

COVER PRICE
\$4.99

SASKBUSINESS

SASKATCHEWAN BUSINESS MAGAZINE

January/February 2013

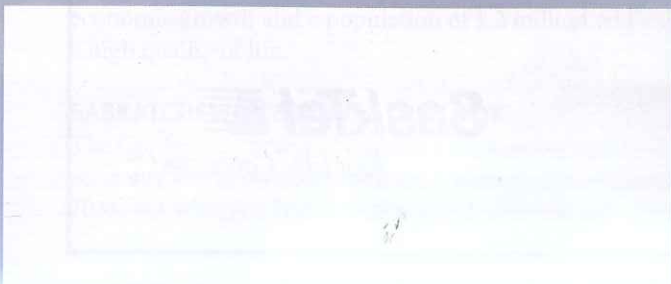
THE DEMAND FOR FARMLAND

Saskatchewan farmers are experiencing their greatest prosperity since the 1970s. How is that affecting prices and demand for acres in the province?

WOMEN OF INFLUENCE

Saskatchewan NOW

Plan for Growth: Vision 2020 and Beyond



Publication Mail Agreement No. 40013389

0 74470 71649 5 02 >



Giving while living

Finding the ROI in personal giving.

I've spent a lot of time in this column talking about the business case for community investment. I've argued that philanthropy can be one of the best ways to build a business, and that corporations can – and should – expect a tangible return on community investment. I want to now switch gears and focus on the potential return on investment from personal – rather than corporate – philanthropy.

I know a lot of people who are on the fence when it comes to personal giving – some are big donors, others are not so engaged. For those of you who haven't bought into the value of personal giving, I have one question for you. What else are you planning to do with your money? There are only so many toys you can buy before you appreciate there's more to life. I realized a while ago that the big bank account, nice house, vacation home, cars, boats and vacations still left me with the vague feeling that I had the capacity for something more – and *more* didn't mean more deals. One of the best ways I know to find real and lasting significance in life is to enrich the lives of others. I know how clichéd that sounds, but it's true.

Here's another truth: if you think you're going to do your children a favour by leaving them a big inheritance – think again. I firmly believe that inter-generational wealth transfer is one of the most serious issues – and greatest opportunities – of our time. I've seen some families appear to do this well, but I've seen others who literally cripple their children with *kindness*. My own kids know that the vast bulk of my own wealth will go to charity. None of them can live expecting an inheritance because, frankly, there won't be one. And each of my now-adult children is finding a career path based on his or her personal passion, which I applaud.

I recognize that this is an extremely personal decision. But I encourage you to consider what really is best for your children. When you're considering your own estate transfer, the appropriate threshold is probably lower than you might think. Bottom line is this: when your time on earth is over, you've got two places to send your money – children or charity. I'm not a big fan of anyone waiting for the opening and reading of the will to determine where a parent's money should go. For me,

the bigger and better issue is about giving while living, and the best way to manage that process is while I'm alive.

My focus is on doing philanthropic work using both my leadership skills and my money. For the past several years, I've participated in a program called Homes of Hope organized by Youth with a Mission (YWAM) San Diego/Baja. These trips have had a big impact on my family, friends and business colleagues. I've now made the trip to northern Mexico nine times – the last trip was in September 2011 – with a group of sixty-three. Together, we built three homes over a weekend. In addition to the impact we make on the Mexican families we support, it's a powerful time of group bonding and personal growth for everyone who volunteers.

Participating in a two-day build is life-changing and it's been a fundamental part of my children's personal development. Rather than, say, a car at graduation (a commonly-observed gift), I've funded trips for each of them and a group of their friends to participate in the Homes of Hope experience. It's taught them a great deal about their own potential for giving back, and for engaging others in their network to do the same.

Making this journey each year has been an incredible gift in my life and the lives of my friends, partners, and children. I would urge everyone to take the time to experience the impact of this work. At some point in your life, get

together with a group of folks committed to making a difference, and go to some corner of the world that needs help. Build a home. Bring some supplies. Teach a skill. Do anything. You may not be able to help everyone, but know that often the smallest thing you can do will make a big difference in the life of someone. And that is the best return on investment I can think of.

One of the best ways I know
to find real and lasting
significance in life is to
enrich the lives of others.

I know how clichéd
that sounds, but it's true.

W. Brett Wilson, a native of Saskatchewan, is Chairman of Canoe Financial and Prairie Merchant Corporation. His new book, *Redefining Success*, is available through Penguin Books. Connect: @WBrettWilson.