



Kevin Weedmark took this aerial photo of crops near Moosomin.



Farmland prices strong, stable, FCC reports

Canada's farmland market remained strong and stable during a year marked by economic turbulence caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the latest Farm Credit Canada (FCC) Farmland Values Report.

The average value of Canadian farmland increased by 5.4 per cent in 2020, slightly more than the 5.2 per cent increase reported in 2019.

In Saskatchewan, average farmland values increased by 5.4 per cent in 2020, following gains of 6.2 per cent in 2019 and 7.4 per cent in 2018.

Manitoba farmland values increased by an average of 3.6 per cent in 2020, following a 4 per cent increase in 2019.

The report, which describes changes in Canada's farmland values from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2020, covers almost an entire year of disruptions caused by the pandemic. For Canadian agriculture, disruptions included temporary food processing plant closures, some displaced exports, sector-specific labor shortages and significantly altered consumer buying habits.

"Since land is the most valuable asset on any farm operation, the agriculture land market is a good barometer for measuring the strength of Canadian agriculture," said J.P. Gervais, FCC's chief economist. "Despite having gone through a uniquely volatile year, farm income generally improved and the overall demand for farmland remained strong throughout 2020."

Despite important supply chain disruptions

caused by the pandemic, commodity prices climbed in the last half of 2020 for many crops and interest rates kept close to historic lows. Domestic demand for food remained strong and global supply chains continued to have an appetite for Canadian food and commodity exports, Gervais noted.

"Producer investments in farmland are a reflection of their confidence and optimism," he said. "Agriculture presents opportunities as producers seek to expand, diversify or transfer their operations to the next generation."

The highest average provincial increase for farmland in 2020 was in British Columbia and Quebec, with averages of eight and 7.3 per cent, respectively. Alberta followed with a six-per-cent increase and Saskatchewan mirrored the national average increase of 5.4 per cent.

Ontario and Manitoba both reported increases that were lower than the national average at 4.7 and 3.6 per cent, respectively.

Farmland values across the prairies were mainly influenced by tenants purchasing land from landlords, neighbour-to-neighbour sales, producers buying or selling land to gain operational efficiencies and family farm purchases to support succession plans.

Atlantic provinces saw the smallest average farmland value increases in 2020. Prince Edward Island reported an increase of 2.3 per cent, Nova Scotia's increase was

1.6 per cent and New Brunswick had a 1.3-per-cent increase. This follows more significant increases in 2019.

Weather played a significant factor in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, as well as other parts of the Atlantic provinces in 2020. The region experienced the worst drought in decades during the critical growing season, which significantly diminished the value of cash crops, as well as created hay and forage shortages.

There was an insufficient number of publicly reported sales in Newfoundland and Labrador to fully assess farmland values in that province.

Increases in farmland values reported across the country are as wide and varied as the factors that may have influenced them. Average farmland values have increased every year since 1993; however, increases were more pronounced from 2011 to 2015 in many different regions. Since then, Canada has seen more moderate single-digit increases in average farmland values.

Gervais said producers should have and maintain a risk management plan that takes into account possible economic changes, ensuring their budgets have room to flex if commodity prices, yields or interest rates shift. They also need to exercise caution, especially in regions where the growth rate of farmland values exceeded that of farm income in recent years.

"The pandemic has underscored the value of having a comprehensive risk

management plan that covers all risks areas: production, marketing, financial, legal and human resources," he said. "Farm operators need to have the financial ability to protect their operations from the potential impact of risks that may not be on their radar. Fluctuations in commodity prices and interest rates and/or unforeseen variations in production can diminish the ability to safeguard and build equity in the operation and successfully meet cash flow requirements."

Given the uncertain economic environment, Gervais recommends farmers, ranchers and food processors continue to thoroughly evaluate their investments.

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan's average farmland value increased 5.4 per cent in 2020, the same as the national average. This follows an increase of 6.2 per cent in 2019, which came close to mirroring the national average increase of 5.2 per cent for that year.

Much of Saskatchewan received excessive moisture at the beginning of June, which caused some localized flooding, although the moisture received in early July was desperately needed. There were no delays in harvest, and yields were generally average throughout the province with some areas reporting higher-than-average yields, which contributed to improved farm incomes and stronger demand for farmland.

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Four ways to use process and structure for effective leadership

Many entrepreneurs can keep numerous tasks or projects running simultaneously. Farmers provide an excellent example of this—work needs to get done, and often it's achieved by working harder and longer hours.

This changes when more people are involved. Eventually, as the business grows, even the hardest working and efficient farmer will need to bring in more help. It can be a huge adjustment to shift from doing the work themselves to accomplishing work through others. Instead of just working harder to move the business forward, a leader needs to optimize how well the team works and look for ways to enhance employee's efficiency and engagement.

The best leaders usually have 'spiky profiles,' which means they're really good at one or two things but not good at everything. Being organized can be a big ask for certain leaders, but structure and process are necessary to ensure that all employees know the employer's expectations. Solid processes also ensure that employees are treated equally and fairly.

In this article, we look at four core concepts and processes you need to lead a team effectively:

- 1. Employee handbook:** Creating an employee handbook to document and communicate fundamental rules and standard operating procedures is a good place to start.
- 2. Priority planning:** Unexpected events can require a change in plans. Create a strategy to help everyone decide what needs to be taken care of immediately and what can be pushed back.
- 3. Time management:** Efficiency levels for individuals and the team become harder to assess as the number of employees and business complexity grows. Tools and strategies to monitor efficiency become very important.
- 4. Consistent employee interaction:** The employee handbook will outline company policy, but leaders and managers should follow consistent protocols when communicating and interacting with employees.

Employee handbook

It sounds daunting but creating an employee handbook can start as something basic and simple. It can be a one or two-page document summarizing guidelines. It's meant to be a living document that evolves to address new realities in the workplace. Adding new elements and changing the handbook as you go keeps it relevant and accurate.

A handbook should include a mission statement and vision for the business. It should communicate to employees what kind of company they work for and the values



that influence how the company and its employees conduct themselves.

The handbook also allows you to communicate the rules, expectations and quality standards for the workplace. It can also protect you as the employer should an employee take legal action. The handbook shows that you've done your diligence in communicating company policy to the employee.

The handbook can also go beyond the hard and fast rules and protocols and allow employers to create or reinforce the desired culture.

There are templates and sample employee handbooks available to help you get started. But if it's done right, every company's handbook will be unique to their culture, values, policies and workplace realities.

There are common elements though, and the following topics should be part of the content for most employee handbooks:

1. Hiring policies
2. Safety and security procedures
3. Payment schedule and overtime pay policy
4. Meal and rest breaks
5. Leaves of absence
6. Performance review procedures and frequency
7. Resignation and termination procedures
8. Employee benefits description
9. Disciplinary process

Priority management

Successful leaders maximize their productivity by recognizing that they must make tough decisions about where they direct their attention and energy. On an individual level, this means being adept at pri-

ority management. In other words, the question "what is the best use of my time?" plays in a constant loop in their head. It applies over the long-term where a plan for the coming year is being mapped out, but also on a real-time basis when things become busy and complicated at work.

There's a good farming metaphor for this skill related to rock picking. Many farmers, farm kids and employees will be familiar with this task. If you start by picking up every rock you see, big and small, it will quickly become evident that you need to focus on the big rocks if you hope to progress.

It starts by defining the long-term priorities. This is the easy part, and everyone involved should be aware of these. The hard part is when events conspire that require a shift from the planned priorities. If something comes along that becomes THE priority, then the previous priority must be either delayed, allocated to someone else or cancelled. These are the tough decisions.

Setting long term priorities and explaining the rationale behind them helps everyone understand the process. Having monthly or weekly meetings to address shifting priorities reinforces the mindset. The objective is for everyone to know the existing priority, and if it changes, what the thinking is behind the shift.

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How fleet monitoring and geofencing can help on the farm

BY PETER GREDIG

GPS technology is deeply entrenched in guidance and precision crop production practices, but the technology has numerous other functionalities that fit farm equipment, livestock and people.

Fleet monitoring

If you've ever used the Uber ride-hailing service, you know a main benefit is seeing exactly how close any available Uber vehicles are in a real-time map on your smartphone. It's a far cry from the traditional taxi service where you called for a ride and simply waited it out.

Commercial trucking and courier companies have been using GPS fleet monitoring technology for years. They use it to know precisely where all units are and other real-time information relating to trip logistics, travel speed, fuel economy, maintenance status and more.

GPS fleet tracking or monitoring for farm managers and equipment dealers offer similar benefits and help prevent theft as the equipment can be disabled if someone tries to move it. The major equipment manufacturers offer proprietary fleet

monitoring subscription services that integrate with their precision farming and guidance hardware in tractors, sprayers, combines, etc. It goes well beyond just location and theft protection. Farm managers can monitor engine performance, efficiency, productivity per hour and more in real time from anywhere.

Some manufacturers partner with companies to provide fleet tracking services. Kubota, for example, has partnered with Cellutrack. Dealers use the GPS tracking and theft prevention service while equipment is on the lot, and buyers can maintain a subscription as an option after purchase.

Aftermarket services specifically for agriculture can be used for equipment or items that do not come equipped with GPS tracking capability. BeeSecure, a Saskatoon-based company, provides a small battery-powered tracking device that can be hidden on equipment, ATVs, or even beehives. The batteries last up to four years, and the service is powered by a mobile-friendly web app that allows the user to connect to the police to share the last known location of a stolen item.

Geofencing

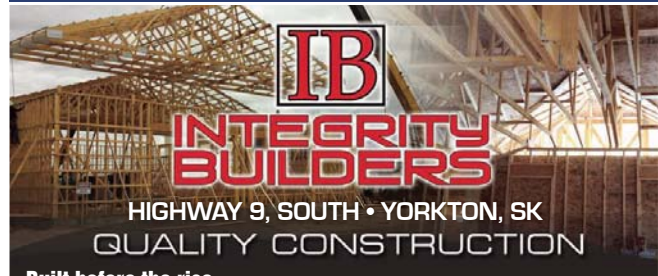
Geofencing is a component of GPS tracking technology that has numerous applications in agriculture. It's already in use in other sectors. Some golf courses geofence the course so golfers can't drive golf carts where they shouldn't (too close to the green, into sand traps or through environmentally sensitive areas). The cart just shuts down, and the driver must back out of where they are.

A potential use for geofencing is to have active GPS sensors on cattle tags or collars where the herd is on unfenced pasture. If they cross a designated GPS boundary, the rancher is alerted and can take appropriate measures to move the cattle back to where they belong.

There are safety benefits to geofencing and tracking. It's possible to create geofences around field hazards like power line towers, ditches, trees or anything that may be a problem for autosteering or robotic machinery. The geofence prevents the tractor or sprayer from driving into the hazard if the operator is distracted or unaware of it.

Continued on page B13

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You can't pour from an empty cup

Mental health resiliency in turbulent times

BY KYLE ANDERSON, M.A., BRIDGES HEALTH

It is said that the only constant in life is change, and there is no better example of this than the current Covid-19 pandemic, which has caused momentous changes in the ways we live our lives.

With so many individuals experiencing fear, uncertainty, and stress, mental health concerns are on the rise.

Agricultural producers face unique stressors, including financial uncertainty, community isolation, and work pressures, all of which contribute to higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. It is more important than ever to make sure that mental health is a priority for ourselves, our families, and communities.

Resiliency is a skill that can be actively learned and applied to improve mental wellbeing. When considering how to improve resilience, here are a few elements that are important to consider:

Maintain connections

Having supportive social relationships ensures we do not feel alone during challenging times. While some individuals have a natural reaction to withdraw and isolate, it

is important to accept support from those who care about you. Displaying vulnerability and asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Focus on what you can control

Highly stressful events are inevitable, but you can change how you interpret and respond to them. If we put too much focus on things that are out of our control, feelings of stress and anxiety will only multiply. Instead, put your time and energy into matters you can control, such as your attitude, your effort, and problem-solving solutions.

Nurture a positive self-view

Often we are our own harshest critic. Be aware of your internal dialogue and challenge any negative self-talk. Display self-compassion by speaking to yourself the way you would talk to a loved one, use positive self-affirmations, and give yourself permission to make mistakes.

Maintain boundaries

It is important to set and maintain healthy boundaries around physical space, time, and emotional energy. Not having healthy boundaries can cause us to become overwhelmed and burnt out, so do not be afraid to strengthen your "NO" muscle!

Engage in self-care

"You can't pour from an empty cup." Prioritize time to look after yourself so that when setbacks inevitably occur you are in a better position to respond effectively. Exercise, healthy eating, meditation, and hobbies are a few general areas of self-care. Do what works for you!

When we strengthen these skills on a regular basis, we are better equipped to handle challenges when they arise. Try checking in with yourself each day by asking, "how do I feel right now?" This increases self-awareness and helps you identify when problems are occurring, allowing you to adjust before the situation worsens.

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Crime analysts uncover trends to support police work

By TRAVIS POLAND
Behind the front-line RCMP officers in Saskatchewan, there's a team of crime analysts digging deeper into the details.

They look for connections between crime and search for trends, hotspots and potential offenders.

"The key is being intelligence-led," says Sgt. Scott Hunter, with the Crime Prevention Unit in Saskatchewan. "Knowing the trends, locations and times where certain crimes are occurring can help officers make their policing more efficient."

The analysts' work supports police officers who are often busy answering calls for service and focusing on the files on their desks.

