

New Rotary Exchange student from Belgium in Melfort

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Exchange student Amber Sillen arrived in Melfort from Belgium.

With a new school year comes a new Rotary Exchange student at Melfort and Unit Comprehensive Collegiate. This year it is Grade 12 MUCC student Amber Sillen from Belgium, sponsored by the Rotary International Youth Exchange Program.

Sillen is originally from the Limburg province in Belgium. Sillen has been in Melfort just over a month.

"I like it here, it's very different," Sillen said.

"There is really a culture shock," she said.

One major difference is the education system in Canada when compared to Belgium.

"The school system is completely different because here you pick all of the classes and at home you can't pick your classes you have to do everything like languages, math, sciences. We have seven periods instead of five but we don't have every day the same classes," she explained.

Saskatchewan is very different from her home and the size has made an impression on Sillen.

"There is more agriculture and we have more industry. You have to drive a long ways until you are in the next city, in Belgium if you drive out of the city there is another city," she explained.

"We don't drive that long because if you drive three hours here you think it's normal. If we drive three hours we are

on the other end of the country or we have crossed to another country,” Sillen said.

As well when Melfort is compared to her home the difference is striking.

“My city we have 31,000 people that live in it. I thought the city where I live was small but compared to this,” she explained.

Sillen is presently staying with the Dufault family, as the year progresses she will be staying with three other families throughout her time in Canada.

According to Sillen she was always interested in doing some type of exchange.

“I wanted to do it for so long. I was always interested in travelling, meeting new people and seeing new places,” she said.

She heard about the Rotary Exchange from someone a few years ago and began to try to convince her family that she should go.

“I kept talking about it and then they said okay we are going to look at what are the possibilities,” she said.

“I thought it would be good to learn a new language because it is always good to know more languages,” she said.

Sillen explained that she has taken English in school but being in a predominantly English-speaking country has helped her.

“If I am in a conversation with a group and a group is talking then it is a little difficult for me because there is too much information. It is going better because at the beginning it was more difficult then now,” Sillen said.