



newsletter

Team Saskatchewan wows BIO 2003

Saskatchewan Industry and Resources Minister Eric Cline declared his province "Wide Open for Biotechnology" at BIO 2003, at the BIO 2003 Trade Show and Convention, held in Washington, D.C. on June 21 to 25. BIO 2003 is the world's largest gathering of biotechnology leaders, with over 20,000 international delegates in attendance.

Cline was accompanied by Team Saskatchewan, a contingent of business, academic, community and government leaders from across the province. The team was led by Ag-West Biotech President Peter McCann. Representing Innovation Place at the conference was Austin Beggs, Director of Marketing and Corporate Development for the research park.

"BIO 2003 is an opportunity for us to make high-level contacts, build stronger business relationships and attract new business partners and investment to Saskatchewan, says Cline. "We are promoting an economic sector – agricultural biotechnology – in which our province is world class, a sector that is helping shape our wide open future."

Cline hosted a special event for delegates and media at BIO 2003 which showcased Saskatchewan's leadership in ag biotech and profiled a number of the province's most successful biotech firms. One-third of

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McCann announces retirement from Ag-West Biotech

Saskatchewan's leading ambassador of agricultural biotechnology has announced his decision to semi-retire. On June 12, Peter McCann, President of Ag-West Biotech Inc., announced he will be resigning his position with the corporation effective October 31, 2003. A long-time city councilor, McCann will also not seek re-election in the approaching Saskatoon civic election.

"We don't intend to vegetate in retirement at all," says Peter McCann. "We have a whole host of plans."

The McCanns will move to Belleville, Ontario this autumn, where Peter will do some consulting work in ag biotech and Fay will continue her career in the residential real estate industry.

"We are hoping for a lower level of activity for both of us, so we can take some time to visit with our children and grandchildren, and do a bit of traveling."

McCann says he has mixed feelings about leaving Saskatoon. "I've been in Saskatchewan since 1979, and it's been a very, very happy part of our lives. We've thoroughly enjoyed our time here."

As President of Ag-West Biotech, McCann has played a prominent role in the development of Saskatoon's biotech cluster.

Since its incorporation as a not-for-profit corporation in 1989, Ag-West Biotech has supported the development of a strong and profitable agricultural biotechnology industry in Saskatchewan, by providing investment and support for biotech start-up ventures and expansions,

by influencing government investment and regulatory policy at the federal and provincial levels, and through education and communications activities.

The corporation is funded by the provincial government, through Saskatchewan Agriculture Food and Rural Revitalization.

"I've been honored to be in this position and help things develop in biotech. I've had the privilege to work with some very talented people here at Ag-West Biotech, beginning with Murray McLaughlin, who established this organization in 1989. He did a super job," says McCann.

He also lauds officials of the provincial government for their on-going support of Saskatchewan's ag biotech industry. "The provincial government recognizes how vital this activity is to the future success of Saskatchewan, particularly in terms of developing the knowledge-based economy."

While he is quick to attribute credit to others, McCann remains one of the province's most effective proponents of agricultural biotechnology.

Under his leadership, Ag-West Biotech's core work in ag biotech has helped to foster an industry which now generates sales of products well in excess of a half billion dollars per year.

The dynamic growth of the ag biotech industry over the past decade has been mirrored by the steady expansion of Saskatoon's research park, Innovation Place, home to many of Saskatchewan's

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leading ag biotech firms. Of the 120 companies located at Innovation Place, approximately 60 per cent are involved in ag biotech research, development and commercialization.

McCann sees Innovation Place as “absolutely the jewel in the crown” of Saskatchewan’s outstanding infrastructure of research organizations and facilities. “Ag-West Biotech brings many international delegations to Saskatoon all the time, and they are what the British call ‘gob-smacked’ when they see what’s going on here. They’re amazed by the quality of the environment and the support services that exist at Innovation Place.”

