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SASKATCHEWAN'S CONSTRUCTION MAGAZINE
**BUILDING ON: PERSEVERANCE & STRENGTH
IN TURBULENT TIMES**

**COVID-19 TODAY,
TOMORROW AND
INTO 2021: A PANEL
DISCUSSION WITH
EPIDEMIOLOGISTS**



**MAINTAINING
VIGILANCE IN
SAFETY AMIDST
COVID-19**

**MENTAL HEALTH
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Mark Cooper, President & CEO,
Saskatchewan Construction Association



**SASKATCHEWAN
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By the time this issue hits your desk, we will have crossed the 100-day mark since the beginning of the economic and societal shutdown due to COVID-19. We will likely be on the verge of starting Phase 4 of the provincial government's five-phase Re-Open Saskatchewan plan.

It is comforting to know that Saskatchewan has, to date, weathered COVID-19 successfully from a health perspective at least. Swift and decisive action on the part of our governments, coupled with widespread compliance by citizens, enabled the spread of the virus to be contained. Now the task before us is to re-open our society, reignite our economy, and re-double our vigilance with respect to managing the spread of the virus.

This issue of *We Build* is all about bringing expert perspectives to you in terms of how to build perseverance and strength in turbulent times. In this issue you'll read about some essential best practices for overall wellness and mental health from our partners at

Bridges Health. We also have a great article from Brent Banda of the Banda Marketing Group on what construction companies should consider doing next in order to bolster your business amidst COVID.

Finally, we have three feature articles in this issue that I think are truly superb. We leveraged technology to hold video interviews with local experts in the areas of health, safety, and economic development. Then, we combed through those video interviews and turned them into articles that summarize the discussions. You'll be able to hear from the best in the business about what we can expect from COVID in the coming months, how we need to prepare to tackle the virus, how on-site safety and our company cultures are adapting to better manage, and how the economy can and will recover through our collective efforts to continue growing Saskatchewan. You won't want to miss these articles.

The complete videos for both the

safety and the health conversations will be released online through the SCA's YouTube channel, our social media platforms, and our COVID-19 information portal: www.covid19sk.com.

If you're a regular reader of *We Build*, you'll notice that this issue is shorter than most. That's on purpose, for a few reasons.

First, early on in the pandemic we asked our publisher to stop selling advertising for this issue. We didn't want our members being asked to advertise during such a difficult time. As a result, we have to publish the magazine based on the revenue raised by the advertisements sold to that date. To our advertisers, I want to say thanks for investing. Your money enables us to continue to deliver important messages to the construction community across Saskatchewan, for which we are extremely grateful.

The second reason the issue is shorter is we know you are pulled in so many

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different directions right now. We wanted to give you the fewest and best articles we could. I think we've met that goal.

Finally, I want to chat briefly about the economic stimulus coming from governments in the form of new infrastructure dollars. Last month the province announced an historic level of stimulus funding designed to jumpstart a wide array of public infrastructure projects across all categories of construction. This included considerable money for municipal projects. While funds for most of these projects haven't begun to flow yet, they will soon. We will see many new design projects out for competition within weeks, and the same for construction projects, with a particular focus on maintenance and renovation work that can come to market quickly.

As part of the province's commitment to stimulus, a big focus of their investment is on improving the flow of dollars to local companies, ensuring that local workers do the work. The SCA is working with the provincial government to refine the mechanisms they can use to make it easier for local companies to access information, improve their performance during competitions, and win more work. I would say that our members can expect more news on this theme soon.

We also expect the federal government to announce more funding for stimulus-focused infrastructure, perhaps through a new stream of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) that might be specifically targeted at COVID economic relief. This money needs to be announced soon and, more importantly, it needs to flow soon. At this point, it is likely most of it won't be able to be accessed until 2021.

If you have any questions or concerns

about any of the infrastructure programs, or you'd like to know more, please reach out to me and let me know.

On the SCA's YouTube channel you can watch the replay of our virtual Town Hall with provincial officials where they answered your questions about their investment plan. We will be holding more conversations like

that in the future and will be happy to help you find answers to any of your questions, while always working to make sure that government programs are structured in such a way as to ensure your continued business success.

As we move into the summer months, I want to wish you well. Take care and stay safe. 🏠



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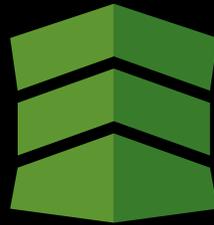
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COVID-19 TODAY, TOMORROW AND INTO 2021: A PANEL DISCUSSION WITH EPIDEMIOLOGISTS

Want to access the full conversation? Visit covid19sk.com to download the audio file or watch the video!

By Brook Thalgott



Dr. Cory (Cordell) Neudorf, Professor, Community Health & Epidemiology, University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine.



Dr. Bonnie Janzen, Associate Professor, Community Health & Epidemiology, University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine.



Dr. Bruce Reeder, Emeritus Professor, Community Health & Epidemiology, University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine.



Dr. Anne Leis, Professor and Department Head, Community Health & Epidemiology, University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine.



We Build caught up with experts from the department of Community Health & Epidemiology, University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine to talk about COVID-19 and its implications on the health of our province. We spoke to Dr. Anne Leis, Professor and Department Head; Dr. Cory (Cordell) Neudorf, Professor; Dr. Bonnie Janzen, Associate Professor; and Dr. Bruce Reeder, Emeritus Professor. SCA President and CEO Mark Cooper moderated the discussion.

