

Enterprise

International

SOBE SETTLES DISPUTE

A Norwalk-based beverage company paid a \$219,000 US penalty and reimbursement for legal expenses to settle a dispute over its products' health claims, two state officials announced Monday. SoBe beverages falsely advertised and packaged its products as protection against colds and other illnesses and to increase energy levels, said Conn. Attorney General Richard Blumenthal and Edwin Rodriguez, commissioner of the Department of Consumer Protection. "Duping customers into believing that a flavoured beverage will stop illness, enhance memory or reduce stress is deceptive and deplorable," Blumenthal said. SoBe, or South Beach Beverage Co., is an operating unit of Pepsi-Cola North America, which is part of PepsiCo. A company spokesperson called the statement "old news." "SoBe co-operated with the Connecticut Attorney General's Office from the very beginning of this issue and worked to resolve it in a timely manner," spokesperson Kristine Hinck said.

DELTA TO BEGIN CUTS

New Delta Air Lines Inc. staffing cuts will mean service changes for passengers on overseas flights, according to an internal memo. Atlanta-based Delta, which recently cut employee wages and is slashing 7,000 jobs in a sweeping turnaround plan aimed at saving the airline, will begin the cuts Jan. 31. The flight attendant cuts referenced in the memo are part of the turnaround plan, which was announced in September after the company posted a second-quarter loss of almost \$2 billion US. The staffing cuts will be on some of Delta's transoceanic flights. On the 767ER flights, which carry up to 285 passengers, there will be seven flight attendants instead of eight. Transoceanic 777 flights, which have 268-passenger capacities, will carry nine flight attendants instead of 10. However, Delta may add an extra attendant on full flights, the memo states. The memo also states Delta will eliminate meals for flight crews beginning April 1.

Sask Portfolio

Quotes Provided by Union Securities Ltd
www.saskstockmarket.com

	Last Trade	Daily Change
Big Sky Fin	10.00	n/c
Ag Growth	12.15	0.07
Blackstrap Hosp	0.25	0.03
Buffalo Oil	0.38	0.07
Cameco Corp	39.83	0.59
Churchill Energy	1.05	n/c
Claude Res	1.28	-0.02
Cons Pine Ch.	0.16	-0.01
Explor Resources	0.28	n/c
Fyotokem Prod	0.09	-0.02
Gr Wst Min Grp	0.32	n/c
Golden Band	0.26	-0.03
Hodgins Auction	0.36	n/c
Intl Road Dyn.	1.05	0.04
IPSCO Inc	54.25	1.59
JNR Resources	1.13	n/c
Pac & Western	7.79	-0.09
Potash Corp	92.98	0.69
QCC Tech	0.06	n/c
Sk. Wheat Pool	0.36	0.01
Shane Res	0.36	n/c
Shore Gold	3.15	-0.15
Sweeprite	0.11	n/c
United Carina	0.45	0.03
Philom Bios inc	2.60	n/c
NorthWest Term	3.50	n/c
Wedona	4.20	n/c
Weyburn	23.30	n/c
Sig. Sk. Op		
Agricore United	7.80	-0.05
Agrium Inc	18.77	-0.03
Arsenal Energy	0.92	0.04
Calian Tech	14.75	0.03
CGI Group	7.59	-0.04
Helix Biopharm	3.00	-0.05
Husky Energy	32.86	-0.09
Kensington Res	1.02	-0.07
Mosaic (US \$)	15.33	0.20
Nixen Inc	48.57	0.56
Purcell Energy	2.83	0.03
Talisman En	32.35	-0.52
Titan Pacific	0.14	-0.02
UEX Cp	2.30	0.02
Weyerhaeuser	82.64	n/c
Sask. LSIF's		
Crown Ventures	10.21	0.01
Golden Opp	13.28	0.02