"They can take a large amount of information that wouldn't be practical for a front-line officer to spend hours on and condense it into reports officers can use," says Hunter.

Using spreadsheets, databases, specialized software and information from across the province, crime analysts can help detachments be more dynamic and effective.

The information can help police organize patrols in crime hotspots, find potential suspects and engage with other detachments or specific units.

"We can flag crime patterns for specialized units to assist with," says Monica Deters, a crime analyst with the Saskatchewan RCMP. "Units like the crime reduction team, general investigation sections or even a gang unit."

Watching for crime trends also allows the RCMP to pass along that knowledge to the public.

"In the fall, we may see an increase in cabin break-ins and we can notify the public to remind them to lock up their cabins and ensure they remove their valuables," says Deters.

Last year, analysts saw an increase in break-and-enters at churches and places of worship throughout the province. In De-

ember, the RCMP issued a crime-pattern alert highlighting the problem and listing tips to help prevent future break-ins.

Between January and November, 64 incidents occurred in 55 churches across Saskatchewan—an increase of 60 per cent since 2019.

"Officers were able to create public awareness and engage the community and partners in the church community to help prevent further crimes," says Hunter. "If police are aware of a crime trend before it happens in their own area, they can be proactive and prepared and perhaps even prevent it."



Last year, crime analysts noticed a 60 per cent increase in church break-ins in Saskatchewan.



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Isolation can be an issue for producers

BY SPENCER KEMP
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Loneliness has always been a factor in the mental health of producers in the region, especially during the winter months, and its impact has only been amplified through the COVID-19 pandemic with the public being asked to stay home and avoid going out unless absolutely necessary.

This increase in isolation has been noticed by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Saskatchewan branch. Senior Consultant, David Nelson with CMHA Saskatchewan says he has seen an increase in calls to the Farm Stress Line and to the CMHA.

"I understand that the Farm Stress Line has had more calls as well. At CMHA we don't necessarily ask if they are a producer or not, but we have had lots of calls from rural areas and other areas of people who are under stress and looking for support," Nelson explained.

While CMHA Saskatchewan does not provide counseling, they do listen to what the callers have to say and will offer suggestions for the next steps moving forward.

"We generally listen to the story of their issues, we speak to them about their situation. We don't do formal counseling, but what we can do is recommend them a place that might be near them and they can get

counseling from."

Nelson notes that there are different types of stressors that can be seen in producers who call, the most commonly seen being the loneliness brought on by the winter months. He explained that loneliness is something that can be easily treated, but has run into complications due to the pandemic.

"There are all kinds of issues that pop up. I think that the loneliness and the general feeling that you can get depressed at this time of year, from Christmas until now, there's the seasonal affective disorder kinds of issues that can pop up. Family stressors with people suddenly being unable to leave home or working from home."

To help cope with loneliness, Nelson says that producers should do anything they can to avoid isolation. While the public health order suggests staying home, Nelson believes that producers should take any opportunity to get out of the house when it is safe to do so.

"Do not isolate yourself. As much as you can, on social media or by phone or whatever means you have, keep in contact with friends and relatives so that you don't feel like you're so cooped up in your home," Nelson explained. "It's fine to go out and get some fresh air, but not in this kind of weather," he laughed. "In better weather, you can go for a walk, you can do outside activities, as long as you're not in a group of people too close."

Nelson warns that social media is a double-edged blade. While it can be great for keeping in contact with both friends and family, it can become a rabbit hole that leads to what Nelson dubs 'Doom Scrolling'. Doom Scrolling is the act of continually scrolling through social media and taking in a constant flow of negative information. Nelson says that this can quickly become a factor in stress.

"Another thing to do is to not do this kind of thing we call 'Doom Scrolling',

which is really just watching more and more kinds of things and information about COVID or about the world in general and so on," Nelson explained. "Some of that is fine, but it's easy for people to get sucked in and start watching that too much and that really affects your mood and your ability to cope with stress as well."

While social media provides a great opportunity to keep in touch, Nelson says it is wise to limit yourself while on it.

"I think it's all too easy for us when we get stressed

or anxious to get caught up in the nonsense going on in social media."

For those who feel that their loneliness and depression has gotten worse, Nelson recommends counseling. He says that there is a certain stigma around going to counseling or therapy, but it is designed to help.

Counseling provides an opportunity to speak with someone who can give a new opinion on the things a producer might be facing and offer solutions to the problems.

"Sometimes with coun-

seling there's the feeling that there must be something wrong with you if you're going to counseling, but the fact of the matter is sometimes just talking to somebody outside of a friend or relative that doesn't have a lot of baggage so to speak to bring along can really help to clear your mind of some of these concerns and actually give you coping mechanisms."

Nelson said that if there are thoughts of self-harm, the individual should immediately go to the hospital and seek help there.



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An international team led by the IPK Leibniz Institute in Germany and including University of Saskatchewan (USask) researchers has succeeded in completely decoding the genome of rye, despite its large size and complexity.

Rye is a distinctly climate-resistant cereal plant that is of considerable importance for Germany and northeastern Europe. In Canada, most rye is grown in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

At USask, the research team includes professor Curtis Pozniak, director of USask's Crop Development Centre and Ministry of Agriculture Strategic Research Program Chair in Durum and High-Yield Wheat Breeding and Genetics, plant molecular geneticist Andrew Sharpe, director of Genomics and Bioinformatics at USask's Global Institute for Food Security (GIFS), Sean Walkowiak (Pozniak's former research officer, now research scientist for Canadian Grain Commission), bioinformatics analyst Brook Byrns, and plant sciences emeritus professor Brian Fowler.

"Rye is one of the most cold-tolerant cereal crops and can survive the harshest winters typical of the Canadian Prairies," said Pozniak. "The genome sequence of rye points to important genes that could be used to enhance the cold tolerance of other important winter crops, including wheat."

The results published today in the journal *Nature Genetics* are promising for both science and breeding. Rye offers access to a diverse gene pool, not only for rye breeding but also for wheat breeding.

"The delivery of the rye genome represents the work of a large and dedicated group of partners across the world," said Sharpe. "These results are significant, as they provide a complete genome that is closely related to other grass crop species such as wheat and barley, thus allowing a deeper insight into the evolutionary relationships between them."



Rye only became a pure cultivated species 5,000 to 6,000 years ago. Its complex genome has just been fully decoded for the first time.

All the research data is available to the general public, meaning the extensive genetic diversity of rye can be systematically discovered and used by breeders in a more targeted approach.

"The comparatively low economic importance on a global scale, combined with the great complexity of the genome, interfered with rye getting into the focus of the international research community and thus its genome sequence has been revealed only recently," explained professor Nils Stein, lead of the research group Genomics of Genetic Resources at IPK and holder of a joint professorship at the University of Göttingen.

Rye shares a close and long evolution-

ary history with barley and wheat. However, its role as an important crop is much shorter. While barley and wheat were domesticated about 10,000 years ago in the so-called Fertile Crescent of the Near East, rye initially spread to Northern Europe as a weed growing in barley and wheat fields. Gradually, rye adopted the characteristics of its two "big brothers" before becoming a purely cultivated species 5,000-6,000 years ago.

There are important biological differences between rye and its two relatives: rye is fertilized through cross-pollination, thus individual genetic traits cannot be "fixed" as easily as in a self-fertile plant species, and the rye genome is highly

complex, which is mainly due to the large number of highly repeated DNA segments.

Knowing the reference sequence makes it easier to transfer positive properties of rye, such as resistances, to wheat without negatively affecting baking properties, for example.

"For example, resistance genes from rye can be transferred to wheat through classical cross-breeding, which has already been used repeatedly in the past," said Stein. "So the significance of our research extends far beyond rye."

"The technical prerequisites for sequencing such a complex genome are available today," Stein emphasized.

The research used homozygous seeds from the plant breeding company KWS SAAT SE & Co. KGaA.

"The new genome sequence of our inbred line Lo7 is a great technological achievement and an important step forward towards a more comprehensive genetic characterisation of this crop," said Andres Gordillo, lead of rye breeding at KWS.

"It will considerably enhance breeding progress and, therefore, the attractiveness of rye. More specific, it will substantially improve our ability to link resistance traits observed in the field with their underlying genes and their location on the rye genome."

Parallel to the work of the international research team led by Stein, Chinese researchers created a reference sequence of a Chinese landrace.

"We worked very well with our Chinese colleagues, which ultimately brought great added value for rye breeding and research. We were able to use two different methods to study two very different rye varieties, of which the complete reference sequences are now available," said Stein. "With these two studies, rye has caught up with barley and wheat and is in the middle of the genome research era."



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Affordability of farmland remains low despite higher revenues and lower interest rates

BY LEIGH ANDERSON
BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE ANALYST

Demand for Canadian farmland remained strong in 2020 due to record-low interest rates and improved crop production revenues. According to the FCC Farmland Values Report, farmland values increased 5.4% in 2020.

Average farmland values have increased every year since 1993 and were more pronounced from 2011 to 2015. Since then, Canada has seen more moderate single-digit increases. But despite low interest rates and high farm revenues in 2020, affordability was at its second-lowest level in the last 20 years.

In this article, we look at the farmland values report findings through the lens of ownership costs.

Calculating farmland annual payment

Most farmland is purchased with a combination of equity and debt. And the affordability of farmland is a matter of land prices, financing costs and farm revenues.

Let's assume we have a new land purchase with a down payment of 25% and a loan amortized over 25 years. The annual payment will be based on the loan interest rate.

To determine the farmland annual payment, we'll use the effective average business interest rate (a weighted-average borrowing rate of bank and market interest rates), which averaged 2.7% in 2020. The formula for determining the farmland annual payment is:

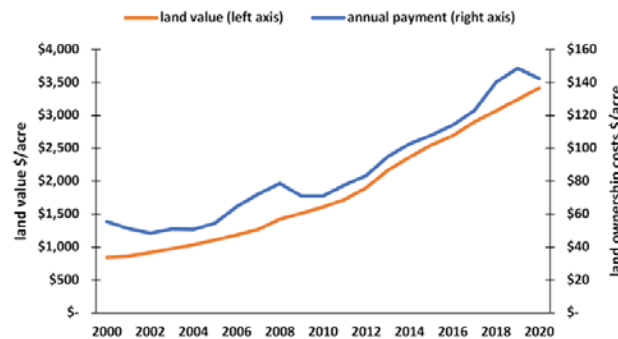
$$\text{Farmland annual payment} = \frac{\text{Purchase price of land} [2.7\% ((1 + 2.7\%)^{25 \text{ years}})]}{[(2.7\% + 1)^{25 \text{ years}} - 1]}$$

Farmland values and annual payment tend to evolve at the same pace (Figure 1) but differ as interest rates rise or fall. Despite rising land values in 2020, lower interest rates reduced payments. Average Canadian annual payments per acre declined 4.3% to \$142/acre in 2020 despite land values increasing 5.4%.

Measuring affordability

A measure of affordability is obtained by comparing

Figure 1. Canadian average farmland values vs. the cost to purchase



Source: FCC calculations.

land payments relative to gross revenues derived from crop production (Figure 2). We used average provincial yields and prices to measure revenues—a soybean-corn rotation in Eastern Canada, a canola-wheat rotation in Western Canada and a potato-wheat rotation in Atlantic Canada.

Land payments as a percentage of crop revenue declined from 33% in 2019 to 32% in 2020 due to strong crop receipts and lower interest rates. This remains slightly higher than the 2014 to 2020 average of 29%. The 2008-2014 average share of crop revenues devoted to owner-

ship costs was the lowest.

Continued on page B12

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Canadian food autonomy takes a big step forward

McCain Foods ups the ante in TruLeaf Sustainable Agriculture

We learned recently that McCain Foods has upped the ante in TruLeaf Sustainable Agriculture and its wholly-owned subsidiary GoodLeaf Farms, Canada's largest commercial vertical farming operation.

McCain has invested \$65 million in GoodLeaf, making it the single largest shareholder in the venture. The idea is to create a national network of sustainable vertical farms that will bring fresh produce to several urban markets in the country.

These are exactly the type of projects we need in Canada.

GoodLeaf has come a long way from its humble beginnings in an abandoned school in Bible Hill, Nova Scotia. It now operates a fully-automated 45,000-square-foot facility in Guelph, Ontario, and is looking to expand its operations nationally, with McCain's support.

These are highly capital-intensive projects and getting a private sector leader in partnership is nothing short of a coup. The company has the technological experience and expertise to do well.

McCain brings to the table far more than just cash. The company is probably one of Canada's best agri-food vertical integrators. It understands supply chain economics very well. The potato industry in Canada is amazingly well-co-ordinated, mostly due to McCain's leadership. From farm to fork, farmers, distributors and even food service, including players like McDonald's, all work together to improve efficiency and quality.

Last year, McCain had to deal with a 300-million-pound glut of potatoes due to the closure of thousands of restaurants. More than 75 per cent of fries are consumed through food service. Most of the glut was rerouted or repurposed within months, and 12 months later, the industry is back on its feet.

While milk was being dumped everywhere, the potato industry regrouped and got it done. It was an impressive feat.

McCain's ability to work the food chain will help GoodLeaf. Since these projects are about generating business in a high-volume, low-margin environment, risks can be high. Dealing with grocers is never easy but understanding the stock-keeping unit (SKU) game and what happens in grocery stores will be critical. These partnerships are key for Canada's ongoing pursuit of more food autonomy.

Food autonomy is about moving the needle on domestic production. It's not about food sovereignty, which fosters the desire to produce and regulate everything within our borders. An autonomous food system is about building production capacity in an open economy.

