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Back: Rose Friesen, Danielle Bueckert, and Randy Andrusiak. Front: Peter Bueckert and his sisters. BRENDA SAWATZKY

# Local Child Benefits from Red River Co-op Donation

**By Brenda Sawatzky**

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
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Across western Canada, September 17 is known as Fuel Good Day, a day when five cents of every litre of Red River Co-op (RRC) gas is donated to charity. This year's charitable beneficiary of the Manitoba chapter of RRC was the Children's Rehabilitation Foundation.

Rose Friesen, co-owner of Country Snacks, says that while they love to participate in the Fuel Good Day promotion, this was an extra special year.

"We got a notice that a child in our community was going to be a beneficiary, so we were pretty excited about that," says Friesen. "My staff were really pumped and they've been asking people all week for donations towards the charity."

Randy Andrusiak is the senior director of RRC Manitoba's gas bar operations and was on site in Niverville for Fuel Good Day.

When his committee chose the Children's Rehabilitation Foundation as this year's benefactor, he says the organization was quick to point out the need for tablets and specialized bikes for kids dealing with special needs.

Nine-year-old Peter Bueckert is the recipient of one of RRC's Fuel Good Day bike donations, each with a value of around \$4,500.

Peter is one in a set of triplets born to Niverville parents Keith and Danielle Bueckert. Peter lives with autism and is nonverbal.

Peter's mom, grandparents, and two sisters joined him at the Niverville Co-op on Fuel Good Day to participate in the charitable event. Peter's sisters paraded placards on the streetside, encouraging commuters to fill up and make their donation.

Danielle Bueckert is ecstatic that her son was chosen to receive one of the specialty bikes.

"He gets to ride one of those bikes in school and he loves it," Danielle says. "The one we'll be getting is for at home, so that as a family we can go for bike rides and spend time out in the front yard, which we normally can't because of his disability."

Danielle describes Peter as fully functioning in terms of mobility. The bike, which was recommended by Peter's in-school occupational therapist, provides Peter and his support team with a way to help channel his energy.

"He's tried the two-wheeler bike with the training wheels but

unfortunately we haven't had success with that," Danielle says. "But we've had success with the specialty bike in school because somebody can be behind him pushing and helping him out."

Prior to using the bike, Peter often ran through the school's hallways.

When outside at home, he had a tendency to bolt, forcing the Bueckerts to remain always on guard.

It was Peter's occupational therapist who told them about the Fuel Good Day donation and helped them apply.

The new specialized pedal bike is fully adjustable to grow with Peter as he grows.

Thanks to the RRC Fuel Good Day event, children like Peter will have one more tool in their toolbox to enjoy active participation with their peers and families.

Andrusiak says RRC puts out a call every year for charities to apply for Fuel Good Day donations. Every year, his committee tries to choose a different charity.

But according to Andrusiak, no one goes home empty-handed.

If a charity applies, even if they are not selected as the focus organization for the year, they still receive a special donation.

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# School Nutrition Programs Get Provincial Funding Boost

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Grade schools across Manitoba have been beefing up their school nutrition programs this fall thanks to newly allocated provincial funding.

To make good on their promise to help remove barriers to childhood learning, the province announced an additional \$30 million in nutritional funding earlier this year.

The new funding is being rolled out in three streams.

The first \$15 million has been distributed directly to school divisions to help them establish or enhance their nutritional meal programming. Student enrollment numbers and socioeconomic factors govern the differing division allotments.

An additional \$6 million is being allocated to individual public schools where the socioeconomic need is markedly high.

Finally, \$9 million in grant money is available for nutrition programming on an application basis. This funding may be used to support family outreach initiatives and after-school, summer, and school break programs.

## DSFM

Joel Mangin, Director of Student Services with the division scolaire Franco-Manitobaine (DSFM), says he is excited for provincial funding that will help enhance his division's existing nutrition programs.

Even so, he hopes parents understand that a universal food program means better all-around access, not food for everyone.

"I hope nobody has the illusion that every kid is going to get fed lunch every day, because that's not what this is," says Mangin.

In DSFM, the bulk of the new funding will continue to be funnelled towards three Winnipeg schools which exist in areas of higher socioeconomic need.

"We already had a more robust



meal plan that we were just funding ourselves for our really high-needs schools," says Mangin. "We provided about 200 lunches through a contract with a caterer who assembles lunches and we just deliver them to those three schools every single day."

Even so, each school in the division received a survey last year allowing DSFM to assess need. If, at any time throughout the school year, schools indicate a need for additional food assistance, Mangin says the division will continue to provide accordingly.

"We've got some schools that have basically said, 'All of our kids have lunches. We don't have any kids that come to school starving,'" Mangin says. "They know their kids. When you have 100 kids in the school, you have a pretty good idea [about their situation]. Not like the students that are in some of our schools in the city where [the school meal] is the only meal they eat in a day."

While the division could have chosen to allocate portions of the provincial funding to the creation of cafeterias, kitchens, or food cupboards, DSFM schools have little space to spare for such amenities.

So to provide food services throughout the division, DSFM will be contracting with Sysco Canada, which makes regular food deliveries to each school.

In the majority of schools, this will entail providing shelf-stable foods which are easily stored and doled out to students as need demands.

"Some of our schools in Winnipeg, where these kids don't really have access to fresh fruits and vegetables and we know that it's going to be consumed, they'll get that," Mangin adds.

In terms of the grant funding available through Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba (CNCM), Mangin says that individual schools need to apply for that on their own—and some of them are doing so.

Schools like La Broquerie, for example, offer their students a daily breakfast program. In cases like these, Mangin suspects they'll be applying for the additional funding.

"The government's been very good with saying, 'We just want you guys to feed kids and we're going to work on this together,'" says Mangin.

## HSD

Vice superintendent Colin Campbell of the Hanover School Division (HSD) says that his division benefited to the tune of \$575,000 from the new provincial nutrition funding.

A portion of the funding will be used to ensure that every school in the division has a store of fresh produce available to students every day.

"As part of this program, each school will have fresh fruit and

vegetables readily available during the school day," states an HSD news release. "This is intended for students needing a healthy snack to help them concentrate and participate fully in their learning. We understand that access to nutritious food is essential for physical and mental well-being, and we are committed to ensuring that no child goes hungry while in our schools."

Additionally, HSD says that they'll continue to partner with a local not-for-profit organization based out of Steinbach called Soup's On.

For the past two decades, Soup's On has been providing lunches for children in need of a meal.

Soup's On provides two free evening meals per week to individuals and families in need of food support.

The school lunch program is a supplementary program to the soup kitchen model.

"As Soup's On continues to serve the needs of the community, we have seen other challenges arise—specifically in families with school-aged children," the Soup's On website states. "Our Lunch Program created a way to expand our abilities to provide further support for those with food insecurities in the southeast. By partnering with local schools, we have been able to ensure that hundreds of children have the nourishment they need to grow and learn in a way that

honours and respects their dignity."

According to Campbell, all three of Niverville's schools will benefit from Soup's On services this school year.

## SRSD

According to Teresa Hampton, assistant superintendent at the Seine River School Division (SRSD), a grant of \$266,000 was received from the province for nutrition programming for this school year.

Hampton says, prior to this funding announcement, that all of their schools were running their own independent nutrition programs. Many of them were receiving some level of government funding which they had to apply for.

For some schools, the funding allowed them to provide their students with grab-and-go snack options such as granola bars or fruit.

In other schools, like those in Ste. Anne and St. Norbert, a full breakfast program complemented the grab-and-go snacks.

The new provincial funding allows SRSD to disburse money to schools based on their enrollment and socioeconomic need.

Schools that would like to implement a breakfast program, she says, may be able to do that now.

It may also be used to provide supplementary wages for staff to get involved more fully in the implementation of their various nutrition programs.

Still, Hampton says, the money only goes so far. Volunteers and student helpers will still be needed.

Last month, the division held a meeting where they explored outside catering options which could take pressure off school staff.

"Right now, [school staff] is having to order, prep, deliver, and clean up," Hampton says of their internal planning. "We could eliminate a lot of that. It would just be the delivery and pickup that they'd have to manage within the school, which is considerably less [time-consuming] than running the whole program."

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# Commemorative Cemetery Shed Honours Couple's Memory

By Jennifer Lavin

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The lovely little shed recently erected in Niverville's Heritage Cemetery was created in memory of, and with a donation from, Alvin and Marilyn Podjan, longtime residents of Niverville.

Heritage Cemetery is owned by two different churches.

The northern half belongs to the Niverville CMC Church and the southern half is both owned and maintained by the Niverville United Church (NUC).

Myra Kehler, a member of the United Church as well as the committee that maintains their portion of the cemetery, says that the Podjans were deeply committed to their church family.

Alvin Podjan passed away in 2009, and his wife followed in 2016. The pair bequeathed funds to the United Church



The new commemorative shed in the Heritage Cemetery. **JENNIFER LAVIN**

to be used specifically towards care of the Heritage Cemetery.

Kehler explains that the committee in charge of the cemetery knew the property needed a new shed in which to store the equipment used to maintain it. So they decided to use the Podjans' donation for that purpose.

The committee didn't want to just create any shed, though. They wanted to create something special.

In 1987, Marilyn Podjan

wrote a booklet about the history of the United Church for the church's eightieth anniversary. On the cover, she featured a drawing that had been found in the archives of the original church building.

The committee modelled their new shed after this depiction, a wee church, to honour the church that the couple held so dear.

Alvin and Marilyn were married in 1967 and settled in Niverville. They raised their daughters, Laurel and

Shannon, and built a business, Al's Plumbing & Service Ltd., which served the community for 40 years.

The Podjans were devoted both to their town and to the United Church and Kehler feels they deserve recognition for their devotion and contributions over the years to the care and maintenance of Heritage Cemetery.

"We thought it was kind of a lovely story to tell," Kehler says. "There's a little bit of history, and I think a lot of people in Niverville think that the cemetery is not being used when it actually is. We still have grave sites, we still have urn sites, we are a functioning cemetery, and we hope to make it a lovely setting that people see as they drive or walk by Main Street. And the Podjans deserve to have their names go out there one more time for the kindness of their donation."

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# Hoop Dancers Tell Story of Truth and Reconciliation at NHS

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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In Indigenous tradition, hoop dancers are storytellers, and that's exactly what the Mason sisters—Kimberly, Charisma, and Nakiyah—came to Niverville High School (NHS) on Tuesday, September 24 to do.

In honour of Truth and Reconciliation Week, teachers and students at NHS participated in a series of meaningful ways to help capture the essence of what it means to recognize and reconcile with darker aspects of Canada's past.

Raelyn Voulgaris is the learning support teacher at NHS. She says that a number of the school's teachers over the past couple of years have been instrumental in developing lessons that look at Indigenous history and culture, both past and present.

Much of Truth and Reconciliation Week at NHS was dedicated to those lessons.

"We are taking time to talk about the importance of not just Orange Shirt Day but what truth and reconciliation is," Voulgaris says. "What does it mean to us as Canadians and what does it mean to us as Nivervilleans?"

To add richer meaning to those lessons, students also participated in a hands-on art project of tile painting. Each student attempted to depict, on their tile, what truth and reconciliation means to them.

At some point, these will be combined into a larger art project to be determined by the school's art teacher.

On Friday, NHS students also joined the other Niverville schools in a Walk for Reconciliation.