Ag-West has been instrumental in helping many ag biotech companies locate and grow in Saskatoon – from major players including Dow AgroSciences, Bayer CropScience (formerly Aventis) and Monsanto Canada – to local firms such as Philom Bios, Bioriginal Food and Science, Prairie Plant Systems, Saskatoon Colustrum Company, MCN Canola and Phenomenome Discoveries, just to name a few.

McCann also takes pride in his involvement in the province’s emerging nutraceutical and functional foods industry. Ag-West Biotech played an integral role in the establishment of the Saskatchewan Nutraceutical Network, which now boasts over 100 industry members.

McCann is also proud of Ag-West’s role in nurturing Saskatchewan’s bio-products industry. Ag-West Biotech has helped to launch Bio-Products Saskatchewan Inc. (BPS), a non-profit industry organization established to develop and grow bio-based industries in Saskatchewan.

The bio-products industry brings new value to agricultural and forest industry wastes through processing into bio-fuels, energy alternatives, adhesives, resins, structural composite materials and fertilizers.

McCann sees bio-products, produced

from renewable sustainable agriculture-based materials, replacing petroleum-based products in the not-so-distant future.

Another major benefit of bio-products is that the industry will help bolster the economy of rural Saskatchewan. Bio-processing will provide an alternate revenue stream for rural communities, as small- to medium-sized processing plants are set up across the province in close proximity to raw resources including oilseeds, cereal grains, flax straw and forest industry wastes.

The strong interest in the potential of Saskatchewan’s bio-products industry was evident June 14 to 16, when over 150 people attended the Bio-Logical Futures Conference organized by Bio-Products Saskatchewan Inc. at the Delta

Bessborough Hotel. “We had people in attendance from across Europe, the United States and Canada, and they were very complimentary, saying that Saskatchewan is miles ahead of any other province in Canada in terms of bio-product development,” says McCann.

McCann will now pass the biotech torch on to the next president of Ag-West. “What I’m most concerned about is that we continue on this path and there be a seamless transition to new management in the organization. I’m sure that can happen, given the great strength and expertise of our Board of Directors, chaired by Shelley Brown. The important thing is to continue the good work, and build upon Saskatchewan’s investment in ag biotech,” says McCann.

Innovation Place Golf Tournament thanks participants, sponsors

Thank You... to everyone who participated in the 7th Annual Innovation Place Golf Tournament for Easter Seals on Thursday, May 29, 2003. We are very pleased to announce that we raised \$2,000 this year for Easter Seals!

The winners:

- Doug Zolinski, Executive Council (Men’s Low Gross)
- Marie Knowles, Crown Investment Corporation (Women’s Low Gross)

Winning Team:

- Bayer CropScience

Closest to the pin:

- Austin Beggs, Innovation Place
- Doug Zolinski, Executive Council
- Rob Sykes, Boffins Club
- Mike Tourigny, SED Systems

A BIG thank you to all our generous sponsors:

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Despite the gale-force winds, a good time was had by all. Mark your calendars; next year’s tournament will be on May 27, 2004.

NRC-PBI Industry Partnership Facility will bring future tenants to Innovation Place

The biotech start-up companies currently incubating in the new Industry Partnership Facility at NRC Plant Biotechnology Institute (NRC-PBI) could well become the future tenants of Innovation Place, says Dr. Kutty Kartha, Director-General of NRC-PBI.

The \$15.4-million expansion to the NRC-PBI facility on the U of S campus was officially opened in March of this year. Six plant-science companies, including two international firms, have already moved into the facility to gain access to NRC's specialized facilities, the expertise of its researchers, extensive national and international networks, technology intelligence and knowledge dissemination resources.

The six companies now operating from NRC-PBI's Industry Partnership Facility include:

- **Guardian Biotechnologies Inc.** is the Canadian affiliate of a Korean-based company that utilizes molecular farming to produce vaccines and commercial enzymes and is developing genetic screening services for both processed foods and raw cereals and grains.