Investing in controlled-environment agriculture (CEA) is about optimizing growing conditions for any crops, throughout the year, regardless of weather patterns. CEA technologies have come a long way to include hydroponics, aeroponics, aquaculture and aquaponics.

There are several ways to grow crops effectively and safely. GoodLeaf uses hydroponic techniques to produce



Sylvain Charlebois

sustainable, safe, pesticide-free, nutrient-dense leafy greens, very much what a growing number of consumers are looking for.

Vertical farming also knows no limitations when designing a supply chain. To reduce logistical requirements and increase product quality and freshness, vertical farms can be built in cities, in suburbs, anywhere. Growing microgreens or produce generates no smell, unlike livestock.

The potential is substantial, especially for a country like Canada where produce price volatility has historically given consumers sticker shock. According to NielsenIQ numbers, vegetable prices over the last 12 months have increased by almost 11 per cent. Some products, like tomatoes and cauliflower, have seen higher increases.

When healthy food is perceived as financially out of reach, some consumers will walk away and their nutrition will suffer.

With climate change, CEA and vertical farming can become humanity's best friend, no matter where you live in the world.

Conventional outdoor agriculture has also come a long way but it remains highly vulnerable to a variety of uncontrollable factors. So the McCain-GoodLeaf partnership is a step in the right direction. We have access to clean water, clean energy and affordable land in Canada, compared to other places. All the main elements are there for this growth.

But \$65 million is still a very modest sum compared to what we're seeing elsewhere in the industrialized world.

AppHarvest, an agri-tech company operating one of the world's largest CEA facilities in Morehead, Ky., became a publicly-traded company in the fall. The transition provides AppHarvest with more than \$600 million of unrestricted cash, which will primarily be used to fund operations and the building of many other facilities around the United States.

With climate change affecting crops in Florida, Arizona and California, coupled with the emergence of better soil and plant science, agri-tech clearly has the attention of many investors. The pandemic just made the issue even more obvious. America has now over 50 major vertical farming operations, with more to come.

We have much to do in Canada to catch up. But this new McCain-GoodLeaf venture should be a good case study.

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois is senior director of the agri-food analytics lab and a professor in food distribution and policy at Dalhousie University.

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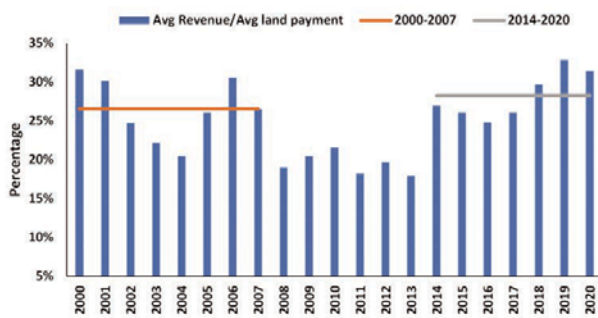
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Affordability of farmland remains low despite higher revenues and lower interest rates

Figure 2. Canadian share of crop revenues allocated to average land payments



Source: FCC calculations.

^{EST} Continued from page B10

That period also had some of the highest increases in farmland values, highlighting the strong annual returns in the grain and oilseed sector during this period. As crop revenues following 2014 showed stability, land values increased, resulting in affordability declining.

The trends are similar across all provinces, but the proportion of crop revenues to cover payments varies considerably. In Saskatchewan, the share of crop revenues (canola-wheat rotation) relative to average land payments was estimated at approximately 18% in 2020,

cash flow is possible in the current environment. In this case, the ability to "subsidize" the purchase from other sources of revenues or other land will factor in the buyer's decision.

Expected farmland value trends in 2021

The low interest rate environment and strong grain and oilseed prices will continue to drive strong demand

down from 19% in 2019.

In Ontario, the share of crop revenues (soybean-corn rotation) is much higher at 66% in 2020. Ontario agriculture is diversified across many enterprise types, including horticulture and livestock sectors that compete for farmland. Also, farmland values vary considerably within Ontario, ranging from as low as \$2,000/acre in Northern Ontario to as high as \$32,900 in the Central West region. High valued land would require gross revenues of \$4,200/acre to reach the national average of 32% of revenues covering payments. Elevated payment/revenues ratios suggest that observing farmland purchases with a negative net

in 2021. And tight availability will likely mean higher farmland values.

Monitor interest rates trends as the economy recovers. There are some early signs of rising yields for longer-term bonds. Understanding the influence of various rate and farm income scenarios on farmland payments is an essential component of a solid financial risk management plan.



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How fleet monitoring and geofencing can help on the farm

Continued from page B5

Another recent use of geofencing relates to re-entry into fields or buildings that present a hazard to employees or other persons. If a field has just been sprayed with an insecticide, it's possible to create a geofence boundary

around the field. If an employee, field scout or agronomist tries to enter the field, a smartphone app will generate an alert warning them that the field cannot be scouted for another 24 hours.

Livestock operations with biosecurity concerns can uti-

lize GPS services like Guelph-based Farm Health Guardian, a mobile app and software that allows farmers to create a geofence around farms. The farmer is notified whenever a vehicle passes in or out of the geo-boundary. A record of all registered visitors, including employees, consultants, vets and family members is created automatically. This system has benefits in the event of a disease outbreak because all visitors can be immediately notified and vetted to help control any disease spread.

There are differences in the capabilities of the different services and software packages for GPS fleet management and geofencing. But, in general, the user can easily create or draw geo-boundaries on a computer or mobile device and establish the rules. For example, a farmer or company may create a rule whereby an alert is sent, and the equipment is disabled if anything is started or moved on a Sunday. Another rule may generate an alert if the equipment leaves a prescribed area outside of the farmer's land base.



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The technology is very flexible and becoming easy for developers to work with. It essentially allows programmers to combine GPS locational information with other functionalities. It meshes nicely with the Internet of Things, where everything can be controlled remotely. For example, you could create a geofence around your shop that would detect your smartphone. As soon as you or other registered users crossed the geo-boundary, the shop lights would automatically turn on, and the door would unlock. As soon as you leave the geo-boundary, the lights turn off, and the doors lock. It's a simple example, but we're going to see more software and services that allow us to create rules or actions driven by real-time locational information.

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The World-Spectator asked readers in 2020 to submit some of their spring seeding photos. Shown here are some of the submissions from seeding last year. Once seeding gets rolling, The World-Spectator will be holding a spring seeding photo contest in 2021 as well!

Daryl Harrison

Member of the Legislative Assembly for **Cannington Constituency**

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DREAM. GROW. THRIVE.

FCC: Canada's farmland market remains strong, stable

Continued from page B1

Saskatchewan farmland values were mainly influenced by tenants purchasing land from landlords, neighbour-to-neighbour sales, producers buying or selling land to gain efficiencies and family farm purchases to support succession plans. All of these were typically purchased through tender, realtor or privately negotiated.

The North Western region saw an average increase of 6.3 per cent, although there were stable farmland values in some parts. The increase was influenced by smaller parcel purchases of cultivated land and most of the increase was a result of activity that occurred in the last six months of 2020.

The most significant increases in average farmland values occurred in the West Central and North Eastern regions at 9.1 per cent and 9 per cent respectively. Strong demand for good quality land in pockets of these regions drove the increase, while interest in lower-quality land remained stable.

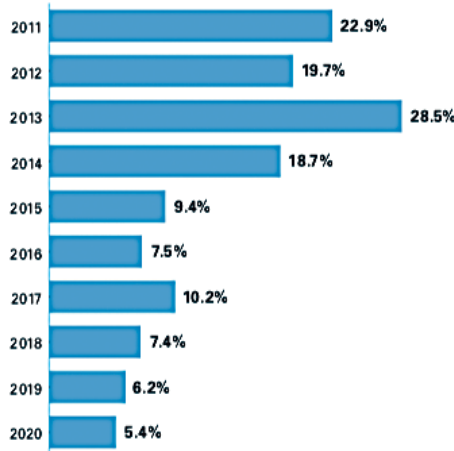
South Eastern and East Central regions reported an average farmland value increase of 4.8 per cent and 4.3 per cent respectively. Good quality land again accounted for most of the increases, supported by purchases of lower-quality land in some areas.

The South Western region had the lowest increase for the province at 2.5 per cent. Farmland values in this region are very diverse, with increases mostly noticeable in the south, where farmland values are the lowest. The majority of this region has remained stable.

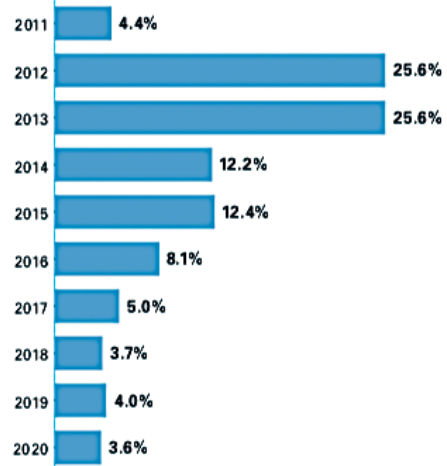
Manitoba

Manitoba farmland values in-

Saskatchewan Annual % change in farmland values



Manitoba Annual % change in farmland values



creased by an average of 3.6 per cent in 2020, following a 4 per cent increase in 2019.

The 2020 growing conditions varied throughout the province, with overall yields near average, depending on the crop and location. Forage production was impacted by a lack of sufficient moisture and potato yields were average throughout the province. Buyers in the province continued to be mainly existing producers expanding their operations, next-generation producers entering the market and landlords selling to tenants.

While some areas received reduced rainfall, other areas experienced significant moisture;

however, the overall moisture levels were below average. Insect infestations were an issue in 2020, with flea beetles in canola fields, cutworms and grasshoppers in other crops. But overall, grain and oilseed receipts have been very strong.

The Interlake region had the highest average farmland value increase in the province at 11.6 per cent. This followed a dry and windy growing season in northern areas, while southern areas received more consistent moisture. The harvest conditions remained good with minimal weather delays, and the area experienced an early frost, which impacted longer-season crops.

The Eastman region has an average increase of 5.3 per cent in farmland values, following an 8.2 per cent increase in 2019. The area also had a growing season that was variable with significant moisture in the south and dry, windy conditions in the central to the northern region.

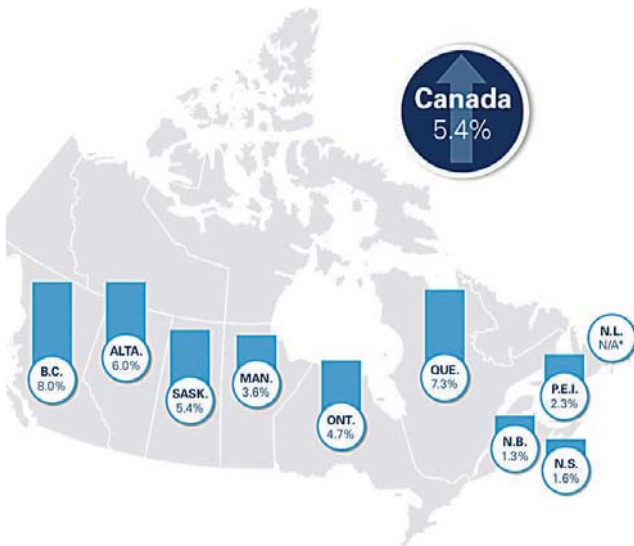
In the Central Plains-Pembina Valley region, farmland values increased an average of 4.8 per cent, with the most significant increase observed in the traditionally lower land value area of the region.

Central Plains-Pembina Valley region's irrigated land—including parts of the Westman region—had an average value

increase of 4.6 per cent in 2020.

The Westman region had an average increase that was lower than the provincial average with 2.9 per cent, largely due to varied growing conditions experienced throughout the province. Buyers in the region were mainly existing producers continuing their expansion with next-generation producers entering the industry.

The Parkland region reported a decrease in value of 2.9 per cent, with the most significant decrease observed in the northern part of the region. Other areas of the region experienced mostly slight increases in values or no increases.



The annual percentage change in farmland values across Canada from January 1 to December 31, 2020. (There was an insufficient number of publicly reported transactions in 2020 to accurately assess farmland value in Newfoundland and Labrador.)

