



SaskWatch

Consumer Association of Saskatchewan Inc. ISSN 1184-0005 Volume 28 Issue 3 Fall 2012

UNIQUELY SASKATCHEWAN

- First explored by Europeans in 1690 and settled in 1774, having also been inhabited for thousands of years by various indigenous groups.
- Entered confederation and became a province Sept 1, 1905.
- Official flag adopted in 1969 featuring the provincial shield of arms and the western red lily.
- Name is from the Plains Indian word *kisiskatchewan* meaning *the river that flows swiftly*, a reference to the area's major river.
- Covers approximately 651,900 square kilometres (more than a quarter million square miles).
- Has 15 cities: Estevan, Humboldt, Lloydminster, Melfort, Melville, Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon, Swift Current, Weyburn, Yorkton, Martensville, Meadow Lake.
- Principal industries are mining, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism.
- Has more than 2 million hectares of parkland: 2 Canadian National Parks, 34 Provincial Parks and 95 Regional Parks.
- Produces 99% of Canada's chickpeas; 95% of Canada's lentils; 86% of Canada's durum wheat; and 74% of Canada's flax.
- Home to Canada's only training academy for Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) recruits, located in Regina.
- Site of North America's oldest bird sanctuary, established in 1887 at Last Mountain Lake.
- Receives more hours of sunshine than any other Canadian province.
- Canada's sunshine capital, Estevan, averages 2,540 sunshine-filled hours each year.
- The hottest temperature ever recorded in Canada happened in Saskatchewan. The temperature rose to 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in Midale and Yellow Grass.
- The coldest temperature ever recorded in Saskatchewan was -56.7 degrees Celsius (-70 degrees Fahrenheit) in Prince Albert.
- Has many places named after body parts: Knee Lake, Eyebrow, Moose Jaw, Arm River, Head Lake, Skull Creek, Elbow and Bone Creek.
- Cree is the most commonly spoken Aboriginal language with about 20,000 Skatchei Cree-speakers, making it the second most common language in Saskatchewan after English.
- Sask. has around 100,000 lakes.
- Albert Street Bridge in Regina is the largest bridge over the shortest span of water in the world.
- The Athabasca Sand Dunes stretch for 100 km along the south shore of Lake Athabasca in northwest Sask - the largest active sand surface in Canada and one of the most northern sets of major dune fields in the world.
- The Great Sand Hills of southwestern Saskatchewan contain one of the largest set of active sand dunes in Canada.
- The western red lily was chosen as the official flower in 1941.
- The sharp-tailed grouse was selected as the provincial bird emblem in 1945.
- The white birch was adopted as the official tree in 1988.
- The white-tailed deer was designated the official animal in 2001.
- Curling was named Saskatchewan's official sport in 2001.
- Sylvite, also known as potash, is Saskatchewan's official mineral.
- Saskatchewan is the world's largest producer of potash.
- Saskatchewan is the birthplace of Canadian Medicare.
- The population of Saskatchewan today is approx. 1,072,082.

Premiers of Saskatchewan Since 1905

Walter Scott (1905 to 1916)
William Martin (1916 to 1922)
Charles Dunning (1922 to 1926)
James Gardiner (1926 to 1929)
James Anderson (1929 to 1934)

James Gardiner (1934 to 1935)
William Patterson (1935 to 1944)
Tommy Douglas (1944 to 1961)
Woodrow S. Lloyd (1961 to 1964)
Ross Thatcher (1964 to 1971)

Allan Blakeney (1971 to 1982)
Grant Devine (1982 to 1991)
Roy Romanow (1991 to 2001)
Lorne Calvert (2001 to 2007)
Brad Wall (2007 to present)

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Consumer Association of Saskatchewan, active since 1947, is a non-profit, volunteer-driven association committed to fairness in the marketplace and improving the quality of life for consumers.

Through information and education, CASK assists consumers make wise use of personal resources and represents the consumer interest in marketplace issues with business and governments.

