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LOCAL NEWS

Niverville to Install Electric Charging Stations

■ This summer, Niverville will become home to the region's first public charging stations for electric vehicles. The chargers will be installed in the CRRC parking lot.

Details on Pages 6-7

LOCAL NEWS

Cattails in Fifth Avenue: Behind Council's Decision

■ The Citizen did a deep dive this month to investigate the somewhat contentious decision by Niverville's council.

Details on Pages 14-15

COMMENTARY

Anger, Mobs, and Taking Riot Selfies

■ What factors could drive ordinarily peaceful people to engage in mob violence?

Details on Page 17

SPORTS & REC

Embracing Winter

■ Don't let the snow and cold keep you stuck inside this winter. Our communities have lots of wintery options to keep us active and healthy.

Details on Page 18



The Latest Look Inside the CRRC

➡➡ READ MORE ON PAGE 10

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Questions? Please email info@hsd.ca or call 204-326-6471.

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The

Citizen

Box 266, Niverville, MB R0A 1E0
www.nivervillecitizen.com

Managing Editor:

Evan Braun

Sales Manager:

Ray Dowse

Operations Manager:

Cara Dowse

Design/Production Manager:

Dustin Krahn

Contributors:

Evan Braun, Sara Beth Dacombe, Daniel Dacombe, Jennifer Lavin

CONTACT US

Letters to the Editor:

editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Advertising Sales:

sales@nivervillecitizen.com

Classifieds/General Information:

info@nivervillecitizen.com

Artwork/Ad Proofs/Graphics:

ads@nivervillecitizen.com

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The Heritage Life Personal Care Home in Niverville.

DUSTIN KRAHN

Several Residents Pass Away in Heritage Life PCH Outbreak

By Evan Braun & Jennifer Lavin
editor@nivervillecitizen.com

The Heritage Life Personal Care Home in Niverville has been reporting a steady stream of increasing cases in the last month. As of the last update on January 27, there had been a total of 23 cases among the residents, with two of the PCH's neighbourhoods—Prairie Rose and Lilac—being affected. Of those 23 cases, nine were still active at press time, nine had recovered, and unfortunately several have passed away, including one man in his 70s, two women in their 80s, one man in his 80s, and two men in their 90s. One resident is hospitalized. With no outstanding tests being

reported at the end of January, there is some hope the outbreak is nearing an end. The first case came to light on January 4 when CEO Wes Hildebrand confirmed to The Citizen that a staff member had tested positive. The outbreak began in the Prairie Rose neighbourhood and subsequently spread to Lilac. Since that time, five staff members have tested positive. The PCH's other neighbourhoods have fortunately managed to remain unaffected. During the outbreak, testing was expanded to include all residents in all neighbourhoods. Several protective protocols were beefed up in the face of rising cases. All residents are required to wear masks in hallways and common areas. Residents who visit with each other in their own rooms also need to remain masked. N95 masks are being used by staff. As well, designated caregivers that do visit have been given a mask, goggles, and a gown and have been shown how to properly use them. Caregivers are also encouraged to visit less frequently. Hildebrand says the outbreak has been hard on the residents. "The residents in the outbreak neighbourhoods need to remain in their room, and so this does create more than an inconvenience," he says. "For many of them, the freedom even to walk around within the neighbourhood creates some anxiety."

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It Pays to Shop Local!

Niverville 12 Days of Christmas Contest received a total of 506 entries, with receipts submitted that represented the following Niverville retailers:

Anya's Hair Studio	Niverville Animal Hospital
Bigway	Niverville Chicken Chef
Bistro 290	Niverville Family Chiropractic
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Mary Kay Cosmetics	Wiens Furniture
Negash Coffee	Wm Dyck and Sons
Niakwa Pizza	

113 prizes were awarded totalling \$6,038

Thank you to the Province of Manitoba for sponsoring the contest and the MB Chambers of Commerce for their continued support. Most of all – thank you to everyone who supported our local businesses! Please continue to shop local!

Congratulations to our lucky winners:

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Jason K. - \$5.89	Dan H. - \$59.45	Anais R. - \$46.80	Cyndi W. - \$71.27	Cara D. - \$50.23
Jason F. - \$100.00	Lia P. - \$53.75	Roger A. - \$8.98	Cyndi W. - \$5.05	Ed F. - \$100.00
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LOCAL

Municipalities Struggle from Lost Revenue

By Sara Beth Dacombe

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Municipalities across Manitoba are warning that they need more support from the provincial government. According to a report released on January 22 by the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM), 85 percent of municipalities say they are struggling under the impacts that code red restrictions have had on their community programs and finances.

The report was prepared by the AMM to support their request for additional pandemic-related financial assistance from the Manitoba government.

When the federal government rolled out its Safe Restart Agreement for municipalities in the fall, Manitoba opted against matching funds to further support municipalities, in contrast to many other provinces in Canada.

Another finding of the report, according to the AMM, shows that the single biggest financial hit for 71 percent of municipalities was due to the closure of community recreation centres.

Another area of financial loss for municipalities has come in the form of enhanced information technology expenditures, such as updating programs and equipment to allow staff to work from home.

"During these challenging times, municipalities have remained on the front lines delivering essential services Manitobans rely on," says AMM President Kam Blight. "While

the Safe Restart Agreement was designed to support local governments in 2020, the data from the survey strongly suggests that municipalities are facing further revenue losses throughout 2021 and beyond."

Both the Town of Niverville and the RM Ritchot participated in the AMM's survey, which ran from December 2020 to January 2021. The timeframe was selected specifically to measure the impacts of the Safe Restart Agreement, code red restrictions, and other financial pressures.

While 66 percent of municipalities found the Safe Restart Agreement has been sufficient to cover losses to date, the results also strongly indicate that municipalities won't be able to continue covering the current costs in the face of compounding revenue losses.

"The single largest revenue source for municipalities is property tax, but then of course there are grants from other levels of government for programs or capital projects," says Denys Volkov, executive director for the AMM. "Then there are income streams such as fees, licensing, programs, and community centres. But what we are projecting is that in 2021 and going forward, a lot of the community centres will still not operate the way they did before."

Notably, Volkov points out that in addition to lost revenue, municipalities will continue to be on the hook for hydro bills, cleaning, sanitization, and other maintenance expenses.

"It is vital that all orders of government continue to work together to ensure municipalities receive all necessary supports, including increased funding to offset operating losses in 2021 and expedited approvals for shovel-worthy infrastructure projects," adds Kam Blight.

LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES

Ritchot Mayor Chris Ewen says that his municipality is one where the Safe Restart funds have so far been sufficient to cover losses. Although their main area of financial concern has to do with the operating costs of arenas, they have yet to use all the federal money they received.

"We are fortunate and grateful to have received Safe Restart funds," says Ewen. "The facility concern is ongoing and we are continually working to provide funding and strategies."

Although the RM does have new projects on the go, Ewen says that their focus right now is to continue supporting the sites they have.

Niverville has also experienced challenges related to community centres and programs. But according to Mayor Myron Dyck, the town's most recent financial briefing reveals that the Safe Restart money has been completely allocated.

"While we are grateful for the monies we received, it didn't cover all our expenses," says Dyck. "So we've had to look at our budget and see what it means for us moving forward. It will mean some belt-tightening for us. For instance, we're just not able to

accurately project what revenue from programs will look like in the fall if we still can't run as we used to."

UNIQUE SITUATION

Dyck highlights the unique situation Niverville finds itself in, being owners of a medical clinic. He says that initially the town had projected that they were on track to meet the goal of making the Open Health medical clinic financially solvent this year, but the onset of the pandemic has led to increased operating costs as well as changes to how appointments are conducted. Notably, virtual appointments don't yield as much provincial revenue for doctors as in-person appointments.

"We thought we would be in the black by now, and we are making definite steps forward, but COVID has affected [us]," Dyck says.

Aside from the clinic and community centres, Dyck also says the town has seen a decrease in people visiting the community due to travel and gathering restrictions. This impacts the number of people utilizing local services and has resulted in a dip to the employment rate.

All of this being the case, Dyck says that the town isn't going to just wait around for another provincial handout.

"Any money we get from other levels of government is always appreciated," he says. "At the same time, we need to not just stand with our hand out and say, 'Please give.' We can look at what makes sense to spend within our means."

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DEPOSITPHOTOS

Niverville to Install Electric Vehicle Chargers This Summer

By Sara Beth Dacombe

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

The Town of Niverville will be installing a pair of Level 2 electric vehicle charging stations at the Niverville Community Resource & Recreation Centre (CRRC) this summer, which will allow four vehicles to charge at one time.

The announcement came on January 27, with the news that the town has received a grant from Natural Resources Canada (NRC). The installation costs will be shared between the town and the NRC grant. Once in use, drivers will pay for each charge.

“Charging stations will be on a pay-per-use platform,” says CAO Eric King. “The final procurement decision has not been made yet, as we have six proposals in front of us, so the rates [per charge] are not yet set.”

The town is excited to move forward with the installation with the help of a group called Eco-West Canada. Eco-West helps Western Canada’s municipalities with planning and implementing green economy

infrastructure.

“They helped us secure the grant, as it was a multi-municipality project, and they also led the procurement effort on the equipment side of it,” says King.

Procuring the charging equipment is the next step. According to Plug’n Drive, a champion for electric transportation in Canada, these Level 2 chargers are the most common way to charge an electric vehicle. This type of charger requires a 240-volt power source, which is similar to what is required to run a home clothes dryer, and provides 30 kilometres of driving range per one hour of charging.

In North America, electric cars now come with a standard plug, meaning that different makes and models will be able to use the charging stations.

Niverville’s goal is to have the stations ready by the time the CRRC opens this upcoming summer.

These stations will represent the first publicly accessible charging stations in Niverville, and it will be a big step towards building a network

of charging stations throughout the southeast region.

“When it came time for the design of the CRRC, we were looking at the parking lot and there was infrastructure needed under the pavement if we would ever be looking at putting in charging stations,” says Niverville Mayor Myron Dyck. “We thought, this is where our world seems to be going and if there is going to be a need for electrical charging stations within the lifetime of the building, or the next 100 to 150 years, we need to think about this now. So the decision was made to put them in. That was already about a year ago. We made that decision so we wouldn’t have to break up the parking lot now.”

This announcement comes the same week that Ritchot Mayor Chris Ewen said that he is pushing for communities in his municipality to move in the same direction and install public charging stations.

PERSONAL TESTIMONIAL

Local electric car owners are excited about the town’s decision,

even though the stations likely won’t benefit them directly as they have their own charging stations at home. More so, the town’s decision represents a forward-thinking mindset that sends a message to the community—and to the entire province—that Niverville values green energy.

Dr. Chris Burnett of Niverville owns a Tesla sedan. He knows of three other Tesla owners in the community, as well as a few others with electric or hybrid vehicles, and he says the market is clearly growing.

“Most electric vehicle owners here own a garage and have a place to charge, so what the town is doing is really for visitors, and for growth,” says Burnett. “But for residents, it sends a message.”

Burnett says that in Europe, it’s common for people not to own a single-family home with its own garage, and so charging stations are everywhere. It is often an option for these drivers to charge their electric vehicles directly from ports on the side of the street.

In Canada, the market for electric vehicles hasn’t grown as quickly. One barrier has been the challenge of establishing a universal charging infrastructure. Different electric vehicles have used different methods of charging, making it necessary to manufacture adaptors for certain models if their owners plan to travel to places with different charging ports.

The popularity of electric vehicles has so far been much higher in Europe than in Canada, and to a large extent that could be due to greater population density and a more widespread public charging infrastructure.

“Tesla has brought out their own infrastructure system, which is now about 12,000 ports worldwide, and they give you a rapid charge, up to almost 1,000 kilometres per hour,” says Burnett. “There is a supercharger almost every 200 kilometres along the TransCanada from one end of Canada to the other. They’re the fastest way. There’s a map with all of the information you need and shows you where the chargers are,

and the number of those ports is increasing.”

INCREASING INTEREST

Our local gas stations have no plans yet to install electric charging stations, but although it's more likely to spot an electric car in Winnipeg than in the countryside, Burnett feels there's no reason that won't soon change. He says there is a local market for charging stations.

“If you think about it, you're going to have people coming down for hockey from the city, and increasingly we will see electric vehicle users coming through town to conduct normal activities and business,” says Burnett. “Right now, they say, the number of electric cars per normal car in North America is at 1.5 percent. But if you look at the graph, it's going up exponentially every year, probably because the price is coming down and affordability is increasing. This year we're seeing places like Ford overhauling the Mustang to electric. Almost all manufacturers are going that way. Diesel engines are being phased out. This last year, Tesla made and sold half a million cars.”