Cooper begins by asking about Saskatchewan's relatively low rate of community spread and lack of major outbreaks and why we should take COVID-19 as a serious threat.

"All you have to do is look around the world to see why we need to take this seriously," says Dr. Neudorf. "There

have been other countries that were hit harder, faster. We in Saskatchewan were late to the game in seeing cases and Canada was even behind other countries. We have benefited from being able to watch what others have done, how the virus has behaved in other countries, and therefore can take our cues from that. What other countries have shown us is how many people can get it, how quickly, how it's spread, and how quickly the hospitals can get overwhelmed if it's left unchecked, completely overrunning a hospital and causing many, many deaths and a lot of severe sickness."

Dr. Reeder also points out the comparisons being made between influenza and COVID-19. "It tends to spread more quickly than influenza. It's considerably more deadly—that is, it has about 10 times the case fatality rate. It appears to spread a considerable amount before symptoms develop. And, that is not so prominent with the

influenza. So, for these reasons, it's worse than the seasonal flu."

Peaks and valleys

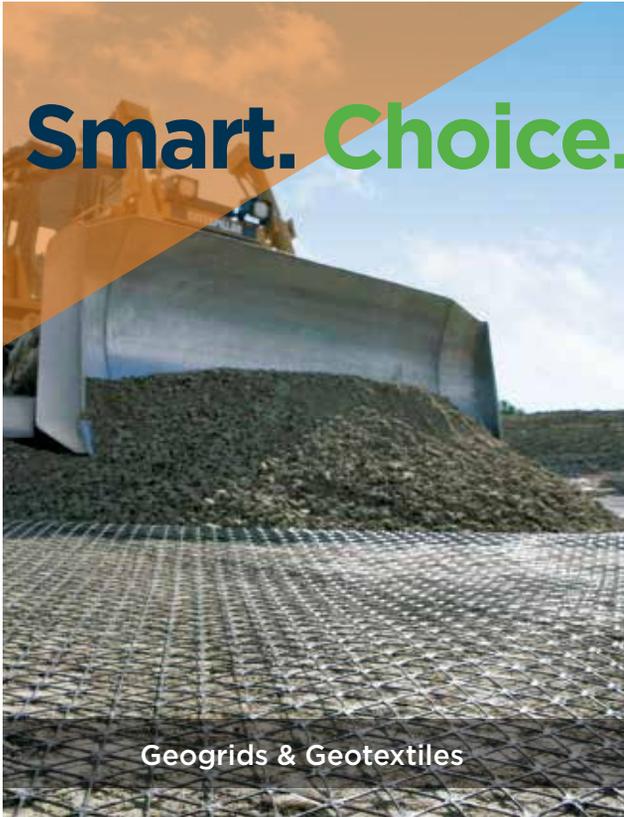
While Saskatchewan has avoided a major onslaught of cases, Cooper asks the panel where we are in the curve, and what we can expect going forward.

"Globally, the spread of the virus is quite different from place to place right now—just because of the nature of how it gets into different populations. We're seeing it at different stages in different countries," says Dr. Neudorf. "Once it gets a hold in an area, it tends to take off very quickly. By changing our behaviour [we] can slow that spread very quickly as well."

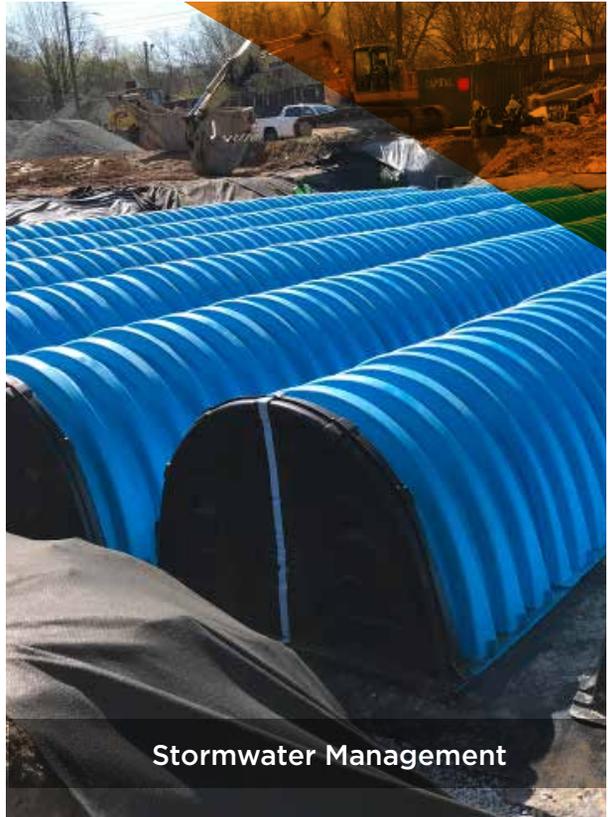
Every pandemic has multiple waves, and Dr. Neudorf sees the COVID-19 pandemic as no different. He notes that the length of waves and troughs are yet to be determined.

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to the gradual reopening, close monitoring for new infections, and contact trace very aggressively, we can make that trough between the waves very long,” says Dr. Neudorf. “On the other hand, if behaviour relaxes too quickly while there's still virus circulating in the community, that second wave can come just weeks after the first wave.”