Markets	
S&P/TSX Index	Dow
9,026.83 +20.61	10,621.03 +17.07
S&P/TSX 60	S&P 500
499.06 +0.70	1,190.25 +4.06
TSX Venture	Nasdaq
1,781.05 -3.85	2,097.04 +8.43
Dollar (US\$)	Gold (NY US\$)
81.80 +0.62	419.10 +0.20
NYMEX N. Gas (US\$)	West Texas Oil (US\$)
6.159 +0.158	45.34 -0.10

Taking the pulse: Producers unsure which crops to plant

By Murray Lyons
SP Business Editor

Saskatchewan's pulse crop producers aren't likely to find too many market signals this early in the year about what to grow this spring, says one of the province's leading players in pulse crop processing.

Murad Al-Katib of Regina, president of Saskcan Pulse Trading, says normally it is possible for producers to start lining up contracts at the annual Crop Production Show which began Monday in Saskatoon, but not this year.

"The expectation is that price levels are going to reduce from the current level today," he said. "Currently, the only contract available at Crop Production Show is a red lentil contract and that's because it's our core commodity for our splitting operation."

Al-Katib, with backing from Turkish investors, has built Saskcan Pulse Trading into a major exporter and pulse crop processor and was named Saskatchewan Business of the Year for 2004.

Despite the August frost, Saskatchewan produced a large pulse crop in 2004 which the market is still digesting, he said.

"We had a very large crop last year and even with the poorer quality, there was very good yields," Al-Katib said. "When you do have a larger volume crop, buyers tend to think the price levels are coming down so they took only the stock they needed for the fall months and are waiting for price reductions."

"Growers are resisting the price reduction," Al-Katib said the trend to sign pulse crop contracts in advance of the growing season appears to be falling by the wayside as growers and processors alike are shying away from committing to contracts before the crop is even planted.

"It hedges the risk for both buyer and seller, but the pulse market is much more of a spot market and growers are willing to take the upside and the downside along with it," he explained.

Bruce Burnett, the director of weather and crop surveillance for the Canadian

Wheat Board, told pulse producers that global weather patterns may hinder some of Canada's pulse competitors and help others.

India's monsoon season was weaker than in past years and there may not be the subsoil moisture in the subcontinent to carry crops while Australia also saw poor moisture conditions during its long growing seasons before the December harvest. Both India and Australia are being affected by a weak El Nino event, sometimes referred to as southern oscillation.

Less known in climatology is the North Atlantic oscillation off the coast of Africa. Burnett says for the previous 25 years it delivered rainfall to northern Europe, but now it appears to have reversed itself and is delivering that rainfall to the Mediterranean basin. The greater likelihood of timely rains from that system should help pulse producers in countries such as Turkey and Syria, he said.

While few people are willing to offer a positive price outlook this month on any

of the usual grains and oilseeds grown on the Prairies, flax producers are interested in whether the current record high prices can be sustained through the 2005 growing season.

Mike Jubinville of Winnipeg's Pro Farmer Canada, a crop commodities intelligence service, says the high prices of flax of \$13 a bushel and higher are definitely because of the August frost which destroyed or downgraded much of the flax crop grown in Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan.

"It really renders us with supplies that are insufficient to meet what demands there are in the marketplace," he said. "Some users are going to have to go without this year. We won't have enough flax."

Despite the prices farmers might command for growing flax in 2005, Jubinville says the problem remains that it is difficult for farmers to project a return from growing flax because the crop still produces uneven yields.



THINKING ABOUT SPRING

The growing season seems far away during a cold snap in January, but farmers from across the province are spending time at the annual Crop Production Week. The trade centre at Saskatoon Prairieland Park is filled with displays of machinery and producers can meet with various crop input suppliers and special crop buyers. Sessions being held at the Saskatoon Inn can be viewed by producers on a big screen closed-circuit television link at Prairieland. (SP Photo by Gord Waldner)

Proposed hours law splits student opinion

By Angela Hall
Saskatchewan News Network

REGINA — Student groups at the province's two universities say proposed hours-of-work legislation has divided campus opinion.