According to public perception, the reason electric vehicles haven't been catching on more quickly in Canada is that we're too spread out and it may be difficult to get where you're going.

“Yes, it would be difficult going up to Thompson at the moment,” Burnett agrees. “But every year, more and more chargers are being put in. So it may seem like a small thing that Niverville is doing, but it is part of a mosaic popping up across the earth.”

Burnett's travels across Canada have given him a unique insight into how the vehicles work while charging them across long distances.

“There is a charging station along the TransCanada in Saskatchewan that is quite good, and while I was there I found out that the local town had also put in a charging station for another make of electric vehicle so that even more vehicles could be serviced, so they're popping up everywhere.”

When Niverville's new charging stations are installed, they will eventually be added to the map and encourage people to drive out in this direction. Burnett says that this will set the town apart from other rural hamlets and



Dr. Chris Burnett of Niverville charges up his Tesla. SARA BETH DACOMBE

send a clear message that the town is investing in growth.

“[The town has] put a state-of-the-art building in there. It's green, it's got geothermal energy as well,” says Burnett. “In Manitoba, almost all of our energy is already coming from hydro, so it is the most sustainable energy source for us. It's a step in the right direction and we are now ahead of the curve. We are going to get an increasing number of people interested in our town because of this.”

FOUR MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ELECTRIC VEHICLES

It's safe to say Burnett is an electric vehicle ambassador. He would love to see more green energy come into the community and encourages anyone considering an electric vehicle to make the transition away from gas engines.

One common misconception is that traveling at consistent high speed, such as on a highway, requires less energy because you use less energy to maintain speed than to reduce and accelerate repeatedly. Burnett says that's not the case.

“You actually regain power by stopping and starting, because the vehicle will use the kinetic energy and transfer it back into the battery to charge it.”

Another misconception about electric vehicles is that they lack power to accelerate. Burnett says his vehicle will do 0 to 100 kilometres per hour in 4.5 seconds and is the most powerful vehicle he has ever owned.

Thirdly, many people who are unfamiliar with the new technology are concerned about how to service an electric vehicle if something goes wrong.

“People are concerned about where to go to fix

them—and yes, there's not a lot of places,” he says. “There's one service station opening up in Winnipeg soon. But in two years my car has yet to go in for service and most cars don't need service. There's just nothing to service. There are no moving parts. There's no oil to change, no filters to change. I did have one problem with a warning light that went on one time, so I booked an appointment with my app for the vehicle. At that time, somebody was coming in to do it on a contract basis. I brought it to a place on Lagimodiere [in Winnipeg], and it was solved. It was efficient. It was the best repair I'd ever had to have done.”

Lastly, many people view the electric vehicle as cost-prohibitive.

“The major cost of the car is the battery,” he adds. “But battery prices have come down. It's like any technology. If you remember what memory used to cost in a computer, now that really has come down and even bottomed out. Well, it's the same with the batteries. They're only getting more and more affordable.”

TECHNOLOGY AND WINTER CONSIDERATIONS

Most people know what prevents them from buying electric, but they don't always fully appreciate the greatest appeal: the advanced technology. Most electric vehicles have technology that completely revolutionizes the way we drive.

By far the most obvious advantage is the cost of the electricity.

“If you leave it overnight, you're completely charged,” Burnett says. “It's costing [our family] about \$20 per month. In other words, for a full charge, it's about \$5, which is just incomparable to gas.”

And in Burnett's experience, while there are many electric vehicles on the market, the Tesla is the most advanced of them all.

“This car goes farther and goes faster than any other car I've owned. It has 360-degree camera views for constant external surveillance and does external updates to its technology automatically. It has one-pedal driving, which means that to go slow, you just take your foot off the accelerator and it will come to a full stop. It has four-wheel drive. When you're on cruise control, it will stop or avoid objects. It drives itself.”

In winter, Burnett says the vehicle may have difficulty detecting the white line on the highway if there is too much snow, so there are times when he doesn't use the automatic driving feature. But otherwise, he says it's the ideal winter car.

“If there are difficult road conditions, it will alert you to keep your hands on the wheel. It has ABS and handles ice and slush very well. I have winter tires on it. But you don't have a drive shaft; you have two motors, one in the front and one in the back. And so they communicate and the wheels differentiate between the two of them to increase control,” says Burnett. “Another winter perk is that because there are no moving parts in the engine, you don't have to wait for your engine to heat up the oil and warm up. You literally don't have to warm up your car, which means the heat is also instantaneous.”

The cold is one thing to consider about storing and charging an electric vehicle, though. Burnett says you will lose up to 30 percent of your charging capacity during the winter to keep the vehicle warm when it's parked in cold conditions. This means that if he heads to the city, he typically finds a place to charge. But in summer, it also means that he only charges his vehicle once per week.

Another unique consideration is the volume of the engine. The Tesla makes virtually no noise when starting and driving, which is noteworthy. In fact, Burnett says that the complete absence of engine sound will leave any muscle car enthusiast shocked.

When asked if he misses the sound of a classic car engine, Burnett laughs. “Well, yes, but that's different. It certainly has its place.”

CITIZEN POLL

Would you consider buying an electric vehicle when the time comes to make your next vehicle purchase?

- ☐ Yes. The advantages outweigh the disadvantages.
- ☐ No. There remain practical reasons why an electrical vehicle isn't right for me.
- ☐ Have a more nuanced opinion? Visit our website to vote and leave us a comment.

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LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

Are you satisfied with the way your municipal government handles garbage/recycling pickup services?

Yes.

66%

No.

34%

YOUR COMMENTS:

Everything is good but I find my recycling bin and a lot of my neighbours is regularly overflowing, blowing recycling all over our back lane. If it's full and we put more recycling in another blue bin on the side that would be much appreciated.

Would be nice to have recycling picked up every week, as we have more recycling than garbage most of the time.

Let's start by stating the bins we have hold a small household's weekly garbage, however the recycling is not adequate. With pickup bi-weekly and a push for families to recycle more and properly, as a larger family, the bin is already full prior to the end of the second week. We try diligently to recycle everything we can that is allowed, but because our bin is too full, we often have to borrow a neighbour's space if they have any in their bin or throw away some of the recycling.

Recycling needs to be every week. And to drop off your extra recycling at the dump you have to pay a fee. If recycling is encouraged then they should pick it up weekly.

We only receive recycling pickup once every two weeks. This does NOT encourage sustainable living. We always have an overflowing recycling bin and a half empty garbage bin. If recycling was picked up every week it would encourage people to recycle more.