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**CASK Board of Directors
2012-2013**

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Ruth Robinson
Mary L. Glauser
Lillian Findlay
Maura Gillis-Cipywnyk

President's Message

We at the Consumer Association of Saskatchewan hope everyone had a safe and enjoyable summer. As summer is coming to an end, and we are leaving outdoor activities behind for fall and winter ones, we would like to encourage our readers and supporters to consider joining our organization as volunteers or as board members.

Canadians are well known to be caring and involved with community and charity-based organizations and they appreciate and understand the value of giving back to our communities. Many studies have also revealed that people with a strong sense of community tend to enjoy better physical and mental health.

We can offer many ways in which you can feel connected with our community. We invite you to contact our office to find out how

you can become part of the Consumer Association and look forward to hearing from you.

This edition of *SaskWatch* features 'Uniquely Saskatchewan' on our cover, as well as articles on Consumer Debt, Smart Meters, Extended Warranties, Eating Locally, Sask. Intercultural Association, Get a \$50 Toilet Rebate, Saskatchewan Book of Musts, Birds Prefer Pooping on Red Cars, a Flowers & Wine Scam, and much more.

We hope to see you at *Spotlight on Seniors* on October 2nd at TCU Place. We will have a Display Booth set up with plenty of free literature, as well as copies of *SaskWatch*. Drop by for a visit and take home a lot of helpful information on being an informed consumer.

Best wishes from the staff and board.

Audrey Findlay, President

Consumer Debt

The theme of consumer debt is not a new one. It is a massive global problem and affects the way people spend - and the way people save. There's plenty of information on the news and on the net saying that Canadians of all ages need to slow down and consider the debt load they're acquiring when making purchases. Rising inflation and increasing interest rates can quickly become devastating to households that are barely managing their finances. One strategy to protect yourself from crippling debt is to *stop impulse buying*. Before you buy, ask yourself: "Do I need this - or do I just want it?" And then ask yourself, "Can I afford it?"

Consider other options, as well, such as buying used or renting, if possible. Perhaps "downsizing" your wish list will help you to keep things afloat

financially. Remember, self-control in spending habits is often a key factor in avoiding nasty debt situations. Keep in mind that marketers and businesses are in the business of selling. It is up to you, as a consumer, to determine whether or not you need to buy. That decision lies with you alone ...

~ so be a savvy consumer ~

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Smart Meters

There has been much debate over Smart Meters. Utility companies are touting their benefits; others are concerned about health, safety and privacy issues. SaskPower's Advanced Metering Infrastructure program will result in the installation of



approximately 500,000 smart meters across the province. They say their customers will see many benefits, including: no more electric or gas bill estimates; no more meter reader visits, and quicker electric service connects and disconnects.

RF/EMF Concerns.

Sask Power says they continue to monitor concerns related to the radio frequency (RF) Electric and Magnetic fields (EMF) emanating from Smart Meters and the new meters will comply with American National Standards Institute standards for meter design and manufacture. For customers who express concerns, SaskPower will continue to allow meter relocations on a customer's property, in keeping with SaskPower's current policy.

Coalition to Stop Smart Meters.

In California, more than 44 municipalities, including eight counties, "have criminalized the installation of, banned or taken resolutions out against 'smart' meters."

In November 2011, the Union of B.C. Municipalities voted in favor of a moratorium to temporarily suspend smart meter installations. 55 cities have passed motions opposing the installation of Smart Meters and have Moratoriums and / or Requested Opt Out.

Where's the Opt-out Clause?

Jim Waugh, author of *Living Safely with Electromagnetic Radiation* say the BC Hydro Smart Meter program does not give customers an option to opt-out. In May 2011, a law firm in Maine convinced the Public Utilities Commission "that it was unjust and unreasonable for Central Maine Power Company to refuse to permit residential and small commercial customers to opt-out of their smart meter program." The firm proved that there were unresolved concerns relating to health, privacy and cyber security, and that customers should be given a choice. This was the first time in the U.S. that an electric utility was ordered to give customers a choice and it serves as a precedent for other jurisdictions.

Unclear Radiation Levels.

According to the Health Action Network Society, BC Hydro claims the RF radiation from their Smart Meters is not harmful to people and are within Health Canada guidelines. The Network says the safe exposure guidelines recommended by Health Canada deal only with the thermal effects while ignoring the non-thermal effects and ignoring hundreds of published research studies that document biological effects at intensities thousands of

times lower than what Health Canada deems safe. The Network says wireless smart meter radiation can be harmful to humans and any statements by BC Hydro to the contrary are simply not true.

