

New provincial survey crew based at Shoal Lake

As part of the Province's management plan for enhancing soil-survey activity, \$423,550 in funding has been allocated through the federal-provincial Agricultural Policy Framework for the first year of a three-year program that begins this spring. Five staff will be added to the program to speed up survey and mapping activities, including two professional staff and two field technicians in Shoal Lake, and one laboratory position in Winnipeg. The benefits of soil mapping are that the data is unique to that sector of the province, providing valuable information to environmental farm planning and soil-nutrient management. By establishing staff at Shoal Lake, the province is supporting agricultural diversification and enhancing information in support of the *Planning Act* and the *Water Protection Act* as municipalities in the area meet with the public to plan future developments. Municipalities rely on the findings from these surveys when making sustainable land-use decisions that will affect future business ventures and economic development in their area.

Partnership supports Carberry's Crop Diversification Centre

Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI), Manitoba Water Stewardship, the Government of Canada and the Manitoba Horticultural Productivity Enhancement Centre have entered into a four-year agreement that will ensure funding continues to the Canada-Manitoba Crop Diversification Centre (CMCDC) in Carberry. CMCDC researches and develops services for special crops and sustainable water management, as well working towards environmentally-sound potato production technologies that increase the quality and yield for Manitoba growers. MAFRI will provide \$60,000 in funding through the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) to support on-site operating costs as well as extension services, and Manitoba Water Stewardship will provide support for sustainable water management.

Manitoba entrepreneurs meet the challenge

Nine Manitoba companies represented the province at the Salon International de l'Alimentation (SIAL), the largest

food exhibition in Canada and one of the pre-eminent industry gatherings in North America, held this April in Montreal. Over 735 exhibitors from over 80 countries attend the food, beverage, wine and spirits exhibition where 14,000 visitors attend in search of the latest trends and food products. Representatives from Manitoba included Roy Legumex, Wild West Seasonings, Manitoba Starch Products, Sunny Day Products, D.D. Leobard Winery, Sabourin Seed Service, Prairie Flour Mills, Vandaele Seeds and Miinan and Calypso Slices. The trade opportunities that result from this event are significant, providing Manitoba companies a chance to contact numerous foreign market representatives at a single event, collect information on potential customers and discuss real cross-marketing opportunities.

'Arctic bridge' a hub for Russia's air and sea links

Manitoba is strategically located to develop the 'Arctic bridge' shipping route, as well as the Manitoba-Russia air link across the North Pole. The proposed sea link from Churchill to Murmansk may have two test shipment



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runs as early as this summer. Estimates are that shipping commodities by sea between the two ports would be 50% less expensive than shipping from other ports currently being used. The air link would save about 20% on fuel.

The Manitoba and Canadian governments are supporting the project by offering favourable aviation fuel taxes and flexible rules regarding which flights can land at the airport. This opportunity presents a key economic development strategy. It is anticipated the farm equipment, medical supplies and specialized forest products will be exported and fertilizer, refined petroleum products and steel will be imported, expanding from the current shipments of crops. Currently, researchers are trying to determine the potential economic benefit to both nations.

New SDIF projects announced

Manitoba will provide over \$291,000 from the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund (SDIF) to fund 17 projects across the province. SDIF supports a wide range of projects including research studies and demonstration of new technology, community enhancement and environmental awareness. Some of the projects receiving support include: Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach (\$3,800) to revitalize the municipal lands, including green spaces and park areas, while increasing public awareness of environmental issues; Turtle Mountain Conservation District (\$25,000) to permanently secure 50% of the remaining forest and wetland habitat on private land in the region through the signing of conservation easements; University of Manitoba, Department of Entomology with Coalition to Save the Elms (\$14,367) for a four-year research project to improve control methods for Dutch elm disease in Manitoba communities; and, University of Manitoba, Department of Soil Science (\$24,810) for the second year of Manure Nutrients in Sensitive Land, a three-year research project to continue investigation of nutrient cycling and greenhouse gas emissions from soil. The research will contribute to development of best management practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from animals and limit transfer of harmful manure bacteria to the environment.

New bursary for rural and northern students

Access to college and university education for rural and northern Manitobans will improve as a result of a new five-year bursary program. Provincial funding of \$500,000 will be used to leverage at least that amount in donor support to create \$1 million in endowment funds. This will provide rural and northern students with resources to offset the costs of traveling or moving to larger centres to further their education. Eligibility criteria will be established at the local level as Manitoba community foundations work with local donors to create new bursaries and scholarships or add to existing ones. The Provincial contribution will be paid to local community foundations based on their success in growing educational endowments. Bursaries will be given to students demonstrating the greatest need for financial support.

Enhanced services for seniors

The Support Services for Seniors Program (SSSP) has received \$500,000 for new programming to assist seniors in maintaining their health and their ability to live independently in the community. This funding will support a wide range of services and resources for seniors including congregate meals, community resource councils, yard and home maintenance, safety checks, advocacy, senior centres and tenant resource pro-



grams. The Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat has also updated many of its informational print materials such as the Manitoba Seniors' Guide 2005-06 and Emergency Information for Seniors. These and other publications are available by calling the secretariat toll-free at 1-800-665-6565 or through a local seniors resource centre. Additional information is available on the secretariat website at www.gov.mb.ca/sd.

Province to fund water-bombers

In April, the Province announced that the Office of the Fire Commissioner will be able to use the provincial water-bomber fleet to assist municipalities in certain emergency operations at no cost to municipalities. The CL-215 water bombers, normally used to fight forest fires, have been used in recent years by the Office of the Fire Commissioner to combat other emergency and fire situations needing aerial assistance including the Firdale derailment, the strawboard plant fire at Elm Creek and a hangar fire in Gimli.

The Province operates a fleet of seven CL-215s that are designed to self-load up to 1,000 gallons of water by flying over a lake or river using a scoop. The planes can also be used to apply chemical fire retardants that are loaded by pumps. The AMM has been lobbying for the Province to cover these costs and looks forward to the benefits that will accrue to municipalities.

New apprenticeship and certification funding

The Provincial Government has committed \$506,800 in new funding for apprenticeship and certification in the designated trades to continue providing skilled employees for Manitoba's labour market. About half the increased budget will support community-based apprenticeship training, while the remainder will increase capacity to monitor and ensure compliance in the compulsory certification trades. There are important benefits to offering training programs in local communities across Manitoba since trainees do not have to leave their home community to obtain training. Increased support for compulsory trades will enhance service quality as well as increase public safety and protect consumers. For more information, visit www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet/apprent.