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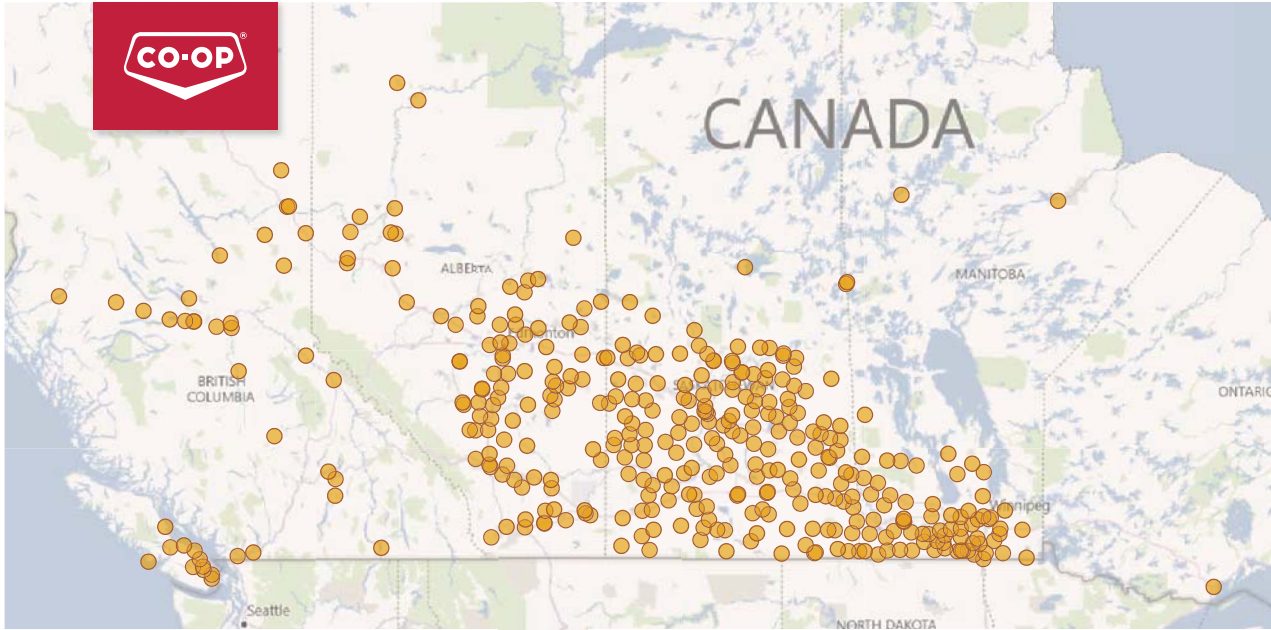
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The World-Spectator asked readers in 2020 to submit some of their spring seeding photos. Shown here are some of the submissions from seeding last year. Once seeding gets rolling, The World-Spectator will be holding a spring seeding photo contest in 2021 as well!



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Brent Kobes—Policy Researcher, APAS



Sameeha Jhetam—Master's Student, University of Saskatchewan College of Agriculture and Bioresources (Poultry Management and Welfare Lab)



Andrea De Roo—Farmer and Professional Agronomist (with specialization in precision agriculture)

Investing in our youth

How three young agricultural leaders are making a difference

BY DELANEY SEIFERLING

The Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) has long recognized the importance of nurturing the next generation of industry leaders.

This is why it launched the Youth Leadership and Mentorship Program in 2014, which aims to help young producers gain the skills and contacts necessary to lead the industry into the future.

APAS is not alone in recognizing the importance of having a succession plan for the industry. In the past decade several initiatives have been launched with the same goals, including at a national level.

Last September, federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Marie-Claude Bibeau announced the formation of the Canadian Agricultural Youth Council (CAYC), a group of young Canadian industry members that will provide input into future plans for the development and success of the agriculture industry.

The council is made up of 25 members (chosen from 800 applicants), of which three are from Saskatchewan. Meet them below:

Brent Kobes

Why did you apply to be part of the CAYC?

The council is open to young people from all parts of the agricultural industry, and with my workplace and background I figured I would be a good fit. I was honestly surprised when I was selected, and am frankly humbled by the talent that the CAYC has recruited.

What are your specific areas of interest in the Canadian agriculture/agri-food industry?

I am particularly interested in markets and transportation. My grandfather worked for the Canadian National Railway and growing up on the prairies every small town had an elevator. Understanding the interconnections and flow of goods from the farmgate to port is a truly herculean task. It interconnects my family farm to the global market and relates me to consumers across the globe.

What impact do you hope to have in your CYAC role?

My hope is that the CYAC can provide the Minister with valuable insights into the workings of agriculture on the ground, particularly in Western Canada, while also developing another generation of young leaders within the sector that can support each other in their future endeavours.

In your opinion, what are the major challenges/opportunities for Saskatchewan's agriculture industry going forward and how can we address/exploit these?

Over the last few years Saskatchewan producers have seen a dramatic decline in their margins, which creates instability in families, communities, and the entire sector. Ensuring that producers have access to markets with competitive prices and inputs that don't break the bank is essential to ensuring stability and growth in the sector.

Sameeha Jhetam

Why did you apply to be part of the CAYC?

I thought it would be a great opportunity for the federal government to hear about challenges faced by youth in the industry, as we are well educated, experienced, and have many innovative ideas. I also thought I would bring a unique perspective to the CAYC as a woman of color and immigrant with a passion for agriculture, livestock farming, and science.

What are your specific areas of interest in the Canadian agriculture/agri-food industry?

My specific areas of interest include all aspects of poultry production, animal welfare, and using science and research as a way of improving and advancing the agriculture and agri-food industry.

Why are you interested in these areas?

Poultry is the meat most consumed in Canada, and thus research into production practices and bird welfare is extremely important. As the world's population increases, we need to feed the world while continuously improving animal welfare, farming sustainably, and advancing our technologies within the industry. By using science and research, the agriculture and agri-food sector can continuously evolve and improve by adopting new practices and technologies. This can lead to more investment and commitment to the industry.

What impact do you hope to have in your CAYC role?

First, I hope to focus on the core ideas that we, as a council, determine are most important and work toward implementing changes in these areas. I personally hope we can improve public trust in the sector and increase the presence and credibility of the CAYC, while allowing other youth in the industry to feel their voices are being heard.

Andrea De Roo

Why did you apply to be part of the CAYC?

As I finished my studies, started working in the industry, and invested in our family farm, I could start to feel the disconnect my grandparents and parents felt between agriculture and government. When the CAYC was announced, I saw it as an opportunity to be a part of the discussion around policies that affect the industry and my future in agriculture. I also saw it as an opportunity to connect and network with a diverse group of youth across our country, and to listen and learn about their concerns and challenges.

What are your specific areas of interest in the Canadian agriculture/agri-food industry? Why are you interested in these areas?

My interests in Canadian agriculture are really grounded at the farm level. Farming systems, agronomy, and research are where I focus most of my energy, but animal husbandry, public perception of agriculture, and mental health are also very important to me. Growing up on the

farm, of course, has greatly influenced my interests in the industry. But I also believe producers are the foundation that the rest of the industry is built around and my interests are driven by the desire to help them succeed.

What impact do you hope to have in your CYAC role?

Ultimately, I hope I can bring a practical perspective from the farm to the discussion and development of agriculture policy, and see the feedback from the council be implemented in a meaningful way. I would also like to see the disconnect between industry and government, urban and rural, and the various ag sectors start to narrow. Outside of our work on the council, I hope I can inspire youth to consider all the amazing opportunities that are available in agriculture and to get involved. I think it's important to include the ideas and thoughts of youth, through the council and other means, in the discussions of decisions that are going to direct their future in agriculture.

In your opinion, what are the major challenges/opportunities for Saskatchewan's agriculture industry going forward and how can we address/exploit these?

The biggest challenges I see for Saskatchewan agriculture are the barriers to young producers succeeding or starting a farm, rural connectivity, and the disconnect between primary agriculture, government, and consumers. The opportunities I see in Saskatchewan are climate change mitigation, value-added processing, and a growing movement to support local. Most of these challenges and opportunities are not unique to Saskatchewan and their impacts can be felt across the country. That in itself is an important part of how we will address and exploit the challenges and opportunities in front of us and help the industry move forward.

Originally published by APAS in Saskatchewan's Farmers' Voice, Winter 2021. Reprinted with permission.

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Calls up to Farm Stress Line

BY SPENCER KEMP
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Many producers have turned to the Farm Stress Line to help deal with some of the stress and feelings of isolation brought on by the job.

Acting Executive Director of Saskatchewan Mobile Crisis Services which oversees the Farm Stress Line, Jan Thorson, says that in the past quarter of 2020 the agency an increase in calls followed by a seasonal decrease.

"I can certainly say for the last quarter with what we have statistically available to us, yes we did see an uptake over the summer and into the fall. We don't have our early winter statistics back yet, but I would suggest that there's been a slight drop-off just because of the time of year and the stresses of farming aren't as great in the winter in many cases. We suspect that will turn around again in the spring and we will see more calls to the line," Thorson said.

The Farm Stress Line provides a service to producers in Saskatchewan who feel the pressure of their job and provides an opportunity to normalize their concerns.

"The Farm Stress Line is a gateway service. It's a place to bring your immediate concerns, talk with a professionally trained counselor who can help you normalize some of the things you're going through, and help you decide if you need more help. We have a resource bank of referrals that we can make for people if they feel they need more help. I think the main thing we do is provide normalization, assure people that this is a normal response to a very difficult situation across the globe. We encourage them to



call us at any time as often as they need to if that will be helpful for them." Said Thorson.

Concerns raised by producers were largely around the stress of being isolated during the pandemic, with the public health orders making it difficult to meet in person. Thorson noted that the increase in isolation due to the pandemic has led to increased depression amongst the producers who have contacted them.

"The main issues brought up to us are around mental health concerns, concerns about depression, isolation, those kinds of things. Family disputes and addictions too."

Thorson explained that they have been implementing a new system to help track COVID-19 related concerns from produc-

ers as they currently do not have a system in place.

This new system as it's implemented will provide Mobile Crisis Services with additional information and will better allow them to keep track of statistics.

"It's not something that we track specifically with our statistics, but we made some changes so we will be able to do that, but it won't be until down the road until we get that data back. But I think what's been hard for farmers has been the isolation that the current health orders have produced. And I'd say that across the board for all our clients, that's been very difficult for people, particularly people who live alone or do not have access to a friend or family group, don't have great wi-fi or internet access."

With the stress of COVID-19 at the forefront of many producer's minds, Thorson reminds farmers of a few ways to deal with some of the stress.

"I would say, particularly during COVID, it's very important to maintain contact with your friends or family, whether that be through telephone calls or zoom meetings. I would really encourage them to reach out to someone they're close to at least once a day."

Thorson also reminds producers to participate in some self-care, which can help reduce stress.

"Go easy on yourself, everybody is suffering right now and it's okay to not be managing this as well as you may think you should be. Whatever you feel you need to do to make yourself feel better is fine unless it's destructive. Eat properly, get some rest, exercise, all those things contribute to your overall well-being all the time and they're particularly important during a pandemic."

If a producer is feeling that they need additional help, Thorson says that they provide recommendation services to callers who feel they may need them. This service gets callers in contact with professionals who can better help them.

Thorson explained that they see seasonal increases and decreases in calls to the Farm Stress Line, but have been seeing more since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Farm Stress Line is available 24/7 and can be reached at 1-800-667-4442

The Mobile Crisis Services also provides services for gambling addictions and a suicide hotline as well as a general crisis hotline for those who need it.



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SSCA calling for farmer feedback

BY SPENCER KEMP
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Farm organizations including the Soil Conservation Council of Canada and the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association (SSCA) are calling for farmers to review the Government of Canada's proposed Greenhouse Gas Offset Credit System regulations.

The proposed regulations are currently open for comments and will remain open until May 5, 2021, for a total of 60 days.

Jocelyn Velestuk, a Sask Wheat and SSCA director who is also a member of the SSCA's Carbon Advisory Committee explains that the SSCA has some things they would like to push for with the regulations.

"Some of the things that the SSCA has been pushing for, and we've been quite solid on our position, is that we need to separate biological sinks from industrial point source emissions in order to have carbon off-set markets. But that encompasses agricultural soils.

"The other thing we would need to include is no-till continuous cropping. There are also issues with words like 'additionality' and like 'businesses as usual', there's a 40% penetration rate for prac-

tices before they're considered 'business as usual' and basically taken off the system completely.

"The third point we would be pushing for is that we need transparency in the carbon offset market, which means that we need to know where the money's flowing and we need the person who is creating the offset or the farmer to own the carbon credit and be able to even bank that credit if he needs it."

She says that the Government of Canada had invited the SSCA to help develop the regulations, which Velestuk notes was an opportunity for them to voice concerns.

In a release, the SSCA notes that their Carbon Advisory Committee is committed to working with the federal and provincial governments to develop a science-based offset protocol for the sequestration of carbon in agricultural soils.

Additionally the groups represented included Sask Wheat, SaskCanola, Sask-Pulse, SaskBarley, Sask-Flax, SaskOats, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, Agriculture Producers Association of Saskatchewan, the Soil Conservation Council of Canada and the SSCA.

"For the past year we were involved in representing a lot of the farm groups,

so we represented a lot of commission groups. APAS and SARM represented as well and were invited to participate in a technical working group for industrial carbon sequestration and carbon offsets in ag soils. There was also the Ministry of Ag and Ministry of Environment folks that were on that technical working group," said Velestuk.

"We worked for a year on that technical working group and we were very solid in our position because this is the way we see forward, as a way for farmers to really be involved in the carbon offset system."

"We have research backing us up with this too and SSCA is a long-standing organization that's always been industry-driven and so when no-till was first getting adopted 30 years ago is when SSCA came to be. In 1995 SSCA initiated the Prairie Soil Carbon Balance project. We've been sampling soils on a large scale in Saskatchewan to determine carbon change over time with our practices. So that project was initially introduced with no-till in 1995 and soils were measured four times in the last sampling that happened in 2018.

"So we have data saying that yes, farmers are sequestering more carbon

than they're taking out, so we know that we have a net positive carbon change in our soil with our current practices, which includes our no-tilling continuous cropping.

"We know this happening, we know you're probably not going to go back to when we started this practice, but if we totally ignore the fact that with our current practices that we're sequestering carbon, then we're missing out on huge opportunities. If you want to measure real change and real carbon offset, we can't just throw away an entire practice. So we've really been standing by that in our discussions with the government."

One of the concerns was the term 'business as usual' being used. Velestuk notes that the term has no scientific backing and is only used as a policy.