Invisible Hazards.

The Center for Research on Globalization told customers that these new meters would update the grid and help them control individual usage. But The Centre says customers have not been told about the serious health problems that these RF pulsing meters cause and say that Smart Meter radiation emissions are both greater in volume and more frequent than power companies admit.

Jim Waugh says the radio frequency Smart Meters emit is harmful and people living with the meters are claiming mild to severe symptoms, including: concentration and memory problems, dizziness, tinnitus, heart palpitations, headaches, sleep disruptions, nausea, anxiety and behavioral problems in children. People are especially concerned about certain groups who are vulnerable to Smart Meter health risks, such as children (who absorb radiation at a greater rate than adults), electro-sensitive people, people with pacemakers, and chronically ill people whose immune systems are compromised.

(globalresearch.ca/radiofrequency-radiation-the-invisible-hazards-of-smart-meters/; stopsmartmetersbc.ca/html/; you-be-healthy.com/2011/09/letter-about-dangers-of-smart-meters/; hans.org/magazine/928/Smart-Meters-What-are-the/; globalresearch.ca/smart-meter-dangers-the-health-hazards-of-wireless-electromagnetic-radiation-exposure/)

Use Reusable Bags

Each year about 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags are used worldwide. At over 1 million bags per minute, that's a lot of plastic bags, of which billions end up as litter each year, contaminating oceans and other waterways, and killing wildlife and sea animals, which mistake the plastic debris for food.

Los Angeles Bans Plastic Bags

Los Angeles became the largest city in the nation to approve a ban on plastic bags at supermarket check-out lines, handing a hard-fought victory to environmentalists and promising to change the way Angelenos do their grocery shopping. The City Council voted 13 to 1 to phase out plastic bags over the next 16 months at an estimated 7,500 stores, meaning shoppers will need to bring reusable bags or purchase paper bags for 10 cents each. The ban came after years of campaigning by clean-water advocates who said it would reduce the amount of trash in landfills, waterways and the ocean. They estimate Californians use 12 billion plastic bags a year and that less than 5% of the state's plastic bags are recycled. Los Angeles becomes the latest in a string of California cities, including San Jose, San Francisco and Long Beach, to ban plastic bags. (from *Los Angeles Times*, May 2012)

Oral Health of Seniors

The recently released position paper of the Saskatoon Long Term Care Steering Committee, *Oral Health of Seniors in Saskatchewan*, is a must-read for older adults, families of vulnerable elderly, and caregivers. Contact the Saskatoon Council on Aging at 652-2255 or visit their website to access this information: www.scoa.ca.

Throw a Potty - Get a \$50 Rebate

If you are a Saskatchewan homeowner, you could receive a \$50 rebate per eligible toilet when replacing high volume toilets (13-litre per flush or higher) with toilets that are dual flush or 6-litre per flush or less. This program is funded through the Ministry of Environment's Go Green Fund, which provides financial support to Saskatchewan people to help them Go Green. There are also several municipalities in the province that offer their own incentive programs, in-

cluding supplemental rebates or credits. For more information, contact the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, c/o Provincial Toilet Replacement Program at: 306.694-3900. Website: toiletrebate@swa.ca.

Update Health Registration Info Online

Saskatchewan residents who need to update their health services card registration information can now complete these requests by using new online printable forms at www.health.gov.sk.ca/update-info. Six forms are available, including:

- Change to Family Unit
- Change of Address or Request Replacement Card
- Change of Information or Legal Change of Name
- Notification of Extended Absence
- Notification of an Updated Immigration Document
- Notification of Power of Attorney.

For questions regarding your health card, email: change@health.gov.sk.ca, or contact its call centre at 1.800.667-7551 or 306.787-3251.

Free Information Service @ 1.800.Goog411

No need to spent money on information calls. Dial 1.800.goog411 (1.800.400.4411). The voice at the other end says, "Say the name of the business and the city & province" and then gives you both the address and phone number with the choice of being connected directly right then. This is nationwide and absolutely free! Works on cell phone and landlines.

