

The Citizen

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LOCAL NEWS

Local Councils Reveal 2024 Budgets

■ As April turns to May, our local councils reveal their budget priorities for the upcoming year.

Details on Pages 3, 12



LOCAL NEWS

What Are the Local Impacts of an Increase to the Minimum Wage?

■ The minimum wage has risen sharply and is scheduled to go up again in October. We ask: what is the best way to help low-income earners, and what are the impacts?

Details on Pages 8-9

LOCAL NEWS

PCH Averts Strike

■ It was a close call this month when a last-minute reprieve kept staff at the PCH in Niverville from taking to the picket lines over a wage dispute.

Details on Page 11

SPORTS & REC

The Sophomore Jolt

■ In this issue, we and take a bird's eye view of the Niverville Nighthawks' complete second season, which was a very up-and-down campaign.

Details on Pages 22-23

Niverville Fair Announces 2024 Musical Acts, Headlined by Hunter Brothers

» READ MORE ON PAGE 26

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Local Trades Respond to Proposed Changes in Apprenticeship Rules	4
Crowd Fills Ritchot Council Chambers Over Livestock Expansion Proposal	5
Ritchot Council Talks EV Vehicles, Main Street IDC, and Bilingual Service	6
Province Digs Deeper for Couples Dealing with Infertility	7
Debate Continues Over the Impact of Next Minimum Wage Increase	8
Recognizing International Mother Earth Day through Education and Action	10
HSD Appoints New Superintendent-CEO	10
Niverville PCH Workers Call Off Strike	11
Ritchot Presents a Review of Budget 2024	12
Providence College Hit Hard by New International Student Restrictions	16
Province Extends to Citizens the Right to Homegrown Cannabis	16
Niverville Chamber Hands Out Annual Awards	17
Locals Weigh in on the Use of Receipt Scanners	19
Evergreen Therapy Opens in Niverville	19
Speed Skating Club Looks Back on Successful Season	20
Tryouts Coming for Manitoba Summer Games Girls Soccer	21
The Sophomore Jolt: Looking Back at a Second Season of Nighthawks Hockey	22
Eastman Heat Do Manitoba Proud at Western Provincials	25
Niverville Fair Announces 2024 Musical Acts, Headlined by Hunter Brothers	26

The

Citizen

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Niverville's 2024 Budget Includes Tax Hike to Support Greater Spending

By Brenda Sawatzky
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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Niverville's town council introduced their 2024 budget on April 16. Residents can expect their property taxes to go up by 2.5 percent.

According to CAO Eric King, this will increase taxes on the average house assessed at \$324,000 to the tune of \$52.89.

In recent weeks, the Hanover School Division also introduced an increase to local taxes, adding 6.2 percent to their education tax levy. This will mean an additional \$50 to households assessed at \$285,000.

Between municipal and education taxes, homeowners in Niverville with average household valuations can expect to see their property taxes jump by at least \$100 this fall.

One cost that's not going up is the waste collection tax levy. It will remain steady at \$140 per household for the second year in a row.

Expenditures will rise in every department with the exception of Public Health and Welfare, which primarily funds local cemeteries. King says the growth in expenditures has a direct relationship to continued population growth.

General government services will see the most significant jump at 15 percent. This is, in part, due to the rise of minimum wage, as well as added IT and cyber security needs at the town office.

As a publicly funded medical clinic, Open Health Niverville also falls into this category.

"Open Health will be expanding to accommodate more doctors, and so we'll be taking on more square footage," King said. "We're starting to renovate probably in summer."

A budgetary increase for Protective Services is next on the list, at just

under 15 percent.

"This is a large chunk of the increase due to the RCMP contract," King said.

He refers to a federal requirement that Niverville pay more in policing fees after reaching a population of 5,000. Last year, for the first time, the cost of local policing jumped from \$200,000 annually to almost \$650,000.

Environmental Development, too, is taking a jump of more than 13 percent due to updates to the zoning bylaws and development plan, needed in part to prepare for the possible annexation of more

"Before we can even start to bring in library books or nice comfortable chairs, we need to fix up the room. The possible vision could include a coffee bar to help subsidize some of the services that could be offered there."

Meghan Beasant | Town Councillor

land to Niverville's east.

Transportation is up 11 percent in order to budget for a \$1 million repair scheduled for two blocks of Fourth Avenue South this summer.

Further funds will be allocated to the detailed redesign of Highway 311 west between Krahn and Wallace Roads in order to prepare for further commercial development.

Recreation costs will go up nine percent in order to offer more kids camps and programming across all age categories.

Some of the items budgeted into this year's capital plan include the purchase of a new half-ton truck, an engineering vehicle, and a water tanker for the fire department.

Council will also research the cost of adding new welcome signs at both entries into the community. The first steps toward a public

library will be taken with the renovation of the south end of the Centennial Arena in order to create a take-one-leave-one lending library and study lounge.

"Before we can even start to bring in books or nice comfortable chairs, we need to fix up the room," Councillor Meghan Beasant told *The Citizen*. "The possible vision could include a coffee bar to help subsidize some of the services that could be offered there."

Beasant says that the bookcases will be portable to allow for the space to be opened up for functions if needed. As well, a strong Wi-Fi connection will be ensured for those who come to use the space.

She anticipates that the library space could be ready for use as early as this fall.

Mayor Myron Dyck adds that, over the next two years, council will do what they can to work together with a potential library board for a more permanent public library option in the future.

Finally, council hopes to spend some time this year reviewing the potential for a future intermunicipal raw water source cooperative. It's a concept that would operate similarly to the upcoming wastewater treatment plant.

Working collaboratively with surrounding municipalities, King says that they will begin conversations on developing a single primary source from which water will be drawn for the larger region.

If workable, this initiative would provide a more environmentally sound solution to the many independent community wells being dug around the region.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
The full budget details can be found on the Town of Niverville's website: www.wheretheybelong.ca

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MLA for Springfield-Ritchot

Local Trades Respond to Proposed Changes in Apprenticeship Rules

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Making good on an election promise, the province has announced its intention to alter current legislation in favour of a one-to-one ratio of apprentices to journeypersons throughout the construction industry.

Though the new rules haven't received a final stamp of approval, some local trades are worried.

If approved, the existing two-apprentices-per-journeyperson (two-to-one) ratio will become obsolete and many apprentices will be let go. Many more won't get hired at all.

Jamie Moses, Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, cited worker safety and proper training as the reasons for the change.

"High-quality training with the highest possible safety standards is good for the industry, good for our province, and it means more Manitobans coming home safely at the end of a shift," Moses said in a March press release.

That release referred to the death of Michael Skanderberg in 1999, an apprentice killed while working unsupervised.

"For someone training to be an electrician, proper supervision can be a matter of life and death," said Dave McPhail of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union 2085. "Moving back to one-to-one will help keep all electricians safe and we are grateful."

Skanderberg's death provoked questions around workplace safety. In 2000, the existing four-to-one ratio was changed to one-to-one.

Approximately 20 years later, under the PC government, this was changed to a two-to-one ratio, allowing every journeyperson to train two apprentices.

Ron Hambley is president of the Winnipeg Construction Association (WCA), a non-profit organization representing about 800 construction companies, suppliers, and associates



JOEY VILLANUEVA

in both union and non-union environments across the province.

"We can see the pending retirements for thousands of construction workers," Hambley says. "In the next ten years, we're going to have to find 8,000 tradespeople for this industry, so the quicker we can grow, the better. Apprenticeship is the principal way that the industry grows. So if you turn the tap off a little bit, it's not going to grow any quicker."

Hambley says that the one-to-one ratio practiced before 2021 wasn't a sweeping law that applied to all trades as it's proposed now. And when the change to a two-to-one ratio seemed imminent, the provincial labour minister involved the WCA and tradespeople in discussions.

There was flexibility and dialogue, two things Hambley says are missing this time around.

"The industry settled on the two-to-one ratio because it provides a good combination of training and mentoring and growth," says Hambley.

Bryan Trottier owns Trotco Electric, a mid-sized company in Niverville that employs approximately ten journeypersons and ten apprentices.

Trottier sits on the board of both the WCA and the Electrical Contractors Association of Manitoba (ECAM).

"When [the government] says they do industry consultation, I'm always offended if [we're] not consulted,"

Trottier says.

According to Hambley, the trades union represents a smaller proportion of the province's construction workers compared to the WCA, yet they have great influence.

"The [union's] concern is likely about making sure that as many journeypersons as possible in Manitoba get employment," Hambley says. "If you load up with too many apprentices, there may be journeypersons that are not [getting work]."

This may be true, he adds, when it comes to the electrical trade, which at present has a glut of apprentices and journeypersons in the system.

Trottier says this is because electrical work is a "cleaner" construction trade. But other construction trades struggle with a shortage of available journeypersons and apprentices.

As for safety, cited by the NDP as the primary reason for the change, Hambley says that the WCA would be able to provide statistical evidence to show otherwise had the labour minister asked to see it.

This is because the WCA also runs the Construction Safety Association of Manitoba. Based on years of statistical evidence, there is no reason to believe two apprentices per journeyperson is unsafe, he says.

In fact, Hambley adds, the data says that worker safety in the industry has been improving year after year.

Hambley and his team at the WCA

will continue to try and engage the labour minister in conversations, even if the new law is enacted.

All the WCA asks for, he says, is some flexibility so that certain segments of the construction industry, which have high safety ratings and a shortage of workers, can remain at the two-to-one ratio if they desire.

As it stands, the new legislation has the potential to penalize some construction companies if they don't comply.

"The challenge, of course, is if you're a small business with the maximum amount of apprentices [allowable today], if the regulations change, you're now not compliant," says Hambley. "That would be a Workplace Safety and Health infraction. They could ticket you for that."

POTENTIAL RISKS

In the current market, Trottier says it's imperative for construction companies like his to remain competitive and reasonably priced. For this reason, employing as many apprentices as possible makes good sense.

"The consumer market [won't] accept an all-journeyperson crew because it raises the price," Trottier says. "On a \$1 million electrical contract, it'll raise the price by \$200,000."

