Sharing farming innovations

By Ashleigh Viveiros

A group of international visitors was in town last week to learn about Canadian farming innovations for ideas to take back with them overseas.

Organized by Winnipeg-based International Development Enterprises (iDE), 12 representatives of iDE’s operations in Ghana, Ethiopia, Cambodia, and Burkina Faso toured Southern Potato’s Winkler facilities and the Pembina Threshermen’s Museum on Oct. 1.

The local tours were part of a week-long visit to Manitoba that also saw the group make stops at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, the Canadian Mennonite Organic Farm, Peak of the Market, and the University of Manitoba Ian Morrison Research Centre.

“They’ve come to Manitoba to learn from what we consider to be some of the best in agriculture,” explained iDE Canada CEO Bill Pratt, noting the focus was on processes and products that focus on financial viability and sustainability. “We want them to take those ideas and go back to their countries and try and figure out ... how can those lessons help the farmers right now who are still where we were many, many years ago.”

Touring the Pembina Threshermen’s Museum was an important part of that, Pratt said, pointing out that some of the agricultural tools and methods on display there as part of Canada’s farming heritage are those still being used in poorer countries around the world.

“There’s things in there that go back 40, 50, 100 years, and some of those things they’re still using in our African countries, for example,” he said. “So they get to see our past, but it also brings great hope for their future because they can see you can move from that to what they’ve seen this week.”

At Southern Potato, the group got the chance to tour the company’s storage facility in downtown Winkler as well as its seed plant south of the city.

“It’s good to be able to demonstrate the technology that we’re using here,” said company CEO Keith Kuhl. Kuhl has long been an avid supporter of iDE’s work around the globe, having most recently toured their operations in Bangladesh.

“I was in Bangladesh visiting some of the projects this last summer, so it’s nice to reciprocate and get some of them here now,” he said. “iDE is a great organization to work with.”

Pratt explained that the organization strives to offer a hand-up, rather than a hand-out. “We’re based on the premise of helping people help themselves,” he said, stressing that iDE’s projects work to give people in nearly a dozen countries the ability to lift themselves out of poverty through training and technology. “We’re really about inspiring, igniting the local market so that when we’re done everything continues on by itself. It speaks to the people being in control of their own lives.”

The tours certainly gave the participants food for thought.

Kebede Ayele, director of iDE Ethiopia,

Continued on page 9
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SUBMITTED PHOTO

pia, said the whirlwind week left him with a great deal many ideas, though he acknowledged that Canadian farming is quite different from the way things are done back home.

“The farmers here, they have huge areas of land, thousands of acres, and it’s all highly mechanized, less labour, and highly productive. Our farmers own small plots of land—on average, about one acre—their production is very low ... and they’re using equipment we saw at [the Threshermen’s Museum] you used 100 years ago. It’s hard work, and productivity is low, and therefore farmers are poor.

“But although there is such a stark contrast between the farmers of Canada and the farmers of Africa, we have seen a lot of similarities, too. Similarities in terms of behaviour, in terms of the challenges farmer’s face, and in terms of the support they need: agronomic support, market support, business management support.

“The farmers of Canada get that support from many different directions, and our farmers also need that kind of support,” Ayele said. “And we, IDE, are there to provide that support. There’s a gap there, and we are filling that gap.

“We are helping our farmers to modernize a little bit ... but it will take many years for us to get to where you are in Canada.”

To learn more about IDE Canada and the work it’s doing around the world, check them out online at www.ide-canada.org.

> FORUM, FROM PG. 8

the debt,” he stressed.

He added that they are the only pro-life party in federal politics and that he believed he was the only declared pro-life candidate in the Portage-Lisgar riding.

“We would work towards establishing some laws around abortion, and we’d use the notwithstanding clause to prevent doctor-assisted suicides,” he added.

Dondo, who has been a school trustee and currently serves on the Local Urban District of St. Claude, said they would prioritize balancing the budget and eliminate the debt within 25 years, which would allow them to reduce taxes and invest more in services.

“I don’t think [the Conservatives] can be trusted to balance budgets because they haven’t done it yet in the last seven years,” he said. “They did have a surplus in the last fiscal year, but that was more by chance than any plan they had.”

CANDICE BERGEN, CONSERVATIVE PARTY

In her absence, Bergen’s representative read a statement on her behalf.

In it, she touted the strong record of the Conservative government, particularly in managing the economy through challenging times, and she suggested they are the best choice to maintain that growth.

Bergen also said that she worked hard for Portage-Lisgar to bring the riding infrastructure funding as well as in advocating for funding for seniors centres and residences and assisting small businesses through the small business grant.

Portage-Lisgar voters head to the polls on Monday, Oct. 19. If you can’t make it that day, the advance voting polls will be open from Oct. 9-12 from noon to 8 p.m. Advance votes can be cast at the Elections Canada office in Winkler’s Southland Mall.

For more information on the different ways to cast your vote, including how to double-check that you’re on the voter’s list, go to www.elections.ca.

Away or busy on October 19?

You can vote in advance.

If you’re ready to vote early, you can vote at your advance polling place between October 9 and 12, from noon to 8:00 p.m.

Or you can vote at any Elections Canada office across the country any day until October 13 at 6:00 p.m.

For all voting locations, check your voter information card, visit elections.ca or call 1-800-463-6868 (TTY 1-800-361-8935).

Elections Canada has all the information you need to be ready to vote.