Birds Prefer Pooping on Red Cars

When shopping for a car, most buyers ask about fuel efficiency and interest rates, but they're probably not asking which colour will attract the most bird poop. A recent study, conducted by online retailer Halfords, analyzed more than 1,140 cars in Brighton, Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester and Bristol over a two-day period. The research revealed that 18% of the pooped-on cars were red, followed by blue cars (14%), black cars (11%), white cars (7%) gray or silver cars (3%) and green cars (1%). According to Halfords' press release, there are many theories - none of which are scientifically proven - as to why this could be happening to red cars more often. Their suggestion to avoid bird bombs ... Don't park under a tree!

(from www.huffingtonpost.com/; www.autoblog.com/)

PIECES

Bits & Pieces

Saskatchewan Intercultural Association is a non-profit organization that provides services for immigrants and refugees in Saskatoon. They recently received the first annual EMCY (Enriching My Canada and Yours) National Foundation's Humanitarian Award, which pays tribute to organizations or individuals who dedicate themselves to "making a difference by upholding human dignity and promoting harmony between all people." These national awards are based on how the nominees reflect diversity in Canada, with particular attention to vision and leadership, impact, innovation and achievement, and community leadership. SIA's nomination was based on its MY WAY Program for immigrant and refugee women, as well as on its 43-year history of promoting diversity, equity, and fairness in Saskatoon and area. Website: saskintercultural.org/.

Seniors' Information Line

The Saskatchewan Seniors' Mechanism operates a Seniors' Information Line (1.888.823-2211) to provide information and assistance on a variety of issues, including: financial, mental or physical abuse, scams, health, recreation, fear of youths, and so forth. All calls are answered by people able to access information on the computer immediately or refer individuals to the proper channels. Information is also available on their website: www.skseniorsmechanism.ca/.

Social Media Explosion

Social Media has exploded within the past few years to become a fixture in our culture. Facebook's network has mushroomed to 500 million users and Twitter attracts 190 million visitors a month, who generate 65 million Tweets a day. And the UN estimates cell phone users will number 5 billion globally this year, with one billion people using smartphones to access Web applications such as Facebook and Twitter.

Eyelids Sagging? Try the old potato trick, which seems to work better than cucumbers. Potatoes contain catecholase that is actually used in some cosmetics as a skin lightener. Placing a half-moon slice of potato underneath each eye for about 20 minutes while you're resting can help reduce the swelling and brighten dark, under-eye circles.

SaskSecrets is Tourism Saskatchewan's official online newsletter. It's free and features the latest news about what's happening throughout Saskatchewan and is delivered right to your inbox. In addition to receiving monthly updates from Tourism Saskatchewan, you will also receive information about upcoming events, special offers, access to contests, new videos, fun facts, trivia and a whole lot more. They also let you know when new travel guides and other planning resources become available. Go to: sasktourism.com/whats-happening/sasksecrets-newsletter to sign up and become a member.

Did You Know ...

- Chickens with red earlobes produce brown eggs; chickens with white earlobes produce white eggs.
- Peppers with three bumps on the bottom are sweeter and better for eating raw. Those with four bumps are better for cooking.
- Tomatoes and cucumbers are fruits.
- Tomatoes and avocados blended together make an excellent dressing.
- Mix chopped herbs with olive oil, and then freeze in ice cube trays. Add frozen cubes to soups and stews or toss with hot pasta or rice.
- Remove the lingering smell of garlic from your hands by scrubbing them with coffee grounds, then washing with soap and water.
- Vinegar is a natural laundry softener that costs pennies, and is chemical free, unlike most other softeners.
- Drinking bottled water left inside a car exposed to the sun is dangerous. The sun's ultraviolet rays speed up the leaching of plastic chemicals (specifically dioxin) from the bottle to the water. Dioxin has been linked to breast cancer.
- The Canadian Taxpayers Association says the average Canadian now pays 43% of their income to taxes, more than they pay for the basic needs of life - food, clothing and housing.
- More than 30% of people in Saskatchewan are obese with the Body Mass Index being greater than 30.
- In 2012, December has 5 Fridays, 5 Saturdays, and 5 Sundays. This apparently happens only once every 823 years.