Visiting the school through the course of the week was an Indigenous elder from Roseau River First Nation, there to answer any questions students may have.

"We offered him tobacco last year and asked him to be our school community elder," Voulgaris says. "That's our goal, is inviting community [into the school]. We want to know who



Kimberly, Charisma, and Nakiyah Mason perform the hoop dance at NHS.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

has gifts in our community that they can share."

As noted by the popularity of the Ribbon Skirt Club at NHS, Voulgaris says that students have been embracing Indigenous teachings at NHS in a very positive way over the past couple of years.

Canada's role in the treatment of the Indigenous peoples is something Voulgaris says the education system has ignored for too long. Truth and Reconciliation Week, she adds, is a step in the right direction for creating a better future for all.

"If you hear Justice Murray Sinclair talk about it, it's not going to happen in one generation," Voulgaris says. "It took six generations plus to get us where we are today. I think it's really important to recognize that it's a systemic issue, especially in the education system. It's our duty as teachers... to make sure that kids are seeing stuff like these young women who are reclaiming their culture, and that's reconciliation."

The young women she refers to are the Mason sisters, invited to NHS along with their parents to perform a hoop dancing demonstration.

The eldest Mason sisters, 15 and 16 years old, have been hoop dancing for just over nine years. Together they have performed at events across

western Canada.

Most recently, they competed in the hoop dance world championship in Phoenix, Arizona. They ended up just a few points shy of making the top five.

Seven-year-old Nakiyah, too, placed eighth out of 70 dancers in the children's category.

On Tuesday morning, they performed in the NHS gym.

"Not too long ago, Indigenous people weren't allowed to express their culture," Kimberly told the gathered students. "[They] weren't allowed to grow their hair long, speak their language, or wear the regalia like we are today. Some who could dance practiced in secret so they weren't caught and punished. But our people are resilient and they stayed strong."

Amidst the storytelling, the three brightly dressed dancers performed to recorded music, moving to self-choreographed dances.

Each dance, they explained, tells its own story of life.

"If you watch very carefully, you may see an eagle come down with his outstretched wings, flying toward the bright open sun," Charisma said. "Or a hunter in the tall grass, aiming and shooting his bow and arrow towards his prey."

Hoop dancing is also viewed as a

healing dance, they added, offering healing to whoever watches the story unfold.

"The [first] hoop represents the world and its circle of life," Kimberly says. "It has no beginning or end, and each and every one of us are a special part of it. The second hoop and third hoop represent you and me. When we make connections, we gather to understand each other and make our roles in life stronger."

For a brief time, the young ladies were joined by a group of NHS students, teachers, and the principal to participate in some hoop dance formations.

"The way you came up here, open-hearted and open-minded, that is called reconcili-action," Kimberly says. "You are taking matters into your own hands and turning it into something good."

The ceremony also included an audio clip that included many difficult-to-hear historical details as relayed by Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, a First Nations elder and residential school survivor.

But the Mason sisters' performance was about more than just addressing the injustices of the past. It was a story of celebration of all peoples.

"Not only do we want to inspire

Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to unite, learn, celebrate, and heal," Kimberly says, "we also want to inspire each of you guys to step up and embrace your own culture, as each culture is beautiful and deserves to be embraced."

Parents Russell Mason and Ginger Johnson were there to support their daughters. Together they have nine children, the youngest of which is four months old.

Johnson says her eldest daughters were just four and six when they developed a deep fascination with hoop dancing. Since then, they've been virtually unstoppable in their passion for both the art and reconciliation with their Cree identity.

As a family, they've constructed their own hoops and created their own bright regalia embellished with traditional beadwork.

The oldest girls are enrolled in online learning with the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC). Through this program, languages like Cree are being reintroduced to Indigenous students.

The language was seemingly lost with Kimberly and Charisma's maternal grandmother, but now Johnson is learning her native tongue for the first time through her daughters.

"In school and in certain places, [my mother] didn't feel safe using her language," Johnson told *The Citizen*. "She was trying to protect me and I didn't understand. I said, 'Mom, can you please just teach me?' But she didn't. She wanted me to fit in with the community that, at the time, was mostly non-Indigenous. And so she felt that was the safest."

As for the message the Mason sisters convey through their art, Kimberly says it's one they take very seriously.

"When we provide an education, we have to seek out the right information to provide," says Kimberly. "We really, truly feel this is such a responsibility, but we feel extremely joyful and thankful at the end of the day... We were taught that we dance for one person. Even if one person shows up, we give our best."

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Mel Marginet, member of the sustainable transportation team at the Green Action Centre.

BETHANY DAMAN

# Online Carpooling Tool Makes Ridesharing Easier

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Thanks to \$30,000 in new provincial funding, GoManitoba is offering Manitobans a better online platform when it comes to creating their carpool and rideshare connections.

GoManitoba is part of the not-for-profit group Green Action Centre (GAC). The organization's primary goal is to introduce sustainable, healthy commuting options to Manitobans.

It's not just a means of finding carpool partners, though. The app also provides up-to-date information on Winnipeg's public transit routes and walking and bike paths.

As well, the site connects users with mentors who can help them navigate the public transit system for the first time or find the best bike-friendly routes.

On September 12, Tracy Schmitt, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, met with members of the GAC and University of Manitoba Sustainability Projects Coordinator,

Christie Nairn, to make the funding announcement.

"Finding greener and more sustainable transportation options is critical to reduce our GHG emissions," says Schmitt. "Our government is taking real action to fight climate change and we are proud to support tools like GoManitoba to help Manitobans work together to protect our planet while saving money on their commute."

GoManitoba was first launched in 2017. Thanks to the recent introduction of the more user-friendly platform, GAC hopes the word will continue to spread and increase the number of users.

Mel Marginet is one member of the sustainable transportation team at GAC. She's excited to launch the sleek new carpool tool.

"The most common use is to find carpool partners," Marginet tells *The Citizen*. "This [site] is kind of like the Kijiji of carpooling where the 'buyers' and 'sellers' are coming together to make those connections."

While most of the existing 3,000 GoManitoba members are residents of Winnipeg, Marginet

says that the tool is equally useful to rural residents.

"We really see carpooling as the missing link for a lot of communities that don't have public transit to get them to and from the city or from their neighbouring communities," Marginet says. "This can really offer people the opportunity to reduce their driving alone or to offer commuting options to people who have been, so far, left behind in a lot of ways."

Marginet says that the tool isn't just there for those needing to carpool to work on a daily basis. It can be used by anyone for single-trip options, too.

For instance, if someone is looking to rideshare in order to get to a medical appointment, GoManitoba provides the means to arrange it.

Anyone planning private or public events will also find the app useful as a way to offer sustainable travel options to their guests.

The provincial funding will serve a second purpose for GAC. Now they'll be able to incentivize business owners across the province to network with GoManitoba.

Marginet says that, statistically, most users of the carpool app first heard about GoManitoba through their place of employment.

For this reason, GAC recognizes the benefit in getting employers on board as networking partners.

"As much as we can promote as a small non-profit, it really makes a difference when those organizations sign up and help get the word out," says Marginet.

For a nominal monthly fee, organizations can create network pages on the GoManitoba site. Here, they can run employee contests and reward programs to encourage carpool use.

It also gives the organization free access to GoManitoba's Emergency Ride Home program, which reimburses carpool employees if they need to use public transit or a taxi to leave work early due to a personal emergency.

Organizations that register with GoManitoba can receive the first six months of membership for free.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ www.gomb.ca

IN BRIEF

## Truck Ride for Special Olympics Kicks off in IDC

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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On September 7, the annual Truck Ride for Special Olympics fundraiser kicked off at the TC Energy Centre in Île-des-Chênes.

A breakfast and registration took place at 7:30 a.m. By 10:00 a.m., truck drivers and their riders hit the road to form a trucker's parade along the Perimeter Highway.

They returned to the TC Energy Centre for a noon lunch, special program, and silent auction draw.

The Truck Ride takes place every year through the collaborative efforts of the Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) and the Manitoba Trucking Association.

"The Perimeter Highway will rumble with the sound of passionate Manitoba truckers in an awe-inspiring display," the Manitoba Special Olympics website states. "Whether you're behind the wheel or cheering from the curb, your involvement enables Manitoba athletes with intellectual disabilities to enjoy the sports they love, develop healthy habits, and make lifelong friendships."<sup>1</sup>

The LETR is a grassroots fundraising organization dedicated to raising money and awareness for the Special Olympics. They engage law enforcement from around the world, championing acceptance and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities.

The Truck Ride is one of their many fundraising and awareness events supported by the LETR.

"After an engaging community breakfast, drivers return to their rigs, blare their horns, and drive as a group around the Perimeter Highway, forming an eye-catching parade of support," Special Olympics Manitoba says.

Once every two years, Special Olympics Manitoba hosts its provincial games. The next event will take place from June 20-22, 2025.

Medallists of the provincial games are eligible to become members of Team Manitoba to compete in the national games. Likewise, medallists of the national games go on to form Team Canada to compete at the world level.

Niverville's Terrylinn Johnson took home four medals in speedskating at this year's national winter games held in Calgary.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<sup>1</sup> "Rev Up Your Engines for the 2024 LETR Truck Ride for Special Olympics Manitoba," Special Olympics Manitoba. Date of access: September 6, 2024 (<https://somanitoba.akaraisin.com/ui/2024truckridemb>).



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# Could It Work? A Guaranteed Liveable Basic Income

By Brenda Sawatzky

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Introduced as a private member's bill in 2021, Bill C-223 called for the federal government to create a national Guaranteed Liveable Basic Income (GLBI), a model which many advocates believe could help end poverty across the country.

The bill was up for its second reading in late September and failed to pass the House of Commons.

For many, this failure will not have come as a surprise.

However, a primary objective of Bill C-223 was to revive conversation about the prospects of an GLBI in Canada—and the conversation is an interesting one.

Leah Gazan, an NDP Member of Parliament from Winnipeg, was the one to table the bill. She says it was developed and drafted by leaders in the basic income movement.

In order to create the bill, real-life data and verifiable evidence was used.

According to Gazan, the bill would have imposed on the Minister of Finance the requirement to present a report to determine what constitutes a GLBI for each region of Canada.

"We know that costs of living vary depending on where you live," says Gazan.

Apart from a few basic

guidelines, she says that Bill C-223 gave full autonomy to the government to develop the specifics of the law. The bill required only that GLBI recipients be determined based on age, income level, and Canadian residency.

Gazan says that the GLBI should be available to all people living in Canada over the age of 17, regardless of their citizenship or immigration status.

Unlike some other basic income programs already in place, recipients of the GLBI would not be required to participate in education, training, or the labour market.

"It is meant to augment and improve our current social safety net," Gazan says. "because we know that current income guarantees are not liveable."

Examples of Canada's existing income guarantees include Employment Income (EI) for the temporarily unemployed and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), a supplementary top-up available to low-income Old Age Security pensioners.

"The purpose of our bill [was] to lift up those current income guarantees and spread them out to folks that are falling through the cracks."

## ROUNDTABLE

On September 11, a roundtable panel of four experts spoke to the merits of a GLBI.



DEPOSITPHOTOS

Among them was Evelyn Forget, an officer in the Order of Canada and professor of Community Health Science and Economics at the University of Manitoba.

Forget is also the recent author of the book *Basic Income for Canadians: From the COVID-19 Emergency to Financial Security for All*.