Trottier currently operates his crew on a one-to-one ratio but still appreciates the two-to-one legislation. When a journeyperson calls

in sick or takes time off, the corresponding apprentice can be assigned to another journeyperson for a time, preventing forced unpaid leave.

He knows of other companies that have consistently operated on a two-to-one basis for the last few years.

"When I've talked to them, they said they'd have to lay off guys if this comes in because they have no place to put them," Trottier says.

Another big frustration caused by these legislative changes is that, too often, they are put into effect on very short notice.

"We bid far out into the future," says Trottier. "We'll have contracts that we're bidding on right now that are three or four years in coming. So if you're bidding it at a two-to-one ratio and then you have to go one-to-one, that costs you about 25 percent on your labour."

To add insult to injury, the construction trades recently underwent a regulated minimum wage increase that saw journeyperson wages climb by 14 percent over a period of 18 months.

"So if you already had contracts signed, you couldn't go back and get the wage increase put on," says Trottier. "A lot of [companies] took a pretty big hit on that."

For Trottier, who typically captures about 30 percent of the contracts he bids on, the wage increase resulted in him obtaining only three contracts out of the 100 he bid on.

Many of those contracts, he says, may have simply been put on hold due to affordability concerns.

"It's hard enough to make a living in the construction game when people aren't changing the rules on you," Trottier says.

According to Trottier, Ontario is the only other province he's aware of that has legislated a one-to-one ratio. British Columbia and Alberta currently have a three-to-one ratio in the construction trades.

Manitoba is the only province with a Construction Industry Wage Act regulating minimum wages specific to the trades.



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Crowd Fills Ritchot Council Chambers Over Livestock Expansion Proposal

By Brenda Sawatzky

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Ritchot's council chambers were filled to capacity, with overflow into the foyer, at their public meeting held on April 17.

The majority of the approximately 60 attendees were there to speak either in favour of or objection to the conditional use and variation applications made by Pierre-Andre and Veronique Mivelaz of 1659 Sood Road near St. Adolphe.

The family sought to expand their existing dairy operation from 400 to 900 cows, and accommodating the extra livestock will require an expansion of the farm's existing manure management system.

A variance request was likewise made to reduce the RM's required distance between the farm's manure facility and barns with the nearest rural and urban residents.

Inonge Aliaga, on behalf of the provincial government's Municipal and Northern Relations, addressed council in person. She is the senior planner with the Livestock Technical Review Co-ordination Unit.

Aliaga's team had already provided council with a complete provincial review of the applicants' proposal, which considered the many safeguards and requirements which a livestock operator needs to adhere to.

At this stage, she said, the matter was in the hands of the RM.

"The variation orders are only required because the bylaw requires larger operations to be further away [from residences]," Aliaga told council. "Separation, size, and location meet all the requirements of the development plan and the development bylaw for the expansion of the existing operation."

All areas of concern, she said, such as the spreading of manure in areas that are regularly inundated with flood waters have been taken into consideration.

The review also included comments submitted by 31 stakeholders from the St. Adolphe area.



Residents pack council chambers in St. Adolphe.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

"Common concerns were with odour, the effects of the use of Sood Road, decreasing property values, [the safety of] local water systems, and composting mortality," said Aliaga.

Also within the review were comments from the applicants, indicating their intent to mitigate local concerns by creating a shelterbelt around the manure storage facility. As well, the spreading of manure on local fields in spring would be virtually eliminated.

"If the proposal has reached this stage of the process, it means that the province has no outstanding technical concerns with it," Aliaga said. "Based on available information, it has been determined that the proposed operation will not create a risk to health, safety, or the environment, or that any risk can't be minimized through the use of appropriate practices, measures, and safeguards."

If council were to deny the application, she added, they would be required to provide written reasons for their rejection and the applicant would have the right to an appeal at the municipal board level.

Jordan Karpinchick, who has worked for the Mivelaz family as a consultant for the past 12 years, also addressed council. The site of the Mivelaz farm, he said, has been in use as a livestock operation since the 1940s.

"The dairy industry holds a vital place in southeast Manitoba's heritage, providing not only nourishment but also livelihoods for families across multiple generations," Karpinchick said. "The input from the technical review process was invaluable in

guiding our decision-making process and ensuring that any development aligns with the RM's mission for sustainable growth."

Eight others individually approached council, also speaking in favour of the farm expansion. They included neighbours and an agronomist for Terraco.

Clint Masse from A Maze in Corn was among those standing in support.

"There's no farm that's shrinking," Masse said. "If we're not growing, we're stagnant. And if we're stagnant, we're not thriving. In modern agricultural, we have to embrace economies of scale."

An additional 22 letters were received by council in support of the application. Reasons for support included local employment opportunities provided by farm operations and the clean and respectable nature in which the Mivelaz family have operated their business to date.

Seven people objected to the application. Most were not against the farm expansion, per se. Rather, they shared frustrations in regard to the destruction of the local roads by the farm's heavy equipment.

Another concern was the high speeds used by equipment drivers along that road, creating safety issues.

Two St. Adolphe residents confronted the question of air quality. Both said they had moved to this small town to get away from noxious city odours.

Among them was Robert Doiron, who worries about the potentially toxic fumes from methane gasses created by an increase in cows at the site.

"The average cow produces 64 pounds of faeces per day, which turns out to be 23,360 pounds a year," Doiron told council. "When there's 900 cows, that'll be 8,526,400 pounds of cow faeces produced. [With that] methane gas pumped into the air approximately one mile from town, I don't know how you can sit there and say, 'That's okay.'"

Mayor Chris Ewen closed the hearing to public feedback after the first hour. Council then spent time in deliberations of their own.

Councillor Shane Pelletier verified with Karpinchick that the Mivelaz farm already housed around 800 cows in the two barns on site.

When Councillor Jason Bodnarchuk asked whether the RM had received any complaints regarding farm odours, CAO Mitch Duval stated that there had been none, to his knowledge.

As for concerns over the use of Sood Road, council concluded that there were things the RM could do to mitigate this, including increasing dust control measures and performing traffic counts.

Council also noted that they could request that the province employ brake retarders and place speed limit signs in the area.

Asking the farm owner to speak to his drivers about speeding and brake use, Councillor Janine Boulanger added, could go a long way to improving safety in the area.

In the end, all five council members voted in favour of both the conditional use and variation requests.

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Ritchot Council Talks EV Vehicles, Main Street IDC, and Bilingual Service

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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On April 3, Ritchot council covered a variety of topics at their morning public meeting.

EV TRUCK

Among the first was the recent purchase of another Ford Lightning XLT extended range electric pickup truck at a cost of \$88,700.

"The truck was purchased as part of the Ritchot Car Share Initiative (RCSI), thanks to \$150,000 in funding from the Climate and Conservation Fund," says EDO Ryan Faucher. "This is the second [Ford Lightning EV] the RM has purchased and, if future funding is secured, it may increase up to five."

Until the public car share program is ready for launch, the pickups will be integrated into the public works fleet for use by RM staff.

Eventually, the EVs will be available to residents for rent on evenings and weekends.

"To date, the first vehicle has been used by RM staff to gain feedback and test capabilities and range during the winter, which will be used to guide future vehicle selection," Faucher adds.

Faucher says he's still waiting for the car share platform to be available to the public. More details on the RCSI will be available closer to the program's official launch date.

NEW EMPLOYEE

New to the RM staff this year is David Huska, who will take on



An electric charger in the RM of Ritchot.

RM OF RITCHOT

the full-time position of Parks and Infrastructure lead hand. He will be working out of the public works department.

"He is responsible for maintaining and developing parks and greenspace within the RM and managing and coaching seasonal green team employees," says CAO Mitch Duval. "David brings a wealth of experience to our team and we are confident he was the best person for the position."

TERRACON AGREEMENT

Also at Wednesday's meeting, council was asked to consider allowing a minor change to an agreement which exists be-

tween the RM and Terracon, the developers responsible for the 161-acre development proposed for Île-des-Chênes's south side.

According to Duval, the developer has asked for the inclusion of a clause that would give them some flexibility in paying for their contribution towards Main Street repairs when they are undertaken.

"The improvement to IDC's Main Street by Terracon is to include the stretch from Dumaine Road to Lacroix Avenue," Duval says. "The clause that council approved was in regard to the timing of

their \$500,000 contribution to the RM."

According to Duval, there is still no official timeline in place for when these street improvements will at last begin.

BILINGUAL SERVICE

Finally, Duval announced to council that the Honourable Ian Bushie, Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations, has officially signed off on the Municipal Maturity Model (3M).

The 3M program was developed by the Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities (AMBM) as a way to assist the province's bilingual communities in rolling out all services they provide in both official languages.

With the province's recent stamp of approval, Ritchot's council has voted unanimously in favour of creating a bylaw to adopt the program internally.

"As a municipality that uses both official languages, we are always looking for ways to improve in the way we communicate and provide services to our communities in both official languages," Duval told *The Citizen*. "This has been in the works for a number of years and it's an important milestone for us at the RM of Ritchot. And now that the bylaw has been adopted, we will review our services to determine what level we are currently at and then develop a strategy on how we will move forward now to implement any changes that will need to be made."



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Joel and Raesha Enns with their two children.

TINY FOX PHOTOGRAPHY

Province Digs Deeper for Couples Dealing with Infertility

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Couples struggling to get pregnant will be glad to know that the provincial government is increasing fertility supports this year.

According to Budget 2024, released on April 2, the maximum annual credit available under the Fertility Treatment Tax Credit will double, now reaching up to \$16,000.

"For families on a path to parenthood, cost can be a big barrier," says Premier Wab Kinew. "Our budget makes fertility treatments and surrogacy more accessible and affordable, because starting a family shouldn't be dictated by how much money you make. This investment is just one way Budget 2024 lowers costs for people."

The province will also be extending funding to other expenses related to fertility, including money paid to surrogates and donors for medical expenses they have incurred, payments to fertility clinics or donor banks, and costs related to prescription drugs.

