

January 10, 2011

Industrial Hemp Plant under Construction

After almost 5 years of research and development, an industrial hemp plant moves forward in the RM of Gilbert Plains.

Gilbert Plains, MB – Today Robert Sopuck, Member of Parliament for Dauphin-Swan River-Marquette, on behalf of the Honourable Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and the Honourable Lynne Yelich, Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification, along with the Honourable Stan Struthers, Manitoba Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, and representatives from the Parkland Agricultural Resource Co-op, were on hand for the ground-breaking ceremony for Plains Industrial Hemp Processing Ltd.

Much has been accomplished over the past many months since the announcement of an industrial hemp processing plant was made at Gilbert Plains in April 2010. Within weeks of receiving confirmation of the Provincial Environment License being approved, the project site began its transformation with surveying, engineering, road construction, arrival of building materials and construction contractors setting up. Local companies in the region have stepped up to meet the challenge of getting the design, engineering, and site work to be contractor ready. With approvals and agreements in place, the project is on course as planned.

“This processing facility will give farmers access to new and growing markets,” said MP Robert Sopuck. “By making key investments such as this, our Government is helping to ensure a bright future for farmers and the agricultural industry.”

“The province is pleased to be part of the funding partnership that helped Robert Jin pursue this project that will create jobs and economic benefits for farmers, their families and a variety of agri-businesses and communities throughout the province,” said Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives Minister Stan Struthers. “By building on the potential to export hemp fibre, Mr. Jin adds to the list of Manitoba’s agriculture products that carry our reputation for excellence around the world.”

The facility will be capable of processing up to 18,000 metric tonnes of industrial hemp annually and will generate new export markets for western Canadian value-added agricultural products. This facility will provide permanent job opportunities for the surrounding communities as well as employment during construction phase of the facility.

“I am very grateful for the strong support from local producers, communities and all levels of governments to this project. Without it, this project would not have come to this far”, said Robert Jin, President of Plain’s Industrial Hemp Processing.

The \$8,875,000 project is funded with capital investment from Plains Industrial Hemp Processing Ltd, two federal government re-payable loans totaling \$4,775,000 and a non-repayable grant of \$500,000 from the Province of Manitoba.

Gary Momotiuk, Reeve for the RM of Gilbert Plains commented, "By working together with our neighbour municipalities to bring an industry such as this to our region helps bring economic diversity and gives our agricultural industry another opportunity."

"It's been a full-time effort to organize those participating with the development of the project", said Marnie Kostur, Project Administrator, with the Parkland Agricultural Resource Co-op (PARC). "It doesn't seem that long ago that we were working with the business consultants to develop the business plan, then developing the pilot plant and now the construction of the processing facility. This is an opportunity for farmers in the region to develop a local market for industrial hemp straw that is currently under-utilized." PARC is a regional industry development cooperative of 9 member municipalities whose mandate is to work together on emerging economic development opportunities that promote the agricultural and natural resources in the region.

"The project is an indication of what can be accomplished to benefit local producers and the regional economy when a community of municipalities works together in achieving a mutually beneficial goal", said Art Potoroka Reeve for the RM of Ethelbert, Director on the PARC Board and a long time hemp farmer.

This project is about the agricultural economy and about the farmers and it will empower farmers across the greater region to expand their cropping options. "The desire to have a hemp fiber processing facility in the Parkland is being realized with Robert's decision to construct a processing plant in Gilbert Plains. We are grateful to all those involved behind the scene to help bring this project to fruition", said Rod Fisher, President of Fisher Seeds and a veteran industrial and pedigreed hemp grower in Dauphin.

- 30 -

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