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Ron R. Schuler
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LUNCH ON THE POINT

My father loves the Gospel largely because its power transformed his life at an early age. He communicates the truths of his Salvation fluently and seeks to share it with others frequently. One such experience was seared into my mind as a young teenager. We were living on Vancouver Island and my father was working on Saturdays doing the electrical for a new building at a youth Bible camp. I was along to help for whatever skills I was suited. We took a lunch break and sat on "The Point," a rock bluff with beautiful open views to Maple Bay. A young man in his early 20's named Chris was there to help. He had arrived in the morning with a loud, fast sports car and it drew the attention of many. Chris came and sat for lunch with us and within a short time Dad introduced the Gospel. It was apparent that the Gospel was somewhat foreign to him, but He listened very intently and with real interest. I do not recall the exact conversation, but the Gospel always comes down to these 4 basic truths. 1) All have sinned (Romans 3:23), 2) The soul that sins, it shall die (Ezekiel 18:20), 3) Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), and 4) Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved (Acts 16:31). As our lunch time ended, Chris expressed appreciation for the talk and Dad ended with a kind warning that this message is urgent. "We never know when we will meet God," Dad said, "that car of yours is pretty fast. You could drive off the road and be ushered into eternity. Make sure you're ready to meet God!"

The following Saturday we arrived for another camp workday and by mid morning we had heard that Chris, driving at a high rate of speed from Victoria to Sooke, spun off the road and struck a large tree. The car immediately stopped but Chris did not – His soul went straight into Eternity. We do not know what decision Chris made with the message he heard the week previous. We hope we will see him in Heaven. For me as a boy of 13, it was a solemn reminder that Heaven and Hell are real, that Eternity is but a breath or heart beat away, and the Gospel is the only message that determines where you will spend it. The Gospel is urgent. 2 Cor 6:12b says "behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of Salvation." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life" John 3:16

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Ile des Chênes, MB. (January 2021) – Terraco – With an eye to continue to offer high value retail agronomic services to Manitoba Producers, Terraco is pleased to announce the appointment of Marc Davy. In his new role as Business Development Manager for Ile des Chênes/Oakbluff, Marc will be responsible for all products and services that can be offered out of Ile des Chênes location (highway 210 just half mile west off 59 highway) and will offer support to Oakbluff.

Marc brings a wealth of experience that spans over 35 years, entirely in the agriculture sector. Marc's passion is AGRICULTURE as you all will find out soon enough. He grew up on a farm SW of Winnipeg, "farming is part of my genetic makeup".

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IDC Caisse Populaire Hit by Armed Robber

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

On Tuesday, January 26, at approximately 2:00 p.m., the RCMP responded to a report of an armed robbery at the Caisse Populaire on Main Street in Île-des-Chênes.

Officers were advised that a lone male, carrying bear spray, entered the premises and proceeded to threaten staff and demand money. The suspect was provided a sum of cash, after which he fled the scene in what is believed to be a dark red four-door vehicle.

The suspect is described as male, approximately six feet tall, with a slim build and blond hair. He was wearing a high-visibility reflective vest,



Security camera footage of the suspect.

RCMP

black and yellow ear protection, black jacket and pants, brown boots, and a black

neck-warmer pulled up over his face.

A search of the area after the

robbery did not locate the suspect or his vehicle, but officers did recover the safety vest, ear protection, and neck-warmer. They also recovered a bottle of bear spray used during the robbery. These items were found in a ditch near Dumaine Road and Poirier Road, one kilometre east of Île-des-Chênes.

Police are now asking anyone who can identify the suspect, or who may have information regarding the robbery, to contact the St. Pierre-Jolys RCMP at 204-433-7433, call Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-222-8477, or submit a secure tip online at www.manitobacrimestoppers.com.

The St. Pierre-Jolys RCMP continue to investigate this crime.

IN BRIEF

RCMP Officer Being Investigated for Speeding

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

The Independent Investigation Unit of Manitoba (IIU) is investigating an allegation of a driving offence against an on-duty member of the RCMP.

On January 13, 2021, the RCMP notified the IIU of the allegation, described as an on-duty officer operating a police vehicle at excessive speed without lawful justification to do so.

The incident is alleged to have taken place on January 11 at approximately 4:15 p.m., with the officer being observed speeding along Highway 59 between Niverville and St. Pierre-Jolys.

The civilian director of the IIU has determined that it is in the public interest for the unit to investigate.

Because the investigation is ongoing, no further details are being provided at this time.

The mandate of the IIU, according to their website, is to investigate all serious incidents involving police officers in Manitoba, whether they occur while the officers are on- or off-duty. The unit has investigational jurisdiction over all police services in Manitoba, including the RCMP.

The IIU does not take complaints directly from the public, but rather become involved after being notified of an incident by the police itself. Complaints from the public are handled by a different organization, the Law Enforcement Review Agency (LERA).

Small Increase Coming to Niverville Waste Collection Fee

By Sara Beth Dacombe

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Homeowners in Niverville will be asked to pay slightly more per year for garbage and recycling collection. Residents had been paying \$118.07 per year, but going forward the proposed rate is \$125, an increase of \$6.93. The town currently has a contract with Bristol Hauling to collect garbage and recycling, which will continue, but the increase comes because the town must reevaluate its special service levy, which expired in 2019.

At a council meeting on January 19, both Mayor Myron Dyck and CAO Eric King described the rate increase as a cost recovery measure for funds the town has already budgeted to cover the Bristol Hauling contract.

While Bristol's contract is secured for approximately four to five years, the waste collection bylaw follows a provincial mandate that governs fees over ten-year periods between renewals. For this reason, it can sometimes

happen that rate increases don't coincide with the signing of a new waste collection services contract.

"This is a special service levy to provide collection, transportation, and disposal of household waste within the Town of Niverville," said King. "The last bylaw was done in 2010 and expired in 2019, so this would cover 2021-2030. A proposed rate would be \$125, which represents a 1.4 percent per annum increase."

King said the town doesn't sign ten-year contracts with waste services providers, but in the event that a contract expires, the bylaw gives the town the ability to keep waste collection going temporarily while allowing for a period of time to research other solutions.

"The point of the ten-year service levy is that we don't want to be meeting too often to discuss minor increases. That's not a good use of time," said King. "The municipal board was involved in helping write the bylaw offer so the Municipal Services officer has weighed in on this and has helped it move forward."

At the public hearing, two residents registered to speak. Jeff Marino attended the virtual meeting, during which he asked council for more information about the bylaw procedures and expressed a few concerns with the town's current waste collection services.