The province is dependent on the public to do their part to spread out the waves and avoid major peaks. “All of these changes we've made to social distancing, reducing meeting in groups, hand washing and mask wearing... these things have got us to where we are now, which are very low levels.”

However, this can lead to a false sense of security. Dr. Neudorf warns that if we go back to normal now with a small amount of virus circulating, we

will end up right back to where we were in March in no time at all. The key is balance—where the public and institutions understand what can be resumed and what safety measures need to be maintained so that when the second wave comes, we can keep it small like we did the first time.

How much longer?

Cooper asks how long we can expect to modify our behaviours, especially as cases decline. “The proper answer is we don't know,” says Dr. Reeder. He sees the next six months, and the second wave will tell the story. He notes that colleagues in B.C. and at the University of Toronto have done modelling that indicate that if we went to a level of 60 per cent of our normal social contact, we'd see a blunt, low return in six to eight months. Keeping lower social contact until a vaccine is available and

vaccinating those more susceptible first is a good course of action. Otherwise, Reeder notes, we would have to accept ongoing disease until we reach a level of herd immunity.

Dr. Neudorf sees some behaviour changes becoming permanent. “There are some things that we may stop and go back... to normal and other things that may need to stay. And that does not just apply to the social distancing and handwashing,” says Dr. Neudorf. Beyond handwashing, governments and businesses have made policy changes that may last. “We've seen changes to employment insurance and other economic emergency aid, the need for paid sick leave for more types of employees, clear criteria for what types of job safety is needed, reduced crowding, changes to work hours, separate hours for shopping for vulnerable people, and curbside

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pickup and delivery. A lot of these responses we've seen I expect are going to gain traction and perhaps need to be maintained into the future."

Fake news

Cooper brings up misinformation being shared, and how we get the right information to people.

"We have to combat this misinformation and provide the right information from trusted sources," says Dr. Leis, adding that she sees how difficult it can be for the public to know where to get the best information. "We're working with the Saskatchewan Health Authority, sifting through the best information... helping them make decisions... at the university level or at the government level to know how to proceed with, for example, opening up businesses and still containing the virus."

The panel also discusses how things can change as new information becomes available.

"As we discover more about the virus and its transmission and what we need to do, our recommendations change. I think the public is not so accustomed to that," says Dr. Reeder. "But, as we understand from the global experience, understand the virus and its transmission better, then recommendations change."

Politicians, scientists, and the health community need to be transparent about what is known and not known. Dr. Reeder points out the change of opinion regarding masks from Dr. Theresa Tam. "One of the premiers chastised her for changing over the course of two months. But, she and others like her need to change when the evidence changes and the public

needs to recognize that that's a good thing."

The job

Cooper moves onto the inevitable question—a vaccine. Dr. Neudorf notes that work has been happening on Coronavirus vaccines since 2003, so researchers are not starting from zero. Early studies show that 60 to 80 per cent immunity will be required to protect the population. Also, because Saskatchewan has had such a low infection rate, "we'll need a high degree of immunization coverage with a very effective vaccine to really protect the whole population."

Dr. Neudorf says the typical vaccine development can take five to 10 years. However, the H1N1 vaccine took less than a year, and Neudorf sees nine to 12 months for initial doses for a COVID-19 vaccine. Dr. Reeder



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"Saskatchewan, I think, has done quite a good job comparing it to other provinces."

says there are about 30 promising candidates in development and four to five viable vaccines are likely.

"The more vaccine candidates, the more companies and countries producing, the better. You would want vaccines of comparable quality and efficacy, but having many groups work on it is a good thing," says Dr. Reeder.

Let's get moving

Cooper asks the panel about opening Saskatchewan, and whether we're on the right track.

"Saskatchewan has had, [what] was referred to a less severe outbreak to this point. It has had small flareups and learned from those flareups," says Dr. Reeder. As well, we have not had major outbreaks in long-term care, and many measures to protect long-term care residents are in place. "Saskatchewan, I think, has done quite a good job comparing it to other provinces. As we go forward though, we do need to open up."

However, caution is needed. The public needs to follow the guidelines set forth. As well, government has staged the opening with an eye on metrics that allow for early warnings.

"To my understanding, the province has been quite attentive to the staging of opening up... so that we will have several early warnings. If things are not going well in one community, action can be taken," says Dr. Reeder.

Dr. Leis says time will tell. "It won't be like before; we are not going back. I think we have learned things that are positive... using more online tools, paying attention to social distancing, to how we behave, and protecting each other."

Dr. Janzen sees the new normal, too. "When I am out in the community, I see people are being generally quite respectful [of] peoples' spaces. You see some instances of people being a bit loose with the social distancing, but even with the recent opening of some of the malls... I was quite shocked at how few people were there and people were just being respectful of the appropriate rules."

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Great expectations

Finally, Cooper asks the panel what we can expect into 2021, what can we prepare for, and what lessons have been learned.

“The first thing is staying vigilant. It's easy to become complacent, especially during this time when we've had the success of flattening that curve and keeping the virus at low levels in our province,” says Dr. Neudorf. “What we want to avoid is a double hit of severe restrictions.”

Dr. Janzen agrees. “Have that community mindedness and really think what you do and how it affects others,” she says. “Keeping that in the forefront, always thinking about community health, as well as your individual health.”