"It is something that is a high priority for students," said Gavin Gardiner, president of the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union.

"It does impact young people because we are a large minority, if not a majority, of the employees who are affected by the legislation."

The draft regulations introduced last week would give part-time workers with seniority the first opportunity to take additional hours that become available. The proposal, which is under review this month, only includes businesses with 50 or more employees at one location.

"On one hand, I think there's the group of students who work several part-time jobs and are really tired of having to work several part-time jobs because they can't get enough hours at one," said Leah Sharpe, vice-president external affairs for the University of Regina Students' Union.

"On the other hand, I think there are students that are worried that part-time entry level jobs are going to somehow disappear."

Sharpe said the students' union isn't planning on taking a formal position on the draft rules, but may arrange an information forum with representatives from government, labour and business.

The U of S students' union will debate the issue at a meeting this week to determine a common stance. Gardiner said he expects coming to conclusion will be no easy feat.

"There are the two kind of lines of thought on it and which one will prevail, I'm not entirely sure."

A representative of SIAST's Wascana Campus student council said concerns about the issue haven't yet been brought to their attention.

But the controversial legislation has already pitted labour groups, which contend the proposal could help part-time workers, against a coalition of organizations that say the government shouldn't determine how businesses are run.

Saskatchewan Business Council member Marilyn Braun-Pollon said Monday the group is developing its formal response and continues to call for a meeting with Premier Lorne Calvert.

Meanwhile, Regina Mayor Pat Fiocco has sent a letter to the premier on behalf of the Saskatchewan City Mayors Caucus asking that municipalities be consulted if the proposed legislation will have an effect on cities. Cities are looking for more information on how the legislation will apply to places that already have collective agreements, said Fiocco, who is waiting for the reply.

The government proposal released last week stated that establishments with collective agreements would, in general, honour the agreements, if the provisions were superior to those contained in the draft regulations.

"Because I haven't seen the wording of the available hours legislation, I can't give any feedback whatsoever other than to say I would hope that it is something that is going to encourage economic development . . . not discourage it," Fiocco said Monday.

(REGINA LEADER-POST)

Fancy cheques soon to be dumped

By Sheila McGovern
CanWest News Service

MONTREAL — Creative cheque-writing is on its way out. By that we don't mean inventing amounts you don't have in your account. It's the oddly coloured cheques with the wildly slanting letters that will bite the dust over the next two years as Canada moves to electronic processing. And we'll all have to write our dates in digits — no more Januarys or Februarys.

Roger Dowdall, spokesperson for the Canadian Payments Association, the organization responsible for processing the nation's cheques, said his organization still packs up and physically transports five million cheques a day throughout Canada. It hopes to have switched over to electronic processing by December 2006.

However, to do that it will have to get everyone to use a standardized cheque format so the electronic scanners can get the high-quality images needed for the system to work.

Dowdall said the average person won't find the change too wrenching, unless they are partial to very dark or "Star Wars or Cookie Monster" backgrounds, which the scanner might not be able to read. Most cheques coming from Canadian printers already meet the new size requirements — 16 centimetres in length — but cheques coming from U.S. sources will have to grow.

The numbering at the bottom of the cheque — that line that includes your account number — will have to contain a serial number as well. Most personal cheques already do, he said, but some businesses will have to alter their cheques to include one.

And perhaps the toughest one to get used to will be dates. The scanner will require all dates to be given numerically. While many English-speaking Canadians tend to write month-day-year, French-speaking Canadians tend to do the reverse. So the system will be able to read either, but it must be indicated on the cheque which is being used. In other words, there will be an area for the date and a line below it specifying dd/mm/yyyy or mm/dd/yyyy.

You have to do what it says, whether you like it not. Banks will begin issuing cheques in the new format in April, he said, and everybody is supposed to switch over completely by the end of 2006. The association is giving people plenty of warning, he said, so they will be able to work their way through their old cheques.