Eat Locally

Improve Your Health and Reduce Your CO² Footprint



Do you know where your food comes from or how it was grown and raised? Were any chemicals used? Was it genetically modified? Do you know how long it was in transport and storage or if it was in contact with any contaminants? Food security is a huge issue and the list of questions and concerns just keeps growing. This is especially critical at a time when the industrial food system is so alarmingly centralized and exploitative to the land, to farmers and to animals.

An excellent way to get fresh, healthy, local food is directly from a farmer, a farmer's market or through Community Shared Agriculture. This provides a direct link between the production and consumption of your food. The more steps your food goes through before it reaches your plate, the greater your chances of contamination becomes. So it is not surprising that new research released by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention shows that food borne disease outbreaks linked to imported foods are on the rise.

Taking action to reduce your CO² footprint can also be as easy as selecting locally produced foods. The average food item trav-

els more than 2,000 kilometres before reaching your plate. All that travel uses a lot of fuel, which creates greenhouse gas emissions. As well, the farmer gets less of your food dollar when there's travel, duty and distribution companies involved. When farmers get little for their foods, it encourages them to either sell off their land, or start using environmentally unfriendly practices to increase their yields. By eating locally, you can save



over 200 kilograms of carbon emissions over a year. Supporting the small family farms in your area, particularly organic farms that respect the laws of nature and use the relationships between animals, plants, insects, soil, water and habitat to create synergistic, self-supporting, non-polluting, GMO-free ecosystems, goes a long way to improving your health and the health of our planet.

Amy Jo Ehman, a freelance writer based out of Saskatoon, has a very informative site on buying and eating locally. In 2005, Amy Jo and her husband John began an experiment in local consumption. For one year, they lived on almost exclusively Saskatchewan products. Since then, she says, "we have discovered wonderful sources

of local food, from farm gate to farmers' markets, from independent shops to regional processors." She says there are a number of good reasons to eat a local diet like cutting the mileage on our food odometer to reduce the pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. However, she says her primary motivation was, "not so much to reject what the world has to offer, as to embrace what we have right here. Saskatchewan covers almost half the cultivated farmland in Canada. That's an amazing amount of food of which many of us, even our farmers, are not fully aware. Eating locally is easy when Saskatchewan land produces such abundant and delicious food." Check out her website at: homefordinner.blogspot.ca.

If you haven't seen the movie Food Inc. yet, check it out at: foodincmovie.com. It'll open your eyes and just might change the way you think about your food.



Further information on buying local is available at numerous sites, including:

eatwellguide.org
foodmiles.saskorganic.com/
livinglocal.ca
localorganicsaskatchewan.php
pickyourown.org/canadask.htm

Flowers & Wine Scam

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) is warning of a clever credit card scam that's making its way around the world. This scam has not yet surfaced in Saskatchewan but BBB says it's likely to show up here and they want consumers to beware of surprise gifts that come to the door. This one is so simple that consumers all too frequently find themselves victimized. This is how it works:

The victim receives a phone call from a 'courier service' asking if they are going to be home to receive a package to be delivered within an hour. An hour later, a delivery person shows up with a basket of flowers and wine. When asked who sent it, the delivery person says they're only delivering the gift but a card will arrive separately. There is a consignment note with the gift.



The delivery person explains that because the gift contains alcohol, there's a \$3.50 'delivery charge' proving that the package was delivered to an adult. The payment is to be made by credit or debit card only. The victim is asked to swipe their card on a small mobile card machine and asked to enter the card's PIN and security number.

Within days, the victim discovers large sums of money have been withdrawn from their bank account

or charged to their credit card at various ATM machines. The 'mobile credit card machine' that the delivery person carries collects all the necessary information from the victim's card and is now able to make a 'dummy' card.

The BBB is warning people to be wary of unexpected deliveries, especially if they involve any kind of payment as a condition. And they say

never accept anything if you do not personally know them or there is no proper identification of who the sender is.

Anyone who has been approached with this scam should report it to the Better Business Bureau at 306.352-7601, 888.352-7601 or email: info@bbbsask.com.