Dr. Leis also sees how people have learned about themselves. “This kind of a pandemic forced the whole society to pause,” says Dr. Leis. “We had time to ‘separate together.’ We can press pause and say that we don't have to be that busy, we don't have to travel, we don't have to be all stressed and we can just rediscover ourselves, our friends, our family, and so on.”

Dr. Neudorf notes how we're learning that we're responsible for ourselves and our communities. “Invest in prevention and preparedness to invest in our community's health and in our social programs because those... things have enabled us to weather this,” says Dr. Neudorf. “There are some really good lessons learned on how quickly government can mobilize and do things to help us as citizens to weather these types of crises. And regardless of what

political party is out there, this is a good reminder of the value of government... and to make sure that we're set up in a way that invests in the strength of our social programs, our health programs, prevention and preparedness, and the wellness of our communities.”

Dr. Janzen ends the panel with some poignant final thoughts about how we see the people around us that we may take for granted. “I think one of the positive things that I've seen is greater awareness of people at the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder who are out there working. There really does seem to be more awareness of that group and the importance of the work that those people do, and also the awareness of how people have struggled economically during this time.”

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MAINTAINING VIGILANCE IN SAFETY AMIDST COVID-19

Want to access the full conversation? Visit covid19sk.com to download the audio file or watch the video!

By Megan Jane, Executive Coordinator, Saskatchewan Construction Association



Although they had a lot of safety procedures in place, Dana Paidel, President at ICON Construction, says that they had nothing for a pandemic.



According to SCSA's Advisory Services Manager, Loy Levesque, very few small builders had any sort of pandemic response plan in place, and even the larger companies were very reactive in the beginning.



Keith Bird, Internal Operations Manager at RNF Ventures in Prince Albert, says that COVID has brought a new level of awareness to safety.



Ryan Smotra, regional safety manager for Graham Construction in Regina, says that how they schedule work has changed in a big way. The new phasing of staggered shifts has had a massive impact on project management.



Ray Anthony, Executive Director with Occupational Health & Safety - Saskatchewan, states that "in the last month alone we've seen [many] refusals to come into work" across all business in Saskatchewan.



In mid-May, we sat down with construction safety experts to talk about maintaining vigilance during COVID-19, and how to navigate the waters today and tomorrow.

The on-site impacts of COVID-19 bring new challenges

While it's true that construction professionals are well versed in following carefully tailored procedures for site safety work, no one was fully prepared for a world-wide pandemic.

"We had all these safety procedures in place; for fire, earthquakes, even tornadoes...but nothing for a pandemic!" says Dana Paidel, President at ICON Construction.

Paidel wasn't alone. According to SCSA's Advisory Services Manager, Loy Levesque, very few small builders had any sort of pandemic response plan in place, and even the larger companies were very reactive in the beginning.

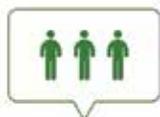
Understandably, this generated a lot of uncertainty for workers, and not just in construction. Ray Anthony, Executive Director with Occupational Health & Safety - Saskatchewan, states "in the last month alone we've seen [many] refusals to come into work" across all business in Saskatchewan.

However, construction companies are made of tougher stuff, and despite these unknowns, workers were quick to embrace enhanced safety procedures. "Our guys didn't balk at

2019-nCov

Statistics

Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people.



What is it?

Coronavirus (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV).



it,” says Keith Bird, Internal Operations Manager at RNF Ventures in Prince Albert. “COVID has brought a new level of awareness to safety.”

From new and improved PPE, handwashing stations, daily pre-screening, and separated work zones – seemingly overnight construction companies have pivoted operations. Ryan Smotra, Regional Safety Manager for Graham Construction in Regina, talks about the number of people on site now being under strict control. “How we schedule work has changed in a big way. The new phasing of staggered shifts has had a massive impact on project management.” This isn’t necessarily a bad thing, Smotra points out, as more time spent in the planning stages has presented opportunities for efficiencies.

Getting information from the federal and provincial health bodies isn’t the problem, keeping on top of it can be.

“Every morning starts with toolbox talks and temperature checks,” Paidel explains. Within days, construction companies had plans up and running on sites that ensured the safety of their workers and the community they serve.

Another challenge is the lack of social interaction. Anthony shared that while his staff working in northern communities are used to working independently, it can be lonely work.

“Our regular Monday meetings now happen via Zoom, and you can see the lack of social interaction affecting people,” says Anthony.

Maintaining a sense of comradery during a pandemic is a new feat

Lunches and coffee breaks have always been a relaxed place to build comradery amongst teams, but now those need to be staggered to ensure physical distancing.

“Our guys miss that,” Bird says. “No one wants to feel lonely at work.”

Levesque recommends allowing some flexibility in the work schedule to maintain productivity. In team meetings, ask not only how work is going, but how is the family doing? “The biggest challenge has been accomplishing the same level of work that you would in the office, at home. If people need to work in the evenings due to being busy with the kids during the day, I’m fine with that.”

Paidel recommends calling anyone working from home for a one-on-one check in.

Bird has found that sending out messages that convey a sense of hope go a long way in shining a light at the end of the tunnel.

“We’re making touch points with more employees more often,” says Bird, who adds that he has shared his associations e-newsletters containing valuable information on tax changes, financial supports, and industry updates. “It’s solicited some really heartwarming feedback in return about our culture.”

Mental health awareness is important now more than ever

Financial pressures, downsizing of companies, job security, and so on has put a lot of pressure on employers and employees.

