

Jakeman's Maple Products receives \$50,000 grant

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A long-standing Oxford County maple syrup producer received \$50,000 in provincial funding Monday to help the company ramp up its maple sugar production.

Bob Jakeman, owner of

Jakeman's Maple Products, said the grant, which is funded by the province through the Greenbelt Fund, will help the business purchase equipment to increase the amount of granulated maple sugar it produces.

"We can do it presently, but the equipment that we use doesn't let us do it in

larger quantities. So we want to introduce some technology into it ... and possibly take (opportunities) from other parts of the sugar industry and bring it to the maple industry," he said.

It is estimated the Promoting Ontario Maple Sugar project could increase Ontario maple sugar sales by \$2 million by 2016.

"This is the fastest growing product that we have," Jakeman said. "We have a number of products but granulated maple sugar, especially because of its nutritional value as compared to other sugars ... A lot of people are looking for it and we want to provide it and grow that market."

So far, Jakeman said he has gone to

visit other companies to look at the equipment used in their processes.

"(We went to) Kentucky two weeks ago to look at the machinery. We are going to go to Minnesota. There are people that are actually making it for cane sugar," he said.

"We want the most efficient, up-to-date method of doing it as possible."

Promoting Ontario Maple Sugar was one of three projects to receive funding Monday.

With a \$90,000 grant, the 100 Mile Food Services Ltd.'s Breaking Barriers in the Food Value Chain project plans to develop a sales model that expands its distribution area and create working relationships between farmers and customers.

My Sustainable Canada received \$40,000 for a Local Food Procurement Mentorship Program.

"These initiatives are of course to really make sure our public-sector institutions - colleges, universities, hospitals, city halls - take the advantage and know of how they can get local food to supply their needs," Jeff Leal, Ontario's minister of rural affairs, said at the Oxford County farm Monday.

"(It) again allows us to grow the agricultural industry in the province of Ontario that represents \$34-billion in GDP."

Leal said Jakeman's Maple Products is a good example of increased innovation in Ontario's agri-food sector.

"They are looking at ways to move forward in using and producing granulated sugar, which would be an import replacement for Ontario and Canada," he said.

"We use granulated sugar and in a wide variety of applications and this is a good way in creating value-added industries and you can do that in any part of Ontario. We are grateful to be in Oxford County today to promote this particular initiative."

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Oxford MPP Ernie Hardeman and Burkhard Mausberg, CEO of the Greenbelt Fund, enjoy some Jakeman's maple syrup and pancakes at Jakeman's Maple Farm on Monday afternoon.

