

# PRESS RELEASE

## ACTION SWIFT CURRENT

### For July 2002

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#### ***Huge potential for growth in the agriculture sector!***

There is little doubt that one of the most significant opportunities for growth in this province lies in the agricultural sector. With close to 50% of the arable land base in Canada, Saskatchewan holds a very distinct natural advantage with respect to productive capacity. Unfortunately, much of that advantage has not been utilized to its full potential. Saskatchewan's reliance on the production of low value, high volume commodities for export, has caused this province to fall way behind our neighbouring provinces in terms of our agriculture economic outputs.

In January 2002, *Action Swift Current*, a community partnership initiative was launched to help set a direction towards economic growth for the City and R.M. of Swift Current. *Action Swift Current* sees agriculture as one area that could help lead the way for economic and population growth for Swift Current, and offers the biggest bang and the quickest return on investment.

While Saskatchewan holds close to 50% of the nation's farmland, the value of its outputs (gross farm gate receipts in 2000) resulted in only 15% of the national total. Ontario, on the other hand, holds 8% of the farmland and generated over 25% of agricultures industry output. Figures identified from a Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce study are staggering. Farm gate receipts in Saskatchewan in 2000 stood at less than \$90 per acre. Compare that to Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and PEI who range from \$400 to \$600 per acre. If Saskatchewan were able to diversify its agriculture sector to the point where we were able to match the output value in most of the Canadian provinces and focus on increasing revenue, this would have a major impact on our provincial economy and bring much needed stability to rural areas.

Intensive livestock production, agri-tourism and value-added processing are areas that hold a great deal of potential for Saskatchewan. Our low population density and large land base is ideal for intensive livestock production. For years, value-added processing has been touted as a key solution to the agriculture sectors woes, but the willingness of entrepreneurs and producers to embrace this concept has been limited at best. But for these to occur, there must be a change in our approach to agriculture and we must develop targets and measures to identify progress and determine the effectiveness of industry policies. The opportunities are there, but we must be willing to break the current trends and accept some risks to fully utilize the potential in the sector.

Through the *Action Swift Current* initiative, our community is laying the groundwork to make Swift Current a great place to live, work and invest. To learn more about the *Action Swift Current* initiative, please contact us at 306-778-7887 or visit our website [www.actionswiftcurrent.com](http://www.actionswiftcurrent.com)