“How are you doing?” has a whole new context now,” says Bird, adding that this newfound attitude has helped negate the negative stereotype that construction is a ‘macho’ world. “It’s okay to ask for help or say you’re not okay.”

Smotra and Anthony both reminded their staff to use their company Employee Assistance Program if needed. “People worry that they’re overreacting, or underreacting,” Smotra says, “but the truth is if you’ve got a spouse at home with no income, or suddenly you’re a CEO and a teacher to your kids, that’s a lot of pressure to be dealing with.”

Anthony has looked at mental health training offered through various universities to help spot the signs of stressed-out employees.

You can’t take care of your team if you don’t take care of yourself first

- Take time off, even if you don’t think you need it; we all need a break.
- Take a nap to reboot or prepare yourself to ‘switch hats’.
- Go outside and do something labour intensive, such as gardening.
- Do things that bring you joy; listen to music, play with your pets or children.
- Focus on what you can control and try not to go down the rabbit hole of the unknown.
- Take up a hobby, such as learning to play the guitar.

The lasting impacts of COVID-19 to be aware of

Anthony predicts that social distancing will be here to stay for the foreseeable future, as well as strict control over where and how travel can occur. Major projects are likely to be spread throughout the year, which could change the seasonality of work.

Smotra points out that construction is adapting on the fly. “Technology will be thrust upon construction in a big way.” Paidel agrees. The attitude towards embracing new technology isn’t the only thing that’s changing. “Cleanliness and safety cultures are being strengthened,” Smotra says. “People will actually use their sick days. People are thinking about others and not just themselves when it comes to safety now.”

The mental health conversation is gaining more traction now than ever before.

“There’s more awareness for your fellow worker and employees,” says Bird.

Finally, “people have no choice but to make room for safety on their jobsites,” Levesque explains.

Anthony notes that the enhanced safety protocols implemented will likely be here to stay.

“At the end of the day, we should come out of this stronger than we were before,” Anthony says, noting that regulations around providing handwashing stations and sanitization protocols will improve future sick leave statistics. “There are advantages to overcoming these problems.”

We might face COVID-19 again, but then we’ll be ready. 🏠

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THE SASKATCHEWAN ECONOMY DURING COVID-19: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

By Brook Thalgott



Kent Campbell, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Trade and Economic Development, notes that while there has been a significant increase in unemployment from February to April, and other economic indicators are still being reported, the province appears to be better off than many other jurisdictions.



Verona Thibault, CEO, Saskatchewan Economic Development Alliance, sees the need for more preparation for the unexpected and is more conservative on the economic outlook.



John Lee, CEO, Economic Development Regina, says that pre-pandemic he saw economic momentum in southern Saskatchewan and in the Saskatoon region, based on entrepreneurship.



Steve McLellan, CEO, Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, notes the importance of embracing new models and revenue streams, such as retailers moving online and manufacturers making new goods, as well as local economic development.

We Build had a virtual discussion with some key players working in Saskatchewan economic development to talk about how Saskatchewan emerges economically from the COVID-19 pandemic, what the province's business community is facing, and how government and organizations can support and grow the economy going forward.

SCA President Mark Cooper led the discussion on May 22 with Verona Thibault (CEO, Saskatchewan Economic Development Alliance), Steve McLellan (CEO, Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce), John Lee (CEO, Economic Development Regina), and Kent Campbell (Deputy Minister,

Ministry of Trade and Economic Development).

Optimism or pessimism

Cooper began by asking about the state of the economy. Campbell notes that while there has been a significant increase in unemployment from February to April, and other economic indicators are still being reported, the province appears to be better off than many other jurisdictions.

"We've been significantly challenged as have economies across the country and around the world, and it's probably the most significant economic challenge we've faced since the 1930s," says Campbell. "But I would say that relative

to most provinces right now, I think we're doing probably better than most."

Thibault recently returned from a rural tour and had her own thoughts on the state of the economy pre-COVID and what the pandemic has done. She was glad Campbell was sounding positive, but has her own concerns.

"I just feel that our resilience quotient was probably pretty low before COVID. And, I'm just concerned that from an industry and community perspective, we're still not ready for the next... waves of this or waves of something else." She sees the need for more preparation for the unexpected and is more conservative on the economic outlook.

Thibault flags concerns for the province's tourism and hospitality sector, which she feels was weak before the pandemic hit. She also sees a lack of planning, investment, and attention paid to local businesses, particularly in smaller centres. And, there needs to be recognition that communities and businesses need one another.

"One thing that's come out of this whole issue is even though we all know that business and community are interdependent, I don't think it's been really acknowledged. I think it's time to play that up. And I think that's what we're all doing."

McLellan echoes Thibault's sentiments. While the first quarter of 2020 seemed okay, the actual impact of COVID-19 will not be seen until the end of the second quarter.

"It's hard to think three, four, or five months [back], but we weren't in a strong economy... we didn't have resilience built in. Our balance sheets were not strong across the province in terms of our businesses. And

now they've been challenged even more." While McLellan sounds more pessimistic than he normally is, he does see a way to help see the province through. "One of the tasks we all have to take [on]... no matter how bad it is looking forward, is helping to increase consumer confidence... we need to make sure that all businesses play by the rules... to get us through this."

Lee leans more into Campbell's cautious optimism.