"This tax credit has helped thousands of people start or grow their families," says Health Minister Uzoma Asagwara. "Doubling it will only

grow its impact and help move us forward in our mission to make sure that healthcare here in Manitoba is accessible to all."

According to Dr. Gordon McTavish, medical director of the Heartland Fertility Clinic in Winnipeg, this new funding promise will make Manitoba one of the most affordable provinces in which to receive assisted reproductive treatment.

Raesha Enns is a Niverville mom who feels gratitude for government-subsidized fertility treatments every time she gazes at her two healthy children, aged three and one.

After years of trying to get pregnant, Enns and her husband finally resorted to outside help. Treatment began with three rounds of intra-uterine insemination (IUI). Unfortunately, none of them worked.

Eventually, in vitro fertilization treatment did work for them and the couple was blessed with six tiny embryos.

"Half of our embryos were made using a technique called ICSI, intracytoplasmic sperm injection," Enns says. "They literally take one sperm inside a needle and inject it into the egg. It's amazing they can make a needle that tiny."

At an additional cost, the

couple decided to have each embryo genetically tested to separate out the ones that were most likely to provide the greatest success rate after transfer into the uterus.

For Enns and her husband, it was worth the expense. Two of the embryos produced two successful pregnancies, two years apart.

"It really is amazing," Enns reminisces. "I learned so much going through it all. It's incredible what they can do."

Not too far away, though, the memories still linger of the heartbreak they experienced with failure after failure, and the trauma of thinking they'd never have a family of their own.

The total costs of their fertility treatments, in the end, came to around \$30,000. With an \$8,000 government subsidy and other medical tax breaks, their costs were almost cut in half.

"If you can get \$16,000 back plus claim medical expenses for meds, it could make it much more affordable for families," Enns says. "It's a hard pill to swallow when you have to pay tons of cash out of pocket to have a family. I'm sure there's many couples that can't afford fertility treatments, and this new funding could change that for them."

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Town of Niverville Proposed Municipal Pesticide Program

Public Notice is hereby given that the Town of Niverville intends to conduct the following Pesticide Control Program during 2024:

1. To control noxious weeds on road allowances, public preserves and parks within the municipality, the Town may use the herbicides Fiesta, Round Up, 2-4-D Amine 600. The Program will run from May 1st, 2024 to October 31st, 2024 using a ground sprayer.
2. To control populations of nuisance mosquitos, the Town may larvicide using Aquabac 200g.

This Program will commence from May 1st, 2024 to October 31st, 2024.

All pesticides and procedures applied will be in accordance with federal laws and recommendations of the Manitoba Department of Agriculture.

The public may send written submissions or objections within 15 days of the publication of this notice to the department below:

Environment and Climate Change
Environmental Approvals Branch
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Debate Continues Over the Impact of Next Minimum Wage Increase

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

In recent weeks, the NDP government announced their intent to give the minimum wage another boost, marking the fourth increase to Manitoba's lowest wage in two years.

By the fall, the minimum wage will have shot up by nearly \$4 per hour since 2022.

On October 1, minimum wage will go from \$15.30 to \$15.80.

THE LIVING WAGE MODEL

Kevin Rebeck is the president of the Manitoba Federation of Labor (MFL), an organization acting as the voice for many public and private sector workers.

Rebeck is a proponent of ditching the minimum wage model and adopting the "living wage" instead.

This, he says, would more effectively help low-income workers climb out of the poverty cycle.

In fact, Premier Wab Kinew was also a vocal advocate for the living wage when he stood as leader of the opposition before his party came to the power last fall.

According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, a living wage in Winnipeg would come to just over \$19 per hour.

The living wage is calculated based on what wage earners require to cover their most basic needs of housing, transportation, and food. It should also be sufficient to allow for the healthy social, civic, and cultural development of children.

The wage is calculated for each of three households: single adult, single parent, and a family of four. Then a weighted average is taken.

"It's pretty simple," Rebeck says. "We think that if people work full-time, they shouldn't have to live in poverty. But for far too many



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workers, that's their reality. Minimum wage earners often have to work multiple jobs, which actually makes them worse off because now they're not getting overtime."

There are a few common misconceptions surrounding Manitoba's lowest income earners, Rebeck says.

Firstly, the belief is that most minimum wage employees are kids

who still live at home and are just looking to make a few extra bucks.

In reality, 64 percent of these earners in Manitoba are 20 years of age or older. And only 40 percent of that number are students.

"We also know that over half of them work for large businesses with over 100 employees," Rebeck adds. "Only a quarter of them work for

small businesses with 20 employees or less. So this whole idea that it's mom-and-pop shops that are negatively impacted [by rising minimum wage rates] is simply not true. It's the Walmarts and McDonalds and the ones who report record profits year upon year."

In defending a \$19 per hour living wage to replace the minimum

wage, Rebeck says that, historically speaking, the local economy benefits by the same measure as the low-income earners do.

The reason, he says, is that these workers tend to spend their new earnings locally. The more money the working class make, the more money circulates in the economic pool. Even the employer who is paying his employee a living wage will eventually benefit from the economic spinoff.

"Do I have some sympathy for small businesses? Yes," Rebeck says. "Do I think we've been misled on what the economic impact will be on small businesses? Yes. The number one thing businesses actually want and need are customers with disposable income. They don't need corporate welfare or handouts or big tax breaks."

But there's another economic benefit that Rebeck believes would result from the introduction of a living wage: an increased number of available workers in the employment pool.

Since the pandemic, Rebeck says that many workers just aren't willing to go back to low-paying jobs with no benefits. In his opinion, employers paying a fair living wage today are not the ones who can't find workers.

Of course, some would argue that the government provides extra tax breaks and other benefits like rental credits to low-income earners to help close the gap between them and the middle-income earners.

Rebeck says that this model simply acts as a public subsidy for businesses that don't necessarily want to pay fairly.

"What we're really talking about is corporate welfare, and I don't think that's fair," Rebeck says. "I think we should all, as a society, agree that when people work full-time,

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they should make enough to meet their basic needs. [Otherwise] we're all paying for it. The business gets away with paying poverty level wages and we all pay for it because our taxes go to government programs that then support those low-wage workers."

At this time, no provinces or territories in Canada have replaced the minimum wage model for a living wage.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Henry Friesen is a chartered professional accountant and financial consultant through Blue River Group in Niverville.

According to Friesen, anytime a worker receives a boost in wages, the government is the biggest beneficiary. So whether it's a minimum wage increase to \$15.80 or a living wage increase to \$19, the government always comes out the biggest winner.

Case in point, Friesen compares the financial outcome for an adult working full-time hours with a living wage of \$19 per hour versus a minimum wage of \$15.80 per hour. The difference between the two is \$3.20 per hour.

This is not insignificant until you consider the fact that the living wage employee will only get to keep \$1.99 of that increase.

Once federal taxes, CPP, and EI premiums are deducted, and considering

the low-income tax credits the employee would lose due to the jump in pay, the government will be keeping \$1.21 of their raise.

But the government benefits a second way when an employee receives a wage increase: through the employer.

The employer paying \$3.20 in additional wages must also

might be just the push that companies need in order to justify electronic automation with which to replace their entry-level human workers.

Instead of a blanket minimum wage rate to address low-income workers of all stripes, Friesen suggests that alternatives might be found which would be more equitable to all.

"If people work full-time, they shouldn't have to live in poverty. But for far too many workers, that's their reality. Minimum wage earners often have to work multiple jobs, which actually makes them worse off because now they're not getting overtime."

Kevin Rebeck | President, MFL

spend an additional \$0.80 for the employer's share of CPP and EI, Workers Compensation premiums, and payroll taxes. So a \$3.20 employee raise in actuality means \$4 in added costs for the employer.

"Governments get 50 percent of the total cost to employers of a minimum wage increase," Friesen says. "If you think this looks like an indirect government money grab, you'd be right."

Another concern Friesen has with the ever-rising minimum wage is that it

He addresses Rebeck's statistic showing that 64 percent of minimum wage earners are older than 20, leaving 36 percent in the youth category. Many of these youth, he says, have low to no expenses to consider.

"The point is that, when you have an almost 60 to 40 split between those over and under the age of 20, 40 percent is a huge number," Friesen says. "So an increase in minimum wage to help the 60 percent is a very big hammer when we're indirectly

affecting the 40 percent who don't really need [the extra income]."

Finally, Friesen references a book by Thomas Sowell called *Social Justice Fallacies*. Sowell is an American economist, social theorist, and political philosopher.

The author presents research to demonstrate that, statistically speaking, the number of workers who progress from the low-income sector to the middle-income sector within a mere five years is enormous.

"[Sowell] says that people better themselves as time goes on by taking advantage of opportunities and it's a relatively small group of people who are destined to remain [at the lowest wage] forever," says Friesen. "This is probably the most relevant information of all, because it gives people hope."

Sowell goes on to suggest that governments should focus their energies on supporting those workers who have little opportunity for advancement and let the rest figure it out for themselves.

"[Academics] have created a powerful vision of classes with disparities and inequities in income, caused by barriers created by society," Sowell says. "But the routine rise of millions of people out of the lowest [income level] over time makes a mockery of the barriers assumed by many, if not most, of the intelligentsia."

CITIZEN POLL

To what degree do minimum wage increases, or the switch to a living wage, benefit the economy and low-income earners here in Manitoba?

- ☐ To a great degree. Higher wages ensure that fewer people live in poverty, which keeps money flowing into the economy and reduces the need for government programs.
- ☐ To a small degree. The primary beneficiary of higher wages is the government, at the cost of small businesses.

Have a more nuanced opinion?
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LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

Should our schools work harder to ensure that different learning styles are supported through the provision of multiple learning tracks as opposed to single track learning?

Yes. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions in education. Schools should diversify their approach.

36%

No. Catering to every learning style would stretch resources too thin, adding strain to already tight budgets.

64%

YOUR COMMENTS:

Have private schools and encourage homeschooling.

