

Innovative local hog-line handles make inroads

**By Kevin Mitchell
of the StarPhoenix**

The hog market looks primed for a boom, all of it centred at Saskatoon's Startco Engineering. The local company's hog-line violation detection system has a new customer in the World Curling Federation, and a prospective one in the United States Curling Association. They recently sold 200 handles to the Canadian Curling Association, which will

use them at their 2004 events including the Brier and Scott Tournament of Hearts.

The WCF purchased 160, enough for eight sheets of ice plus spares. A shipment will go directly to Trois Rivieres, the site of this year's world junior curling championships,

and Startco president Garry Paulson said he assumes they'll be used for the other world championships as well.

WCF secretary general Mike Thomson couldn't be reached for comment at his office in Perth, Scotland.

Startco has also provided a quote to the USCA, which is giving serious thought to buying the Eye

On The Hog system.

"(The purchase by the world federation) is more of a feather than anything else," Paulson said.

"We're not going to get rich on it, but the order is for more than \$100,000 worth of stuff, and anytime you get an order over \$100,000, it's a good order. It means we're a little closer to paying off some of our expenses on it."

It also means more exposure for the de-

vice, which Paulson hopes to start marketing to clubs in the future.

The automated invention has rendered human hog-line judges obsolete at the game's highest levels, using a system that includes a magnetic strip frozen into the ice at the hog-line along with circuitry-loaded handles.

It worked flawlessly at the Continental Cup and Canada Cup earlier this season, and is seeing action at the national mixed championship in Timmons, Ont. this week.