In a media release, the SSCA said they will continue to advocate for separate regulations for agricultural carbon sink protocols that would not be subject to non-scientific factors such as "business as usual." Any offset program must also include farmer ownership of soil carbon credits, a registry that allows farmers to "bank" their credits, an effective price discovery mechanism, and full transparency of basic costs.

"It's not a science-based word. It is completely a policy word that's put in there, so we're saying let's base it on science, let's measure an actual offset. How do you measure an actual offset but then take away what's being sequestered by a current practice. It just doesn't make any sense at all.

"So we're saying yeah if there are more practices, great. But let's measure if there's actual carbon change and let's get a protocol that does that well."

Velestuk says that their biggest goal is to have no-till acknowledged as a practice by the Government of Canada for their proposed Greenhouse Gas Offset Credit System, noting that a vast majority of Saskatchewan farmers take part in the practice.

"Each year, through no-till practices, Saskatchewan farmers sequester about 9-million new tonnes of carbon dioxide. We are

committed to achieving a regulatory environment that recognizes this significant positive impact," added Velestuk.

Velestuk notes that farmers in Saskatchewan are open to change and will adopt new practices if needed.

"We just want to let the provincial government know that Saskatchewan farmers will not be happy if no-till is not included as a practice. What we're currently doing, we're sequestering carbon and we know it's being measured in the federal inventory.

"So we're saying we need to measure that offset and we need to give value to the farmgate. If farmers see value in carbon, they're going to adopt practices to put more carbon in the ground. So it could only be a good thing.

"If carbon is a commodity, then farmers will be able to manage that quite well in an offset system."



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Public investment meeting being held in Redvers

BY SPENCER KEMP
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

People in and around the Redvers area are being encouraged to take part in a Public Investment Meeting with the Re-Gain Corporation that will take place on March 29th and 30th.

The corporation had previously proposed the idea of a wheat-straw pulp mill and is hoping to gather additional interest from investors in and around the community.

The pulp mill utilizes wheat-straw that would otherwise be waste material, according to Hjertaas.

He explains that by es-

tablishing the plant in the Redvers area the company will have access to local farmers who will be able to sell their wheat-straw.

Hjertaas, who represents the Re-Gain Corporation, says the meeting will be short and to the point.

"We're trying to keep it relatively brief, so we're only going to be talking for about twenty minutes hopefully.

"We're going to go over a rundown of what our plan is to turn wheat straw into unbleached pulp.

"We also would like to see about local investment. It would be good if this was owned by people in the area or at least

to some extent anyway," Hjertaas said.

He says the corporation has already reached out to the RM of Antler and Town of Redvers and is now hoping for feedback from potential investors.

"I've delegated the town and the RM meeting and a few others. I've talked to other people about it too so most people know about it," said Hjertaas.

"It's getting to the point where it'd be nice if the rumors stopped and we actually met up.

"This way they can come and hear it straight from the horse's mouth. What the plan is and what is going on."

Hjertaas notes that farmers in the region have expressed interest in the pulp mill and hopes that this will attract investors.

"The farmers interested. It benefits them I think so I hope it's a win-win. It's good for the farmers, it's good for the jobs in town so I hope they're interested."

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, pre-registration is required to attend the event.

People who want to reserve a spot in the meeting can email Martin Hjertaas at martin.hjertaas@re-gain.ca or call 1 (306) 840-7223. The meeting will be held in the Legion Hall in Redvers.

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The World-Spectator asked readers in 2020 to submit some of their spring seeding photos. Shown here are some of the submissions from seeding last year. Once seeding gets rolling, The World-Spectator will be holding a spring seeding photo contest in 2021 as well!



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125,000-acre initiative aims to conserve Canadian prairies through collaboration with ranchers

Ducks Unlimited Canada, McDonald's Canada and Cargill support expansion of Canadian grazing land and forages to help combat impacts of climate change and protect wildlife

Beef farmers and ranchers play an important role in providing quality food, but few people know they also play an essential role in protecting Canada's land, water and wildlife. With the urgency of unprecedented environmental challenges, like climate change, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) has teamed up with McDonald's Canada and Cargill to support rancher-led work through a \$5-million CAD Forage Program. The program will work to return 125,000 acres (50,585 hectares) of cropland to grass and pasture by 2025.

In response to growing climate concerns, returning less productive annual cropland to perennial grass helps remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Collectively, the impact of this program is comparable to removing 75,000 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere—the same as the emissions from driving 299 million kilometres in an average passenger vehicle. Perennial grass cover also provides habitat for prairie wildlife.

"In North America's prairie ecosystems, cattle help ensure the sustainability of grasslands," said Karla Guyn, chief executive officer for DUC. "Cattle fertilize the soil and help maintain plant biodiversity through grazing, controlling invasive grasses and allowing other species to thrive."

"For decades, we've worked with Canadian cattle farmers and ranchers to conserve natural habitat on their land," said Guyn. "This initiative builds on their longstanding environmental stewardship while providing opportunities to help support their operations. We're grateful to have strong partners in Cargill and McDonald's that recognize the importance of natural habitats as part of sustainable agriculture."

Grasslands are some of the world's most productive and diverse ecosystems, but these habitats and the species they support continue to be lost at alarming rates. Canada's prairies contain wetlands, lakes, rivers and val-

leys that provide habitat to more than 60 wildlife species at risk. This project will help expand habitat and provide enhanced water quality, as grasslands naturally filter harmful nutrients from water.

The support from McDonald's and Cargill allows DUC to provide farmers and ranchers incentives via discounted seed and technical support to help establish the forage on their land. In return, program participants agree to maintain the forage for 10 years.

"The result is a healthy, productive landscape where ranchers can graze their herd or harvest hay and a diversity of wildlife thrive," said Guyn.

McDonald's and Cargill are market leaders in Canadian beef. Both have made sustainability a cornerstone of how they do business, recognizing the role they play in advancing responsible food production. These companies are investing \$1.25 million CAD in the Forage Program over the next five years, with DUC adding \$3.75 million CAD through matching programs.

"This initiative is an example of how McDonald's is driving toward our global climate change commitment by supporting beef farmers and ranchers in their efforts

to implement practices that reduce greenhouse emissions," says Nicole Zeni, senior manager, supply chain management, McDonald's Canada. "Here in Canada, we'll continue to collaborate with our partners, working together to create change and positive outcomes for farmers, ranchers, communities and the planet."

This collaboration also supports Cargill's BeefUp Sustainability initiative, which seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions throughout the company's North American beef supply chain by 30 per cent by 2030. Cargill has launched several initiatives and three other programs to support this goal.

"At Cargill, we are in a unique position to drive sustainable beef production across North America. Through this project, we are partnering with Canadian ranchers to show how cattle are a force for good in conserving this critical ecosystem of soil, grassland and wildlife habitats," says Heather Tansey, sustainability lead for Cargill's global protein and animal nutrition and health businesses. "By working hand in hand, we can scale realistic solutions that address sustainability challenges and feed the world."

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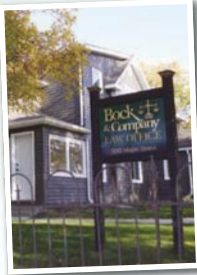
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Building Sasklander

Sask tech startup tackles the issue of land access

BY DELANEY SEIFERLING

Saskatchewan farmers are well aware of the longstanding conflict in our province between landowners and residents who want to access rural property for hunting, snowmobiling, and other recreational activities.

In an effort to manage this conflict (and in response to growing rural crime rates), The Trespass to Property Act was introduced in 2018. It proposed penalties for anyone who sets foot on private rural land without first obtaining permission from the landowner.

Although the Act has yet to be enforced as law, in 2019 the Saskatchewan government went a step further in aiming to address the issue—it called for help from the province's burgeoning tech sector.

In partnership with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM), the government put out a call through Innovation Saskatchewan in early 2019 for a technology-based solution that would connect would-be land users with rural private property owners.

One young entrepreneur heard that call. Sauvelm McClean, who has over 12 years' experience working with geographic information systems (GIS) and who was working for Western Heritage at the time, knew what to do right away.

"The idea came pretty quickly," says McClean, who also has a degree in Geography and GIS from Queen's University.

Knowing how familiar the general population has become with using mapping systems like Google maps, he immediately thought to program a web map that people could use to identify property they wanted to access. The web map could be accompanied by a system that then allowed users to request access from the property owner associated with the location identified on the map.

"That was the basic idea," McClean says. And just like that, SaskLander was born.

"It quickly got a lot more complicated though," he laughs. "There were a lot more factors involved."

The development phase

Soon after winning the bid through Western Heritage, McClean was joined by Aldo Scribante, who helped found SaskLander.

Scribante, who had recently graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with a degree in electrical engineering, worked with McClean on initial research, talking to stakeholders and potential app users about the initial SaskLander concept.

This research helped them shape the direction of the app.

"Our initial aim was to make it easier for people to get access to land," Scribante says. "We learned very early on that was the wrong place to be focusing energy."

So, they shifted their focus to facilitating a connection between landowners and potential land users and giving landowners tools to set access permissions for their land.

This approach is what sets them apart from other apps on the market today, Scribante says.

"Other apps try to solve problems of specific groups, such as hunters, but by focusing on landowners we can help handle access for anyone who wants on," he says.

SaskLander aims to benefit all parties involved in transactions, Scribante says.

"We are really focused on promoting good stewardship, building relationships and improving the health of rural communities."

Finally, one of the biggest concerns the team heard in the design phase of the project was that potential app users were worried about security.

"We anticipated some concerns about this but not to that extent," McClean says.

In response to this, they dialed up every precaution possible. Firstly, landowner names and information are kept private until they themselves grant permission for app users to access them. The names of potential land users are revealed when they make a request to the landowner.

Furthermore, for accuracy and security all landowner information submitted to the app will be verified against the Infor-

mation Services Corporation (ISC) titles database.

"Most of the information that will be available on the app is already available publicly through ISC," McClean says.

Testing it out

Unfortunately, Covid-19 restrictions delayed plans for McClean and Scribante to get out to rural Saskatchewan areas themselves to promote the app.

But they were still able to launch a pilot program last spring in the RM of Shellbrook, a location chosen for its high numbers of both mixed land users and landowners, as well as its relative proximity to Saskatoon.

The have since gained some interesting insights.

First of all, McClean's initial hunch was correct—the platform is indeed an advanced solution to the problem.

"We've learned there's definitely a market for something like this," Scribante says.

Despite the minimal amount of resources they've had to date for promoting the app, they've had a substantial amount of interest, with 50 people currently testing the app as part of the pilot program and 400 more on the mailing list or with inquiries about when it will be available in other areas of the province.

Another pleasant development for the team has been the willingness of Saskatchewan farmers—of all ages—to adopt new technology.

"There was this attitude we heard going into this that landowners don't use technology, that they're not on the Internet," McClean says. "But there's a lot of tech literacy in that group and it's growing."

In fact, he says, he has found Saskatchewan farmers are incredibly open to adopting new technology, as long as they see value in it.

"The key question was, 'Is it going to make my life easier or more complicated?'"

It seems many farmers he has talked to think the former: this solution is more amenable and efficient than fielding land access requests from door knockers and random phone calls.

"There's openness to the idea, as long as they believe it's going to be helpful."

Next steps

The team plans to roll out a partial version of the app more widely in early 2021, with a focus on helping snowmobilers access land for the heavy snow months of the year.

To help make it as efficient and effective as possible for this group, McClean and Scribante are working with the Saskatchewan Snowmobilers Association and other provincial snowmobiling groups.

Once that roll-out is complete and updates have been made based on that growth, the plan is to build it for more general use and accessibility across the province as the year progresses.

The team also hopes to do more localized marketing and promotion throughout 2021 to drive awareness and adoption rates.

Although McClean is hesitant to look too far into the future, he has considered the potential for this platform, once perfected, to be applicable in solving other ag-related problems.

"There's a lot of potential ag data sources that could be plugged into a mapping system like this," he says. "It's not our focus now but it could be a hub for that kind of information in the future."

Bigger picture

One of the greatest takeaways from this project is learning how much potential there is for Saskatchewan's technology sector to serve our provincial agriculture industry, the team says.

McClean, who moved here 10 years ago from Ontario (and is also a musician), says Saskatchewan in general is impressive.

"It punches above its weight in a lot of things—tech, music, talent."

Scribante, whose family moved to Llyoldminster from South Africa when he was 12, has also been pleasantly surprised by the tech industry in Saskatchewan.

"Saskatchewan has one of the healthiest



Sasklander co-founders Sauvelm McClean (left) and Aldo Scribante (right).

tech startup communities right now compared to a lot of places," he says. "It's a very close-knit community, there's lots of potential funding and incentive—it's a really good spot to be."

Currently, the team is seeing a lot of other interesting tech startup projects in the works, focused on agriculture. Scribante also says with current SpaceX developments in satellite internet, there could be potential to help solve problems with connectivity in rural areas of the province.

"The ag sector here is very ripe for innovation right now. I wouldn't be surprised if it looks completely different in 10 years."

In the meantime, McClean hopes that SaskLander can be one part of that.

"We know this industry moves fast and things happen," he says. "But for now we are just hoping people are willing to try something new so we can gain some momentum and help people with this important issue."

Note: The revised Saskatchewan Trespass to Property Act was introduced in 2018 and will require anyone wanting to go onto rural land to first get permission from the owner.

However, the Act will not be formally enacted or enforced until the SaskLander app has been completed and rolled out to the public.

