan Taypotat of Kahkewistahaw First Nation, Kahkewistahaw Fire Chief Stan Bobb who loves his drones as much as I love mine, and with officials of Moosomin, which helped sponsor the event. There were more than 1,000 attendees at the Think Indigenous event and I congratulate the organizers on a successful event.

Friday

Friday I was in Kinistino, west of Melfort, where I toured the Jubilee Care Home. It was great to see this facility and meet some of the people who make it a home away from home for residents. Then, after a long week, I drove back to Moosomin with the hopes of making it home in time to make it to the Mooseberry Acting Company play on Friday night and the Rocanville Fire Department Comedy Night fundraiser Saturday night.

It's a pleasure to serve as your MLA. **Reach out to me any time.** You can contact me at 306-435-4005, office@kevinweedmark.ca or drop by the office at 622 Main Street, Moosomin.

Watoto Children's Choir performing in Moosomin

Continued from page 11

The children's choir is a way to spread the message of Watoto's work around the world, with a number of tours ongoing. In addition to the Canadian tour, there are also choirs performing in the U.S., UK, and Australia.

"Almost all year there is a choir traveling somewhere in the world," Cousineau said. "The children only travel once, and they go to one country. So we don't take 20 children and bring them around the world for two years worth of touring. But in that, they also are getting amazing English skills. These children are getting that English experience and training while they are here, and they have a school teacher that travels with them and takes care of their school while they are on tour. Every tour has a school teacher."

The life-changing chance to travel is unique for the choir members made up of children between the ages of eight to 15.

"In Uganda, the uniting language is English," Cousineau said. "Certainly it's not their official language, but it's a uniting language. Even these children, their first language could be any number of different languages, but English is the one that brings everyone together."

Since the first iteration of the children's choir in 1994, Watoto has grown by leaps and bounds. Today, there are four main sections to the response being the Watoto Villages, Baby Watoto, Watoto Neighbourhood, and Keep a Girl in School.

Watoto Villages take the concept of community building literally through three safe villages named Buloba, Bbira, and Suubi. In these villages, children find a safe place where they can experience a loving family life as they offer classrooms, medical clinics, churches, playground, and homes.

Baby Watoto is focused on children up to two years old, providing them with a nanny and all the care they need until those babies are ready to move into a Watoto village. The goal of this program is to give babies the best possible start in life.

Watoto Neighbourhood helps vulnerable women in Uganda through adult literacy classes, discipleship, business skills training, and meaningful job opportuni-



Watoto supports children and mothers in Uganda and South Sudan, giving them a safe, secure and healthy life.



Through the Keep a Girl in School program, providing the tools for girls to succeed is at the forefront, exemplifying the motto 'when a girl stays in school, every-

one wins.'

Canadian connection

So how can people in Moosomin help Watoto? According to Cousineau, spon-

sorship is the key.

"Sponsorship changes a life, and that's because it changes everything about their life," she said, explaining how the impact can be felt through the Watoto Neighbourhood section. "So if they are living in poverty, but they have parents or have a mom, they will support that mom. They will give that mom training and support her to be able to provide for her children. They will bring those children in and give them an education and support them that way."

"You can sponsor Neighbourhood moms, and those are moms who still have their children living in their home with them, but Watoto is giving them a vocation and a job and taking care of their children with schooling and medical care and what have you," Cousineau continued.

General donations also assist with Watoto on a broader basis, allowing for funds to be distributed as needed. One such example is a water project for Bbira, which needs to be expanded in order to keep up with a rising population. The project was quoted at around \$87,000 with \$82,500 currently raised.

"It was made many years ago for a very small number of people, and now there's at least three times that number of people," Cousineau explains of the current water infrastructure. "The water is not just for the Watoto children and families, it's also for the village."

While the Watoto Children's Choir performance in Moosomin is free of charge, Coleman says that there will be opportunities for people to donate as well.

"There will be a love offering during the show, so you can put money in," she said. "There will also be a table set up where they sell homemade things that are made from the women in Uganda. It's not just the financial support, the prayers are definitely part of it for them. If you can't help out financially, definitely pray. Pray for those kids. Pray that they are able to bring in the funds to support the people in Uganda. It doesn't have to be just money."

The Watoto Children's Choir "Better Days: There is Hope" performance will start at 7 pm at the Moosomin Baptist Church (1117 Main Street) on Wednesday, April 16. All are welcome to attend.



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