"I've wondered about why the town doesn't pick up recycling more than every other week," said Marino. "With a lot more people at home and the culture we now have with shopping online, we have a lot more recycling than we used to. I've noticed in St. Adolphe, they get picked up every week. It's kind of concerning because the bin fills up within a week and then you have to wait another week."

King addressed the question, replying, "Recycling used to be done every week until the last contract. But then we went with a bigger bin, which hopefully met most people's needs. The next contract will be due this year or next year, and there will be more competition for that contract, so we can talk about recycling. Hopefully we can go back to weekly at

that point, if the provincial grants allow."

King added that council is working to ensure that everyone's needs are taken into account and keeps in mind the reality that larger households have more difficulty making the biweekly limit than smaller households.

King expressed satisfaction with Bristol's services, saying that Bristol's contract bid came in almost 50 percent lower than other prospective tenders. He also mentioned that the tonnage fees for waste disposal have risen in the past few years and the cost increase allows them to project fuel prices.

A second resident withdrew their comments, which had been submitted by letter, after being provided more information by the town prior to the meeting.

No comments were registered in opposition.

The bylaw now moves to the municipal board before it will receive its second and third reading.



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On the arena side of the building, seating has been installed. Concrete has yet to be poured over the ice surface.



Drywall is being installed in the large foyer area inside the building's entrance. Once complete, this front area will include an indoor playground.



View from the second floor, looking east towards the arena. The second level will include breakout rooms and meeting rooms.



Construction continues in the fieldhouse side of the building, with space for a running track on the second level.

The Latest Look Inside the CRRC

By Sara Beth Dacombe
& Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com
✉ sdacombe @nivervillecitizen.com

Construction continues at the Community Resource & Recreation Centre in Niverville, where work has largely moved indoors. Although there have been some delays, the building is on track to be finished

this upcoming June.

One of those delays was due to a shortage of aluminum, a symptom of support shortages owing to the pandemic.

"Aluminum became hard to come by for a while, as it was being used to support the plexiglass shields many businesses were putting up for COVID," said Steve Fast, owner of general contractor Von Ast

Construction, in comments made last summer.

The interior is now taking shape, with the arena on the east side and the multiuse fieldhouse on the west side. Between are a series of dressing rooms and bathrooms, above which sit seating areas. The second floor space above the dressing rooms will also house breakout rooms and meeting rooms. A running track will

follow the perimeter of the fieldhouse's second level.

Once complete, the fieldhouse will be a gymnasium-like space with hardwood floors, but it will also be customizable for meetings and other public functions. The town foresees that it will be used for large group gatherings, such as high school graduations, concerts, town receptions, and Remembrance

Day ceremonies—just to name a few possibilities.

The fully accessible building will also have a historical space on the second floor which will present Niverville's growth in a public exhibit, curated by a University of Alberta professor. This exhibit will feature a glass wall, enabling visitors to view the indoor playground.

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Local Man Receives Military Honour for Work with NORAD

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Lieutenant-Colonel Nathan J. Willis, an American military officer who lives in Ste. Agathe, was recently awarded special recognition for his work in the area of adapting operations for the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) to function during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many will recognize the term NORAD for their prominent defence operations during the Cold War, as well as for their radar simulation tracking Santa's flight across the world each Christmas Eve.

For Willis, the highlight of working at NORAD is the special working relationship it exemplifies between Canada and the United States. Specifically, his job is with the United States Air Force, and in that capacity he works with the Canadian Forces base in Winnipeg to conduct aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning in the defence of North America.

"My office is a true example of a bi-national office," says Willis. "We are privileged to act as a bi-national command between Canada and the U.S. During the Cold War, the main concern was attack from the Soviet Union. We've kind of kept that mission of North American defence to this day. And we really zero in on aerospace warning. We use all levels of radar technology and different sensors to not only see what is coming in from outside North America, but also what is at play inside our borders, which is a lesson we learned after 9/11."

In terms of aerospace control, he says his office is responsible for the alert fighters that stand watch

throughout Canada and the U.S.

"We also cover the maritime warnings and we cover Alaska," he adds. "When you look at Alaska, and other bases within the continental U.S., there are Canadians stationed there as well. It's very seamless in the day to day. I may be working next to an American or a Canadian at any point, so it's a very unified approach created by our two countries."

Willis and the military units at NORAD are responsible to ensure that dedicated fighter planes are ready to protect our countries 24/7, but personnel are also prepared to conduct a variety of other types of operations, including air force support and search-and-rescue.

"We are the ones looking at the radars and making sure everything we see on radar is allowed to be there," says Willis. "And if there is anything suspicious, we execute procedures that we have in place to see what is at play. In Winnipeg, we just had F-18s coming back from Romania, and we oversee that they are landed, received, and maintained."

Willis's career as an air battle manager has involved five years of air traffic control and seven years of flying in an aircraft called an E-8 JSTARS. Though currently not a tactical operator, he is instrumental in coordinating and developing plans and projects with NORAD missions and its headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

THE COVID FACTOR

When COVID-19 arrived in North America, Willis focused on risk analysis and developing mitigation strategies to ensure that operations weren't interrupted.



Lieutenant-Colonel Nathan J. Willis of Ste. Agathe.

"When we realized that COVID was going to be a pretty big deal, we created a working group tasked with overseeing different aspects of Canadian Air Force operations, to see that they were supported to continue the NORAD mission," he says. "Our group worked together with all units to build plans to make sure things were sanitized. We modified schedules to make sure personnel were able to come in in shifts to maintain distancing. Any measure of personnel scheduling and procedure-wise, we used that working group as a conduit to streamline procedures for all units. As the pandemic was a new type of threat, it was important to have kind of a clearinghouse for best practices."

In a virtual ceremony last year—on Friday, November 20—Willis received special recognition for his role in aerospace defence during the

pandemic. At that ceremony, he was given a commemorative art piece.

Virtual ceremonies are nothing new for many military bases, especially NORAD, given how widely their stations are separated geographically.

The video conferencing may not be a new wrinkle, but COVID does mean that things take longer than normal, says Willis.

"Professionally, it means we're not bringing in people full-time," he explains. "We're tele-working and bringing in people on more spread-out scheduling. But due to the nature of the work, we just can't bring it all home. We're learning it takes longer to get things done. There's just so many hours in the day."

LIFE IN STE. AGATHE

In June 2020, Willis and his wife made the move from Winnipeg to Ste. Agathe with

their nine children.