Her interest in the idea of a guaranteed basic income dates back decades and is based on evidence revealed through a pilot project that took place in Dauphin, Manitoba in the 1970s.

## MINCOME EXPERIMENT

In 1975, Manitoba became home to what is considered to have been one of the most

ambitious social science experiments ever to take place in Canada. The pilot project was called Mincome, derived from the words Manitoba minimum income.

Designed by a group of economists from the University of Manitoba and the provincial government, and implemented by local policymakers, the goal was to address rural poverty.

More specifically, it sought to answer the age-old question: does financial government assistance produce laziness and reduce work incentive among its recipients?

Dauphin was chosen due to its remote location and population of 10,000,

sizeable enough to provide a sufficient pool of data for analysis.

The project ran for four years before it was halted due to political and economic turmoil.

The results were packed away and not properly studied until, in 2008, Forget took it upon herself to pour through the mountain of collected data.

She discovered that, in the years Mincome operated, hospitalization rates among participating families fell dramatically. There were also marked improvements in people's mental health.

Many recipients received dental care for the first time in their lives.

No less significant was the extreme rise in the number of Dauphin children completing high school. At the time, students in low-income settings were inclined to quit school early in order to get jobs to help out their families.

During the years of the Mincome experiment, the number of high school graduates in Dauphin exceeded those in Winnipeg.

The experiment also opened the door of opportunity for entrepreneurs. When funding was pulled in 1979, many small businesses folded as the economy returned to the more difficult conditions in place before Mincome.

## RENEWED INTEREST

In more recent years, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, interest in a minimum basic income has seen a resurgence.

In order to win over popular opinion, Forget and others say some myth-busting will be necessary.

With the current high rates of inflation, Forget says a major area of misconception is that a GLBI would cost too much and propel inflation rates even higher.

The reality, she says, is that the income supplement initiatives already available in Canada are badly coordinated, creating overlap in some areas and gaps in others.

As well, these programs are unreasonably expensive to administer because they require so many government employees to police the system. By streamlining, she says, the funds could go a lot further.

"That's what a basic income does," says Forget. "It takes money that we're already spending and it spends it better to make sure that it gets into the hands of people who need it. When we give everybody a basic income that allows them to live above the poverty line, many of those same people will not now be collecting provincial income assistance. Provinces are currently paying about \$20 billion per



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year or more on income assistance.”

**EXPERT INSIGHTS**

Another expert on the September 11 panel was Sid Frankel, senior scholar of the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba. Frankel also sits on the board of directors for Basic Income Canada and Basic Income Manitoba. He’s on a steering committee whose mission is to end child poverty.

Frankel says that GLBI is the quintessential example of an evidence-based policy.

“We have the strongest evidence, experimental and quasi-experimental, going back more than six decades, and the findings of a large number of studies which all converge to make this point,” he says.

According to Frankel, the fact that GLBI is to be a hard sell is that, both culturally and politically, we are stuck in our dependence on an antiquated way of doing things.

“We are still making the Elizabethan Poor Laws distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor,” says Frankel of a system of law originating in the early 1600s. “These beliefs were classist, racist, and prejudicial in so many ways... That leads us to inefficient, stigmatizing support systems like social assistance for the so-called undeserving.”

Frankel says this distinction was reinforced by our government during the pandemic when applicants for the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) had to prove a certain level of prior earnings before they were eligible.

He points out that people hold some key misconceptions about programs such as the GLBI.

One myth, he says, is that a guaranteed income robs people of their incentive to work.

“When it comes to work reduction, there is strong evidence that those who do reduce their work are engaged in other socially

useful pursuits like education, caregiving to family members, and childcare,” Frankel explains.

Other upsides of removing poverty, he adds, include improved health and well-being, as well as a reduction in overall crime, including both property and violent crime.

When accounting for the cost to implement a GLBI, Frankel says that one need also consider the cost of running the Canadian criminal justice system in the face of growing levels of poverty.

In the end, he adds, a GLBI would be there for all Canadians, not just those living in a chronic state of poverty.

“For all of us, it will increase our economic security,” Frankel says. “It’s like Medicare. Hopefully we won’t all need [it]. But if we do need it, we know it’ll be there. Same with a basic income if the worst happens to us economically.”

As president of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, Damon Johnston also weighed in on the GLBI. Johnston has been a voice of advocacy for the Indigenous community since 1994.

Like others, Johnston believes a GLBI would turn the tide of perpetual poverty among his people, an outcome he says is the result of segregation through the reserve system.

“There was never any thought, that I can see, given to economic development and creating opportunity for Indigenous people’s participation in the economy,” Johnston says. “In fact, there were clauses in the Indian Act that prevented that.”

Still, Johnston says he’s more interested in finding solutions than pinpointing who’s to blame for the current reality.

Ben Earl rounded out the roundtable panellists. Earl is the CEO of Feed the Need in Durham, Ontario and general manager of the Basic Income Canada Network.

“I believe the crisis we’re facing around food insecurity is one of the most alarming

because it’s so foundational to the health of all Canadians,” Earl says. “It’s the great leveller—food. We all need it.”

Earl says that 8.7 million Canadians reported being food insecure in 2023. This is an increase of 1.8 million over the year prior and an increase of almost 3 million since 2020.

Alarming, Earl says, these growing numbers include people who already work full-time and, in many cases, come from dual-income households.

This puts an unnecessary strain on volunteer foodbanks meant to serve as an emergency response for Canadians who find themselves in short-term economic stress. They are not sustainable in the long-term for more and more Canadians.

Based on a pilot program run in Ontario in past years, Earl says that providing people with a guaranteed minimum income didn’t just increase people’s access to food; it increased their access to the right kinds of food.

“If they had special diets or if they wanted access to fresh fruits and vegetables, [they could buy those],” Earl says.

**MORAL IMPERATIVE**

Had Bill C-223 passed its second reading in Parliament, it would have moved to a parliamentary committee for further study, the first time in history such a committee studied basic income.

“But it’s a huge opportunity even if it doesn’t make it to third reading within the election cycle,” says Gazan. “Let’s make this one of the main election issues going into the next federal election.”

Gazan urges all Canadians to reach out to their federal and provincial representatives to advocate on behalf of this issue.

“It’s not just a moral imperative,” Gazan says. “It’s a constitutional obligation... to uphold the basic human rights of all people living in Canada.”



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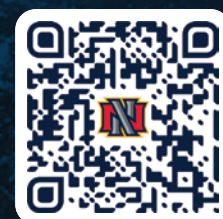


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# Change in Federal Policy Threatens Wonder Shows Midway

By Brenda Sawatzky

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If you've ever attended the Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair, or virtually any other southern Manitoba festival, you'll be familiar with Wonder Shows, a travelling carnival company.

Thanks to a recent move from the federal government, however, its owner says 2024 may have been the last hurrah for operations like his.

Effective September 6, the federal government says they are turning down applications to allow temporary foreign workers in areas where the jobless rate is over six percent.

This will make it more difficult for businesses to rely on cheap labour sourced from outside the country. The hope is that it will expand opportunities for the local labour pool.

But according to Wonder Shows owner Ken Kiernicki, the problem, at least in his business, is with the local labour pool, not in his disinterest in hiring local.

For more than 60 years, Wonder Shows has been delivering thrills. For a lot of those years, Kiernicki has been involved in the carnival business, first as an employee and eventually as owner.

He can remember a time when students and young adults were glad for any kind of employment they could get as long as it meant a short-term paycheque.

That has been changing over the years, he says, but never more drastically than



The midway at the Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair.

✉ DUSTIN KRAHN

in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2019, Kiernicki brought in temporary foreign workers for the first time. The opportunity was a godsend, he says, and it's the reason he was able to stay in business at all.

Prior to that, Kiernicki struggled every year to find enough temporary local workers to fill out his team.

When he did find them, he felt their work ethic was generally poor and the quality inconsistent.

"You give them a chance, but they go drinking, you're breaking up fights, you're putting them to bed at 4:00 a.m., and you don't know if they're going to show up the next day," says Kiernicki. "I don't have any of those problems with [foreign workers]. These guys want to come back next year so they're on their best behaviour. They're respectful and refreshing."

For the most part, Kiernicki's temporary foreign labourers come from Jamaica. In the first year, he hired ten

of them to work from May through August.

He's been increasing that number year after year.

He says it's certainly not a cheap way of doing business. Each foreign worker costs him around \$4,000 in flights alone. Kiernicki also supplies housing for the workers while they're here.

Then he pays them around \$16 per hour and time and a half for overtime. Most of them are expected to put in around 20 hours of overtime per week.

"The deal is they only come in for four months so they want to work as much as they can," Kiernicki says. "Our employment is temporary, it's difficult [work], and it's long hours. We just can't seem to find anybody that wants to work like that anymore."

This includes new immigrants, says Kiernicki, who may have the work ethic but are looking for a permanent job placement when they arrive.

As for local Canadian students, Kiernicki says society

may have made life too easy for them over the years.

"I'll talk to my Jamaican workers and I'll ask them, 'When you're in Jamaica and you don't work, do you get any money from the government?' And they say 'no,' where here it's pretty easy," Kiernicki says. "If you don't want to work, someone will look after you."

Because of their willingness to impress, Kiernicki's temporary foreign workers also add a level of professionalism, which helps to shift the negative public image of "carnies."

In 2024, Kiernicki says temporary foreign workers made up at least half of his workforce. Because the process is a long one, Kiernicki is already filling out the paperwork for next year's workers, crossing his fingers that he'll be approved.

If the federal government approves his applications, he'll bring 30 of his 50 workers in from overseas.

Just like every year before this one, Kiernicki will have to prove that he's done all he can to find local workers first by placing want ads in the local papers and online employment sites. Like other years, he expects a zero-response rate to his ads.

If the federal government doesn't grant his foreign worker application, he's confident that Wonder Shows will close its doors for good.

"This company's been around since 1963," Kiernicki says. "Now finally we get things figured out and [the government is threatening] to pull out on us."

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# Development Undergoes Excavation for Human Remains

**By Brenda Sawatzky**  
 LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
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As of Monday, September 23, an excavation got underway at 420 Main Street in St. Adolphe.

The excavation was monitored by the province's Historic Research Branch, headed by Suyoko Tsukamoto, an impact assessment archaeologist.

It follows on the heels of reports that at least one unmarked children's grave lay beneath the site, and possibly dozens more.

"Heritage assessments and monitoring work are undertaken to identify if a proposed activity or development might present a risk to heritage resources or human remains," a provincial spokesperson tells *The Citizen*. "The type, scope, and methodology of these studies are regulated by the province, and their results serve to identify the best course of action to mitigate any damage or risk."

This excavation work, which appears to be superficial in nature, will inform the next steps to be taken.

"The collaboration between the municipality and developer, as well as citizen engagement, is supporting a



The excavation at 420 Main Street in St. Adolphe.

▣ BRENDA SAWATZKY

commemorated by a cairn located behind the church.

Stalled in the interim by the municipality's refusal to issue a building permit for the site, Fuchs says he's now waiting on results from the province's investigation before he commences his work.

"The province gave me [information] on how to proceed," Fuchs says. "What to do to follow their guidelines to determine what's there and what's not and how to deal with that."

At the time of this writing, Fuchs was feeling confident the excavation work would be completed by Friday, September 27. He was hesitant to speak to his plans to develop the lot before he got clear direction from the province.