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Kitchen: Carbon tax increase will have a 'tremendous impact' on riding

BY SPENCER KEMP
LOCAL JOURNALISM
INITIATIVE REPORTER

Souris-Moose Mountain MP Dr. Robert Kitchen says that the increase in the carbon tax is something that is going to affect producers in Saskatchewan.

The Carbon Tax will increase \$10 per tonne April 1, going from \$30 a tonne to \$40 a tonne.

Kitchen explains that producers are paying additional costs out of pocket due to the tax.

"It has a huge impact on farmers. And the part that a lot of people don't understand, the perception from the government is that they get that money back but they don't, because the reality is that yes when they have the gas on their farm that carbon tax is rebated. However, when they go out to move their grain and crop, the moment they hire somebody to do that the carbon tax is charged and they don't get that money back. That builds up.

"If you've got your own 18-wheeler and you're moving your own things and you're using your own oil, that's fine. But a lot of times farmers don't have that access and ability to do that so that's a huge impact on the farming industry and the fact that as of April 1st it's going up to \$10 to \$40 and then next year will go up another \$10, then the year after that will be another \$15 a year each year to hit \$170 a tonne, that's going to be a huge impact on their costs and their overhead costs. Like fertilizer that's being brought in, they're being charged carbon tax when it is being brought in and that's coming out of their pocket."

Kitchen notes that it is not just producers who are feeling the impacts of the tax, but trucking companies as well.

The GST being applied to the tax is another cause for concern from Kitchen.

"There are trucking companies in the riding that are smaller companies that are trucking, whether it may be just providing services like oil or whatever it may be or transportation, their impacts are tremendously increased because of it. There have been a couple that have come up and they're paying thousands of dollars a month added on. In fact, I had a question that I presented about three weeks ago in the House of Commons on that aspect of the carbon tax, and what the government fails to tell people is the fact that there's a GST, a tax on a tax because GST is put on that carbon tax.

"When you ask the government how much money they have collected on that GST on the carbon tax, they refuse to tell us how much money is coming in. When they turn around and say they are giving 90 per cent of it back to Canadians come tax time, and the other 10 per cent is given to schools and businesses etcetera. Ultimately they're not giving back a single penny of that GST, that five per cent extra that they're collecting on that tax.

"When asked that question in the House of Commons, the Associate Deputy Minister said that's not happening. But you pull out your power bill every month and you look at the bottom of it and there's a carbon tax and then there's a GST on that carbon tax, everybody has it," Kitchen said.

The increase in taxes is something Kitchen says could cost hundreds of thousands of jobs across Canada according to a report.

"It's going to have a tremendous impact on the riding, especially for our agriculture industry, our ranchers are going to be impacted because of it too. The Fraser Institute came out with a recent study that indicates that it will cost Canadians 220,000 jobs. That's a significant amount, it's going to cost billions of dollars to those industries. The Fraser Institute report is obviously very extensive but it looks into that aspect of what this carbon tax will mean, and when you lose jobs that we need to generate tax income that is going to help pay for social services that we have, it's going to be a huge impact."

He explains that whenever he is given the opportunity, he speaks out against the carbon tax. He also notes that the removal of the carbon tax is one of the key priorities of the Conservative Party.

The use of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) as an alternative to the carbon tax is something that Kitchen says his party is trying to promote.

"Every chance we have, whether it's in finance or agriculture within those committees we have an opportunity to voice that



Souris-Moose Mountain MP Dr. Robert Kitchen says the carbon tax increase will have a negative impact on producers in his riding

opinion or during question period to bring up those issues and try to point that out, we have said that we will get rid of that carbon tax when we get elected. We will do that. That's one of the number one things we will step up to do. Those are things that we've said, obviously, we need to be in government to take those steps and move forward on those things. We have to recognize that steps have to be done by businesses and the industry to try and find ways to reduce emissions, and there are things that can be done along those lines to reduce emissions. But it needs to have investments to do so. A prime example is carbon capture that we spearheaded here in Saskatchewan and this riding, and that technology is now all over the world. Even all the environmental committees over in Europe and all over the world have said that they need CCS technology as we move forward, whether that is in agriculture or whatever.

it is still being researched.

"There are steps that have to be done with where they're at with the technology, and if I do remember correctly there are scientists at the University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina that are actually in the agriculture industry that are showing examples of what percentage of what they're capturing. Those have to be looked at to find out and make sure we can give appropriate support and recognition of that."

A private member's bill was introduced by the Conservative Party to see exemptions for the agriculture industry and the bill was supported the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Greens.

Kitchen says the bill, which would lower the carbon taxes impacts on producers, is currently under review by a committee.

"It's a private members bill that looks at exemptions for our agriculture industry. We voted for that and we got support from the Bloc and the NDP for that which passed at second reading, the Liberals voted against it. It will now go to committee and at the agriculture committee, there will be questions and witnesses coming to talk about that. There might be amendments to it but hopefully once it comes out of committee it will be reported back to the House and it will go forward to a third reading and continue to be pushed forward. I think it's a great bill with

great support and I think it will be great for our farmers."

For producers and workers who are impacted by the carbon tax, Kitchen encourages them to reach out and communicate with not only himself but send their concerns to the federal government as well.

"A lot of them are calling me or emailing me or other MPs to get that out. Ultimately at this point in time, I would say to be sending those same things to not only me but also to the Prime Minister and the agriculture ministers so that they're very well aware of it."

He said it is difficult to communicate the impact of the carbon tax on the farms across the Prairies.

"The challenges that we've had that I've learned in my time is the recognition that truly the understanding of how vast Saskatchewan is, even my riding and the size of it. The perception in parts of the country is not that way. They look at their farms that are much smaller than ours and do not understand the impacts that it has on the size that we're having to deal with. Getting the country to understand the impact it's going to have on the Western agriculture industry is tremendous. The more they can get that information out and ask those questions to the Prime Minister or agriculture ministers the better. Likewise, if there are ways I can help then I will try to get that information across to where I can."



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One Covid year later—bring on spring!

"Mmmmm good," said the young fellow from the 4-H 'podium' as he rubbed his tummy and spoke about the very best day of the year on the farm.

It's March, 2021, one year since Covid-19 became a household name. It's unarguably changed the way we do things, 4-H speeches included. This year, Whitewood 4-H beef club members were videoed by a family member in their own home—and judges (like me)—were delighted to be able to hear these speeches as they shared a bit about their life, be it life on the farm, their future aspirations, a warm vacation memory or whatever they chose to speak about.

Which brings me back to the 'mmmm good' speech. It was obvious the eight-year-old at the imaginary mic was enthralled with everything about farming, except perhaps the low water pressure when the cows are drinking from the watering bowl. But the day that was the highlight in his mind was castrating day! The menu? Prairie oysters of course. No one can make that procedure and outcome sound so delightful as this young speechwriter did, I assure you!

And so it was, as these promising young 4-Her's shared everything from how 'dad's choice of a 4-H calf for a first-year 4-Her was less than stellar' to an aspiring auctioneer's desire to use his obvious talents for an ag-related career, that the judges watching them were left impressed. So impressed in fact that it was a rude realization that they had to grade these speeches. No matter what these kids do in the future, delivering speeches can only be an added bonus to what real life will be for them somewhere down the road.

With a year of Covid-19 under our belt, I am guessing no one could have predicted that we would be in some sort of lockdown for the better part of a year with continuing uncertainty about future waves despite the vaccine making its way into our lives, or rather, our arms.

March 12, 2020 is forever etched in my mind. Yes, it was the day the first Covid-19 case was announced in Saskatchewan but it was the day I travelled to Regina to have my staples removed following my hip replacement two weeks earlier. As the nurse prepared to remove the first staple, she looked up at another nurse close by and said, "I've never done this before." So, if you can be calm, cool and collected when you go under the knife, why was it that comment made me a tad nervous? As it was, the nurse did a really good job (once she was shown) but I have always wondered if questions like that should perhaps be asked out of the hearing of the patient!

One thing that hasn't changed for me during all this has been caregiving for my grandchildren when needed. Especially noon on Tuesdays. That's crepe day with whipped cream and strawberries for the grandkids who come over from school to join us for lunch. Yesterday (being Monday), our trek to the grocery store netted us zero fresh strawberries so when one of the twins phoned last

The Lighter Side of Life...
DOWN ON THE FARM
by donna beutler
FREELANCE PHOTOJOURNALIST
dl_beutler@yahoo.ca



night to confirm Tuesday's lunch plans, I had to break it to him—no fresh (and they must be fresh) strawberries.

Of course, I had some choices to suggest to the kids. Spaghetti. Hot dogs. French toast. But the response was negative to each suggestion. "I think beaver tails," said the young man on the other end of the phone. "Can you make beaver tails?" Prairie folks may know them as elephant ears but to someone raised in the east (moi), beaver tails it is. And so it will be—deep-fried hunks of flattened dough, sugared up to perfection will be served promptly at 12:09 today. Sorry about the smoke lingering in the air kids; I may have heated the oil a tad too much.

One of the highlights of our month (February) was a weekend in Regina where we were caring for our two youngest grandchildren (six and four). These two youngsters were so excited to spend a night and go swimming at the hotel with us. And we were just as excited as they! Since it was my husband's birthday, I gave him a big hug and kiss the next morning and then off I went to do my hair. When I came back into the room, my husband was killing himself laughing at our grandson's question (in reference to my kiss) to him: "Did you like that, Grandpa?"

With that, I took my grandson and gave him a big hug and kiss. I thought his happy grin was a good sign until he marched off to the bathroom and came back wiping his face with a dry face cloth. What!? He had wiped my kisses off, the little rotter!

I was pretty excited to have a 'beyond-the-front-door' visit with my "farm" grandchildren the other day, actually sitting at their counter and chatting with them, bull sale catalogues spread out across the counter. I flipped through them, absent-mindedly as I chatted until one of the twins stopped me midway through one of the catalogues. "Didn't you notice that one?" he said pointing to one in particular (as if they don't all look the same to me). "Yeah," I said, "cool name for a bull." The boys looked at each other with a slight roll of their eyes. "The

bull," they said, "look at the bull, not the name!" Well, alrighty then, I guess it is a mighty-fine looking bull.

I continued with my chat, "How's calving going? Done?" "Nope, 62 have calved, two more to go," the twins tell me. "Any losses?" I continued. "Nope, 100 per cent," they say. And I don't doubt they are anything but exact.

From there we ventured out to play a little street hockey. Okay, so on a gravel laneway, you get a few stones with your "puck," as you shoot the little orange ball toward the net. And then, just like that the ball is gone, snatched up by the very nimble, ball-loving, ball-thievin' border collie. That is a futile exercise, trying to play hockey with that dog. She doesn't understand English either when you tell her to drop it. Her ears do however perk up to the word 'chicken'—I am not sure if that's a good thing or a bad thing but I am sure I'll figure it out when I get my RV settled on the grassy knoll next to the shop a couple of weeks down the road.

I am getting pretty excited for a change of scenery, as in "green." You know, green leaves, green grass, green zero-turn mower with which to cut that grass—all things green. I am ready and I am going to enjoy every outdoor moment I can. Once the camper leaves machinery row for its spot with the view of the chicken house, the fire pit will be set in place for those cool spring evenings while the kids and I await the return of the men from the field. And I, the one who hates cooking, will have adapted to that nasty chore as I set up my 'pallet' deck and barbecue outside the RV. Ah yes, spring is in the air and despite this Covid-19 fatigue I am sure we all have, we will carry on stronger than before, soaking up some sun, swearing at that darn wind, watching for the first sign of budding trees, calves bouncing around in the pasture and tiny wheat shoots sprouting up through the earth.

Ahh yes, spring is just around the corner—bring it on! I plan to welcome it (and the vaccine) with open arms!

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APAS responds to removal of Agri-Stability Reference Margin Limit
Farm group pleased with RML removal, but still waiting on compensation rate increase

The Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) says it is encouraged by the removal of the AgriStability Reference Margin Limit (RML), but is disappointed the program's compensation rate was not increased. "It's good news that the provincial and federal Ministers of Agriculture agreed on the removal of the Reference Margin Limit yesterday," APAS President Todd Lewis said Friday, March 26, "but farmers' costs and business risks have both increased significantly since the program was cut in 2013, so we still need improvements to the compensation rate." "Increasing AgriStability support for farmers is an investment in Canada's economic recovery, because producers need better protection against risks outside their control, like weather and trade disputes," Lewis explained. "Farming will always be an unpredictable business, but enhanced BRM coverage will reduce that risk." Lewis said APAS will continue advocating for improvements to the AgriStability compensation rate alongside the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA), its provincial and territorial counterparts, and other agricultural groups across the country.



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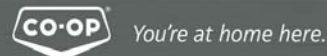
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Richardson International doubling capacity of Yorkton canola crushing plant

By BRIAN ZINCHUK
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Canola is riding a wave these days, and on March 22, Winnipeg-based Richardson International Limited is announcing a significant investment in their canola crush plant in Yorkton. In addition to doubling its processing capacity to 2.2 million metric tonnes, the project will optimize operational efficiencies and modernize the facility to meet an ever-growing global demand for canola oil and canola meal products.

The facility is one of two canola crushing plants that were built on the northwest corner of Yorkton a little over a decade ago, with the neighbouring plant operated by Louis Dreyfus Company. Together, they have made Yorkton an important hub for Canola processing, and this new announcement will expand upon that.

In a release, Richardson said that when completed, the Yorkton facility will include a high-speed shipping system with three 9,500-foot loop tracks, complementing infrastructure currently in place. It will be situated roughly to the northeast of the existing facility.