"We lived in Winnipeg for a few years, and then we just moved down here this summer and it's been a great experience," Willis says. "The neighbours and people were spectacular. We met a lot of them and our kids started making friends. Now, with the limited social stuff we've been able to do, everybody's been feeling a little more isolated," says Willis. "In summer, the kids could play outside and they saw a lot of the kids across the street. They played together a lot. Lately, though, the neighbours helped us out with a couple of snowfalls and helped clear our driveway. But it does get kind of tough."

According to Willis, American soldiers stationed with NORAD typically relocate to Canada for up to four years, bringing their families with them.

"We really feel like we relocate completely," says Willis. "We bring our families. Our kids go to the local schools. I know some spouses work in the community... If you look at some other U.S. bases, they really are segregated on a base. But here, we have the benefit of being involved in an amazing community."

Because of the proximity of the border, in previous years the family enjoyed the convenience of driving to Grand Forks to visit familiar stores and restaurants. Those excursions are out of the question now.

According to Willis, another hurdle they faced when the border closed was scrutiny from Canadians who didn't understand why Americans like them were still here.

"Because we all have U.S. plates, people were thinking we were breaking the law by being up here," says Willis. "That's one thing I wish

people would know a bit more about for us military personnel. Yes, our plates are yellow, so they're noticeably different. Golden yellow plates mean New York. We're here, we're allowed to be here, and we're working to keep us all safe."

ACCLIMATING TO CANADA

The family's children range in ages from two to 16, and while Willis and his wife are from New York, the family initially moved here from Georgia.

"When we first came here, we came in T-shirts and flip-flops at the airport straight into about -20 Celsius," he says. "For the kids, it was a bit of a shock and some of them miss the heat from Georgia. But going out regularly for recess at school helped them get used to it."

The kids also miss other things about living in the south, like going out for chicken sandwiches at Chick-fil-A.

On the flip side, a major highlight of being in Canada, aside from the the people's welcoming nature, are all the wide-open spaces.

"I'm a runner, and the countryside is just beautiful," says Willis. "Running through the city is fine and has its own set of challenges, but the country is definitely a big plus for me... but I guess about -10 Celsius would be my limit for running outside."

The hardest thing to get used to? Using the metric system.

"That's been a bit of a learning curve. When you drive from the States and then you see the 100-kilometres sign on the highway coming up... well, let's just say 100 miles an hour is not 100 kilometres an hour. You have to relearn a few things in your brain, and fast. My wife helps me."

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Home construction in Niverville during the summer of 2020.

JOEY VILLANUEVA

Niverville Continues to Project Growth

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Niverville's growing housing market has continued to boom, supplying the town with a considerable base of financial support—and in concert with this growth, the town projects to complete major capital projects in the near future.

Perhaps most visibly, the opening of the Niverville Community Resource and Recreation Centre this summer will present council with a new revenue stream.

Mayor Myron Dyck adds that the town has many other new initiatives on the horizon.

Despite some losses in the past year related to the pandemic, including financial setbacks related to them taking over the operations of the Open Health medical clinic, good things are on the way.

"We are looking at opening the CRRC this summer, and

we will be hosting the Manitoba Winter Games in 2022, so those are exciting things we are able to do," says Dyck. "We are looking forward to the spring, when we can do more outside, and we are gearing up already to provide programs in what safe ways that we can, such as summer camps."

Mayor Dyck acknowledges that there's no question the town could still use assistance from the provincial and federal governments when it comes to outstanding major capital projects.

This is especially true of the regional wastewater treatment plant that was proposed in late 2019. The project has an estimated cost of \$100 million, shared across multiple municipalities.

"Could we use \$50,000 or \$100,000 to help offset the costs of operations? Yes, absolutely," says Dyck. "But if we look at what the priority is in the town are right now, it's the

wastewater treatment facility. We are talking with the federal government and we are doing a regional team-up with other municipalities. It is vital that this needs to happen."

The wastewater treatment facility goes beyond the scope of pandemic-related financial challenges, as does the water treatment plant which requires a new engine to increase drinking water supply, but the town hopes to increase awareness of how important both projects are for the town's future.

"We need this for our town," says Dyck. "We essentially need a new engine to make potable water. We need to be able to process more of it more quickly to meet demand, and that is based on growth. We also need to make our reservoir larger, which has to do with our duty to ensure capability for fire suppression."

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Deep Dive: Understanding Niverville's Decision to Plant Cattails in Fifth Avenue Ponds

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

When the Town of Niverville realized they had a problem with the ponds in Fifth Avenue Estates, they knew they needed to fix it. The issues are myriad and include shoreline erosion, an abundance of goose fecal matter, and the overgrowth of water plant life such as duckweed. However, the most concerning problem is the growth of blue-green algae, which can be hazardous both to people and small animals.

Since identifying the problem through regular testing, mandated by the province, the town has deliberated on many possible tactics, aiming for a solution that satisfies budgetary needs, environmentalism, and local preference.

In December 2020, the town made the decision to install cattails, a plant species native to Manitoba, along the shoreline to help neutralize blue-green algae.

About this decision, a number of residents are not happy.

Bruce Friesen-Pankratz is a wetland scientist for Native Plant Solutions, an organization affiliated with Ducks Unlimited which designs and installs natural solutions to water quality issues. Notably, they specialize in solutions that don't require the use of chemicals. They have produced the naturalized stormwater pond designs adopted by cities such as Winnipeg and Brandon, as well as other communities across Canada.

In 2020, the not-for-profit worked with the town to provide a study on the health of three ponds within Fifth Avenue Estates and found levels of 234,000, 306,000, and 541,000 blue algal cells/millilitre respectively. The federal guideline is 100,000, meaning that the ponds in Niverville have up to five times the recommended safe amount of blue-green algae.

"In our experience the most economical and environmentally friendly way to address



DEPOSITPHOTOS

blue-green algal issues is to use natural approaches to reduce the available nutrients, typically phosphorus, that are causing excessive algal growth," says Friesen-Pankratz. "The scientifically proven natural approach involves the use of native cattail to remove nutrients from the water column, storing the excess phosphorous both within the plant and in the pond sediment."

The cattail approach has already been used in Niverville to decontaminate the southern portion of the old sewage lagoon. That project has resulted in a safe wetland environment.