In a perfect world and with all the money in the world, this would be ideal. However, the reality of implementing multiple learning tracks in a single school is not realistic. Not only would timetabling and staffing for all of these programs be an issue, but teachers would also need more specialized training (or professional development) to ensure that all programs would be implemented effectively.

It is unrealistic to expect schools to accommodate every learning style.

After graduating from Niverville High School, I found that being forced to do PBL really made everything harder for me. It definitely works for some students, but for me, and other students who learn better traditionally, it just doesn't work and there needs to be equal options for both.

There should definitely be different learning styles in all schools and all grades.

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IN BRIEF



Joe Thiessen will be the new HSD superintendent-CEO.

HSD

HSD Appoints New Superintendent-CEO

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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The Hanover School Division (HSD) trustee board went public on April 9 with their latest staff appointment. Effective August 1, Joe Thiessen will fill the position of Superintendent-CEO, replacing Shelley Amos.

"As a board, we are very pleased that Joe has accepted this new challenge," writes board chair Brad Unger in a press release. "He has a lot of administrative and teaching experience within the division and his deep commitment to community engagement made him an excellent candidate for this position."

Thiessen has been working within HSD in a number of roles for the past 28 years.

His classroom educator experience began in 1995 and continued for eight years at the Woodlawn and Blumenort schools, as well as at Niverville Collegiate. His teaching experience crosses all levels, including early, middle, and senior years.

During this time, he also served as a faculty advisor for the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba.

By 2005, he'd completed his master's degree in educational administration and a post-baccalaureate diploma in education at the University

of Manitoba.

In 2004, Thiessen accepted the position of principal of the Mitchell Elementary School and has been actively enjoying that role ever since.

Over the years, Thiessen also served as president of the Hanover Council of School Leaders and chair of the Professional Development Committee for the Hanover Teachers Association.

"Joe has a deep love for education and seeing students thrive," Unger says. "He works really well with staff in all capacities, encouraging growth and leading from the front as a servant leader. He is a man of solid character, and we are excited about his deep desire to lead the Hanover School Division."

Amos, too, spent much of her educational career in HSD, accumulating 22 years of division service before accepting the position of Superintendent of Education/CEO at Pembina Trails School Division in Winnipeg this year.

In 2018, she assumed the role of assistant superintendent in HSD and transitioned into the superintendent-CEO role in 2020.

The HSD represents 19 schools in southeastern Manitoba, approximately 8,600 students, and 1,100 employees.

Recognizing International Mother Earth Day through Education and Action

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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April 22 is now recognized around the world as International Mother Earth Day (IMED) and this year marks the third anniversary of the United Nations (UN) designated observance.

According to the UN, it's a day intended to educate humanity on the environmental crisis we face, mobilize political will into action, and celebrate human environmental achievements.

The UN recognizes, though, that the planet is in danger for reasons far beyond climate change.

In 2021, they determined that what's needed is a decade focused on ecosystem restoration, because ecosystems support all life on earth.

"The healthier our ecosystems are, the healthier the planet and its people," reads a statement from the UN. "Restoring our damaged ecosystems will help to end poverty, combat climate change, and prevent mass extinction. But we will only succeed if everyone plays a part."¹

Alarming, research shows that our oceans and waterways are filling up with plastic, making these aquatic ecosystems acidic. Carbon dioxide emissions are affecting the climate, which has a trickledown effect to almost every aspect of our lives on this planet.

As well, the UN recognizes a host of other human actions as "crimes" against the world's biodiversity. These include, but are not limited to, deforestation, land use changes, intensified agriculture and livestock production, and the growing illegal wildlife trade, all of which serve to accelerate the speed of ecosystem collapse.

António Guterres, Secretary-General for the UN, offered a message to mankind



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on International Mother Earth Day 2024.

"Humanity is acting like Mother Earth's delinquent child," Guterres says. "We depend on nature for the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the water we drink. Yet we have brought chaos to the natural world [by] poisoning our planet with pollution, wiping out species and ecosystems with abandon, and destabilizing our climate with greenhouse gas emissions."

It's not just important, he adds, but imperative that each person alive today begin working towards restoring harmony with nature. Putting an end to pollution and supporting sustainable food and commodity production and consumption are just a few ways in which it can be achieved.

He says that we need to support those around the world who are being hit hardest by pollution and the climate and biodiversity crisis.

"Countries must produce new national climate plans that align with limiting the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius," Guterres says. "And the G20 must lead a fast, fair, and funded global phaseout of fossil fuels, and put a stop to nature-wrecking subsidies, such as those that underwrite runaway

production of planet-choking plastics. Repairing relations with Mother Earth is the mother of all of humanity's challenges. We must act—and act now—to create a better future for us all."

About 50 new initiatives are taking place worldwide, supported by the UN, to help mitigate the environmental and biodiversity challenges we face. Members hope that, in coming years, many more will come on board as education on the subject grows.

Among these initiatives is the Africa Wood Grow project. With a focus on regreening Kenya's degraded lands, fraught with soil erosion and depletion, the program has been picking up steam since 2010. Today, 61 Kenyan farmers are improving their own livelihoods by participating in an agroforestry transition program.

In the United Kingdom, Project Seagrass Ocean Rescue is well underway. With the help of community volunteers, one organization has undertaken the eventual restoration of ten hectares of seagrass below the ocean's surface through the use of cutting-edge technology.

Closer to home, Ontario's Grasslands Stewardship Initiative provides support for the

creation, enhancement, and maintenance of grassland habitats. The aim of the initiative is to protect at-risk species, including birds such as the bobolink and eastern meadowlark, while improving soil quality and carbon capture.

More than 44 Ontario organizations and volunteers are focused on affecting more than 640 hectares of grassland ecosystems and maintaining 940 hectares of wildlife habitat.

The province of Manitoba decided to recognize the International Mother Earth Day by announcing new funding initiatives for three local environmental non-profit organizations: Climate Change Connection, Green Action Centre, and Manitoba Eco-Network.

"Manitobans are seeing the impacts of climate change firsthand and they want to know that our province is doing its part to protect our air, land, and water for future generations," said Environment and Climate Change Minister Tracy Schmidt in a press release.

Climate Change Connection is the beneficiary of \$100,000, which they'll use to advance awareness, capacity building, and action on climate change across Manitoba.

A grant of \$230,000 will assist the Green Action Centre to advance climate action planning, the circular economy, active transportation, and outreach initiatives.

Finally, the Manitoba Eco-Network will use their \$60,000 grant to help further inner-city climate adaptation work in Winnipeg through the Climate Safe, Green City project.

REFERENCES

¹ "When Mother Earth Sends Us a Message," United Nations. April 22, 2024 (<https://www.un.org/en/observances/earth-day>).

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Niverville PCH Workers Call Off Strike

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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In late April, the union representing healthcare workers at the Heritage Life Personal Care Home (HLPCH) in Niverville was set to go on strike.

On the morning of April 24, that strike was called off.

According to the Niverville Heritage Centre's executive director, Ron Parent, a tentative agreement was reached late on April 23 between Manitoba Health and the union's bargaining committee, Operating Engineers of Manitoba Local 987.

The tentative deal had yet to be ratified by union members at the writing of this article, but Parent said that he was hopeful that a strike may be averted, allowing the HLPCH to soon return to business as usual.

The exact terms of the deal were not made completely clear.

"If I had to make a guess at this point, it's that they are being provided with retroactive wages and benefits that align with the provincial agreement," Parent said. "[Right now], everybody here is just very happy. It's a good day!"

HLPCH union workers include healthcare aides, housekeepers, laundry, and recreational staff.

New contract terms laid out by union workers had been all but agreed upon earlier in April. The one snag they hit was the retroactive wage and benefits compensation.

Parent said that the request wasn't unreasonable. Union workers of the HLPCH have been working without a contract since March 31, 2022. But the final decision didn't lie in the hands of Heritage Centre administrators.

As strike action was starting to look imminent, Parent began sending notifications to family members of the residents of the HLPCH.



The Heritage Life Personal Care Home in Niverville.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

"As a non-profit, community-based personal care home which is part of the Heritage Centre, a social enterprise, we rely heavily on funding from Southern Health-Santé Sud (SHSS) for financial support required to meet the needs of those living within our Home and the community," Parent told them.

This funding, he said, ultimately comes from Manitoba Health but is governed through a service purchase agreement with SHSS. The previous SHSS agreement did not account for retroactive wages or benefits for the workers.

"As a not-for-profit, we do not have the resources to fund retroactive wages and benefits," Parent continued. "SHSS remains a strong partner in supporting all our needs, which includes completing our negotiations."

When weekend negotiations failed to meet those demands, Local OE987 announced a strike date for the morning of April 23.

The strike was then called off for 24 hours, within which time, according to Parent, Manitoba Health and union reps were able to reach an agreement.

As to the reason the workers hadn't seen a contract renewal since 2022, Parent said he's unclear on all the details. He feels, though, that negotiations were likely halted when his predecessor took an unexpected leave of absence during that time.

Parent assumed the position of executive director for the Heritage Centre campus in the fall of 2023. He and his team had been in negotiations with the union since that time.

Niverville resident Brenda Dux has worked in the healthcare field for more than 25 years. She's worked with seniors in a personal care home setting and has been a direct support professional working with people with disabilities.

She was also glad for the years she was represented by a union

who fought for her rights to a fair wage and reasonable working conditions.

Dux understands the plight of the HLPCH workers who were about to take to the picket lines.

"People don't understand how difficult [the job] is," Dux says. "[Workers] risk injury and mental, physical, and emotional burnout. [When there's a shortage of] staff, they have to work hours and hours without gratitude."

Dux says she's experienced these challenges firsthand and witnessed many others go through the same. Burnout, exhaustion, and minor injury among staff are oftentimes overlooked when senior administrators need people to show up to perform a job.

This doesn't just cost the worker, Dux adds. It can come at a cost to patients.

"It can happen to the best of workers," Dux says. "You do what you need to do and, in the end, you're just exhausted."

