



Meeting Needs of the Agricultural Community

Manufacturing folk, Tom Kehoe will tell you, hate to see empty plants. So when in the Edwards Group, now a subsidiary of Ag Growth Industries, found itself owner of the old and empty Noble Blade building in Nobleford, Kehoe, the firm's General Manager, knew what had to happen.

When Edwards, Canada's largest manufacturer of grain aeration and natural-air grain drying equipment, bought out Keho Industries in 2001, it did so to obtain its Grain Guard line; the Nobleford property, says Kehoe, came as part of the deal.

"At first, we didn't realize the potential of the building," says Kehoe. "When we saw it, we thought 'wow, what a nice surprise.' We knew it had a lot of history and a lot of potential, so we decided to capitalize on it. We worked with Nobleford to restore the old gal to its former beauty."

At 86,000 square feet, the building, then 50 years old, was far more than Edwards needed at the time, but when, six years later, the company purchased the Twister line of grain bins, it moved the manufacturing operation to Nobleford.

"It was a huge move," says Kehoe. "We were moving huge equipment, some of which weighed 30 tonnes. We had 50 semi-trailer loads of inventory."

Since last Fall, Edwards has settled nicely into its refurbished digs, eight times larger than its former location, and is employing upwards of 100.

"We're learning the bin manufacturing business," says Kehoe. "We're expanding markets (Edwards exports to the United States and countries overseas) and growing; we're happy we're here. If you're a manufacturing guy, you like to see buildings busy. That's where the beauty of this building comes from because that's what it was meant to be; it's still as solid and robust as it was when it was built."

The building's future, then, is looking far brighter than it has in recent years. Several firms have called it home after the Noble Blade company left, but all have abandoned it for financial reasons. Edwards, with Ag Growth Industries behind it, brings a new dynamic to the structure, and to the community of Nobleford. It is hardly coincidence that the village's administration won the business retention category, at SouthGrow Regional Initiative 2007 Recognition Event and Edwards was named finalist.

Edwards is playing a major role in Nobleford's recent success story, bringing to the community the type of industry it requires for a strong future.

Did you know:

- Ag Growth Income Fund is a leading manufacturer of portable grain handling and conditioning equipment including augers, belt conveyors, grain handling accessories and grain aeration equipment.
- Ag Growth's North American sales, marketing and distribution system includes approximately 1,400 dealers and distributors in forty-eight states and nine provinces.
- Established in 1991, Edwards was acquired by the Ag Growth Income Fund in 2005.
- In May 2007, Ag Growth announced the strategic acquisition of the operating assets of Twister Pipe Ltd., worth \$6.2 million. Ag Growth is relocating production to Nobleford.
- Edward's Group was recognized in the Excellence in Business Retention Category at SouthGrow's 2007 Recognition Event.

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