- **Seed Check Technologies Inc.** from Alberta, is working with NRC-PBI to develop DNA chip technologies to offer genetic testing services and supportive research activities for the seed industry.

- **Agrisoma Biosciences Inc.** is a Canadian ag biotech company owned by Chromos Molecular Systems Inc. Agrisoma is developing chromosome platform technologies for the development of high-value crops with multiple commercial applications.

- **Bioriginal Food and Science Corp.** is a Saskatchewan-based nutraceutical/functional food company producing Essential Fatty Acids from plants. Bioriginal is collaborating with NRC-PBI researchers to investigate new health products derived from plants.

- **Targeted Growth (TG) Canada**

Inc. is the Canadian division of the Seattle-based biotechnology firm, Targeted Growth. TG Canada will utilize advanced scientific techniques to boost the overall yield and health of crops.

- **SynGene Biotech Inc.** is the newest addition to the Industry Partnership Facility. A spin-off from the University of Victoria, SynGene is collaborating with NRC-PBI scientists to research the peptides in canola, pulse crops and wheat. The peptide molecules developed by SynGene, under the name Protectin, can fight diseases and pathogens in plants. The use of peptides could also reduce the use of ag pesticides.

Kartha says the Industry Partnership Facility also houses NRC-PBI's management offices, business offices, library and meeting rooms. "The second floor of the new expansion is what's called the 'Technology Suite.' We've consolidated some of our leading scientific infrastructure there. We have the genomics lab, the robotic handling laboratory, DNA synthesis and sequencing, mass spectroscopy, proteomics, bioinformatics – all located on the second floor. These state-of-the-art analytical services support the research projects conducted at NRC-PBI. It's extremely efficient to cluster these facilities together, not only for our own scientists, but also to provide easy access to these facilities for our industry partners."

The University of Saskatchewan is another beneficiary of the NRC-PBI expansion. The offices for the U of S V-P of Research have been relocated to the third floor of the new NRC-PBI wing. "They will occupy these offices for two years, with an option for a third year. There are about 25 or 26 people from the U of S who have relocated to our facilities, because the University is so short of space," says Kartha.

"We work very closely with the University. It's a mutually beneficial

partnership and one that we're happy to maintain."

The Industry Partnership Facility has the potential to accommodate a total of eight to ten biotech companies. Kartha says that announcements of several new companies are pending.

"Our hope is that once these companies are established and grow big, they will move to Innovation Place," says Kartha.

"We've seen a number of examples where companies have started small here, with two or three staff, and then moved to Innovation Place, eventually employing 60 to 80 people."

Kartha says NRC-PBI works in partnership with Innovation Place. "It's a good partnership, because Innovation Place has all the possibilities for scale-up, and we have all the possibilities for upstream – the early stage R & D. We really don't want to keep a company in the Industry Partnership Facilities for more than five years. That's the plan at this stage."

Regina Research Park barbecue a big success

The Regina Research Park would like to thank everyone who participated in our second "Tenant Barbecue." Over 250 people attended and enjoyed the great weather and food!

With your generous support, we raised over \$800.00 for the United Way of Regina. Thanks to Mayor Pat Fiacco, Shelly Brown and student, Taylor Hautz for joining us during the Centennial Celebration week and offering greetings from the City of Regina. This contributed in making the event a huge success!

updates

Who's new to Saskatchewan's research parks?

Please welcome the following new companies to the Innovation Place community:

• **The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency** has opened offices in The Atrium, at 230 - 111 Research Drive. Contact Judy Nurse at (306) 655-2678 or email: jnurse@scf.sk.ca

On the move...

Please note the following change of address:

• **Innovation Consulting Group** has relocated within Innovation Place to 104-110 Research Drive. Contact Larry Goodfellow at (306) 657-5644 or email: goodfellow@innovationgroup.org.

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all ag biotech industry activity in Canada is located in Saskatchewan.

Team Saskatchewan members also met with key international business and government representatives, in addition to staffing a trade booth at the convention.