The Better Business Bureau also asks you to report it to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at 1.888.495-8501.

Extended Warranties

Extended warranties are offered, even pushed, when people purchase an appliance, a motor vehicle or a computer. These warranties are very lucrative for the retailer.

According to *Consumer Reports* magazine, the retailer gets to keep about 50% of what is charged. It also makes one wonder about the quality of a product when there is such an expectation that it will fail.

Most products have a manufacturer's warranty for a period often up to one year. If a product has problems or is a "lemon", it will usually show up during that period and should be properly repaired or replaced under the standard warranty.

Consumer Reports data shows that products seldom break within the extended-warranty period (following the standard warranty and before the extended warranty expires) and that the repairs, if there is a problem, do not cost much more than the extended warranty itself.

But what if you want the security of an extended

warranty? Then be sure to check into the following:

- Check to see if your credit card provides any warranty-like coverage.
- Check with other retailers to see what they are charging. They may be able to offer you a cheaper deal. You also may be able to negotiate a better price.
- Check the terms of the warranty: what is covered; when does the warranty begin; how long is it in effect; and does it include in-home repair or pick up? Are there any costs the consumer would be responsible for? Read the fine print to ensure that you understand what you are getting and that it is a worthwhile purchase for you.

Be suspicious when there is a lot of pressure to purchase an extended warranty. Unless you really want one, resist the temptation. You may be burned on occasion, but overall you'll probably come out ahead.

by Ruth Robinson

Cellphone Blight

I happily read recently about a restaurant in California giving a discount to customers who check their cellphones at the door because cellphones are ruining the experience of dining out.

People texting, taking and making calls, and photographing their meals is not just obnoxious - it reduces the quality of social interaction within our society.

Why do so many people, when they're out in public, feel compelled to bellow at the person to whom they are speaking with on the phone?

When given a cellphone, many people turn into morons. I have watched people texting while driving, while at funerals, and now the ubiquitous practice

of people sitting at a table in a public place continually staring down at a phone instead of talking with and looking at others present.

It's become obvious that all this so-called connectedness is dumbing down society so rapidly that the coming Apocalypse will not be caused by pestilence and war, but by billions of micro-waved brains.



I once had to slam on the brakes of a school bus filled with kids because a woman on her cellphone didn't notice a four-way stop. I've observed the same thing countless other times while driving a car.

Many studies have proven that drivers using cellphones, hand-held or hands-free, have the same rate of collisions as drunk drivers.

I applaud the province for passing a law against cellphone use while driving. And because idiots should not be allowed to drive, we also need a law that strips people of their licence if they're caught on the phone while driving.

by Ivan Olynyk, Meacham

The Saskatchewan Book of Musts: The 101 Places Every Saskatchewanian MUST See

This book by D. Grant Black has become a bestseller in the province and one of the bestselling travel titles in the country. In March it received the *Travel Media Award for Travel Journalism* at the Tourism Saskatchewan Awards of Excellence.

From fox hunting Victorian-style on the Prairies, to the crooked trees of Alticane, to sipping cappuccinos on Broadway in Saskatoon, or spa hopping and tunnel touring in Moose Jaw, this is the MUST list every Saskatchewanian MUST have.

From strolling Regina's Wascana Centre, exploring outlaw haunts in the Big Muddy, checking out Cypress Hills, seeing where Grey Owl lived, learning about the Mounties, or taking part in the jazz and folk festivals - it's all here.

It is a list of places - obvious, unknown, and even peculiar. It can be a waterfall, a pub, a park, a cherry orchard, or just a quiet place in the woods. This gem of a book is filled with places of the heart, not just places on a map.

Membership / Subscription

- () I'd like a one-year CASK membership (includes a one-year subscription to *SaskWatch*) \$ 25.00
 - () I'd like to make a donation of \$ _____ \$ _____
- Total enclosed: (*make cheques payable to Consumer Association of Saskatchewan*) \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Making a donation to CASK will help us continue to advocate for fairness in the marketplace and improve the quality of life for consumers

Renewal Notice: Your membership expiry date is on the top of your address label.