Ambassador Canadian Reformed Church

Sola Scriptura

Previously we discussed the essence of a 'Reformed' Church, tracing its roots back to the Protestant Reformation, and introducing its fundamental principles known as 'solas'—Latin for 'alone' or 'only' statements. This month we will delve into the first and foundational statement: 'Sola Scriptura,' or 'by Scripture alone.' The word "Scripture" is interchangeable with "Bible" or "God's Word". The Roman Catholic church holds the view that both Scripture and traditions are sources of authority. Reformed churches staunchly assert that the truths of God are exclusively found in Scripture. All of Scripture is God's Word and thus is the sole authority capable of binding the conscience. A faithful Reformed church upholds God's Word, the Bible, as the absolute source of truth essential for our salvation and spiritual well-being. We affirm its infallibility, inerrancy, and normativity, asserting that it governs all aspects of life and culture. This doesn't imply that every truth is contained within Scripture; rather, it signifies that Scripture reigns supreme on matters it addresses. Consequently, Scripture offers guidance on how we should live—both individually and collectively. Any deviation from its clear teachings leads a church astray. Our discussion will continue next month, focusing on 'Sola Fide,' or 'by faith alone.'

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Ritchot Presents a Review of Budget 2024

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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On April 17, a public hearing was held to present the RM of Ritchot's new financial plan for 2024. Residents were invited to participate and present questions and concerns.

No one was in attendance at the 5:30 p.m. meeting hosted by CAO Mitch Duval and CFO Muhammed Zaman.

Duval opened the meeting with some stats. Based on the 2021 census, the RM of Ritchot has a population of nearly 7,500 people who reside in just under 2,800 private dwellings.

The municipality's total land mass amounts to around 333 square kilometres.

Zaman continued with a comprehensive look at the RM's most recent budget.

"Preparation of the corporate tax budget is one of the most critical initiatives undertaken by administration," Zaman began, "as it acts as the fiscal plan that provides the resources required to make progress towards achieving community and council priorities."

Thanks to a general rise in property assessment valuation in the past year, Zaman reported the addition of \$235,000 in new tax revenue over last year.

To provide perspective, Zaman noted that the RM's total property assessment valuation has almost doubled in the past ten years. This is primarily due to new growth and development.

In the past year alone, a five percent assessment growth was realized between all property classes, including residential, commercial, and agricultural.

Residents of Ritchot will be glad to know that there are no municipal tax increases planned for this year. The rate will remain stable at 7.95 percent.

School taxes, on the other hand, will go up across all divisions. Each school

division has the autonomy to determine their own mill rate every year.

Between the five school divisions operating within the RM, mill rates will go up anywhere between one percent and almost eight percent. School division taxes account for 61 percent of the resident's tax bill in 2024.

The NDP government has promised another 50 percent education tax rebate for homeowners this year, although the future of the rebate is uncertain after 2024. Unlike prior years, the rebate will be applied directly to property tax bills in the fall.

"Preparation of the corporate tax budget is one of the most critical initiatives undertaken by administration, as it acts as the fiscal plan that provides the resources required to make progress towards achieving community and council priorities."

Muhammed Zaman | Ritchot CFO

Owners of property considered non-residential will receive a ten percent education tax rebate.

Taxes collected by the municipality account for about one-third of the almost \$19 million in revenue required by Ritchot this year. The remaining two-thirds of the revenue is expected to be realized through other revenue sources, such as government grants, permits and fines, development fees, municipal reserve funds, and sales of services.

Expenditures across many departments are up this year. The economic development budget climbed 32 percent since last year.

"This increase is due to some extra money put in for business export to capture more economic business opportunities for the RM," said Zaman.

As well, he adds, it will cover wages paid to summer students and the newly hired efficiency advocate for the

Manitoba Hydro Energy Efficiency program.

Protective services also saw a jump of 13 percent. This includes the cost of paying for building inspectors, the Commissionaires night patrol, animal control, fire halls maintenance, and emergency measures people.

As in previous years, Ritchot taxpayers are not directly billed for policing services through the RCMP.

Up another 12 percent is recreation services. This is the result of inflation impacts and an increase in recreation summer programming.

General government services, too, went up by nine percent from last year. Under this budget category, council indemnities, staffing wages, benefits, and legal costs are paid.

Capital expenses budgeted for 2024 will reach almost \$11 million. Projects expected to consume that cash include continued civic office expansion and site improvements as well as new

equipment for the operations department, such as a Bobcat and mini excavator. Pole sheds will see upgrades and road improvements are planned.

Ile-des-Chênes's Main Street rejuvenation is factored into this year's budget to the tune of \$2.5 million. While some money has been set aside for this project from the general reserve, the project is still dependent on government grants and gas tax funding.


"In 2024, the RM has received \$573,000 from the province as a one-time grant, funding under the Rural Strategic Infrastructure [program]," Zaman says.

This specific funding will be dedicated to the rebuilding of Hamilton Road and Charron Road.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The full financial plan, as well as a recording of the budget open house, are available on the RM's website: www.ritchot.com

CRRC Infrastructure Fundraising
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PHASE 1 GOAL

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IN BRIEF

Province Extends to Citizens the Right to Homegrown Cannabis

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

For the first time since cannabis was legalized in 2018, adult recreational users in Manitoba will have the green light to grow their own plants for personal use.

"Manitoba will now align with federal legislation on cannabis by allowing people to grow up to four plants per residence," said Minister of Justice Matt Wiebe in a press release. "This amendment is a direct response to Manitoba consumers and was one of our campaign promises. This bill will provide Manitobans the opportunity to grow their own cannabis as long as it is done in a safe and secure way. The regulatory framework will prioritize public safety, with a focus on protecting youth and ensuring cannabis plants are not accessible to young people."

The soon-to-be-introduced amendments to the Liquor, Gaming, and Cannabis Control Act will leave Quebec as the only province with a ban on homegrown recreational cannabis.

According to Wiebe, the legislative changes won't come into effect until the province has established adequate safety and security requirements for growing cannabis at home.

"I want to emphasize that, as we implement these changes, the safety of the public, and particularly of young people, is paramount," Wiebe said.

The ban on homegrown plants was originally enacted under the Progressive Conservative government. They initiated a fine of \$2,542 for those caught breaking the law. Between 2019 and 2023, 13 people have been charged according to the Winnipeg Police Service.

The not-for-profit organization TobaGrown, founded by Jesse Lavoie, has been challenging the law since it came into effect. In two court cases, one in 2020 and another in 2023, the ruling was upheld.

Premier Wab Kinew has long voiced his opposition to the laws banning homegrown product. He made it a part of his election campaign in 2023.

"We are incredibly pleased with the Manitoba government's decision to bring our laws into alignment with the federal Cannabis Act and the rest of the country," says Lavoie. "It's been a long journey for us at TobaGrown to reach this point and we couldn't have done it without the support of the Manitoba cannabis community. Thank you, Premier Kinew and the Manitoba government."



Providence University College in Otterburne.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

Providence College Hit Hard by New International Student Restrictions

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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Earlier this year, on January 22, the federal government announced their intent to put a cap on the number of national study permits issued to students seeking to gain a postsecondary education in Canada.

Across the country, only 292,000 study permits will be approved for the 2024–25 school year.

This is a drop of 28 percent from the 2023–24 academic year.

The move is intended to address the rapid increase in international students coming to Canada and, in the process, take some of the strain off the current housing shortages felt across the country.

For Providence University College and other private institutions like them, however, the news dealt a heavy blow.

On April 5, the government finally announced just how this cap would be quantified, province by province.

Manitoba was allotted 18,652 spaces for new international students.

Dr. Kenton Anderson, president of Providence University College, says that the provincial government made it clear their priorities would lie with publicly funded

institutions.

Even so, the school's administration was shocked to discover that the province had allocated only 37 of those spaces to Providence.

In the end, Anderson says that the true number will be even lower.

That's because the federal government has also introduced the requirement for attestation letters for the first time this year. All new international students wishing to educate here must first apply for an attestation letter from the educational institute of their choice. If provided, they can then apply for their study permit.

Providence University College has been authorized by the province to provide only 37 such attestation letters.

But according to Anderson, typically only about half of international applicants are approved for a study permit.

For this reason, the 37 letters they provide will likely only result in about 20 new students.

"Before, it was more or less unlimited," Anderson told *The Citizen*. "Now there are very strict limits on what we can do, so it's pretty challenging for us. But this is the way by which they are controlling the number of students that can come into the country."

Prior to the new rules, Anderson

says that Providence was gearing up to receive about 1,000 new international students in the coming academic year. As things go, they will be lucky to achieve two percent of that.

Last fall, Providence expanded its footprint by procuring a new campus in Winnipeg's core at a cost of \$9.5 million.

The former home of the Booth University College provided the school with 87,000 square feet of additional campus, including dorm-style housing for 400 international students.

Likewise, Providence's main campus in Otterburne provides onsite housing for hundreds more.

Even so, Anderson adds, many international students arriving in Manitoba already have other housing arrangements worked out.

"In our experience, many of the students that come to study here have a support network already in place," Anderson says. "Of course, we do a lot to assist in all of that, but many of the students would stay with friends and family."

For that reason, he says, Providence students weren't really contributing to the public housing problem in a significant way.

Anderson ponders whether the overall reduction in international students will have an adverse affect on the local economy in the end.

"It's a good thing for the city and the province to have these students come and train to be productive members of our workforce," Anderson says. "Most people will tell you that we need more [workers] who are willing to step up and take jobs that are going unfilled."

That's because many of these students, he adds, work at becoming Canadian citizens once their schooling is complete.

Further surprises were in store for Providence when they discovered that American students are also being included in the federal government's new restrictions. Recruitment in the U.S. has been integral for the university over the years, with the exchange on the Canadian dollar making cross-border education appealing to many Americans.

The new federal rules apply only to students seeking undergraduate studies in Canada. It will not affect undergraduate students who already hold a study permit. Nor will it affect those applying for graduate programs.

It's the graduate programs that Anderson says Providence will have to quickly shift its focus towards.