While at BIO 2003, Cline also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Andhra Pradesh in India on future co-operation in agricultural biotechnology.

Changes of address or other updates can be directed to: Wonda Kirychuk, Innovation Place, 114 -15 Innovation Boulevard, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 2X8, or call (306) 933-6581. Email: wkirychuk@innovationplace.com.

Computers for Schools calls for donations of surplus or outdated computer equipment

Is your company updating its computer equipment? Do you have computers which are insufficient for your needs, but are still useable? Computers For Schools (CFS) invites you to donate computer components for use by Saskatchewan schools.

The Computers For Schools program was established in 1993 by Industry Canada and the Telephone Pioneers, says Dalton Tamney, a member of the SaskTel Telephone Pioneers and CFS volunteer. "The federal government realized an opportunity to recycle many of the computers they had declared obsolete and were replacing. Rather than having these computers end up in landfills, the suggestion was made to donate the computers to schools."

Gary Headington, a SaskTel Pioneer and CFS volunteer, says that's when the Telephone Pioneers across the country got involved with Industry Canada to facilitate the program. "The Telephone Pioneers supplied all of the labour and Industry Canada supplied the dollars to get the program going."

The federal government no longer funds the program directly. In our province, these dollars now flow into Saskatchewan Technology Renewal Inc., a registered charitable organization administered by SaskTel Pioneers.

All schools registered with the provincial Department of Learning are eligible to place requests for computers with the program.

The Computers for Schools program currently operates across Canada. In the national program's ten-year history, more than 400,000 computers have been donated to Canadian schools. Over 14,000 computers have been placed in schools across Saskatchewan since 1993, placed in classrooms, computer labs and libraries.

In our province, SaskTel has provided the Telephone Pioneers with the facilities and supplies to operate nine repair and refurbishing centres across the province. "We like to give something back to the community, to our schools, and we're also interested in computers," says Headington.

Currently, all federal government departments contribute their surplus equipment to CFS. Several Crown Corporations, such as SaskTel and SGI, and

an increasing number of private sector companies have also become involved.

When a computer is donated to the program, Telephone Pioneer volunteers conduct a thorough check-up, refurbishing and cleaning, to ensure the computer system is "classroom-ready." "The hard drives have to be wiped clean and reformatted with operating systems software," says Tamney.

To meet the current demand by Saskatchewan schools, CFS volunteers are appealing to the private and public sectors to join in donating computer equipment.

The program is in need of DOS-based CPUs (Pentium 133 and above), laptop computers, Macintosh CPUs (Power Mac 100 and above), Powerbooks, laser printers, colour monitors, keyboards, mice, printers and modems. Companies that donate to CFS are eligible for a tax receipt, providing that the equipment is Pentium or Power PC level.

"We have lots of requests for computers from schools that are going unfilled because we are in need of more computers," says Headington.

Tamney extends a special invitation to companies at Innovation Place and Regina Research Park who are upgrading their computer systems and may have hardware to donate. "Don't throw those computers in the dumpsters or landfill. Technology-oriented companies are likely to have computers of a speed and nature that would be very good for our program. It could be equipment that we could dearly use."

Companies worried about information security issues are reminded by Headington that "computer hard drives are wiped completely clean of all information. We never let a computer go out of the building without completely reformatting it and installing new operating software."

For more information, call 931-5625 in Saskatoon or 777-3435 in Regina. Details are also available on the Computers For Schools website at: www.saskschools.ca/~cfs/

The Innovation Place Newsletter is published monthly for Saskatchewan's research parks by the Armstrong Creative Group. For information, call Jeannie Armstrong at (306) 249-2459, or email: armstrongcreative@shaw.ca

Share your company's latest business achievements, announcements or events of interest with the Innovation Place Newsletter. Please forward information to Wonda Kirychuk at Innovation Place... Fax # (306) 933-8200 or e-mail: wkirychuk@innovationplace.com