As the overseer to the cemetery located behind the St. Adolphe parish, the church's board of directors was glad for the province's involvement in the process.

"We're happy to see the province has stepped in and is showing support with the archaeology team starting this week," says David Boisjoli, parish board member. "We hope it brings clarity and closure to families and everyone involved."

process that allows for a better understanding of previous land use at this site so that its future use can be appropriately determined."

The future use of this site had already been determined prior to the province getting involved.

Purchased by developer John Fuchs, 420 Main Street was intended to become a housing development, including both single-storey easy-access bungalows and two-storey side-by-sides.

Digging for the new

development was scheduled to begin in late August.

As surveyors mapped out the boundary between 420 Main Street and the lot belonging to the neighbouring parish, a lone grave marker belonging to Marie Thérèse Leclerc was discovered to lie on the wrong side of the fence.

At this point, local historians spoke out, indicating the potential for more unmarked graves.

The markers are said to have been carried away during the 1950 flood and since

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# EV Ownership Slow to Catch on in Manitoba

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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In recent years, voices for environmental change have been decrying our collective addiction to fossil fuels, citing their impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

In response, governments have been introducing strategies to meet lower emission targets.

By 2035, the Canadian government says that they anticipate a complete shift to zero-emission technology in light-duty vehicles rolling off dealership lots.

On a federal scale, the message seems to be getting through. Since 2017, the number of battery-electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles on Canadian roads are ten times higher than they were just seven years ago.

In the first quarter of 2024, Quebec saw the highest number of zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) registrations: just over 22,000. Ontario's were half that at almost 11,000 and B.C. registrations totalled just under 10,000.<sup>1</sup>

In Manitoba, the transition to ZEVs has progressed at a much slower pace. Here, a mere one percent of new vehicles registered since 2017, or about 4,000, are zero-emission.

With recent changes to legislation, the governing NDP hope to alter that. Indeed, they are optimistic that ZEV uptake will triple by 2026.

This summer, Manitoba followed the lead of most other provinces by rolling out an incentive program to entice vehicle buyers to make the move to electric vehicles (EVs) or plug-in hybrids.

The \$25 million in funding will provide individual buyers

with a rebate of \$4,000 on new vehicles and \$2,500 on used.

The hope is that Manitobans will be motivated by the daily cost-savings attributed to EVs in comparison to gas-powered vehicles, especially in tough economic times like these.

And since Manitobans enjoy, on average, the second lowest energy costs across the entire country, thanks to local hydro-electricity production, it's hard to fathom why the EV trend is slow to grow here.

First, there is still a general lack of trust when it comes to new transitional technology.

The second issue, and perhaps more weighty, is the lack of charging infrastructure available to support a large-scale move to EV use.

Some say that incentivizing EV purchases without ensuring the widespread availability of charging infrastructure is like putting the cart before the horse.

## COMPARISONS

In the world of EV technology, Tesla has long led the way. Founded at the turn of the twenty-first century, the company released its first fully electric vehicle in 2008.

Since then, Tesla has built an almost cult-like following.

Slowly, other automobile manufacturers have been perfecting their own EV models. Now buyers have a wide range of options produced by companies like Hyundai, BMW, Volkswagen, Toyota, Ford, and GMC.

According to *Car and Driver*, an online car guide, the EV presents some real pros.

The most obvious, of course, is the cleaner running engine which produces zero emissions while driving.

The net environmental benefit should be evaluated,



Jordan Lépine of Île-des-Chênes with his Volvo C40.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

though, based on how a province's electric energy is derived. Where electric energy is produced through the burning of fossil fuels, the environmental benefits are reduced.

Another major win for the EV is the reduced maintenance it requires in comparison to gas- and diesel-powered engines. Oil changes become a thing of the past. And with all-around fewer moving parts, the electric motor simply has fewer components to break down.

Even the braking system tends to last much longer in an EV thanks to regenerative braking.

Nothing seems to be lost, either, in terms of horsepower and torque.

*Car and Driver* also notes three major cons with the EV, as of now.

Without question, the EV's largest and most expensive component is a wearable item: the battery pack.

"According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the expected life of an EV's battery pack is between 10 and 12 years," the website says. "That said, battery packs can last longer than their estimate. Once a battery pack bites the

dust, though, replacing it is rather pricey."<sup>2</sup>

Replacement cost vary depending on the type of EV and the manufacturer, but it's safe to say it will range in the thousands of dollars. Like any commodity, prices should come down as demand increases.

Companies are already working on refurbishing batteries, to help consumers save money.

Another con is the EV's towing capacity. While the power is there, towing a significant amount of weight, such as a trailer or camper, reduces the battery's range between charges by as much as two-thirds. This can be a significant consideration for some drivers.

That problem could be compounded by a lack of charging stations en route to one's destination.

Few online statistics, however, will be capable of providing a better overview of EV ownership than a first-hand testimonial. *The Citizen* reached out to local EV owners to find out more.

This article focuses specifically on EVs and not hybrid models.

## THE DOWNSIDE OF THE EV

Gurjaspal Singh and his partner live in St. Adolphe. His wife purchased a Tesla Model 3 in the spring of 2023 to save costs on her daily commute to Winnipeg. At the time, she paid just more than \$60,000 for the vehicle.

Brand appeal is what made her decide on a Tesla, he says, and so far she's not regretting her purchase.

Singh, on the other hand, says he's not as impressed with the vehicle's quality when considering its cost. It has some annoying squeaks, he says, and the seat comfort is not what you'd expect from a luxury vehicle.

"Driving down the highway, you have these seams in the road," Singh says. "In the Tesla, you feel every seam. In the back seat you notice it even more."

What's even more annoying, Singh adds, are the driver control features on the Tesla dashboard.

Adjusting the wiper blade speed is just one example of what he says is a poorly planned design.

"You have to do it from the [dashboard touchscreen] without being distracted," says Singh. "It's like Tesla has decided that they want to give as little control to the user as possible. There's a button on the steering wheel, but all that does is it opens up the option on the screen to change the wiper speed there."

Île-des-Chênes resident Jordan Lépine test-drove many EVs before buying his Volvo C40. He, too, was unimpressed with the complexity of the Tesla's driving functions.

It's so different from a traditional vehicle, he says, that the dealership makes you watch an instructional video before you can drive your new Tesla

off the lot.

"When you get into an electric Volvo, it looks the same [as the gas-powered Volvo], and they've done that by design so as to no alienate you and make you feel like you're driving a spaceship," Lépine says. "Whereas Tesla has done the exact opposite. You get a Tesla and you have to learn to drive it."

George and Roxanne Sawatzky moved to Niverville this spring from Vancouver. They've owned a Tesla since 2022.

Upon their arrival in Manitoba, the Sawatzkys quickly realized that their rear-wheel-drive model didn't handle Manitoba winter driving very well.

"I don't think we'd have bought an EV if we'd known we were coming to Manitoba," says Roxanne.

The biggest complaint the Sawatzkys have is the fact that they rarely achieve the mileage per charge that the dealership told them they should.

"We were told a 460-kilometer range on a charge," George says. "We took it to Arizona. We had to stop every two hours and charge for 35 to 40 minutes. We lost a whole day, plus we had to pay an extra night for a hotel. The charging was \$20 per charge every two hours so it didn't save us anything."

On short trips around Manitoba, they say, they might get close to the advertised range. On a road trip, though, it drops to around 260 kilometres.

Part of the problem, they add, is that the charge level is affected with the use of every single vehicle function. So using the heater or A/C, the wiper blades, the radio, all of these things reduce the charge range. Uncontrollable

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elements such as wind and hilly terrain also affects the charge range.

"Your car cues you and says, 'You're going to make it to this [charger],' but there are so many variables, like what the wind is like," Roxanne says. "Tesla may say you've still got 60 minutes left to go on your battery. But if it's quite windy, you may have only 20 minutes."

For this reason, they say, it's quite imperative to stick to a predetermined route when travelling with an EV. There's little room for spontaneous detours along a more scenic route if the scenic route isn't equipped with plenty of charging stations.

On another occasion, a day trip to Grand Forks ended up costing the Sawatzkys a night in a hotel when they discovered that chargers around the city were down on the day they arrived.

Lépine agrees that this can be a problem. Tesla charging stations, he says, are known to be reliable. Non-Tesla chargers, on the other hand, are often problematic.

Lionel Head of Niverville has owned his 2024 Chevy Equinox EV for only two months, but he still feels it's been one of the best moves he's made in a long time.

He adds that EV ownership is not for everyone. It's certainly not for those who live in apartment blocks or condominium complexes where personal charging systems aren't an option. To charge at a public system is inconvenient and expensive.

But for Head, there are few drawbacks so far. If he ever had to have his vehicle towed, he says, he imagines a special tow truck would be required due to the additional weight of the vehicle. As well, servicing the vehicle will require a repair shop with hoists.

Both Head and Lépine have had different range experiences than the Sawatzkys.

The advertised range on Head's Equinox is around 460 kilometres. From personal experience, he believes that he averages more than that.

The computer on Lépine's Volvo has undergone numerous software updates since he's purchased it and, with each one, the vehicle has become more and more accurate in terms of judging charge rate based on driving conditions.

His most recent update actually made improvements to the range, something Lépine

wouldn't have believed possible if he hadn't experienced it. It went from an average 380-kilometre range to 415 kilometres literally overnight.

Lépine put it to the test and rolled into his garage at the 415-kilometre mark.

### THE UPSIDES

When it comes to the local commute, these EV drivers all agree that the daily cost savings in fuel is exciting.

"With Manitoba's electricity prices, it's very economical," Singh says.

He adds that he noticed very little difference in his hydro utility bill since his EV charger was installed.

The Sawatzkys concur. A trip to Costco on the west side of Winnipeg costs them around \$1.30 in electricity. Having a personal charger in their garage has saved them around 75 percent of what it would cost to charge at public charging stations.

For Lépine, saving money on fuel was the number one reason for his EV purchase.

"I used to have a comparable SUV and I do quite a lot of driving," Lépine says. "I was spending almost \$2,000 a month on fuel before. My cost to charge my EV now, on average, is \$20 per month."

Head confidently expects some major long-term savings.

"There's really not a lot to go wrong with an EV," says Head. "An internal combustion engine is a much more complicated system than an electric one. You don't even have to replace the brakes very often because of regenerative braking."

Regenerative braking, also known as one-pedal driving, is an energy recovery mechanism that slows the vehicle when pressure is removed from the accelerator pedal. This additional energy is then recovered by the battery, essentially adding kilometres to its charge range.

"I could take you into the city, drive all over, take you back to Niverville, and not have to touch the brakes once," Head says. "That's why you rarely have to replace your brake pads."

Even in terms of replacing the EV's most expensive component, the battery pack, Lépine isn't deterred. His vehicle came with an eight-year battery warranty at no additional cost.

That doesn't mean the battery will die in eight years.

"A lot of people say, 'Good

luck when the battery goes at 300,000 kilometres,' Lépine says. "Show me a BMW, a Mercedes, or an Audi that has lived to 300,000 kilometres and hasn't had some kind of major engine or transmission issue."

As is true for any technology that becomes more commonplace, prices for new EVs have been trending lower. In just two years' time, the Sawatzkys say that their \$70,000 entry model Tesla now sells for under \$50,000.

### THE EFFICIENCY OF CHARGING YOUR EV

Head says there are three levels of charging systems for EVs and each one has the ability to charge at different speeds.