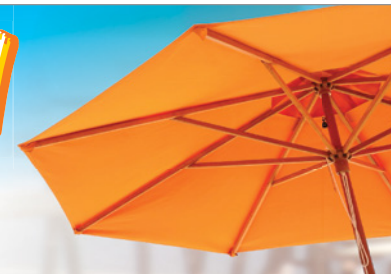
"We had planned to work on that over time, but we've had to accelerate those plans because of this news."



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Niverville Chamber Hands Out Annual Awards

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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On April 12, the Niverville Chamber of Commerce held their annual general meeting, awards, and dinner at the Heritage Centre.

Chamber members celebrated the year's achievements alongside several notable guests, including Niverville mayor Myron Dyck, MLA Ron Schuler, Minister of Economic Development Jamie Moses, and Craig Tomlinson, representing MP Ted Falk.

The evening featured a keynote presentation, networking time, and discussion panel featuring Sparkline Autoworks and Forgotten Flavours, who won New Business of the Year. The locally owned bakery began operating their home commercial kitchen during the COVID-19 pandemic and are now preparing to open a full-scale bakery and storefront at 69 Main Street.

Other award-winners included Ray Dowse, who won the Alex Fast Memorial Sr. Award for not only working to attract a vast number of businesses to town, but his volunteer work as coach and committee member in support of numerous associations, fundraisers, and initiatives.

Ell-Vi Medspa won for Outstanding Customer Service, honouring the work of nurse injector Holly, who provides medical aesthetics, cosmetic injectables, medical grade skincare, and personalized skin treatments at the Done



Elvin Krahn, president of the Niverville Chamber, speaks at the annual dinner.

■ NIVERVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Business of the Year was awarded to Whitetail Meadow, a family-owned and operated establishment with a cafe, event pavilion, guest cottage, and market.

For Elvin Krahn, this was the first AGM and awards dinner as president of the Niverville Chamber. Krahn works as manager of the Business Centre for the Business Development Bank of Canada.

Having been part of the Chamber as a board member since 2018, Krahn also served as treasurer and vice president prior to accepting the role as president in April 2022.

In Krahn's view, one of the Chamber's biggest changes this year involved adapting service offerings to suit their

growing membership.

"I think the Chamber is executing our strategic plan, and evolving and adapting our service offerings to our membership growth," says Krahn. "Second to that, and perhaps an addition to past efforts, we have worked to bring greater awareness to government and others around opportunities that bring impact to our community."

To grow key relationships with those in government roles, the Chamber has worked hard to invite key political figures, influencers, and developers to Niverville, taking time to show them around and talking about the needs of the community and what's happened here in recent years.

Looking to the future,

Krahn says that most business owners are working to evaluate costs and return on investment for their time, energy, and resources so they can continue to carry the local economy forward.

"I think business owners are evaluating costs, especially in light of inflation and interest rates, and this is followed closely by employee talent and retention. Opportunities exist, but it comes at a time when costs, labour, and competition have an impact," says Krahn. "Every year it is important to think about business goals, the economy, and the situational landscape. Taking inventory of advantages you have in your industry, growth areas, and then work out a planned strategy to get you there."



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On April 12th, the Niverville Chamber of Commerce Annual General Meeting, Awards, and Dinner unfolded as a remarkable event at the Heritage Centre, marking a significant occasion in the business community's calendar. This signature gathering was a celebration of the year's collective achievements, a platform for networking and a shared dinner that set the stage for an evening panel discussions and recognitions. The inclusion of a message from the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, complemented by a local business panel featuring Sparkline Autoworks and Forgotten Flavours, added a layer of depth to the discussions, fostering a space for growth, learning, and collaboration among the business community.

The event hosted distinguished guests, including MLA Ron Schuler, Minister Jamie Moses, Craig Tomlinson representing Ted Falk, and Mayor Myron Dyck, whose participation underscored the importance of the occasion and the strong ties between the business community and governmental leadership.

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Locals Weigh in on the Use of Receipt Scanners

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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In recent weeks, the testing of anti-theft scanners at Canadian retail outlets has many people feeling like these new security measures are taking things a step too far.

Introduced at four Loblaws-owned stores across neighbouring Ontario, the scanners have been developed to curb theft from self-checkout users.

Since Loblaws operates several major chains in Manitoba as well, such as Real Canadian Superstore, Shoppers Drug Mart, and No Frills, some locals are concerned that it's only a matter of time before these devices are deployed closer to home.

The devices, which scan customers' receipts, are located by a store's exit. Before leaving, shoppers are required to scan their receipt's barcode, demonstrating that they've paid for their purchase. The scanner in turn opens a metal gate which allows the customer to exit.

According to one Ontario shopper, the scanner in the store he attended caused some chaos when people tried pushing through the metal gate, unaware of the new scanning device as they passed by. This triggered alarms throughout the store, leading to confusion and anger.

It's not a completely new concept. Walmart and other retailers have on occasion hired security personnel to check receipts. Costco, too, has been doing it for years.

Toronto-based consumer advocate and business lawyer Daniel Tsai isn't surprised by the customer backlash, though. It's a risky business, he says, when you try and prevent shoppers from leaving a store if there's no evidence of wrongdoing.

Stores such as Costco can do it, he says, because customers agree to the receipt check when they sign up for a store membership.

"If they're stopping you and you feel like you don't have an ability to leave, and there is no basis for them to



DEPOSITPHOTOS

detain you, that qualifies as false imprisonment," Tsai told the CBC.¹

The Citizen reached out to a local Real Canadian Superstore to see if such a device is under consideration for use at their location. We also asked about the store's experience with self-checkout theft.

The manager was unable to comment without corporate approval.

We then reached out to residents of Niverville and Ritchot for their feedback on receipt scanners. Similar to customers at stores in Ontario, the concept was mostly met with contempt.

"How about they give people jobs or trust us to do self-checkout and not make us feel like criminals?" says Natasha Cooper. "[You've got] two choices: pay people or trust me."

Christopher Rondeau agrees that he wouldn't support a store that initiated receipt scanners.

"Once you have purchased the items, they are your property and you are under no obligation to prove that," says Rondeau. "I do not believe it is legal for a store to prevent you from leaving without probable cause to do so. If they suspect you of shoplifting, then they can call the police and present their evidence."

Like many shoppers, Keri Heiland says she's never been a fan of self-checkout, let alone the scanners that may now be required in order to keep shoppers honest.

"I use them occasionally when I'm only purchasing a few items, [but I] find the area for my items too small and various other little annoyances that make me dislike

them even more," Heiland says. "I'm also a chatty person who enjoys that little interaction with the cashier and it is that extra chance to get assistance from store staff if needed. So adding the extra hassle of needing to scan my receipt to leave the store if I use self-checkout would make me choose other locations for my shopping needs."

Elaine Krahn says that the simple experience of shopping is beginning to feel much too robotic for an old-school thinker like herself.

"I really enjoy human interaction and I believe that providing job opportunities such as a cashier job is also a great option for those who simply don't have the qualifications for so many other job opportunities these days," Krahn says. "Many seniors are really quite intimidated by all the fast-paced changes we see and I do not think it's creating a better environment overall."

Chelsea Brown explains that she's ambivalent to the use of receipt scanners as long as they don't create delays at the exit.

"I'm not sure that they can do it in a way that doesn't create a long lineup to leave on busy days," Brown says. "When my kids are losing their [minds] and I need to get them out of a busy public place quickly, I need to go. Also, on the topic of self-checkouts, I actually love them. I really don't want to talk to anybody at the store. I want to do it myself."

Amidst the anti-scanner sentiment, though, Margo DeCruyenaere approaches the subject from the perspective of someone who has worked in grocery retail for 15 years. She

now works in management.

"The amount of theft, with or without self-checkouts, is absolutely disgusting," DeCruyenaere says. "It's not just kids or delinquents, either. Middle-aged people and seniors are just as bad."

At her store alone, she says, the value of stolen items runs into six-figure territory on an annual basis. She estimates that it equates to a full five to eight percent of the store's overall sales.

"It has always been a bit of an issue, but especially in the last four years, since COVID-19, it has increased," she adds. "It's no longer just your typical criminals coming and testing their chances at getting away with something. These are often well-thought-out plans to steal expensive items in a sophisticated manner."

DeCruyenaere says that while inflation may be partly to blame, there seems to be some degree of entitlement behind modern-day shoplifting.

"If [thieves] were truly financially desperate, they would be stealing things like milk, butter, eggs, formula, etc.," she says. "But it is far more often than not the fresh meat and cheeses."

Store management and staff work hard to catch thieves in the act before they can get away, she says, but they must do it without putting anyone in harm's way. Hiring full-time security staff to do the job would mean adding a major cost to the store's overhead, which would affect grocery prices for every shopper.

She's not alone.

"I have no issue with the [receipt scanner]," says Sheri Mahara. "There are a lot bigger issues in the world to worry about. Store theft is real, and the more the store loses, the more we have to pay for items. It's a shame it has to be done, but whatever."

REFERENCE

¹ Sophia Harris, "Scan Your Receipt to Exit?" CBC. Date of access: April 8, 2024 (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/loblaw-receipt-scanners-1.7141850>).

IN BRIEF



Raychel Agera and Jolyn Sawatzky.

RAYCHEL AGERA

Evergreen Therapy Opens in Niverville

By Jennifer Lavin

✉ jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com

Evergreen Therapy is now open at the Niverville Heritage Centre, offering another option for those seeking help with their relational or mental health.

Evergreen is owned by Jolyn Sawatzky, who practices together with Raychel Agera. Both women have master's degrees in counselling from Providence Theological Seminary.

The Heritage Centre office is the second location for the pair. They split their time between their Niverville and Winnipeg locations with Sawatzky in Niverville on Tuesdays and Fridays and Agera in Niverville on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Sawatzky brings a wealth of experience to her therapy sessions, having become a counsellor in midlife after losing her husband, marrying again, and blending the two families.