"I think we need to acknowledge and celebrate the fact that Saskatchewan... is a fairly diverse province where we are definitely doing better than many of the other provinces," says Lee. Pre-pandemic he saw economic momentum in southern Saskatchewan and in the Saskatoon region, based on entrepreneurship. He also notes that many businesses answered the challenge of the pandemic with quick pivots into new models.

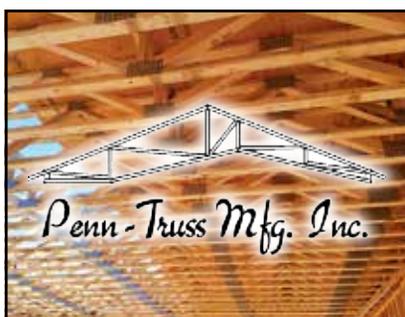
Green shoots

Cooper asks the panel how we can embrace optimism for the economy

and support the business community. McLellan says that while it will be hard on Main Street for a while, there are things the province can do to see itself through.

"We have to generate exports," he says, noting the importance of embracing new models and revenue streams, such as retailers moving online and manufacturers making new goods, as well as local economic development. "We have to do all those things that keep us moving."

Thibault agrees and mentions the need for collaboration. She was recently involved in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between nine rural municipalities to develop a regional economic development plan - the Deep South Economic Partnership. This group has now secured an experienced development specialist to support them in moving forward, of which the response was overwhelming. She also notes that remote working is presenting an opportunity for rural communities, too. Thibault also sees



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opportunities in the digital marketplace that should be prioritized.

Campbell notes that the framework for business and government to stay safe is key to recovery.

“Governments and industry leaders are doing what they can to ensure that people feel safe and confident in going out and engaging again in ways that are safe. I think those are some pretty important things we can do on the consumer confidence side,” he says, noting that he sees the push in technology and digitization accelerating.

Lee sees unique opportunities in the AgTech and food production spaces and notes the importance of brand.

“We’ve all done a poor job of branding... and the challenge we have is Alberta and Manitoba spend millions and we’ve got to compete with that,” says Lee. “And unless we start to get our stories out and around Saskatchewan and all the unique things happening here, we’ll always struggle. I think we need significant investment in that.”

The IT crowd

The conversation turns to the Internet, and how vital it is to business. Demand on the Internet became extreme as people shifted to working from home, students moved online, and businesses pivoted to the web. Thibault says it may be time for investments to meet the increased, sustained demand for reliable Internet access. “It may be time to look for more strategic partnerships in order to serve the demand,” she says.

McLellan agrees. “I like the Internet as an example because everybody in the last hundred days has realized how critical it is to us... it’s not good enough and we need it for education. We need it for that individual who wants to work from Arcola and has to have constant access. We need it for the cattle rancher who is looking for real-time prices, and so on. If we as a community through the government, private sector, federal, provincial, municipal get Internet to the point where it’s not an issue because it’s just excellent everywhere, that will facilitate economic, educational, and

even security issues to be diminished.” With those issues resolved, McLellan sees economic activity rising dramatically.

Lee also sees the tech sector in the province as a vital part of Saskatchewan’s recovery and growth.

“There’s a huge opportunity on the digital technology side... and the reality is Saskatchewan is behind most other jurisdictions. So that means there is a huge upside and opportunity... I think we need to embrace that,” says Lee. “Technology is emerging as an opportunity, and in the last three years, more financial capital [has] come into the market for Saskatchewan companies.”

Local ideas, local growth

Not only is Internet infrastructure pointed to as an opportunity, but so are other major infrastructure projects in the idea phase. McLellan brings up the longstanding idea of building a canal from Diefenbaker Lake to Buffalo Pound—an idea that has come up again recently as a significant, signature infrastructure project that would benefit many sectors and regions of the province.

“It gives us better water quality. It gives us guaranteed access for protein plants... imagine 75 people working in Broadview on a pea plant that needs as much water as a medium-sized city.” McLellan also points out the local industries that need more attention at home. “The largest in-province user of Saskatchewan grains is our distilled products. So why is it I didn’t know that before?”

Campbell also sees the opportunity in promoting Saskatchewan at home and abroad.

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“We have some pretty natural strengths... not just the fact that we have 40 per cent of Canada's agricultural land, but also that we do have... some pretty significant companies and a research base on which to build off. As the world recovers from this, I think demand for food is going to be significant. We just need to make sure that we're attracting as much investment here as we can, supporting our producers and the communities through research, competitive operating environment, and all of that.”

Recipe for success

Cooper asks the panel about how we pave the way for the future.

“I think if we strategically think about investing in opportunity zones or regions... we can fast track things and... recognize where our core strengths are inside of the province and then invest in helping those sort of opportunity zones move forward,” says Lee.

“Show it. Don't tell it. The local products, the things that we're doing, we need to show it,” says McLellan.

“We need to do it more often. Local products, the local heroes that we've got. We need to celebrate those people to inspire more people to do those sorts of things.”

“In the short term we all have to focus a little bit on sort of economic stabilization, public safety, and the reopening of the economy in a very practical way,” says Campbell.

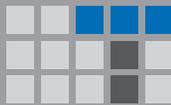
“Companies have to make assessments in terms of what the next few months looks like and the growth opportunities they have.”

Thibault sees that the digital space and small business have a lot to offer and need support to reach their potential.

“I go back to the digital platform. I feel we could really ramp up small business with supporting them in that regard... we've made some recommendations to government, whether that's supporting them with digital squads that will help business get tech savvy, or whether it's actually establishing an online marketplace to give them the lift,” she says.