Loop tracks have become commonplace throughout the United States as the most efficient manner to load unit trains, and they are becoming the norm in Canada, as well. Richardson Pioneer, itself, announced on March 15 that it would be building a loop track for a new 36,600 metric tonne elevator at Swan River, Man. Its new high-throughput elevator near Grande Prairie, Alta., will also have a loop track, as well as one built at another new elevator High Level, Alta., in recent years.

The Yorkton facility will be served by both major railways, Canadian Pacific and CN, and will be dedicated to moving canola crush products "at some of the most efficient levels seen in North America."

Additional facility upgrades and improvements will effectively double processing capacity in excess of 2.2 million metric tonnes of seed. The site will also have three high-speed receiving lanes, providing producers and trucking partners a fast and effective means for seed delivery.

The development includes the purchase of 240-acres of city-owned industrial land adjacent to the existing site. The existing plant falls within the Rural Municipality of Orkney.

"We opened the original Yorkton plant in 2010 and at that time, it was by far the largest capital investment Richardson had ever undertaken," Richardson International president and CEO Curt Vossen said. "Saskatchewan and Manitoba producers have responded effectively, providing growth in canola production over the years - this has given us the confidence to move forward with expansion once again. We have appreciated the encouragement and cooperation of the rural municipality of Orkney, the city of Yorkton, and the province of Saskatchewan."

As a significant supplier to the global canola market, Richardson said it has been focused on improved operational efficiencies, modernization, and automation. With \$120 million recently invested in their Lethbridge, Alberta crush plant, this latest investment in Yorkton will provide additional opportunities to producers to market their oil-seed crop, it said.

When asked how much of an investment the Yorkton expansion would be, Richardson spokesperson Kelcey Vossen said they were not able to share that at the moment.

"The global outlook for Canadian canola oil is promising, and this latest investment emphasizes our ongoing commitment to best-in-class facilities," said Darrell Sobkow, Richardson senior vice-president, Processing, Food, and Ingredients. "Yorkton lies right in the heart of canola country and we are focused on providing our producer customers with increasingly efficient means for meeting the needs of a growing global consumptive market."

Scratching dirt

Richardson said construction will begin immediately



This Google Earth image shows the Richardson International canola crush facility at Yorkton on the left side of the map. To the right is the area where the triple loop track will be installed. The rail line going northwest/southeast is the Canadian Pacific mainline. The line going straight east connects to the CN rail network. The facility on the lower right is the Louis Dreyfus Company canola crush plant.

with no disruption to current operations and is expected to be completed in early 2024. During the construction phase, there will be significant opportunities for employment within the area and upon completion, the company expects to add full-time positions to the plant. "This state-of-the-art facility represents a good news story for all industry participants - for our producer customers and end-use buyers across North America and abroad," said Keith Belitski, director of operations, Yorkton. "A construction project of this magnitude will be significant, economically, to the province of Saskatchewan, the city of Yorkton, and surrounding areas."

Kelcey Vossen said that the construction crew would be "in the dozens," as would future additional employment, once completed. That number would likely be disclosed later, she said.

"This is a significant investment in our province that will create local jobs, support economic recovery and help our province continue to grow," Trade and Export Development Minister Jeremy Harrison said in a government news release. "As the world recovers from the economic impacts of the pandemic, there remains a growing need for the food products Saskatchewan produces, such as canola oil and canola meal, and we appreciate this investment and expansion at Richardson's Yorkton canola crush plant, which will help meet that demand. Our government is committed to maintaining a competitive business environment to attract these types of investments, which will benefit all Saskatchewan residents, and we look forward to working with Richardson on this important project."

The prospect of additional value-added processing fits within government growth plans. "Saskatchewan is a leader in agricultural production and we welcome this investment to increase canola crush capacity in the province," Agriculture Minister David Marit said. "We know the world wants the high-quality products Saskatchewan produces, with canola oil and canola meal our top value-added exports in 2020. This expansion of processing capacity will help Saskatchewan meet the goals outlined in our Growth Plan, which includes a target to crush 75 per cent of the canola

our province produces here in Saskatchewan."

String of canola announcements

The announcement is the third in recent weeks of companies intending on building substantial canola processing facilities in Saskatchewan. However, unlike True North Renewable Fuels' announcement that is beginning fundraising for a "renewable diesel and canola crushing" project at Regina, or Covenant Energy's planned "renewable diesel facility" at Estevan, construction on Richard's Yorkton expansion is expected to begin immediately.

The Regina and Estevan facilities are expected to take advantage of the federal government's planned Clean Fuel Standard, which will require liquid fuels, like diesel to reduce their hydrocarbon components. When asked if the Yorkton expansion had fuel production as its intent, Kelcey Vossen said increased canola production by Western Canadian producers and increased global demand for food product was driving this. She said. "The Clean Fuel Standard came up a fair bit, however, we are in the food business and this expansion project is to meet an increase in global food demand, not biodiesel. Our grower customers have been effective in providing growth in canola production over the years which has given us confidence to undergo another expansion. Richardson had a past expansion, back in 2012, where we increased capacity by 25 per cent."

Richardson International is part of James Richardson & Sons, Limited, a prominent Winnipeg-based conglomerate whose companies include Richardson, Richardson Pioneer, Richardson Oilseed and Richardson Milling in the agricultural sector. Their oil company, Tundra Oil & Gas Limited, is the dominant oil producer in Manitoba, and their pipeline company, Kingston Midstream, is the principal pipeline gathering system for southeast Saskatchewan and southwest Manitoba. Its financial services include RF Capital Group, Richardson Wealth and Wynward Insurance Group. In real estate, their head office is the Richard Centre Limited, at the corner of Portage and Main in centre of Winnipeg. Finally, in transportation, the company operates Bison Transport.



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Next Gen Agriculture Mentorship Program supports industry's future

Canadian Western Agribition's Next Gen Agriculture Mentorship Program welcomed the newest group of eight young agriculture leaders today. This program matches young leaders in the agriculture industry with experienced professionals who provide them with skills and experiences to advance their careers. The Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan com-

mitted \$100,000 in funding through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership to support this intake of mentees. "Canada's young people are key to the future success of our agricultural sector," said Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. "The Government is working hard to ensure our youth are able to play an active role in building a stronger and

more prosperous sector. The Next Gen program creates leadership development opportunities to give the future agriculture leaders the skills and experience they need to contribute and make a difference in our industry." "Canadian Western Agribition's Next Gen Agriculture Mentorship program provides young industry leaders with valuable skills that will help them advance

Introducing the Next Gen Agriculture Mentorship Program Mentees



their careers and share the story of how our producers create safe, high-quality food," Agriculture Minister David Marit said. "I want to congratulate CWA on matching their third intake of mentees with mentors and thank them for their efforts to engage young people."

The successful mentees and mentors chosen to participate in this intake are:

- Alexandra Clarke, paired with Gerry Hertz
- Sandra Hessdorfer, paired with Sara Shymko
- Megan Roger, paired with Brett Halstead
- Morgan Follensbee, paired with Kim Keller
- Blaine Lamontagne, paired with Danny Petty
- Grayson Berting, paired

- with Joe Barnett
- Ryan Garbarczyk, paired with Shelley Jones
- Anna Karlsson, paired with Heather Deobald

The Next Gen Program is an agricultural mentorship program for future leaders in Saskatchewan delivered by Canadian Western Agribition. The Program accepts eight applicants into an 18-month mentorship experience. Mentees are paired with some of the strongest leaders in Canadian agriculture. During their mentorship, mentees will gain industry knowledge, board and governance training, business education and networking opportunities.

"It's been a pleasure watching the Next Gen Agriculture Mentorship

program grow and CWA is proud to be part of the success of our industry's future," CWA President Chris Lees said. "Already, graduates from the program are filling leadership roles in agriculture all over the province."

This project is supported through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a five-year, \$3-billion investment by federal, provincial and territorial governments to strengthen the agriculture and agri-food sector. This includes a \$388-million investment in strategic initiatives for Saskatchewan agriculture.

More information about the program is available online at www.saskatchewan.ca/CAP.



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Four ways to use process and structure for effective leadership

Continued from page B3

Time management

We all know the old saying—time is our most important and valuable resource. You can't make it, buy it, recoup it or transfer it. But you can lose it. Priority management determines what to work on. Time management is about making sure the work gets done efficiently.

There can be unique time management challenges for farm managers, such as intense seasonal workloads that challenge the team both mentally and physically. Weather can ruin the best-laid plans, and priorities can change at the drop of the hat.

Time management is a huge focus for all businesses, from sole proprietors to multi-nationals. And again, some of the principles that help individuals manage their time can also apply to a team setting. Successful entrepreneurs and business leaders find a way to get more things done than the average person by maximizing their time.

You'll hear some common themes from super achievers:

- They tend to get up early
- They allocate alone time to determine their daily action items
- They don't get bogged down by email and unnecessary meetings
- They become very good at delegating and trusting their team

For a farm business with multiple team members, it can be difficult for the farm manager to have a day-to-day understanding of how everyone's time is being spent.

Time management for a team involves process, with monitoring and direction from leadership. Some basic time management practices include:

1. Have clear expectations and set deadlines for specific tasks
2. Use tools to help understand and measure how the team spends time

3. Help your team learn how to better manage and plan their time

4. Communicate with staff to learn their perspective on time issues

Leadership plays an enormous role in how a team spends their time. While leaders need to delegate tasks to their team, overloading them with ad hoc assignments and off-the-cuff requests undermines planning or structured time management protocols. If team members are reluctant to say no, the result is overload, stress and burnout. It's not sustainable.

There are many different tools to help employees and farmers track their time. Building a simple spreadsheet that employees can access via the cloud is about as easy as it gets without reverting to paper. Software packages, while not designed specifically for agriculture, can be customized to meet specific time monitoring needs. Some timesheet software can integrate with payroll and accounting software. There are also mobile app options that make sense for teams not in front of a computer very often.

Once it's determined how time is being spent, leadership can work with the team to identify ways to save time and improve efficiency. Tracking time may yield a surprising result even for team members – they may not realize how much of their time is spent on admin or emails.

Consistent interaction with employees

The idea of consistency in a workplace is part of all the concepts covered in this article. It's a big reason why the

employee handbook is important. A consistent approach helps leaders and team members prioritize large and small tasks with confidence. It also helps improve time management and maximizes efficiency.

If an employee faces a different process every time they submit expenses or ask for time off, it can affect how they view the company and their commitment to it. Organized management and consistent processes give employees a sense of stability and confidence.

Productivity is higher when staff already know the prerequisite steps to complete a task or make a decision. Consistency means not having to reinvent the wheel repeatedly and gives employees a stronger understanding of how to do their job and meet expectations. If two employees are given different instructions how to feed cattle, it creates confusion among employees and influences how the team views leadership.

It's not just processes that need to be consistent. Leaders set the tone for the team. And as discussed in the first article in this series, if the leader is consistent in prioritizing, time management and how they interact with employees and clients, the team will mirror that effort.

If some employees have a performance review every six months, but others go years without one, it sends a message that leadership is inconsistent with what's in the handbook, and it sends a message to the team that inconsistency is okay.

Some farmers struggle with process and structure, because they're naturally independent, freewheeling, nimble and creative. It's a big step but recognizing that structure and consistency enables better team performance is an important part of effective leadership.



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Rural Connectivity Task Force members (left to right) Ian Boxall, Bev Piro, Jeremy Welter, and Bill Prybylski. (Missing: Paige Stewart).

Connecting Saskatchewan

The Rural Connectivity Task Force seeks solutions to poor rural internet

BY NIKKO SNYDER

A frozen face or garbled voice on the other end of a Zoom call has been an all-too-common part of life in the last year, especially for those living in rural areas.

It's a scenario that members of the APAS Rural Connectivity Task Force have dealt with repeatedly since the group formed in September 2020 to work on improving Saskatchewan's rural internet.

"It's very ironic that we're having to do so much of this work virtually," says farmer and Task Force member Paige Stewart of Fillmore, Sask, about navigating poor internet during Task Force meetings.

Between them, the five agricultural producers that make up the Rural Connectivity Task Force have experienced every possible frustration that folks dealing with the challenges of poor rural internet face daily.

Insufficient internet speeds to keep their kids learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Missed land deals and auction purchases. Inadequate connections to fully utilize high-tech farm equipment. Difficulties working off-farm jobs from home. The inability to relax in front of Netflix at the end of a long week. You name it, they've experienced it, and there is no end to the stories they can tell.

Their unique rural perspectives, combined with APAS's credibility and solutions-focused approach, has made the Rural Connectivity Task Force a force to be reckoned with when it comes to tackling poor rural internet.

"We've identified the problem and our goal is to find the solution," says Task Force member and APAS Vice-President Ian Boxall of Tisdale, Sask. "APAS's approach to all policy issues is to not just complain about them, but to find solutions that are implementable and achievable and that can work."

According to Task Force Chair Jeremy Welter of Kerrobert, Sask, APAS's non-partisan approach is also a huge benefit. "We have a stronger voice because when we lay something out there's no political slant to it," he says. "It's just straight common sense. And we're not showing up wet behind the ears. This is something APAS has been working on for the past two years."

Recognizing missed opportunities

Poor rural connectivity negatively impacts the health, education, and safety of rural residents. It also results in barriers to economic growth in rural communities, which is a major problem in Saskatchewan, which relies heavily on agriculture and other rural industries to drive the economy.