For home use, EV owners can install a level one charger, which requires a simple 110-volt outlet. This is a very slow way to charge your battery.

The level two charger, on the other hand, requires 220-volt power and it's what Head had installed in his garage.

"It's about ten times faster," Head says.

Level three chargers provide the fastest charge. These can be found in some high-use public places and are commonly used at the Tesla supercharger stations.

The level of the charger determines the cost per use at public stations. Typically, charging can range in price from free to \$20 per hour.

"The only two fast-charging options I have are in Morris or at Polo Park," Singh says. "I could do slow charging, but it could take hours."

The last time he did that, he says, it took 50 minutes of waiting to get to 45 percent charge. It was at this point that he recognized the importance of owning a home charger.

For Lépine, the longest wait he's ever had at a public charger is 15 minutes, even on level two chargers.

Finding the various charging stations is also easy. Every EV comes equipped with computer systems that lay out all the charging stations along your route and the cost of using them. They can also tell you whether certain chargers are available or in use.

Online apps, such as PlugShare, are available to help you plan a stress-free road trip.

### SLOW UPTAKE

Lépine theorizes that the slow uptake towards EVs in Manitoba is largely due to misinformation, some of which sug-

gests that the environmental footprint to manufacture an EV battery outweighs the environmental benefit of driving one.

But, says Lépine, it statistically takes only three years of EV ownership, during which time you're creating zero emissions, for the environmental cost to balance out. By year four, the real environmental benefits of EVs are realized.

"I don't understand why someone wouldn't want to move toward a better solution," Lépine says.

As for the new provincial incentives, Lépine says the government could do a lot more to encourage EV purchases, such as issuing the grant funding at the time of purchase rather than making buyers apply and wait for a refund.

### MIXED FEELINGS

If they were to go back and do it again, the Sawatzkys say they'd buy a hybrid instead of an EV. For Manitoba, they believe it just makes better sense.

It was the hype and strong environmental messaging in Vancouver that convinced them to spend the money on an EV in the first place.

"We don't typically do stuff like that," Roxanne says. "It was a huge amount of our savings."

While they don't discourage others from owning an EV, they recommend that people rent one for a month so they know exactly what they're getting themselves into.

Lépine would do it again in a heartbeat and he'd repeat his decision to buy what looks like your average soccer mom vehicle.

"It's just your average-looking SUV until you realize it's electric, until you realize it's got 400 horsepower and 600 pounds of torque and does zero to sixty in under four seconds," Lépine says. "Normally, to get those kinds of figures, you're spending \$90,000 for a performance vehicle that you can't drive all year round."

### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> "Electric Vehicle Stats in Canada," Energy Rates. Date of access: September 5, 2024 (<https://energyrates.ca/canada-electric-vehicle-ev-statistics-ev-industry-data>).

<sup>2</sup> Brendan McAleer, "Pros and Cons of Electric Cars," Car and Driver. September 29, 2022 (<https://www.caranddriver.com/features/a41001087/pros-and-cons-electric-cars>).

## CITIZEN POLL

### With the right incentives and charging infrastructure being available across the country, would you be ready to switch to an electric vehicle?

- Yes. The more efficient and affordable the transition to EVs becomes, the more likely I am to make the switch
- No. I am not sold on EV technology and I like my gas-powered vehicle.

Have a more nuanced opinion? Leave us a comment online.

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### LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

## Should more be done by local governments to ensure our communities are fully compliant with modern accessibility standards?

Yes. Our elected officials need to move more quickly to make sure we live in barrier-free communities.

47%

No. Our governments are already doing their best with the time and funding restraints imposed on them.

53%

### YOUR COMMENTS:

Older communities will have to expend more resources to upgrade, due to different standards at the time of construction for some neighborhoods and buildings. On the other hand, there are financially feasible fixes that could be implemented. Such as standing signs to mark accessibility parking, cutting back trees and bushes to allow full access to sidewalks, even cutting curbs to allow a smooth transition from roadway to sidewalk. Small steps to make life easier.

People with disabilities already have one thing against them. Why should we make it more difficult for them not to have access to a place/business where they want to go? Like the article stated, people with disabilities have an estimated spending power of \$40 million across Canada. I think we can do better. What if it was you?

No. Government has too much control to begin with. They need to get out of the business of control and into the business of support.

We definitely need the government to get out of the office and visit communities and force them to comply. Fine them if they have too!

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by: Josh Schouten

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The six Manitoba firefighters who attended the flew to Ottawa for the event: Marcel Courchaine, Chris Perry, Scott Atchison, Cam Abrey, Norm Vuignier, and Brett Kalid. MARCEL COURCHAINE

# Ritchot Firefighter Attends National Memorial Service in Ottawa

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Each year on the second Sunday in September, fallen firefighters from around the country are commemorated with a special service called Firefighters' National Memorial Day.

On this day, the country's flags fly at half-mast on all federal buildings.

This year, a member of Ritchot's volunteer fire department was chosen to attend the service, which was held in Ottawa.

Marcel Courchaine has served as a volunteer firefighter in Ritchot for well over 40 years. He's also the secretary treasurer of the Eastman mutual aid district.

These volunteer positions fill his hours over and above that of his full-time career at the University of Manitoba.

“Every year the Manitoba Association of Fire Chiefs (MAFC) puts out a call to members who might be interested in going to [the national memorial service],” Marcel says. “I sent in [an application] and to my surprise found out in early June that I'd be going.”

Five other Manitoba firefighters were chosen to represent the province's fire departments in Ottawa this year.

Marcel's wife Rita flew with him for the weekend event.

Firefighters' National Memorial

Day was established by the Canadian government in August 2017.

“The Government of Canada recognizes the dangers firefighters often face when carrying out their duties and the ultimate sacrifice of firefighters who have given their lives in the line of duty,” the federal government website states. “Firefighters' National Memorial Day will commemorate their courage, their selflessness, and their unwavering commitment to serving our communities.”<sup>1</sup>

For Marcel and Rita, the weekend left lasting memories.

“To be there with fellow firefighters from Manitoba and Canada to honour the guys and gals who have given their lives up for [others] was really something for us to be part of,” Marcel says. “I can guarantee that anyone who was there was very humbled by what took place. It was very moving.”

Three of Manitoba's fallen firefighters were given special mention this year.

Among them were past fire chief George Chyzy of the Arborg-Bifrost Fire and EMS as well as Edward Jordan, a firefighter from Portage la Prairie.

Lionel Gauthier was another fire chief being honoured. Based out of La Broquerie, Gauthier lost his life in 2022.

For Marcel, the commemoration of Gauthier's sacrifice made the trip to Ottawa extra poignant. Courchaine and Gauthier had

worked together on the Eastman mutual aid district in past years.

According to the Courchaine, approximately 160 fallen firefighters were honoured at this year's event. Not everyone died in the direct line of duty. Some succumbed to cancer or other illnesses caused by toxic chemical exposure while on call.

Marcel says this is a common hazard for firefighters as they enter buildings or burning vehicles that contain plastics and construction materials that emit deadly toxins as they burn.

Today, the self-contained breathing apparatus used by firefighters is more sophisticated than it a decade or two ago. Still, it has to be used correctly to be effective.

The ceremony took place at the site of the Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation's (CFFF) memorial wall, located not far from Parliament Hill.

The CFFF also flew in family members of the fallen from around the country in order to present them with a helmet and commemorative medallion.

Marcel joined approximately 300 firefighters in full uniform who participated in a ceremonial march to the site. They were led by a band of firefighter bagpipers also hailing from across the nation.

“We had the honour of marching in front of the families that were going to be the recipients of the helmets and commemorative

medallions that the Foundation offers them,” says Marcel.

Rita had the privilege of sitting among the guests. She watched in awe as families were called forward, eight at a time, to walk down a red carpet and receive the commemorative gifts.

“The firefighters who were presenting them to each family took the time to talk to them a little bit,” says Rita. “I just felt like it was incredible that they took that time to show their appreciation.”

Some of these included young spouses and their children, making the ceremony all the more moving.

“Being a wife of a firefighter, every time Marcel goes out on a call, I never know what he's actually going into and if he'll get hurt,” Rita says.

For Marcel, countless moments throughout the weekend left him inspired. Not the least of these was the fact that this year's Memorial Day was hosted by the Canadian Volunteer Fire Service Association.

“This made it even more meaningful for us who are not full-time firefighters,” Marcel says.

## REFERENCE

<sup>1</sup> “The Government of Canada Establishes Firefighters' National Memorial Day,” Government of Canada, August 25, 2017 ([https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2017/08/the\\_government\\_of\\_canada\\_establishes\\_firefighters\\_national\\_memorial\\_da.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2017/08/the_government_of_canada_establishes_firefighters_national_memorial_da.html)).

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# Cybersecurity Expert Speaks on Protecting Yourself from Online Scams

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Over the past 30 years, the internet has revolutionized the world in ways that few other technologies can boast, perhaps matched only by the introduction of the printing press or steam engine.

However, despite the internet being used by 5.5 billion people around the world, few can claim to understand the complex nature of how it works.

To a large degree, this lack of wisdom has resulted in a lack of personal online safety, all while the cyber world morphs into a system that is as volatile as it is useful.

Michael Jensen of Ste. Agathe is an expert in the field of cybersecurity. He has impressive credentials and has gained some of his most impressive experience working with top intelligence agencies such as the Department of National Defence.

Part of Jensen's daily work portfolio is to review the latest hacks and scams circulating on the internet by scouring through threat feeds.

It's his business to know what's happening so he can provide preventative and restorative advice on cybersecurity to people in some of the country's uppermost echelons.

Jensen says that his wife would tell him that his job has made him all doom and gloom. In his words, it's just made him extremely risk-averse and sceptical of everything he sees.

Based on the number of people who fall victim to online scams every day, most of the world's population could stand to adopt a similar scepticism.

In its most basic forms, the purpose of online hacking and scamming is to either steal someone's identity or steal their money. But if every internet user were to become a little more savvy in regard to protecting their ingress points, places where scammers gain access to personal data, we'd be living in a much safer world.

Thankfully, computer and cellphone operating systems are beginning to provide built-in technology to help users recognize unsafe emails and phone calls as they come in. According to Jensen, people would be smart to pay attention to these warning systems.

Cybercrime, after all, has been reaching new heights at a fast and furious pace.



There are a number of reasons for this.

First, Jensen says, the internet has been around long enough for many people to become experts in its use.

Second, digital crime is now the most lucrative form of robbery.

"In 2022, there was \$3.8 billion stolen in cryptocurrency theft, which was more money than all recorded bank heists combined throughout the history of the world," Jensen says. "My threat sources probably tell me about three pretty big crypto heists a week."

What qualifies as "pretty big" in Jensen's world is any theft totalling more than \$2 million. He says he's seen crypto thefts as big as \$600 million, and these happen more often than most care to admit.

"Because cybercrime has become so lucrative, more criminal organizations are turning to hacking and scams as a way to generate income rather than leaning on the more traditional types of crime we normally associate with gang activity," he adds.

If the last decade has taught us one thing, he says, it's that cybercrime has unimaginable growth potential.

## MONETARY & CRYPTO SCAMS

According to Jensen, people are being scammed out of their cash or cryptocurrency in many ways.

One is through fake online investment sites where the owner is sweettalked into freely "investing"

their currency.