Agera comes from a nonprofit background where she worked in communications. She enjoyed connecting with people in that role and wanted to work in an environment where she could interact with people in an even more personal way.

Evergreen Therapy focuses on relational health, and Sawatzky describes how important relational health is by pointing out that none of us can be in healthy, happy relationships unless we are first healthy individually.

"The people that we are

supporting in their individual well-being, their psychological health will overflow into their relationships," says Sawatzky. "And people that come in as couples or families... we nurture their relationships while also seeing how they are doing individually. We focus on the combination and interplay between individual well-being and relationship well-being."

They currently offer support for individuals facing anxiety and depression symptoms, families and children (ages six and up), and couples or individuals wanting to improve their relationships.

"With our different life experiences, what [Agera and I] really want to bring is hope," she adds. "It's often in the context of relationships and interactions that people feel hopeless. Kids go through significant stuff, and adults have gone through significant stuff in their past. It kind of haunts you in different ways, and you often don't realize it."

Sawatzky grew up in Pansy, Manitoba, and then lived on a dairy farm in Landmark for 26 years. Agera grew up in the North Kildonan neighbourhood of Winnipeg.

Agera is currently accepting new clients, whereas Sawatzky is building a waitlist.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.evergreentherapy.info

Sports & Recreation



Members of the Eastman Speed Skating Club at the CRRC in Niverville.

EASTMAN SPEED SKATING CLUB

Speed Skating Club Looks Back on Successful Season

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

It has been an eventful season for Eastman Speed Skating Club. After relocating from Steinbach to the CRRC in Niverville, coaches and skaters have been equally thrilled with the opportunities presented. Skaters of all skill levels have seen improvement, enjoying their new space and feeling at home on the ice.

Among the season's highlights, six skaters represented Manitoba at the Canadian Youth Long Track Championships in Quebec City on February 10–11, as well as seven skaters at Canadian Youth Short Track West in Medicine Hat on March 23–24.

Prior to these events, the club had great success at local competitions.

"It was an extremely successful year for Eastman Speed Skaters both in provincial and at national events,"

says club vice-president Cassandra Tetrault. "The club felt confident in our skaters abilities. They are a hard-working, passionate, and committed group that continue to make strides in the sport... It was also great to see the improvements made by our beginner skaters."

Many of the young athletes finished the season by achieving personal best times.

At the Quebec City event, Mackenna Reimer won gold in the 1,500-metre and bronze in the 1,000-metre. Mia Tetrault earned gold in the 500-metre Olympic-style, the ISU 7 lap mass start, the 300-metre, the 1,500-metre, and the 1,000-metre. Willa Dowse won gold in the 500-metre Olympic-style and the 1,500-metre, as well as silver in the ISU 7 lap mass start, and bronze in the 300-metre and 1,000-metre. Justin Cheng got silver in the 500-metre,

the 1,000-metre, and the 1,500-metre, as well as the bronze in the ISU 7 lap mass start. Yule Wang had a strong showing and Everett Saydak skated numerous personal bests.

In Medicine Hat, Reimer won gold in the 400-metre and finished fourth overall. She was also awarded the sportsmanship award. Mia Tetrault finished first overall with a gold in the 800-metre, the 1,000-metre mixed age ability, and the 1,500-metre, as well as a silver in the 400-metre. Dowse finished third, with a silver in the 800-metre and a bronze in the 1,500-metre. Cheng finished second and earned silver medals in the 400-metre, 800-metre, and 1,500-metre races. Wang finished fifth overall, and Saydak and William Larouche skated numerous personal bests.

Tetrault notes that they had an exceptional amount of support from parent volunteers and coaches.

"We are excited about the growth of the club and look forward to continuing to build on this successful season," said Tetrault.

The club also received provincial recognition for the skaters, coaches, and volunteers who went above and beyond in their efforts this year.

Coach Rachel Spridzans was recognized with the Coach of the Year award from Speed Skating Manitoba.

Volunteer official Tao Cheng, father of skaters Justin and William, was recognized as the Official of the Year. He was a volunteer starter at both national events as well as at all the long and short track races hosted in the province.

Mackenna Reimer received the Terry Mymryk Award, which is given to a club skater who displays outstanding commitment, sportsmanship, and potential.

"Our skaters brought home

multiple medals and many personal best times," says club president Mark Spridzans. "Going into the season, our skaters were fast coming out of our preseason ice. The intensity continued into and throughout the season. Our coaches delivered with all of our skaters having noticeable improvements every week. As the club president, I am proud of our athletes, coaches, and our parent volunteers who made this season a success."

Spridzans says that after a short break the committee will begin planning the 2024–2025. Organizers are excited to invite even more skaters of all levels to try speed skating. The club will host a come-and-try event on September 8 at 2:00 p.m. Interested participants can find more information online on Facebook, Instagram, or the club website (eastmanspeedskating.weebly.com).



DEPOSITPHOTOS

Tryouts Coming for Manitoba Summer Games Girls Soccer

By Jennifer Lavin

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An exciting opportunity is coming for young athletes in the rural southeast. In anticipation of the upcoming Manitoba Summer Games, tryouts will be held in May for those looking to join one of southern Manitoba's girls soccer teams.

For the purposes of the Games, the province is divided into six regions: North, East, West, South, and two from Winnipeg. These regional teams consist of athletes ranging from age 10 to 18.

Two teams will represent the southern region, one based in Morden and the other in Niverville. Girls from the area who were born between 2009 and 2012 may try out for the Niverville team on May 14 at 6:45 p.m. in Hespeler Park.

Gerald Negrave, the team's coach, says that he will be looking for players with a lot of heart.

"We hope to choose players for the team that all bring a love of soccer and a passion

for the game," says Negrave. "They may not necessarily be elite athletes, but they should all show that they can work together as a cohesive unit."

Negrave has more than 25 years of experience coaching girls soccer at both the high school and community level. As a teacher, he coached at five different schools, leading his teams to Provincials at four of them.

He recalls that one of those teams, the Birtle Falcons, won the championship in 2000.

"It was a proud moment for the girls, as they were an A school with a population of just over 100 students, competing against AAAA schools, some of which had over 1000 students."

In 2019, Negrave retired from teaching, finishing out his time at the former Niverville Collegiate Institute. During his tenure as a teacher, he received the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching and was nominated for the Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award.

The nomination for the second award came, in part, as a result of his efforts to promote soccer programs in towns throughout Manitoba.

"The Games will be a unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for anyone chosen to represent their region," he adds. "We hope girls making the team will have a memorable and fun experience while competing."

This year's Manitoba Summer Games are being held in Dauphin from August 11-17. The event brings together hundreds of young athletes from across the province to compete and meet fellow participants. A kind of "mini-Olympics," the Games feature both individual sports and team sports.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For questions or to register for the girls' soccer team tryouts, contact Negrave at gnegrave@gmail.com. To learn more about the Manitoba Summer Games, visit: www.sport-manitoba.ca/manitoba-games/dauphin2024



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The Sophomore Jolt: Looking Back at a Second Season of Nighthawks Hockey

By Ty Dilello

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For the second straight year, the Niverville Nighthawks had an up-and-down season. When they were playing well, the Nighthawks were hard to beat. They played strong and looked like one of the best teams in the MJHL.

But when things went south on the scoreboard, there were some very dark days for the Niverville club in their sophomore campaign.

All in all, though, the Nighthawks franchise had a solid second year. The future continues to look bright for the best show in town.

To start off the year, the Nighthawks had an effective preseason, winning three games and losing twice. Coming into the season, head coach and general manager Kelvin Cech noted that the club had some clear goals over the summer for being a little heavier and a little faster, in particular on the walls and winning those key battles.

“We recruited some powerful young wingers up front who are doing a great job on the wall and winning the blue lines,” said Cech in September.

When the regular season began, the Nighthawks flew out of the gate. The high-scoring team won six of their first eight games and kept their foot on the gas.

For the first couple of months of the season, the Nighthawks were consistently among the league’s top teams.

The Nighthawks got lots of scoring from the likes of Kaycee



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Coyle, Michael DeBrito, Ty Kennett, Brendan Bottem, Nathan Brown, Michael Tanchak, and the team’s captain Brett Tataryn. Other key players like Carter Spirig, Ethan Kelly, Avery Laliberte, and Merik Boles did a great job night in and

night out at shutting down their opponents’ top lines.

However, the biggest x-factor in the Nighthawks’ early success last fall was the play of rookie goaltender Raiden LeGall, who stood on his head night in and night out.

LeGall finished the season with a 20–14–0 record with a 2.43 goals-against average and .920 save percentage.

The Nighthawks got an interesting jolt to their season when Cech, Brown, and physiotherapist

Justin Giesbrecht were selected to join Team Canada West at the 2023 World Junior A Hockey Challenge in Truro, Nova Scotia, in mid-December.

Canada West snuck into the play-off round with only a single win in the preliminary round. They went on to stun the undefeated United States in overtime in the semifinals. They then beat Team Canada East in the gold medal game, roaring out to a 7–2 victory and capping off a fairytale run.

“I had a great time in Truro, as I got to play with some of the top players in the west of the CJHL and got to play against international talent, which was a first for me, as well as playing a pretty stacked American roster,” said Brown. “It was also awesome to have my parents and my older brother make the journey and watch the weeklong tournament.”

Unfortunately, for the second straight year, the Nighthawks’ hot start came to a screeching halt when the players returned from the Christmas break.

For the next two months, the team struggled to be competitive. They nearly fell out of the playoff picture entirely.

On February 10, the second annual Nighthawks Red Carpet Gala was held at the Heritage Centre in Niverville. The fundraising event brought hundreds of attendees out, with guests being treated to a full course of appetizers, entrees, wine, and dessert, not to mention an evening chock full of entertainment.

The evening’s keynote speaker

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was Ray Neufeld, a former local NHL forward with the Winnipeg Jets and Hartford Whalers in the 1980s.

Shortly after, the team had yet another jolt.

The board of directors announced their decision to let go their head coach and general manager in an attempt to turn the season around.

