

BREWD survey seeks labour outlook

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A kickoff for a business attraction and labour market survey will take place next week, but the effort is boasting more than 80 volunteers as a survey to about 4,000 local businesses opens and surveys to job seekers are underway.

“Invest Southeast Alberta” is preparing to talk with business and community leaders about needs of local employers and new major industries as new hiring could put stress on the local labour pool over the next year.

Administrators state that the prospect of 1,000 new jobs at two major cannabis and hemp processing facilities will provide opportunity for existing business, such as supply contracts and a general uptick in

wages and economic activity.

It also has the potential to disrupt the existing labour force and wages paid by other businesses.

The goal of the city-led study is to determine how to fill the labour requirements of new and existing businesses, said business support officer Sandra Blythe.

“One business may not be able to hire staff with the right skills, another may be troubled by red tape, while another may be concerned about competition for employees,” stated Blythe.

“The team needed to know about these issues, and we’re promising to respond and do our best to address them.”

Sean Blewitt, the manager of Community Futures Entre-Corp, said participation is vital.

“Hearing the voice of business is

fundamental to the project,” he said. “We need strong participation in the survey to be confident in future actions to help business succeed.”

The information provided will be reviewed, then presented again publicly before an action plan is developed.

A survey for existing business owners will launch Sept. 16. A similar questionnaire for job seekers opened in late August.

Both will be available online through the Invest Medicine Hat website.

The Business Retention and Expansion Workforce Development (BREWD) project is a city-led endeavour that includes a broad group of businesses, post-secondary, community and governmental agencies.

Application for Oyen solar play goes before AUC

Medicine Hat News

A plan to build a 15-megawatt solar facility under agreement with the town of Oyen is going before Alberta Utility Commission regulators for approval.

The “Oyen Community Solar Project” is planned to be built near the town northeast of Medicine Hat with aid of a provincial government program.

In January, the town council agreed to apply for \$100,000 in funds from the Generation Capacity Building Grant Program and also entered into a benefit agreement with the community partnership that’s proposing the project — a stipulation of the program brought in by the previous government.

On Tuesday, the AUC announced it will consider approving the project this fall and made a standard call for feedback from the public.

Written submissions on the 31.4-hectare energy facility are due Oct. 10, with notice to participate in a potential hearing being given by Oct. 1.

The privately owned, previously cultivated piece of land sits 2.5 kilometres east of the town and would feed energy onto the Alberta distribution grid.

Brooks Solar

A date has been set for a hearing into a proposed tripling of the Brooks Solar field. Arguments for and against the potential expansion that sits on the east edge of the city, near the Trans-Canada Highway, will be heard Oct. 16 starting at 10 a.m. at the Heritage Inn in Brooks.

Elemental Energy states that expanding the farm onto two quarter-sections adjacent to its existing 15-megawatt plant is more cost effective and the land is well suited.

Neighbouring land owners were granted intervenor status by the AUC after they complained the new phases would take agricultural land out of production for the 25-year lifespan of the facility and reduce land values on parcels adjacent to the site and near the Trans-Canada Highway.

Their documents are due on Sept. 27.



CP PHOTO JOHN WOODS
Manitoba PC leader and premier Brian Pallister celebrates winning the Manitoba election in Winnipeg, Tuesday.

Manitoba PCs win 2nd-straight majority

Premier Pallister gets fewer seats but says another majority is affirmation from voters

The Canadian Press

WINNIPEG

Brian Pallister and his Progressive Conservatives went early and won big.

Pallister called an election more than a year before it was scheduled and the vote Tuesday ended with a second consecutive majority government for the Tories.

The party was projected to capture 30-plus seats in the 57-seat legislature with an agenda to continue cutting costs, streamlining health care and reducing taxes.

Pallister told supporters that voters opted to move forward.

“Forward to balanced budgets. Forward to better care, and sooner. Forward to new schools for our children and grandchildren. Forward to a stronger economy for all of us. And forward to more affordability for families, with lower taxes,” he said.

The Tories failed to match their 40-seat high in 2016, the biggest majority in a century in Manitoba, which ended 17 years of NDP government.

Pallister himself was declared the winner in his Winnipeg constituency of Fort Whyte.

The New Democrats were on track to add a handful of seats to the 14 won in 2016 and remain as the Official Opposition. They also improved their share of the vote. Leader Wab Kinew won his seat in Fort Rouge.

“I’m feeling pretty good tonight,” Kinew told supporters after telephoning Pallister to concede the election.

Kinew said the extra seats are a message of support and a shot

across Pallister’s bow.

“The seats that we took back made it very clear that Manitobans want us, the New Democrats, to not only be the conscience of Manitoba, not only to be the opposition of Manitoba, but to be the progressive voice for Manitoba,” he said to applause.

Kinew ran on a promise of more money for health, education, infrastructure and social programs, and he accused the PCs of implementing health changes that made the system more chaotic.

Liberal Leader Dougald Lamont won in his Winnipeg constituency of St. Boniface but his party was struggling to retain the four seats it had at dissolution.

Four is the minimum number needed for official party status, which carries with it extra funding for caucus staff, committee spaces and time in question period.

Lamont, speaking to supporters, said he was proud of his team running a positive campaign that pushed critical issues to the forefront. But he said politics is ultimately an unforgiving “blood sport.”

“You can put everything you have into something. You can deliver the best work of your life, and sometimes it’s still not enough. And that’s life. And that’s politics,” he said.

“We will continue to build.”

Both Lamont and Kinew will face mandatory party leadership reviews.

The Green Party of Manitoba was shut out once again in its bid for its first seat. Party leader James Beddome ran and lost against Kinew in Fort Rouge - his fifth attempt at a seat.

All but one of Pallister’s cabinet ministers at dissolution were

re-elected, including Finance Minister Scott Fielding, Health Minister Cameron Friesen and Justice Minister Cliff Cullen.

The election broke new ground for diversity. Manitoba has never had a black MLA but that changed Tuesday when the NDP’s Uzoma Asagwara won.

The campaign was a calculated gamble for Pallister, who called the election more than a year ahead of the scheduled voting date.

It was a four-week summertime fight that offered few surprises and saw Pallister run a front-runner’s campaign.

He participated in only one leaders debate and most of his campaign promises were small additions to measures taken in his first term.

The focus was on health care and money.

Pallister reduced the provincial sales tax by one point to seven per cent and fulfilled an election promise to reduce annual deficits, but his fiscal restraint has stirred up controversy.

Subsidies for everything from public housing to sleep apnea machines to physiotherapy have been cut. Three hospital emergency departments in Winnipeg have been downgraded and no longer handle life-threatening cases such as heart attacks.

The New Democrats had promised to reverse some of the changes.



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Accused man’s hard-sell tactic ends in charged-up arrest by Regina police

The Canadian Press

REGINA

A Regina man who allegedly tried to get a stranger to buy a garden tractor at gunpoint has been arrested after a Taser stun gun was used to subdue him.

Police say a suspect pickup truck was located Monday evening and the male driver fled on foot, but he was arrested soon after when an officer fired a Taser.

The arrest came a day after someone unloaded a garden tractor from a truck in a north-central neighbourhood and insisted a 33-year-old man purchase it.

The offer was refused and the suspect then allegedly pointed a handgun at the man, who walked away without being harmed.

Harold Joseph Hanson, who is 34, is facing multiple charges that include three weapons-related counts.

Hanson was to appear in court Tuesday.

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