Alternatively, hackers may find ways to access private crypto wallets or attack crypto exchanges.

Large criminal organizations, some of them major state-sponsored threat actors, like North Korea, are dedicated to this.

"We're seeing this more and more with crypto. When a lot of exchanges start up, they're so focused on bringing in investors and bringing value that they don't have the time to set up all the security features that they need to."

## SOCIAL MEDIA SCAMS

Every social media user is becoming well-acquainted with online scams. Whether they realize it or not, posts cross their feed every day that lure users with promises of jobs, daycare spaces, business services, friend possibilities, or fake promotions.

Essentially, they're all there to engage users. Once you've clicked a link or messaged a host, you've put yourself, your data, and everyone in your contact list at risk.

"There's a term called OSINT, or open-source intelligence, and social media is an OSINT nightmare," Jensen says. "When people are trying to target you, they rely on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to get them there."

While social media sites provide some security, Jensen says many of these measures are watered down because the sites themselves are in the business of making money off freely shared data.

## PIG BUTCHERING

Another common scam is known as pig butchering. While it sounds crude, the idea is to lure a victim and then spend as much time as it takes to groom them towards a specific end.

In other words, they are "fattening the pig before the kill."

This scam might begin with a text message from an unknown caller. A clear red flag is when the texter doesn't go away, even after being informed that they've reached the wrong person. Instead they try and befriend you.

Pig butchering is also common in other forums, like dating apps.

"The whole goal is to establish a long-term relationship, and they'll devote months sometimes to these scams," says Jensen. "They are grooming people specifically to get them to a point where they'll invest in something that is absolutely going to pull the rug out from under them."

Scammers are sleek and convincing, oftentimes luring vulnerable parties into false investment strategies on fake websites.

In order to gain the investor's trust, the scammer may encourage the victim to make a small investment and then do an immediate withdrawal, to prove its legitimacy.

Once the scammer feels they've reached the height of what the investor will invest, the site disappears along with all the investor's money.

Jensen says that the really interesting thing about these scams is

that they're enabled by human trafficking. Many of these scamming rings are based in foreign countries where everyday people may be relatively easy targets for kidnapers.

"The scam syndicates take [a person's] visas, beat them, and make them do nothing but scam people. They'll give them six phones and all they'll be doing is trying to scam people throughout North America all day every day."

According to Jensen, one such scam ring was recently busted in Cambodia, resulting in the release of 200 kidnapped slaves.

Some of these crime rings are so large that they operate like a legitimate business, building their own internal departments for human resources, payroll, and accounting.

Between 2020 and 2024, an estimated \$75 billion was stolen through pig butchering scams. The crime has become so lucrative that it's given criminals the financial means to bribe law enforcement officials, invest in secure compounds, and generally insulate themselves from the outside world.

## RANSOMWARE

Ransomware tech has been around for approximately ten years.

In the early years, scammers would hack individual computers and hijack personal files, like family photos and financial documents, encrypting them so the computer owner no longer had access. These personal files became available to the owner again upon the payment of a set ransom.

Recently, though, larger corporations and agencies have become targets. The monetary gains are exponentially higher. Healthcare agencies, legal offices, educational institutions, and real estate companies are regularly hit.

The University of Winnipeg fell prey to these cyber attackers in April of this year, putting at risk the personal information of thousands of students and staff.

Jensen also speaks of a major corporate attack on the MGM Grand and Caesar's Palace hotel and casinos in Las Vegas.

"The scammers made away with \$300 million in ransom because those companies were losing \$80 million per day without access to their data."

Last year, Jensen says, an unregistered scamming company by the name of Conti was discovered and shut down. Their net worth at the time was estimated

to be more than \$2.6 billion with a \$400 million annual revenue.

### EMAIL COMPROMISE

According to Jensen, email infiltration still ranks at the top of all scamming ingresses.

“People store everything in their email accounts,” he says. “Tax information, passwords, copies of their identification, and contacts of their family and friends.”

He speaks openly of a scam that he almost fell prey to a few years back. It took place during the purchase of his new home.

According to Jensen, an email appeared in his inbox that seemed to come directly from his lawyer. Attached was a letter on official company letterhead.

The letter included detailed information about Jensen’s pending transaction, including the address of the new home and payment details as they had been discussed between Jensen and his lawyer.

Something triggered Jensen to contact his lawyer personally before getting sucked in. This conversation revealed the letter to be false.

Still, Jensen was astounded at the level of personal information the scammer had procured and the sophistication of its presentation.

It’s important that everyone learn to check the true source of suspicious emails since scammers can change the display name of the sender so the recipient believes it’s coming from somewhere else.

Some quick online research can teach you how to do this.

“Particularly savvy users might want to learn how to check email headers in order to get the most information on where an email came from. It’s like a transaction record and shows everything it came in contact with along the delivery path.”

A general rule of thumb is to learn to hover your cursor over links to find more detailed information about them before clicking.

Remember, once scammers gain access to your email, they have access to the email addresses of everyone in your contact list. Crimes can rapidly perpetuate from there.

### ONLINE BANKING & SHOPPING

Online banking has come a long way in recent years in terms of meeting rigid security codes, Jensen says. Generally speaking, if the bank is a well-known institution, people can trust its online safety measures.

“Banks are the most incentivized to have good security. The one thing they can’t prevent, though, is the end user getting scammed.”

In other words, it’s easier for scammers to get individuals to give up their banking or credit card

information than it is to get those details from a bank or credit card company.

In terms of online shopping, Jensen says it’s important to make sure the website you’re buying from is equipped with recognized security features. One way to do that is to check the website’s uniform resource locator (URL) code.

If it begins with **https://** (hypertext transport protocol secure), it means that the website creator has leased a security certificate for a universally accepted encryption system which helps to ensure that the personal data being transferred between user and website owner remains invisible to outsiders.

A lock symbol on the left side of the URL further indicates that security measures have been taken.

It’s important that the URL contains the letter “s” at the end, which represents a higher level of security. If the URL begins with just **http**, as opposed to **https**, or if the lock symbol is missing, it’s not as trustworthy.

Jensen takes security with online purchases one step further with a practice he says everyone should employ.

If he plans to purchase a frying pan from a company calling themselves Kate’s Kitchen, for example, he will run an online search for that product and company name. Here you can quickly find product and company reviews from other customers as well as potential scams they may be accused of.

“Part of the problem with seeing ads on something like Instagram is that there’s no vetting process. They’ll put ads up for anyone who pays for it. If I’m concerned about a product I see on Instagram, I’ll go see if it’s on Walmart online or Amazon or a company that I know exists. In many cases, the scammer has taken a real product that someone else makes and set up a fake website to pretend to sell it to you.”

Jensen learned this little fact the hard way. A family member ordered a product online which never arrived. Their credit card info now rested in the hands of scammers.

As for allowing Google, Amazon, Walmart, or other online sources to save your passwords or credit card numbers online, Jensen says it’s never a good idea.

### COOKIE SESSION THEFT

There are ways for scammers to gain personal data while you’re making an online purchase, even if the website is considered secure. This is through a tactic called cookie session theft.

Upon logging into an online shopping account, your personal data is being temporarily saved in what’s known as a cookie. Cookies are what the website uses to track your transactions in order to customize your online experience.

Once you log out of the website, your login session (cookie) is closed. But if a hacker has created an ad or popup which appears on the product page and you click on that ad while logged into the website, the information temporarily stored in the cookie is accessible to the scammer.

“When you have your browser open with your credit card information saved, if they can convince you to click on their malicious website, they have the chance to steal that cookie session. They won’t steal your credit card information; they steal the data that the legitimate website has on you and then trick the website into creating a charge for something else. Basically, they make the website think that it’s you who’s doing the ordering.”

To stay safe, Jensen recommends fully completing your purchase and logging out of the site before clicking on any links or popups.

### MOBILE PAYMENT APPS

These days, the goal is to make purchasing a product or service as easy as possible. Hence, the popularity of the mobile payment app.

“One truth about everything having to do with the internet is that the more convenient something becomes, the less secure it is. You will always be sacrificing an element of security for convenience.”

Jensen doesn’t quite trust mobile phone apps just yet. While he believes that companies such as Apple Pay are using pretty advanced security systems, if a hacker has dropped malicious spyware onto your phone, all your mobile transactions become vulnerable.

“The weak point is usually with the end user,” he says. “A person’s made a mistake that allowed the hacker to get information.”

### PASSWORDS & MULTIFACTOR AUTHENTICATION

“If you have a password that is less than ten characters, there’s free tools out there that hackers can use that will crack it in under 30 seconds,” says Jensen.

That’s why it’s imperative to create passwords or passphrases that are longer and, thus, harder to decode. Jensen recommends creating passphrases from four different, seemingly unrelated and random things. Like, for instance, **bookchair%key\$lamp3**.

Throwing in some numbers and characters makes decoding harder still: **book\$chair%key\$lamp3**.

Finally, make sure to create different passwords for every online app you use. If hackers get into one, they won’t get into all your data.

Be reminded that social media plays a big role in helping scammers decode your passwords.

You’ve probably come across seemingly innocuous online

questionnaires on social media with the supposed goal of telling your friends more about you. However, they’re usually created by scammers.

“If I was a hacker, I’d be using one of those to build what’s called a dictionary on you. And when you’ve answered those questions, I’ll build combinations out of them to decode your passwords.”

Jensen adds that hacking someone’s Facebook account is a simple affair that requires very little savvy.

In terms of protecting social media sites, people should also consider the personal data they’ve shared or store there. Many people use their social media site as free cloud storage for their family photos, but it’s all at risk if it falls into the hands of a hacker.

“If you put pictures of your kids with their names online and I can guess their ages, it’s easy for me to pretend I’m someone related to you. And that’s the real risk. Once you put all that stuff out on the internet, you can’t take it back.”

As for the storage of other sensitive information on your computer, Jensen strongly recommends encrypting files when saving them. This is done with a simple right click of the mouse which should take you to an encryption option.

“Is saving files on your computer inherently more dangerous than saving them in a filing cabinet that could catch fire or be stolen? Not really. There are ways to protect them digitally.”

As a secondary safeguard to encryption, Jensen suggests that computer owners store important data in more than one place, like a USB device or another computer. This way, you’re less likely to experience a complete loss.

When using storage services such as iCloud, files should still be encrypted.

“Encrypting will create a special key for your user account so that, when you go to access that file, you can decrypt it. But if someone were to get in with a different user account, they don’t have the key to unlock it.”

Finally, multifactor authentication (MFA) is an important tool that everyone should be using.

Examples of security factors include the use of personal identification numbers (PINs), passwords, and fingerprint authentication. The requirement for a secondary authorizer, such as a spouse, may also be an option.

MFA isn’t just for online banking protection, says Jensen. It can be set up on certain social media accounts and apps. A simple online search can help anyone learn to set up MFA on any site that allows it.

Unfortunately, some sites like Amazon don’t support MFA yet, although they are working on

developing it.

### SHARING AND REPORTING

Jensen can relate firsthand to the humiliation one feels when they’ve been scammed or nearly scammed. It’s the kind of experience no one wants to admit to. Yet keeping your silence means the scammer wins. Unreported, they can keep drawing more victims into their nefarious schemes.

“The reality is that scammers can catch you on a bad day, and everyone has bad days. It’s human to click on things online. It’s human to be lazy about passwords.”