Jeremy Welter sums up the problem as a missed opportunity. "You can't be 100 per cent aware of the opportunities that are missed," he explains. "Missing out on a great deal at an online auction is something everyone could recognize. But there's more than that, and the average person isn't aware of most missed opportunities because these are projects that don't even make it to the planning stage."

There have been efforts to put a dollar value to what these missed opportunities have cost Saskatchewan. According to the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association (CWTA), the economic value of connecting rural Saskatchewan could be up to \$1.2 billion in additional

Gross Domestic Product (i.e., economic activity) for the province.

As a rural industry that increasingly relies on high-tech, connected equipment, agriculture certainly stands to contribute to this improved economic picture in a well-connected Saskatchewan.

But without adequate connectivity, there is no way for agriculture to reach its economic potential—potential that both the provincial and federal governments count on when planning for long-term economic growth.

"Agriculture is going to rise to the top in Saskatchewan as the primary driver of our economy," argues Task Force member Paige Stewart of Fillmore, SK. "If we can't keep up with making use of the technology that is offered to us, we won't be able to compete. We have to make sure that Saskatchewan farms have competitive access to keep up with the rest of the world. I want it recognized that getting growers good connectivity is priority number one to benefit the economy."



Rural Connectivity Task Force meeting in November 2020.

Identifying solutions

In 2016, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) set out a national internet service goal for Canadians: 50 megabytes per second (Mbps) for downloads and 10 Mbps for uploads for all Canadian by 2030. It's known as "50/10" and is considered fast enough for Canadians to meet their day-to-day needs in a connected world, including using streaming services and cloud-based applications, and having multiple people use the internet at the same time.

So is there a magic bullet that will see all of rural Canada connected at the speeds promised by the federal government?

"Initially I thought we were going to get all this information together and fix the problem," says Task Force member Bev Piro, who farms near Radville, SK. "But I realize now there's no quick solution."

In the case of Saskatchewan, it's unlikely that one single technology will achieve universal access for all. Instead, a combination of technologies will be needed.

For example, while fiber optic wireline is the gold stan-

dard in terms of internet speed, quality, and longevity, it's not necessarily a practical or affordable option for individual farms and other remote locations, at least not in the short term. Rather, investments are needed in a range of technologies that make sense in a variety of contexts. In Saskatchewan that will probably look like fiber optic wireline connections for some, and wireless connections to towers or satellites for others.

When it comes right down to it, the problem is less about technology and more about economics, regulation, and collaboration.

The economics of connectivity

One of the most important things to understand about connectivity are the economics that drive it. In short, unless there is a business case to connect a community, it's unlikely to happen. And the more rural or remote the community is, the less attractive the business case will be. At the end of the day, profitable projects are the priority.

There are many solutions to this problem. Letting smaller service providers play a role is one, but this requires policy changes at both the provincial and federal level. In Saskatchewan, our provincial Crown corporation SaskTel (which provides 60 per cent of wireless service in the province) needs support and incentives to be able to effectively partner with smaller providers.

Federal funding can also help if it's delivered in the right way. Right now, over \$7 billion in federal funds have been committed towards getting connectivity projects up and running. But for rural internet service to be financially sustainable over the long term, funding for operations and maintenance is also needed. Unfortunately, ongoing operational funding isn't currently available, leaving some of the most underserved communities with few or no options.

An attractive business case isn't the only (or best) way to think about connecting rural and remote communities. We also need to see investments into rural connectivity as investments into local economies with important economic and social returns.

"I was really disappointed to learn that was not part of how we decide where this funding goes," says Paige Stewart. "How can it not be part of a funding request to say the project is going to create X-number of jobs, or that it's going to kick back this amount of money into the economy?"

Regardless of these important economic questions, the fact remains: since 2016 high-speed internet has been considered a basic service no less important than telephone service. This means that profitability aside, every Canadian needs to be connected.

"It needs to be a right, not a privilege," says Bev Piro. In the Saskatchewan context, we must ask how Saskatchewan's publicly owned Crown corporations are working to ensure this right to universal high-speed internet access.

"We deserve the internet service that the government has promised us, so some of this needs to be done for the public good," says Ian Boxall. "There is a point where SaskTel has a responsibility to the public to provide this internet service to us."

Continued on Page B33

Connecting Saskatchewan

The Rural Connectivity Task Force seeks solutions to poor rural internet

Continued from Page B32

Partnering for the public good

How universal internet access will be achieved remains to be seen, but it will certainly involve many strong partnerships. In some cases, this may look like SaskTel partnering with smaller service providers to deliver service to rural and remote communities.

"There are a lot of people out there that are really suffering because big companies look at them and go 'that's not lucrative,'" says Jeremy Welter. "But a small company might only need 100 people."

There may also be an opportunity—and a necessary one—for SaskTel to partner with other provincial Crowns to make use of existing infrastructure such as "dark fiber," which refers to fiber optic wireline that is in the ground but isn't currently being used for residential and commercial internet service.

"The dark fiber stuff blew my mind," says Bev Pirio. "The fact that there's fiber in the ground for SaskPower is so frustrating to me. Because I feel like that's our solution to a certain degree, and the door is just shut in our face. And SaskTel and SaskPower don't work together, and that surprises me because they're both owned by the people."

Use it or lose it

Dark fiber isn't the only example of where technology and infrastructure to solve the problem might already exist. In some cases, the failure to take advantage of existing resources happens at the regulatory level, where the mechanisms to enforce accountability are lacking.

The management of spectrum, for example, leaves a lot of room for improvement. "Spectrum" refers to the radio waves that are used to send signals between a wireless device and a connecting point such as a cellphone tower, modem, or satellite. Spectrum is treated as a limited resource and is distributed by the federal government to internet service providers through auction. Spectrum auctions have raised billions of dollars for the federal government.

How spectrum is managed (or mismanaged) can make or break a region's connectivity. Although service providers agree to conditions about how and when they will use

the spectrum they lease (including an agreement to "use it or lose it"), these conditions aren't generally enforced, leaving plenty of available spectrum sitting idle and unused.

"I was surprised and disappointed that the 'use it or lose it' clause has never really been enforced, kind of like an old toothless lion," says Jeremy Welter. "I think that is one of the biggest issues federally that needs to be addressed."

"Companies are buying up spectrum and then never utilizing it, and there are still citizens who do not have

no simple solution.

"It's been a real eye-opener," says Task Force member and APAS Vice-President Bill Prybylski of Willowbrook, SK. "The complexity of the whole issue, all the different components that have to come together to provide a reliable network of internet service and cell coverage. Between satellites and fiber optics, all the different service providers, and the spectrum auctions, it's been a real eye opener."

And yet solutions do exist. The Rural Connectivity Task Force is developing a thorough series of recommendations that will be included in their final report, due out this year.

But it's what happens after the recommendations are released that will be the most critical.

"I'm really looking forward to speaking with the government about this. I can't wait for that," says Bev Pirio about the next stage of the Task Force's work. "I'm anxious for them to know that farmers and rural people in Saskatchewan can work together, and that we will stick this out until there's a solution."

The ultimate goal?

"Long term I'd like to see the government's 50/10 goals attained," says Jeremy Welter. "Because if they are that means that every rural resident in Canada, not just Saskatchewan, has access. And something that's been missed a little too often is affordable access. Long term I'd like to see every rural resident have affordable access to the 50/10 plan that the federal government has."

But that's not where his vision ends. "Going out 25 or even 40 years down the road, I'd like to see our country regain the position we had off the start. Canada

used to be number two in the world in terms of connectivity. What I'm talking about is really investing in the future and working hard to drive the next iteration of business growth into our economies. The need for connectivity and the continued growth through tech is not going anywhere. It's going to continue to grow. So long-term we need to have a plan to position ourselves at the forefront of that to drive that growth into our local communities.

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Rural Connectivity Task Force Chair and farmer Jeremy Welter.

adequate internet service," adds Ian Boxall. "And yet they're hoarding that spectrum. I found it surprising that the government didn't put more emphasis on the 'use it or lose it' side of those contracts."

What comes next for rural connectivity?

After months of interviews and careful study with the industry's top experts and service providers, the consensus of the Rural Connectivity Task Force is that there is a

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Canada's Ministers of Agriculture agree to improvement of AgriStability

During the March 25 virtual meeting of Canada's federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) Ministers of Agriculture, Ministers agreed to remove the reference margin limit for AgriStability, one of the business risk management (BRM) programs under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. The removal of the reference margin limit will be made retroactive to the 2020 program year. In addition, the deadline for producers to enroll in the 2021 program year will be extended to June 30, 2021.

The meeting was convened to discuss key changes to the program, in order to better support farmers facing challenges. Removing the reference margin limit could increase the overall amount AgriStability pays out to farmers by approximately \$95 million nationally.

The objectives in making this change are to help simplify the program and help farmers in need by increasing the level of support for agricultural operations with lower allowable expenses. This change is an important step towards making the program easier to understand, more bankable, more accessible, and more fair for some sectors, who might have been left out of the program under

the previous rules.

Costs for the removal of the reference margin limit will be shared, as outlined in the Canadian Agricultural Partnership; 60 per cent by the federal government and 40 per cent by provincial and territorial governments.

This change will help producers better manage risks and financial losses due to poor yields, low commodity prices or rising input costs. AgriStability provides support when

producers experience a large margin decline.

The federal government first tabled its AgriStability proposal during the last FPT Ministers conference in November 2020. At that time, Ministers agreed that BRM programs needed to improve to better target emerging risks that threaten the viability of the farm. As well, programs should be simple, predictable, and respond quickly for producers, while treating farms fairly and equitably.

Ministers also noted that analysis continues on alternative risk management designs. This analysis will inform upcoming discussions on longer-term reforms, set to take place at their next in-person Annual Conference in Guelph, Ontario scheduled for September 8-10, 2021.

Ministers also recognize the importance of close collaboration with each other to ensure the successful development and implementation of the

next five-year agricultural policy framework, expected to be in place on April 1, 2023.

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Texas student weathers winter research conditions

BY LANA HAIGHT

Feeding cattle in the winter is a much different experience in Saskatchewan than it is in Texas. It may seem obvious but it's still full of surprises for a University of Saskatchewan (USask) graduate student.

"I'm continually impressed with how innovative you Canadians are and how you manage winter," said Rachel Carey, a PhD provisional candidate who is co-supervised by USask animal scientist Dr. Greg Penner (PhD) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada researcher Dr. Tim McAllister (PhD).

Carey was surprised when she learned about a potential research project that she is now running. She is monitoring the body condition of pregnant cows, including their weight gain and fat cover, as the cows graze in fields in the fall and winter for as long as conditions are suitable for the cattle, and that includes fields even when there is snow on the ground.

"This is my first winter grazing study ever! I thought Canadians were crazy when I first heard about winter grazing. I had no idea this was even happening."

Carey, who grew up in a small city in Texas, has taken a long and winding road to Saskatoon. After teaching high school in Texas for five years, she went back to school to pursue veterinary college but after taking a course in ruminant nutrition at New Mexico State University, she switched gears and enrolled in a master's program in animal science instead.

From there, she worked three years with a feedlot consulting company based in Calgary. When she decided to return to school for a PhD, she knew she



USask PhD student Rachel Carey in front of the pen with bred cows at the Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence near Clavet.

Lana Haight photo

wanted to be at USask and supervised by Penner, having read research papers by him when she was a master's student.

Grazing bred cows in fields during the winter is not new in Western Canada, but no research has been conducted on how well animals fare when they graze on corn residue—the leaves, stalks, husks, cobs, everything that's left in the field after the high-moisture corn kernels have been harvested.

"Profit margins for farmers and cattle feeders are extremely tight. Anything they can do to decrease the cost of feed-

ing animals while maintaining (growth) performance is important. We are looking at the possible economic benefits of using these alternative corn products."

Carey's research is addressing the old adage "waste not, want not" with her whole-systems study.

In the spring of 2020, 200 acres of corn was seeded at the university's Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence, south of Clavet, Sask. The corn was harvested as three different products: as snaplage, the term used to describe a method where the ear of the corn is harvested or what would be snapped off the corn stalk, as high-moisture corn and as corn silage. In all three cases, the feed was fermented and, starting in February, the corn has been fed to two groups of cattle

at the centre's feedlot and in its metabolism barn.

Carey is tracking the animals' weight gain and evaluating how well the animals are digesting the corn feed.

She started the bred cow component of her research on November 25 when 30 cows began feeding on the high-moisture corn residue left in windrows. Another 30 were in a control group, feeding on barley that was swathed at the hard dough stage.

"These are good Canadian cattle. They know what they are looking for. They have figured it out," said Carey. "Once you have the cows trained to look for the swaths and nose around in the snow, they find the feed. I was amazed at how fast they found the swaths. They knew exactly where they were."

Carey wasn't able to feed cows using the snaplage residue because a winter storm in early November covered the snaplage residue with snow too deep for the cattle to find the feed.

Carey's project took another hit with freezing rain and heavy, wet snow in early January. She and Penner made the difficult decision to move all the bred cows off the fields and to the centre's Forage and Cow-Calf Research and Teaching Unit where they are continuing to be fed.

As disappointed as she is, Carey realizes that she is conducting real-world research with real-world conditions, the same unpredictable weather conditions cattle farmers in Western Canada face every year.

"It's hard to compete with Mother Nature," said Carey with a laugh.

The research is funded by Saskatchewan Cattleman's Association and Beef Cattle Research Council and the seed is provided by Pioneer Hi-Bred. Carey's research will continue until the summer of 2022.

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