Aside from planting cattails, the town has also discussed the option of placing tarp and river rock along the shore to address soil erosion, dumping gravel and rocks on the bottom of the pond bed to prevent growth of unwanted vegetation, an increased use of aeration machines and fountains to disturb duckweed growth on the surface of the water,

and chemical additives that counteract the algae.

All of these options come with certain price tags and environmental ramifications.

Mayor Myron Dyck says council has come back to this discussion many times and relies on research and input from experts to help aid them in their decision-making, especially in areas that go beyond the councillors' firsthand expertise.

SOLUTION #1: CHEMICALS

One thing council learned early on is that the ponds were never designed to be lakes, with all the recreation connotations that go along with that term.

Mayor Dyck says that retention ponds have become a near requirement from the province when it comes to new developments, designed to manage excess runoff.

"They subvert and hold water from our spring melt and our occasional seven-inch rainfalls," says

Mayor Dyck. "Before Fifth Avenue [Estates] was built, water would come from Hanover through Niverville on its way to the Red River. That's how the topography of the land flows... and we would have water from springtime and high-water events coming through places like Edelweiss Crescent where water would come up to people's properties and come in window wells. Even if we would put in an ecologically responsible chemical solution, the water would move on and need to be treated repeatedly."

He says that the town ran some rough numbers, and their final decision came down to the sheer cost of this option.

Friesen-Pankratz also has concerns about going the route of a chemical solution.

"We wouldn't recommend chemical treatments," says Friesen-Pankratz. "There is one solution that is sometimes used, but it results in a sort of sludge at the bottom of the

lake, which isn't healthy. The Town of Niverville is within the Lake Winnipeg watershed. Chemicals added to stormwater systems within the Lake Winnipeg watershed can flow downstream, causing ecological impacts along the way and could eventually end up in Lake Winnipeg."

SOLUTION #2: GRAVEL

Another idea discussed by the town was to install stone along the bottom of the pond to encourage filtration and reduce vegetation, and place tarps and gravel by the shoreline to reduce erosion.

"But we looked into the cost of stone per tonne, and renting a barge to transport stone to the lake, and we would be looking at a cost point of easily hundreds of thousands of dollars," says Dyck.

He adds that some communities use a form of tarp fabric to help with shoreline stabilization. This is known as the wrap method.

"I don't know the science behind cleaning the wraps," Dyck says. "I understand it's more of an aesthetic thing, so that doesn't solve the problem of cleaning the pond of the blue-green algae. And again, there is more upfront and ongoing cost associated with that."

SOLUTION #3: AERATION

The Native Plant Solutions report also covered options like aerators and fountains, which council at one point indicated would have been their preferred approach.

"In some systems I've seen, including fountains, they tend to just push the floating duckweed to the edges, which is unsightly to residents," Friesen-Pankratz said at a council meeting on October 6, 2020. "But it still grows. So you're mostly moving the decomposing matter, just stirring it up, which stimulates further decomposition. There is more upkeep in the long run to remove the dead matter and you'll end up with higher levels of

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algae in your ponds. Algal communities reproduce so quickly. In a natural system, you have many algal communities that can uptake the nutrients at different points in their lifespans and clean water systems more efficiently. Aeration, though, is usually for promoting fish life, so they can have available oxygen. For algal communities, you want to control the phosphorous levels."

Niverville currently uses some mechanical agitation to increase the flow of water out of the community, but council notes that it has a limited effect on duckweed and almost no effect on blue-green algae.

SOLUTION #4: CATTAILS

The natural approach to wetland areas is typically the most effective in making a safe environment for kids, pets, and wildlife that will inevitably come in contact with the ponds.

The annual influx of geese is the form of wildlife that currently has the most impact on the ponds. These large birds often choose to nest on the shoreline and their fecal matter is rich in phosphorus and nitrogen, contributing to algal blooms.

Friesen-Pankratz says that cattails will help solve this problem since they make the shores much less desirable for geese to nest in.

"The reason you see geese on properties is they prefer grass that is short," he explains. "By using native grasses, longer grasses, you discourage geese from coming up from the ponds onto people's properties."

He says that cattails along the shore will also solve the town's other concerns.

Cattails absorb nitrogen, phosphorus, and other elements, directly mitigating the growth of blue-green algae, and according to Native Plant Solutions they will lend erosion protection, trap sediment and nutrients from surface runoff, regulate the water temperature, and improve water quality for fish as well as downstream lakes and rivers.

At approximately \$10,000 per pond, the price point for cattails also happens to be on the low side.

CONCERNS FROM RESIDENTS

Jacqueline Robert is a Niverville resident whose backyard directly faces one of the ponds in Fifth Avenue Estates. When the option to install cattails first came up more than two years ago, she helped rally residents to speak up against it. More recently, she has helped form a social media committee with about 45 members.

She says that she has spoken to property owners in other developments with retention ponds, such as the Sage Creek and Bridgwater neighbourhoods in Winnipeg, who also dislike cattails. According to Robert, complaints about cattails include swampy smells, vole nests, rats, and mosquitoes.

Robert's main concern is that the cattails would need to be cut regularly to keep their growth from impeding upon activities around the ponds.

"Companies would need to be hired to cut this and it's an ongoing cost says Robert."

In winter, residents have helped clear the ice for activities like skating, and Robert is concerned that, with time, the plants will eventually grow into the middle of the ponds and make these sorts of activities difficult.

"If there's bulrushes, it disrupts the skating possibilities," Robert says. "In a couple of years, the bulrushes will take over and we won't be able to do this anymore. There will just be bulrushes."

She says that the residents with property around the ponds feel a sense of ownership, and many of them are environmentally conscious and take great pride in maintaining their yards and gardens.

"I'm a gardener," she says. "I am four years pesticide-free. Because my yard is organic, I have no mosquitoes. I have spiders, dragonflies, and everything that eats them. Everybody here cares about their yards... Had I known that this was going to happen, I would not have put \$150,000 into my backyard to have to look at bulrushes."

Robert says she knows it's a complex issue and acknowledges the town did a study and wants to be environmentally and budget friendly. But she maintains that the town isn't doing enough to find a solution other than cattails.

She also claims there is a chemical that will work in the ponds of Fifth Avenue Estates, something called a pond conditioner. She says it's less expensive while also being good for fish, pet-friendly, kid-friendly, and effective at getting rid of geese.

Robert says that her cousin, Robert Sarasin, uses a product like this in his pond on the grounds of Waldenway Canine and Kitty Camp near Ste. Anne.

"The most economical and environmentally friendly way to address blue-green algal issues is to use natural approaches to reduce the available nutrients that cause excessive algal growth."