Finally, Campbell concludes the discussion with some heartfelt words about Saskatchewan.

“People should be very, very proud of the work they're doing to create wealth and grow the Saskatchewan economy,” he says. “They should be very proud of what they're going out and doing every day in terms of contributing to that recovery.” 



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YOU CAN'T POUR FROM AN EMPTY CUP: MENTAL HEALTH RESILIENCY IN TURBULENT TIMES

By Kyle Anderson, M.A., Mental Health Workshop Facilitator, Bridges Health



“You’re either in a problem, just left one, or are headed towards one.” This quote from Les Brown sums up the inevitable challenges and setbacks that we face on a regular basis throughout our lives. It is said that the only constant in life is change, and there is no better example of this than the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused momentous changes in the way we live our lives. With this in mind, how do we endure the unavoidable storms of life?

Resilience is the process of adapting and overcoming adversity and can be applied to all areas of our lives.

The current pandemic has forced us to develop resiliency in business, relationships, and overall wellbeing. Within the workplace, we are at times faced with challenges such as organizational change, deadlines, conflict with co-workers, and business competition.

Resiliency is not a passive quality that some individuals have, and others don't, but rather a skill that can be actively learned and improved over time. When considering how to improve resilience, here are a few elements that are important to consider:

1. Make Connections – Having positive, supportive social relationships ensures we do not feel alone during challenging events. While some individuals have a natural reaction to withdraw and isolate amidst difficult times, particularly males, it is important to accept help and support from those who care about you. Displaying vulnerability and asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness, especially in managers and leaders within the workplace.

2. Move Toward Your Goals – When looking at a broad long-term goal, it can often appear daunting and overwhelming. Split the end-goal into more manageable short-term goals and act. Do something regularly – even if it seems like a small accomplishment – that enables you to move toward your goals. Utilize the SMART goal-setting acronym to provide clarity surrounding goals: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

3. Focus on what you can control – You cannot change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. If we put too much energy and focus on things that are out of our control, feelings of stress and anxiety will only multiply. Instead, put your time and energy into

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matters that you have control over, such as your attitude, your effort, and problem-solving solutions.

4. Nurture a Positive Self-View – Often we are our own harshest critic, putting unrealistic expectations and pressures on ourselves. Be aware of your internal dialogue and challenge any negative self-talk. Display self-compassion by speaking to yourself the way you would talk to a friend or loved one, use positive self-affirmations, and give yourself permission to make mistakes.

5. Maintain Boundaries – It is important to set and maintain healthy boundaries, particularly for managers and individuals looking after others. Boundaries can be set surrounding physical space, time, and emotional energy. Not having healthy boundaries in place can cause us to become overwhelmed and burnt out, so do not be afraid to strengthen your “NO” muscle!

6. Engage in Self-Care – “You can’t pour from an empty cup.” Make sure you are prioritizing time to look after yourself and recharge, so that when setbacks inevitably occur you are better positioned to respond effectively. Exercise, healthy eating, meditation, and hobbies are a few general areas of self-care, but at the end of the day do what works for you!

Employer support

It is important that we engage in these practices within the workplace, and employers, managers, and team leaders set the tone. When leaders can display vulnerability, disclosing when they are having a tough time or require support, employees will feel encouraged to do so as well.

Having trusting relationships within the workplace is imperative, so take an interest in peoples’ lives outside of work, as this drives connection.

Be aware of the different personalities and communication styles that exist within your team and find the best ways to connect and support specific individuals.

Whenever possible, include team members in decision-making processes, as this fosters their own self-efficacy and improves decision-making skills that can be used during times of crisis.

Finally, host regular group check-ins that recognize wins and accomplishments, as well as offer individuals the opportunity to identify areas they require support. Regular individual check-ins are also important, as it provides employees with the chance to discuss anything they don’t feel comfortable sharing with the entire group.

Take a proactive approach and strengthen these skills on a regular basis, so that when we are in a crisis we will be better equipped to handle the challenge. Try getting in the habit of checking-in with yourself each day by asking, “how do I feel right now?” This increases self-awareness and helps you identify when problems are occurring, allowing you to make appropriate adjustments to improve your mental wellbeing before the situation worsens.

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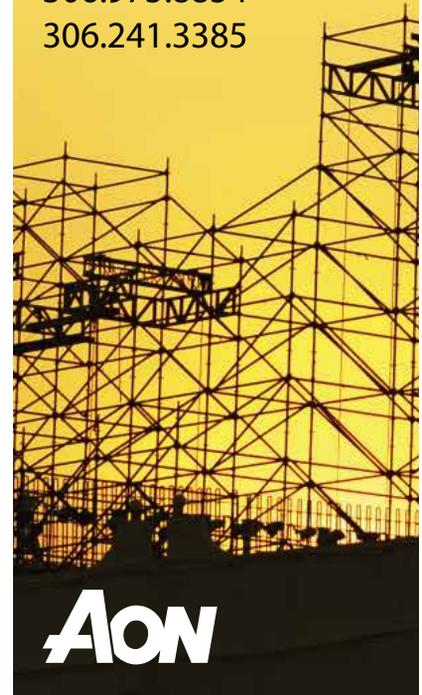
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DOING BUSINESS DIFFERENTLY: WHAT CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES SHOULD CONSIDER NEXT

By Brent Banda, President of Banda Marketing Group



The current situation, in which construction sites are forced to operate with social distancing and sanitization safety measures, will continue until a vaccine for COVID-19 is developed or the pandemic burns itself out. The best estimate by the epidemiology community is that a vaccine is at least one year away, even by optimistic estimates. This is the time frame governments around the globe are basing their plans on. These safety measures will be part of the construction industry for some time.