It’s important that people speak up quickly, he adds, before others get burned. Also, if possible, get help to deal with the scam that was perpetrated on you. Reporting to local law enforcement may not help you get your money back, but it does put the scammers and their tactics on a registry to help police build files against them.

Reporting scams that happen on social media is also a good idea.

“Reporting a scam might not mean that things can be fixed for you, but it might mean it can be fixed for the next person.”

### VPNS & ANTIVIRUS SYSTEMS

Jensen cautions against believing everything you hear about virtual private networks (VPNs) for added online security. While they have their place when it comes to encrypting or hiding online browsing activity, they are often advertised as one-stop shops for digital security.

“They are not effective antivirus systems. They are not firewalls. They don’t really keep you safe. They keep your activity hidden to a point, but they won’t prevent a lot of the scams we’re talking about.”

Jensen is a believer, on the other hand, in having a good antivirus system installed on your device.

“There used to be a time when you absolutely had to pay for an antivirus system like Norton, McAfee, or MalwareBytes. But these days, the free antivirus systems that come in Microsoft and Apple computers have gotten very good. If people feel more comfortable using a paid system, there’s nothing wrong with that. But I want people to understand that online safety doesn’t need to be expensive.”

### STAY SAFE OUT THERE

At the end of the day, vigilant use of the internet will go a long way toward keeping you safe in a world where dark forces try to separate you from your money and well-being.

“Most people are absolutely bound to a system that they don’t understand but need it to run their lives,” Jensen concludes. “We need to learn how it works at the very least. Do a little bit of work to keep yourself safe. And always be sceptical.”

# Sports & Recreation

## Nighthawks Off to Hot Start

By Ty Dilello

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It's a new season in the MJHL and the Niverville Nighthawks have already been especially productive, outscoring their opponents by a combined total of 26 goals to just 10.

If September has given the fan-base an indication of what's to come, it's going to be an interesting year.

### SEPTEMBER 20 WINNIPEG FREEZE, HOME

The Nighthawks kicked off their 2024-25 campaign in style with a massive 4-1 win over the Winnipeg Freeze on Friday night at the CRRC.

The jam-packed home crowd was treated to some stellar play. The Nighthawks impressed in the regular season opener, outshooting the Freeze by 58-22.

After a scoreless first period, the Nighthawks opened the scoring early in the second frame with Dawson Zeller's first tally as a Nighthawk. The Freeze tied the game a few minutes later before Merik Boles found the back of the net to regain the lead.

Zeller added his second of the night for the insurance tally.

In the third period, Luke Mackenzie scored to make it 4-1, and that's how the game ended.

"We got the pucks on net that we wanted to tonight," said Nighthawks head coach Dwight Hirst. "We could have done a better job of taking the eyes away from the goalie, but we kept coming at them all night long."

Hirst is quick to credit the team's number one centre man, Zeller.

"It was a great game for Zeller with the two goals and he was awesome on the faceoff draws as well," said Hirst. "Tonight, him getting both a power play goal and a short-handed goal was a big boost for the team."

### SEPTEMBER 22 WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES, AWAY

The Nighthawks continued their strong start with a dominant 6-0 road



The Nighthawks blew out the Swan Valley Stampeders in late September.

EVAN BRAUN

win over the Waywayseecappo Wolverines on Sunday night. With the win, the Nighthawks briefly moved into first place in the MJHL's East Division.

For the second straight game, the Nighthawks played strong, outshooting their opposition by a 40-26 margin.

The Nighthawks spread the offence around as multiple lines got in on the scoring action.

Brock Assailly and Adam Vigfusson each scored in the first period for Niverville to give them a 2-0 lead.

In the second period, the floodgates opened with tallies from Parker Carrier, Mackenzie, Carter Spirig, and Bryce Warkentine.

A scoreless third period sealed it.

"I was pleased with the continued pace and overall team performance, as it was another full team effort," said Hirst. "At any level, success is a shared effort amongst the group and that's what it was this evening with the scoring being spread around."

LeGall was an unbeatable force in net, stopping 26 shots in goal for his first shutout of the season.

"Raiden was excellent tonight," said Hirst. "It was a testament to his focus, as he was ready when those waves came on him. The team's defensive structure is a work in progress and the team did a great job of allowing him to focus tonight and see the shots from a distance."

### SEPTEMBER 24 SELKIRK STEELERS, AWAY

After two hot games on offence, the Nighthawks lost their way on a road trip to Selkirk, getting blitzed 5-1 by the Steelers.

With the loss, the Nighthawks dropped back to second place in the East Division.

A bright spot on the otherwise forgettable night: Niverville outshot Selkirk by a 36-35 margin.

Unfortunately, they had trouble staying out of the penalty box. The Steelers capitalized three times on the power play.

Selkirk scored a trio of goals in quick succession in the second half of the first period to jump out to a 3-0 lead. They added two more goals in the second period to make it 5-0 and put the game out of reach.

Matthew Bertolin, a 16-year-old rookie, scored the lone consolation goal for the Nighthawks with a minute left in the game.

"They pulled our team into their style of play, and got into the boys' train of thoughts," said Hirst. "We didn't play our style or type of game that we would have liked. It was a night where our penalty kill let us down, and I don't want the outcomes to deter how we play physically either. It just wasn't our night on the penalty kill."

Hirst looked to correct some of the errors on display in this loss, with

three days to prepare for their next game—this time, back on home ice.

"It will become a night to reflect on our game as a team and take away some important learning points this evening," said Hirst. "We can't choose when to play the right way and when to play your own way. The smaller habits that we didn't execute were the differences of our outcome tonight. We were not good on our details and execution. The way we respond Friday at home will show if we can mature as a hockey club and realize what drives our success."

### SEPTEMBER 27 WINNIPEG BLUES, HOME

The Nighthawks got back in the win column in resounding fashion on this Friday night at the CRRC, trouncing the Winnipeg Blues 7-2.

It was a great performance for the home crowd, with the Nighthawks dominating throughout the game and outshooting their opposition 37-15.

The Nighthawks once again spread the offence around with multiple lines getting in on the action.

Bertolin led the charge for Niverville with a pair of goals.

The other tallies came from Lane Apperley, Warkentine, Mackenzie, Zeller, and Aiden Corbett.

"We did what we needed to do to play to our strengths," Hirst said. "And our strengths are that we want to play fast and heavy on teams. I was

very happy that we rebounded with a better compete level without the puck, and we did a better job retrieving pucks than we did in our loss on Tuesday."

Speaking to how the Nighthawks can play consistently this year, Hirst keyed in on focusing on the team's strengths.

"Recognizing what our success comes from and playing to those strengths," he said. "So once we realize that, we want to stick to it consistently night in and night out."

### SEPTEMBER 29 SWAN VALLEY STAMPEDERS, HOME

The team put on a clinic on Sunday afternoon at the CRRC with an 8-2 demolition of the Swan Valley Stampeders.

For the second straight game, the Nighthawks put on a splendid performance for the home crowd.

On the way to gifting every ticket holder with free pancakes from the Niverville Smitty's—a perk that happens every time the Nighthawks score six goals or more at a home game—they outshot their opposition by a 46-24 margin.

The home team scored once in the first period, three times in the second, and four in the third period.

Luke Wagner and Vigfusson led the way with a pair of goals apiece, while Matteo Speranza, Apperley, Evan Panzer, and Spirig all pitched in with impressive tallies of their own for Niverville.

"I'd tend to think that this year's team is a little more of a tight-knit group than last season and are playing a lot more as a group, which is great to see early in the season," said Hirst.

Niverville's Austin Dubinsky stopped 22 shots in goal for his first win as a Nighthawk.

It was also his first start in net. "We loved Austin's performance today," Hirst added. "It was important to see him in game action and he did very well today."



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# Niverville Nighthawks 2024-25 Season Preview

By Ty Dilello

tdilello@nivervillecitizen.com

The Niverville Nighthawks kicked off their third campaign in the MJHL this September with some high-impact play.

Nighthawks head coach Dwight Hirst, who joined the club midway through last season, has been elated for his first full season behind an MJHL bench and is ready for the challenges that lie ahead.

"I'm excited to get things going and getting things together the way I see fit in regard to the on-ice preparation and off-ice conditioning," says Hirst of the long campaign ahead. "Having a thumbprint on the day-to-day routine is crucial to how I see this team getting prepared for the season ahead. I'm also really looking forward to the fresh start of a full season. We're setting ourselves up to be the team that doesn't quit until the game is over. We want to play hard, fast, and resilient every single night."

Hirst was very pleased with the intensity shown by the players throughout the team's training camp in August and early September. He is also keen to recognize

the tremendous focus of all the players who attended.

After a successful pre-season in which the Nighthawks won four out of five games, he says the Niverville squad was ready for its best season yet.

"The veterans came back ready to go, and the new players also came ready to show themselves," says Hirst. "There was lots of character that came out of the camp and in the pre-season."

There are lots of returning names to the Nighthawks roster this season, including Caleb Lepitre, Raiden LeGall, Merik Boles, Avery Laliberte, Ty Kennett, Hayden Wheddon, Adam Vigfusson, Luke Mackenzie, Carter Spirig, and Bryce Warkentine.

These veterans are all looking to carve out key roles for themselves with the third-year franchise.

The Nighthawks also received a big boost towards the end of training camp when goaltender Raiden LeGall rejoined the team after returning from a USHL tryout. The Bemidji State University recruit will team up with Austin Dubinsky to form the club's latest goaltending tandem.

"Getting Raiden back for this season is huge for us, and having Austin here as well is going to be huge for our team," Hirst says. "We strongly believe that we have two very top-notch goaltenders that will push each other and compete in practice as well."

In the early weeks of the season, Hirst points to several things that have helped ensure that the team is able to win games and carve out a place at the top of the league standings.

"The first month of the season is going to be spent on the team's systems, conditioning, and getting to the points we need to be at for the upcoming season and staying there throughout the year."

The Nighthawks' collective goal this season is to get back to the MJHL playoffs for a third straight year. They expect to be a relevant playoff team that can compete nightly with the upper-echelon clubs in this league.

"This is the third year here as a program, and some steps have to be taken in the upward trajectory to get better every single day."

## HERE IS THE COMPLETE ROSTER FOR THE NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS:

- #33 Austin Dubinsky
- #49 Lucas Bertolin
- #11 Matthew Bertolin
- #3 Brock Assailly
- #9 Lane Apperley
- #6 Alex Ballard
- #25 Caleb Lepitre
- #29 Noah Asmundson
- #4 Holdin Getzlaf

- #17 Parker Carrier
- #12 Jase Konecsni
- #2 Luke Wagner
- #31 Raiden Legall
- #14 Aiden Corbett
- #55 Merik Boles
- #8 Avery Laliberte
- #10 Evan Panzer
- #19 Ty Kennett

- #21 Dawson Zeller
- #18 Hayden Wheddon
- #15 Adam Vigfusson
- #37 Luke Mackenzie
- #22 Carter Spirig
- #77 Bryce Warkentine
- #7 Matteo Speranza

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Brothers Ty Dilello and Braiden Mahon.

RAY DOWSE

# ODR Men's League Crowns New Champs

By Jennifer Lavin

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The Old Drivers Run golf course in Niverville recently completed its ninth season of men's league competition.

This year, brothers Ty Dilello and Braiden Mahon finished on top.

Throughout the season, the men's league took place on Wednesday and Thursday nights over ten weeks of regular season play.