"We want to thank Kelvin for his significant role in developing and building the MJHL's newest franchise," read a press release from the organization. "We wish you all the best, Kelvin."

At this point in mid-February, Niverville was in the middle of a very deep slide, with the team holding a 3-7-1 record since the Christmas break.

"Upon the recommendation of hockey operations, we made the decision to relieve our head coach/general manager," said Clarence Braun, the chair of the team's board of directors, at the time. "The trend within the past three weeks was not good. We had a difficult post-Christmas last year, but we were at least competitive. This year we were getting blown out and that was unacceptable. It's all about players competing and not necessarily winning. We were not competing."

At the same time as Cech's firing, the Nighthawks also announced that Mike McAulay had accepted the interim role of general manager. Furthermore, the organization hired Dwight Hirst to serve as interim coach for the remainder of the season.

The 44-year-old Hirst had an extensive history playing hockey in the MJHL, USHL, and NCAA Division 1 and 3. He also played for the University of Manitoba Bisons. He had finished his career playing senior hockey for the Lac du Bonnet Blues of the MEHL.

Before being hired by Niverville, Hirst served as the head coach of the Eastman Selects U18 AAA team for four seasons.

"The first week on the job, with four games in six days, would be tough for any coach," said Hirst. "Only one practice before the first game and also only one practice before the next three games. But I wouldn't change that week at all. It showed everyone in the organization what the underlying issues were, and from that week forward

we made adjustments and corrected the way the team approached things."

Forward Brendan Bottom concurs that this was a tumultuous time for the team.

"The coaching change was definitely hard at first," Bottom said. "It was a big culture shock at first, especially midway during the year."

However, in the coming weeks the team was able to bounce back.

Climbing out of the hole they'd dug for themselves, the Nighthawks secured a 7-2 record in their last nine games and narrowly earned the last playoff berth in the MJHL's East Division.

"We were able to grow and mature heading down the stretch to playoffs," said Hirst.

At the end of the regular season, the club handed out its team awards to a range of key players. First, the team's departing 20-year-olds were recognized: Alex Walicki, Michael Debrito, Colin Whaley, Josh Danis, Brendan Bottom, Michael Tanchak (assistant captain), and Brett Tataryn (captain).

The year's best defence-man award went to Kaycee Coyle (assistant captain), whereas the best forward was Michael Debrito. The most outstanding first-year player was a tie between Raiden LeGall and Nathan Brown.

Other awards included the Fan Favourite Award (Ty Kennett), Coaches' Choice Award (Colin Whaley), Humanitarian Award (Carter Spirig), Three Stars Award (Raiden LeGall) and Most Valuable Player (Kaycee Coyle).

In the first round of the playoffs, the Nighthawks met up with the top-seeded Steinbach Pistons. Although the hometown heroes were promptly swept in four straight games, Hirst noted that the team learned a lot from playing in those high-intensity games.

"Everyone in the organization and everyone in the day-to-day operation got that experience of how it goes in the playoffs," said Hirst. "The returning players have gained that experience and confidence from being a part of a series. We all have to take in those moments, because it's another stepping stone for this program."

"It was a fun season," said Bottom, looking back at the campaign as a whole. "I

would say we were successful in making the playoffs for the second year in a row. Obviously, it didn't end the way we wanted, but I think the future is really bright in Niverville."

Both Hirst and Bottom noted that the Nighthawks need to become more consistent night in and night out if the franchise ultimately wants to take the next step and become one of the higher-echelon teams in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League.

"I would say just being more consistent," said Bottom. "This year, when we were on our game, we were a top team. On the flip side, when we were struggling, we could lose to anyone. So I would say just finding more consistency."

"It's all about building a strong program, and it got a little stronger again after our push to make the playoffs and competing in them," said Hirst. "The ability of getting another MJHL draft under our belt, too, this June will give us another level of depth and identity that will be on display next season. Drafting, developing, and getting players to conform to the Nighthawks standards will be how we continue to get better."

Hirst is hopeful that he may yet be able to take the Nighthawks to that next level and stick around for the rest of this process as the new head coach. Those decisions will be made in the upcoming weeks by the team's board of directors.

Once the board makes their choice and gives direction to the future head coach and general manager, there will be a lot of work done to ensure the Nighthawks are ready to step up in the fall and take the next step.

For 20-year-old Bottom, who has now aged out of junior hockey, he will now be going to college. He also hopes to play college hockey, although the specifics have yet to be determined.

"I loved my two years in Niverville. I was blessed with a great coaching staff, trainers, billets, etc.," said Bottom. "I can't thank everyone enough. It was fun to play in front of the best fans in the league. Niverville is a place I'm going to miss, and I can't thank everyone enough for making it a special two years for me."

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Easing Hip Pain: The Power of Exercise in Managing Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis of the hip is a debilitating condition that can severely restrict mobility and diminish quality of life. However, a growing body of research highlights the significant benefits of exercise in managing this disease. Regular physical activity is proven to alleviate pain and improve joint function, empowering patients to enjoy a more active lifestyle.

Exercises tailored for hip osteoarthritis focus on strengthening the muscles around the hip, increasing flexibility, and stabilizing the joint. This helps to reduce the strain on the hip, ease pain, and potentially slow the disease's progression.

Physiotherapists play a vital role in managing hip osteoarthritis through exercise. They design personalized exercise programs that safely match the patient's health status and arthritis severity. These programs typically include stretching, strength training, and low-impact aerobic exercises like walking or cycling.

Initiating exercise routines under the supervision of a physiotherapist ensures the movements are done correctly and safely, enhancing the benefits while reducing injury risks. Proper exercise can markedly improve daily function and decrease dependence on pain medications, making it a key component in managing hip osteoarthritis effectively.



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The Eastman Heat.

BERRINA DEQUIER

Eastman Heat Do Manitoba Proud at Western Provincials

By Jennifer Lavin

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The U16A Eastman Heat ringette team recently wrapped up a particularly successful season. After winning their Provincials in overtime, they qualified to represent Manitoba at the Western Canadian Ringette Championships in Calgary from March 27–30.

The Heat is made up of players throughout the Eastman community who amalgamated this year with

those from the Interlake, Northwest, and River East due to a lack of numbers in their age category in individual clubs.

The Heat started off the championships with a bang, defeating the host city in overtime. They lost their next two games but won the fourth match to put them in the bronze medal game.

At the halftime mark, Manitoba was down 3–0, but they were far from out.

According to Leanne Harder,

mother of 14-year-old Natalie Harder of Niverville, says that this was when the best part of the tournament took place.

“The clock was having some technical difficulties, [so the arena was] playing music while we were waiting for the game to continue,” says Leanne. “A few players from the hosting Bow View ringette team started dancing on the ice in front of their net to ‘Cadillac Ranch.’ Natalie went over and started dancing with their players, [and they all] did a line

dance together in front of their net. The crowd and benches all cheered the players on!”

The Heat did ultimately lose that game 6–2. But after receiving their medals, the players from both teams hit the ice again and linedanced some more.

Natalie says that this final match will likely form a core memory in her life.

“This game was a great way to end a great season with the girls and coaches who have all given me so

many experiences and memories,” she says.

Leanne Harder agrees with her daughter on that point.

“What an amazing and memorable experience for all players,” she says of the trip to Calgary. “The Alberta parents and associations were so impressed with our Manitoba sportsmanship and spirit. It was the talk of the tournament! I think this was a great representation of what ringette is all about and a proud moment for our girls.”



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Arts & Entertainment



Hunter Brothers will headline the Olde Tyme Country Fair this year in Niverville.

HUNTER BROTHERS

Niverville Fair Announces 2024 Musical Acts, Headlined by Hunter Brothers

By Jennifer Lavin

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Spring is here—and before you know it, Niverville's annual Olde Tyme Country Fair will be here as well.

This year, the fair will take place June 7–8 and feature an exciting lineup of musical acts.

The headliners will be Hunter Brothers, a country music act featuring five real-life brothers: J.J., Dusty, Luke, Brock, and Ty.

With more than 76 million video and audio streams in their career so far, they've racked up some impressive credibility in a short time, including multiple nominations

for the CCMA's and Junos.

They've also won an award from the Saskatchewan Country Music Association.

The brothers grew up on a farm and attribute their success, in part, to their rural upbringing. Three of their songs have been certified Gold in Canada: "Lost," "Those Were the Nights," and "Born and Raised."

They are becoming well-known across the country for their energetic live shows and have toured with country icon Paul Brandt.

Another featured act this year is Jake Vaadeland, a self-taught multi-instrumentalist and songwriter from Saskatchewan.

Vaadeland's unique musical style has been described as a blend of bluegrass and 50s rockabilly.

In 2022, Vaadeland won two Saskatchewan Music Awards, including Album of the Year for *Everybody But Me*, and Folk/Roots Artist of the Year.

He also earned four SCMA Awards, including Fans Choice Entertainer of the Year, Songwriter of the Year, Alternative Country Album of the Year, and Emerging Artist of the Year.

Niverville's own Catie St. Germain will grace the stage again this year as well.

In 2023, St. Germain released

her first original song and quickly obtained a remarkable 25,000 streams. She was also nominated for six MCMA Awards: Emerging Artist, Fans Choice, Single of the Year, Songwriter of the Year, Indigenous Artist of the Year, and Interactive Artist of the Year.

St. Germain was recently signed to Jason Petric and Chris Burke Gaffney's new Atomic Ranch/Warner Canada record label. The talented trio is currently writing new songs and plan to release an album later in 2024.

Rounding out the musical acts will be Taylor's Story, a Taylor Swift tribute act performed by an artist

known simply as Shannon.

According to Booking House Inc., the booking agents for Taylor's Story, Shannon is much more than a Swift impersonator.

"Shannon delivers a performance that goes beyond mere mimicry," they say. "With dedication to the craft and attention to detail, audiences will experience the magic of a Taylor Swift concert, complete with the energy, charisma, and flair that has made Taylor a global phenomenon."

Taylor's Story features a wide variety of Swift's music, both old and new, with the accompaniment of a band and backup dancers.


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