With this time frame and new safety protocols in mind, companies must figure out how to run operations profitably. Most have adapted well so far, but the operating environment continues to evolve. Here are four trends that will affect the strategic choices you make for your business over the next year.

Local preference

The massive shutdown of national economies has meant that many manufacturing companies around the globe have been forced to close. Some of those able to operate had employees ill with COVID-19 who could not come to work. Production was curtailed. Products ready to be shipped became stalled in a distribution system operating at only

partial capacity. The result is that some Saskatchewan companies that import goods are facing delays. The transportation network is moving again, but confidence in the reliability of the system has been shaken.

The construction industry depends on reliable sources of goods. Expect shortages of some supplies from countries that have high incidences of COVID-19, such as regions of China and the U.S., and expect the introduction of new brands as more reliable local manufacturers are sourced. This is a worldwide trend away from globalization and toward local suppliers.

We have seen the province demonstrate local preference in its capacity as a client. The provincial government's massive \$2 billion in new infrastructure spending and its fast-tracked approach with the province's entire \$7.5 billion in capital spending over the next two years is now favouring local companies. The provincial government's local content criteria are not unique to Saskatchewan: other provinces are willing to put interprovincial free trade agreements on hold in the name of local stimulus. Expect the trend to continue after COVID-19 as provincial and national governments focus more on local benefits and self-sufficiency

than free trade. To benefit as a local company, ensure your proposals comply with these criteria.

Workforce as a competitive advantage

We don't know yet if people who have recovered from COVID-19 will be immune to it. Viruses can behave in many ways. If you are infected with norovirus and recover, you can be re-infected within a few months. The chickenpox virus stays in the body and can cause shingles decades later. But if you are infected with measles and recover, your body will retain immunity to the virus decades later.

Let's hope that people recovering from COVID-19 will have immunity. Consider the implications. If your employees could not contract the disease or infect fellow staff members, would you require them to adhere to social distancing restrictions? These restrictions are important for the general population, but they tend to reduce workplace productivity. What would you say if an immune employee demanded a premium wage?

Saskatchewan has been fortunate that few people have been infected. Our workplaces have not yet had to manage infections. Imagine if one of your crew were to test positive for

COVID-19. Right now, the protocol is that everyone having close contact with that employee must go into self-isolation for two weeks. How would this impact your jobsite?

Employer-employee dynamics will shift as employees develop immunity. You might have another crew that could step in if a crew needs to be quarantined, but the point is that trades that have historically been well-managed and reliable may not have enough staff to complete their work on time.

Just like in the broader population, some employees will not take COVID-19 seriously. But those who are deeply concerned will favour employers that provide a safe work environment and particularly those that have genuinely accepted COVID-19 protocols as a new requirement for safety.

With the need for healthy, reliable crews to show up and work productively, it is more important than ever to ensure that appropriate safety protocols are in place and are enforced.

Doing business differently

Construction is a relationship-driven industry. But until a vaccine is available, we will have far fewer in-person meetings. That means fewer opportunities to build relationships with people. Have you ever had a video meeting with someone you have never met? It is a bit awkward. That's partly because we are all getting used to the technology, but there is something a bit different about introducing yourself online.

Technology will be a bigger part of how you do business. Examine your sales and project delivery processes

We don't know yet if people who have recovered from COVID-19 will be immune to it. Viruses can behave in many ways.

to identify areas where technology can replace in-person meetings. For example, it may not be nearly as effective to hold a lunch-and-learn or a product demo in an online video meeting, but this is our new reality. One option I've heard suggested is to hold a virtual site visit through video meeting software on a cell phone, because you can show owners what is going on in the construction site, have a discussion, and make decisions as if the owner were on the jobsite. Your

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But if we have a second wave of infection that is larger than the first, the risk that your workers will be exposed away from the jobsite is higher than what we have seen so far.

company needs to figure out soon how to effectively use technology because it will be a requirement to conduct business.

Protecting your company and industry

A second wave of infections is likely to occur in the fall. This happened with the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic and it's what epidemiologists expect to happen with COVID-19. The provincial government declared the construction industry to be an allowable business and is propping up the sector with stimulus measures, but what would the government do if a series of

infections emerged on multiple worksites? Our government is trying to balance health with the economy and would face difficult decisions if an outbreak occurred in the construction industry. Would the government shut down these worksites or perhaps the entire construction industry? An industry-based outbreak is certainly a possibility; it has happened elsewhere, such as in meat processing in Alberta. Keep in mind that the Saskatchewan government has discretion on when to declare an outbreak, balancing its need to protect the public and ensure privacy of individuals and businesses. A COVID-19 outbreak was declared when Saputo Foods in Saskatoon had only one case in its workplace.

It is crucial to acknowledge that cases of COVID-19 are rare in our community – we flattened Saskatchewan's curve. But if we have a second wave of infection that is larger than the first, the risk that your workers will be exposed away from the jobsite is higher than what we have seen so far.

The construction industry's best defense is to continue enforcing the new safety measures. Make sure your employees take this seriously and form the right habits before an outbreak occurs. 🏠

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