In total, 42 teams of two golfers each competed, with the top 16 teams from each night then meeting for the next five weeks in a single elimination bracket.

Dilello and Mahon won the

Thursday night league and then went up against the Wednesday night league winners Ray Dowse and Bryan Trotter in the final on September 15.

The competition was stiff. Dowse and Trotter had won the men's league three times since its inception.

"I had a really good round in the league final," says Dilello. "I shot an even par, while my brother shot +2. We were up 5-1 after six holes, which meant we were already leading by enough to win the championship."

Mahon and Dilello started golfing more frequently during the pandemic and say they have really taken to the game over the past few years.

"Our play really improved throughout the season," Dilello says, "to the point where we were shooting some really good scores in the later stages of the playoffs. It helps playing the course so much during the summer, as you learn quickly all the spots of where to hit the ball and where not to, etc. And it was good to apply that during our run to the league championship."

This year's men's league final also happened to be something of a family affair for *The Citizen*, as Dilello covers the Niverville Nighthawks for this publication and Dowse is the sales manager and co-owner.

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# Nighthawks Launch Chase the Ace Fundraiser

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Nighthawks fans have one more reason to unite this season in support of their favourite team. Beginning September 23, the team has been hosting a Chase the Ace fundraiser every Monday night at Smitty's in Niverville.

Monday's kickoff event brought out the entire Nighthawks roster plus coaches, board members, team volunteers, and fans. Draws were held every half-hour throughout the evening with giveaways of Nighthawks merchandise, Jets tickets, and more.

In the end, Nancy Braun was the first winner, taking home an automatic cash prize of \$500. Since she didn't draw the ace of spades, however, the pot has continued to grow.

After night one, the pot sat at \$2,821.

Nighthawks board president Clare Braun says that multiple winners will come away with prizes from every Chase the Ace night.

"What we did is we seeded the pot," Braun says. "We started it with \$2,500 and guaranteed that, from the first event on, we'd be giving away a minimum of \$500 every night."

While attendance is encouraged to help rally team spirit, fans can also buy their Chase the Ace tickets on the Nighthawks website in advance of each event.

Like any similar lottery, the cash pot will continue to build until some lucky winner pulls the ace of spades.

"There have been Chase the Ace winnings in Canada that have gone [up to] \$2 million," Braun says. "It's like winning a [major] lottery."

Braun adds that while some of the fundraising money may go towards team operations, the board hopes to funnel a good portion of it towards an infrastructure fund.

Thanks to recent fundraising



Team VP Ray Dowse alongside Kevin Pauls, voice of the Nighthawks.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

efforts, the Nighthawks were able to add a bar and special seating area, with upper and lower decks, to the east side of the arena last season. They called it The Kettle, a word used to describe a group of nighthawks.

This time around, the board is focusing their energy on the addition of a much-needed dressing room.

"We're looking at probably a million and a half dollars that we're going to have to invest in the next few years on a new dressing room," says Braun. "Hockey players, when they come to communities, they compare your dressing room to others. We're really fortunate that Niverville's become a destination point for players that really want to come here. But the dressing room issue has to be resolved."

Since the team got its start two years ago, players have been using trailers outside the arena as makeshift dressing rooms.

The new dressing room, currently

in early design phase, will not only provide a place for the home team to gear up but include a training room, a player's lounge, as well as offices for coaches and trainers.

In total space, approximately 3,000 square feet will need to be added to the existing arena.

As for why this space wasn't accounted for during the original build, Braun says that town council faced some tight restrictions if they were going to be eligible for millions of dollars in federal grant money.

To qualify, plans for the proposed CRRC had to place a great emphasis on community multifunctional use. Adding professional-level sports dressing rooms to the plan would have given the government an undesirable impression at the time and risked the town losing out on the grant.

For this reason, the Nighthawks will just have to work a little harder in the coming years to fundraise beyond

their operational needs.

Braun says that approximately 20 percent of the team's revenue needs to come from fundraising efforts. Ticket sales and sponsorship cover the other 80 percent.

"Typically, when a fan comes to a game, they're there to watch the players on the ice," says Braun. "But the players on the ice is the end product of all the work that was done by the board and the volunteers and the coaching staff. This [Chase the Ace event] represents a part of the labour and work to get a season going."

Other fundraisers the team has become reliant on include golf tournaments and black-tie galas. All require a dedicated team of behind-the-scenes people to pull off every year.

Braun says that most people probably don't realize the exponential costs involved in operating an MJHL home team. These annual budgets can run between \$750,000 and \$1

million.

Still, he adds, it's all worth it when you consider the impact it makes on people's lives—and that impact extends well beyond the pride and entertainment value derived from a Junior A hockey team.

For example, Braun takes pride in watching these young players as they move up the ranks to achieve even bigger hockey dreams.

"Scholarship opportunities are afforded to players at the division one level who are deemed to be the highest quality," Braun says. "We have three of those players on our team this year. As 18-year-olds, they've already signed their NCAA division one with fully paid scholarships for four years of university in the United States."

According to Braun, the Nighthawks have already built a pretty exemplary track record, helping 13 players graduate to the NCAA or other university sports programs across the continent.

Just as important in Braun's mind, though, are the skills these young players develop which make them all-around better human beings for having been a part of the MJHL. Not only do they learn the value of hard work, they also develop a giving spirit as they volunteer in countless areas around the community.

At any given time throughout the season, Nighthawks players can be found shoveling snowy driveways for senior citizens, assisting with operations at the Niverville MCC Thrift Store, or visiting the elderly at the local personal care home.

Everyone is invited to join the Nighthawks for the next Chase the Ace event on Monday, October 7 from 6:00 to 8:30 in the Smitty's lounge.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ [www.mjhlighthawks.ca/chase-the-ace](http://www.mjhlighthawks.ca/chase-the-ace)

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# Arts & Entertainment



## Local Artist Releases Whimsical Music Video

By Jennifer Lavin

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On August 23, Trevor Lux of Niverville released his new music video, filmed close to home in Hespeler Park—and the song is a cover of a popular song from the 1960s that Lux feels is just as relevant today as it was back then.

The video is credited to The World on Loan, and Lux explains that he's the sole artist behind that name.

His work, however, is aided by many others. In this case, the song was produced by Evan St. Cyr with additional production from Myles

Clayborne.

In the music video, Lux sings “For What It’s Worth,” a classic by Buffalo Springfield. Many people will recognize the piece by its first lines: “There’s something happening here, but what it is ain’t exactly clear.”

“The video was my concept and idea, and it was brought to life by the incredibly talented Trav Anema,” says Lux of the project’s director. “The video concept speaks to a distracted society but with a playful, fun twist.”

In the video, Lux walks through Hespeler Park with an eclectic group of adults and kids. The entire group was comprised of Niverville residents.

“Everyone that came out to the video shoot were superstars, especially the kids! I am so grateful for everyone who lent their time to be a part of the video. We had so much fun!”

Lux and his family live right across the street from the park and Lux jogs through it nearly every day, which made it a natural fit for the project. The parks feels like home.

The video shoot was scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on a day that started out rainy and stayed that way until about 30 minutes before the crew needed to start rolling. Lux watched the skies nervously throughout the day, hoping

he wouldn’t need to reschedule.

“However, the rain stopped right before the shoot and we were blessed with a beautiful evening and gorgeous prairie skies,” he says. “I couldn’t have dreamed of a better backdrop. It was perfect! I feel fortunate.”

Lux has been making music for the last 24 years in one way or another. Many locals may know him from his last project, Plain as Ghosts. Plain as Ghosts achieved quite a bit of success, even opening for Tom Cochrane on one occasion.

Lux currently plays in a local cover band, The Dept. of Human Resources.

Besides being a performer, Lux is active in other aspects of music and entertainment. He co-produced local singer Catie St. Germain’s first single and last year he, St. Germain, and JR Charron threw a huge New Year’s Eve bash in Niverville.

“[The New Year’s Eve event] sold nearly 400 tickets last year and we are doing it again, bigger and better for NYE this year!”

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ The World on Loan’s cover of “For What It’s Worth” is available on Spotify, Apple Music, and other major streaming platforms.

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# Festive Film Shoots in Niverville

By Brenda Sawatzky

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Around 60 film crew descended on the town of Niverville this week to shoot the made-for-Hallmark movie *Hanukkah on the Rocks*.

The film's director is Sean Garaughty out of Winnipeg. Executive producer Joey Plager and his California-based company Shalom Amigo Productions were visiting the site at Gan's Kitchen on Main Street on Tuesday.

The restaurant was closed to public traffic while the crew moved in and retrofitted the interior for a completely new look.

During two days of filming at this location, the building was transformed into the set of Gilbert's Deli in Chicago.

"We've taken down all of their décor that suggests that it's a Chinese restaurant," says Plager, "and instead brought in a lot of elements that show that it looks like a deli with various signs and all of the appropriate food."

Prior to their restaurant shoot, the crew also filmed at the Great Canadian Dollar Store, which stood in for a party supply store. A townhouse in the Prairie Crossings development also served as the set for the lead actress's Chicago-based apartment.

By midweek, the crew will be moving on to one of the local Niverville churches to film scenes which are said to take place at a Jewish community centre.

"We came to Niverville in part because there are tax incentives for shooting in Manitoba and for shooting outside of the urban core," says Plager. "Our local producer,



Filming underway at Gan's Kitchen in Niverville.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

Juliette Hagopian, is a big supporter of Niverville and is building Jette Studios just down the road."

Other Manitoba filming locations for *Hanukkah on the Rocks* include Selkirk and Stonewall. Downtown Winnipeg also made the cut for an eight-day shoot.

"Most of our movie takes place in what we call our hero location, which is a bar in our movie," Plager says. "We shot that at Wee Johnny's [Pub] right underneath Johnny G's on McDermot in the Exchange District."

Hallmark movie fans may recognize some of the movie's stars, including the leading lady, Stacey Farber, who is well known for her roles in *Degrassi High* and *Virgin River*. The male lead is Daren Kagasoff from *Secret Life of the American Teenager*. Playing his grandfather is Marc Summers, the long-time host of an American game show called *Double Dare*.

*Hanukkah on the Rocks* is set to premiere on the Hallmark Channel by mid-December. It's expected to be released on the W Network around the same time.

Of the approximate 40 holiday movies made for

Hallmark this year, Plager says this will likely be the only Hanukkah-themed film. For Plager, it will mark the fifth Hanukkah movie he's been hired by Hallmark to produce over the years.

"I've got the distinction of being probably one of the most prolific Hanukkah movie producers in the world," Plager jokes.

Producing a movie of the Hallmark calibre, he says, is relatively easy. Filming takes only about three weeks from beginning to end. This is followed by about seven weeks of post-production work and then it's ready to air.

Throughout production, Plager says about 120 crew members will have touched the movie in one way or another.

As for Niverville, it was Plager's first visit, but he's confident that it won't be his last.

"I think Niverville's a great place," says Plager. "Manitoba is a great place to make movies. The crews are wonderful, the locations are great. This is my sixth movie in the last two and a half years in Manitoba. This is my first time shooting in Niverville. And I'm sure if Juliette has anything to say about it, I'll be back."

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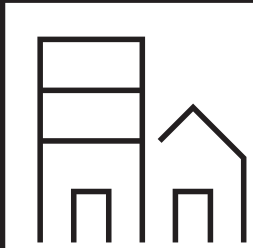
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