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Ski resorts make improvements

Associated Press

Operators of two North Dakota ski resorts have been making renovations during the off-season and are now hoping for big snowfalls to provide the payoff.

Skyline Skiway near Fort Totten will be replacing its tow rope with either a t-bar or a j-bar to ferry skiers to the top of the hill, said Harris Saele, chairman of Lake Region Winter Sports.

"We have made some progress.

Now we need to get some snow and get the T up and get operational," Saele said.

Skyline Skiway didn't open last year because there wasn't enough snow. Saele said the resort has a snow-making machine, but man-made snow is best used as a supplement to the real thing.

Saele said the ski runs have been smoothed out and expanded this year. Only 30 percent of the ski slopes are for advanced skiers, compared to 70 percent in the past. And a new bunny hill for beginners

has been designed.

Plans for expansion are also being made at Frost Fire Mountain Ski Area in the Pembina hills west of Walhalla.

Owner Dick Johnson said he and his wife bought a barn that they plan to turn into a second ski lodge.

They also plan to convert the top floor of the lodge into a dinner theater.

Johnson said about 70 to 75 percent of the customers at his ski resort are Canadians.