

MANITOBA GOVERNMENT

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NEWS SERVICE

BUSINESSMEN EYE WESTMAN
DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

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Operation Manitoba
Attracts Record 300

More than 300 Manitoba businessmen were provided with a first-hand insight into the investment opportunities and economic potential of the Brandon-Rivers region during this year's Operation Manitoba held Monday.

So great was the response to the invitations sent out by the Manitoba Department of Industry and Commerce, which organizes the annual event, that an additional two buses had to be chartered to carry the large contingent.

Industry and Commerce Minister Len Evans said the aim of the mission was to encourage Winnipeg firms intent on expansion to channel some of their investment funds to western Manitoba.

Transported by a fleet of six buses, the businessmen visited: Behlen-Wickes Co. Ltd., Canadian Brown Steel Tank Co. Ltd., Cancade and Co., FPE-Pioneer Electric Limited in Brandon and Sekine Canada Ltd. and Edson Industries Ltd. at the Oo-za-wekwun Centre near Rivers.

Total value of these plants was estimated at more than \$7.5 million, employing 565 workers.

Commenting on the strong economic growth recorded in western Manitoba -- marked by \$40 million worth of construction in Brandon alone since January, 1971 -- Mr. Evans said that much of it was due to the expenditure of provincial funds in the area.

He said that since January, 1971, the provincial government has invested \$15.9 million on a variety of specific projects including the \$7 million expansion of Brandon University, \$1.2 million on the Highway Services Garage, \$2 million on the First Street Bridge, \$2.4 million on the Provincial Government Services Building and \$900,000 for an 11-storey Senior Citizens Residence Number 2.

In addition, said the minister, a further \$12.6 million worth of provincial government projects are under construction or in the planning stage. Among those projects already under construction are the \$2.5 million Brandon General Hospital Intensive Care Unit, the \$4 million Brandon General Hospital Extended Care Unit and the \$2.8 million Regional Vocational High School.

"There has, therefore, been a total of \$28.5 million invested since 1971, or to be invested in the near future, in the Brandon area by the provincial government in major construction projects alone," he said.

"These provincial expenditures have been an important factor in stimulating additional private investment in the Brandon area."

During their tour of Brandon, the businessmen were shown not only existing plants but also areas for future industrial development and residential areas.

They were told that most of Manitoba's agricultural production, by dollar value, takes place within 75 miles of Brandon -- an important reason for the area's economic stability. Agriculture accounted for \$170 million worth of the total output of the western Manitoba region in 1972.

To emphasize further the importance of agriculture in the region, the tour itinerary included a visit to Manitoba Pool Elevators Livestock Auction Market where the businessmen witnessed on-the-spot beef sales.

A brief description of the plants visited during this year's Operation Manitoba follows:

In Brandon:

. Behlen Wickes Company Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Wickes Corporation of San Diego, California. The firm established itself in Brandon in 1970 and manufactures grain bins and steel buildings. About 110 persons are employed in the plant which is valued at \$3.6 million.

. Canadian Brown Steel Tank Company Ltd., a Brandon-owned and operated company formed in 1929. About 140 persons are employed in the \$500,000 plant producing truck boxes, steel grain bins, well cribbing, reinforcing steel and a variety of other products.

. Cancade and Company, another Brandon owned and operated company. Thirty persons are employed in the production of truck boxes, farm front-end loaders, hoists, trailing axles and bulldozer blades. Last year's sales totalled about \$1 million.

. FPE Pioneer Electric Limited, employs 55 persons in the production of circuit breakers, electric heating equipment and telecommunications equipment.

At Oo-za-we-kwun Centre Inc.:

. Sekine Canada Ltd., where 150 persons are employed in a \$1.5 million bicycle manufacturing plant. The plant was officially opened September 8.

. Edson Industries Ltd., which exemplifies the basic aim of this year's Operation Manitoba as it represents the expansion of a Winnipeg operation -- Marrs Marine -- in western Manitoba. The company employs 80 persons in a \$500,000 plant. Its current product line is campers.