Bruce Friesen-Pankratz / Native Plant Solutions

Sarasin confirmed that he uses a product called Blue Pond, but his pond is what is considered a stagnant pond, meaning it doesn't drain. In fact, they usually need to add water in the summer during long periods of hot weather.

The ponds in Fifth Avenue Estates are not stagnant and do not fall into the same category.

REASSURANCES

The Citizen asked Friesen-Pankratz for his professional assessment of the concerns raised by residents such as Robert, and he largely offered reassurances that cattails are the soundest option.

Notably, he says that he has seen the use of these natural systems in other subdivisions and it hasn't impeded the use of ponds or reduced access to them. He adds that the depth of the ponds in Fifth

Avenue Estates will surely prevent cattails from growing out into the middle and prevent winter skating.

"Shallow water zones support the growth of wetland plants. The middle section of the pond is often the deepest area and contains open water only," Friesen-Pankratz says. "Cattails are limited to the edge of the pond where water depths are shallow. The cattail plants will not 'take over' a naturalized stormwater pond if it's designed correctly, as the depths in the middle of the pond will be too deep for the cattail to grow."

He also disputes the idea that the cattails will be costly to cut and maintain.

"With the proper stormwater design, wetland plants in these systems will never need to be trimmed or harvested. Nor will they require any additional management by the town, or chemical applications or external products to control blue-green algae in the future."

RELYING ON EXPERTS

Mayor Dyck recognizes that the installation of cattails isn't a popular decision with certain residents and agrees that their concerns need to be heard. He says that he's aware of their social media group and that he has spoken with Jacqueline Robert.

"There are solutions flying around, which are appreciated. And to residents, we welcome your ideas," says Dyck. "The truth is, there are some problems we need to fix [on the ponds] and we are trying to do it as economically as possible. We need professionals and engineers to look into this, to look at our water health."

Dyck has explained that when town council looks at solving a complicated problem like this one, it's standard operating procedures for council to approach professionals who deal with the issue at hand and learn from their input and expertise. This provides the general population with assurance that council is receiving expert information instead of

relying only on firsthand experience and anecdotal evidence.

"Council doesn't want to run to a professional to conduct a study every time and spend money willy-nilly, so we do strive for a balance there," says Dyck. "That's one reason why we hired our own in-house engineer, so we don't have to run to an external source to do in-house planning anymore. But in matters such as this, dealing with shorelines and the importance of healthy water ecosystems, we knew we needed to reach out to Native Plant Solutions, who are not-for-profit. They conduct their services for free. They weren't paid."

Dyck says he has asked the town's CAO to put some more numbers together on other options for pond solutions.

In the meantime, the cattails will begin to be installed at one of the ponds. That decision was made on December 15 and a notice was delivered to Fifth Avenue Estates residents in the middle of January. Taillieu Construction Ltd. will begin digging trenches in preparation for the planting to begin.

The town also notes that construction crews are aware of the ponds being used for winter recreation activities and skating.

"Yes, we can start work on this in winter," says Mayor Dyck. "The town is cognizant of the skating rinks, and we're willing to work on making sure there is still safe access to the skating areas."

However, Dyck also points out that this is an ongoing discussion.

"We like to hear from residents and we will talk to residents. If there is a cheaper way to do this by a capital and operational standpoint, while also being ecologically sound and aesthetically pleasing, we would look at it. But we are tasked with solving problems. Like any family budget, there's always way more things that need doing than you have money for... Our town has many priorities and we are just trying to deal with it and get by with something that will work."

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Commentary

Anger, Mobs, and Riot Selfies: The Psychology of Bad Decisions

By Daniel Dacombe

On January 6, many of us were glued to the news as we witnessed history being made—and not the good kind. Most readers will be aware of the events that occurred in Washington DC as far-right protestors (rioters) entered the U.S. Capitol by force. Windows were smashed, belongings stolen, and a symbol of American democracy was, by most accounts, tarnished. People were injured, and a few died.

It was a shocking display, and surely everyone watching realized they were witnessing something that would fill future history books. For some, it was disheartening, as the new year had seemed to bring a sense of hopeful anticipation.

So much for the misery of 2020 being well and truly behind us...

The events of the US Capitol riots were shocking, it's true. The arrests and criminal charges against many of the rioters have been less shocking. After all, these people entered, stole, and destroyed federal property.

However, many rioters claimed that they hadn't intended to do violence. They claimed that they were normally very peaceful, and that these actions were not reflective of their characters.

For some, these claims are clearly disingenuous. Some had a clear history of violent behaviour, for example. And of course why would you wear body armour and carry zip ties if you intended to be peaceful?

For others, though, there was no history of violence. These were gainfully employed members of their communities, with no criminal records, who nonetheless participated in the violent and destructive actions of the day.

How can otherwise peaceful



ANDY FELICIOTTI

people take such actions? Why would people act in ways that so obviously incriminate themselves? Who takes selfies while committing federal crimes?

In order to understand these behaviours, we can look to two psychological factors: the impact of anger on people's decision-making and the psychology of mob behaviour. Both are well researched and can provide insights not only into the events of January 6 but also our own behaviours—and perhaps help us to avoid similar pitfalls.

HOW ANGER AFFECTS DECISION-MAKING

I've written in previous articles about how critical thinking and problem-solving occur in the prefrontal cortex. This is the seat of intellect in our brains. The prefrontal cortex is responsible for all sorts of higher functions, most of which come together to produce behaviours that are rational, socially responsible, and reasonably explainable. When we are at our best, we make decisions using our prefrontal cortex.

However, we aren't always logical.

We are humans, after all, not Vulcans from *Star Trek*. Certain events have the ability to activate our emotions, and sometimes those emotions cause an event called flooding, when we are overwhelmed with fear, hurt, panic, or anger. When we are flooded, our prefrontal cortex takes a back seat to other parts of the brain.

One of these parts is the amygdala, which is largely responsible for our threat response. The amygdala helps us to react quickly in the face of danger and is one of the oldest parts of our brain. When a sabre-toothed tiger attacks, we don't need to think rationally; we need to survive. Such a response fills us with the adrenaline and anger we need to get away.

If you've ever had an unproductive and hurtful argument with your partner, or if you've seen a normally calm and decent person overwhelmed with road rage, you have witnessed a flooding event.

It also helps to explain the actions of the people in the Capitol Riots. Flooded with strong emotion, they made decisions they wouldn't normally make—such as filming themselves breaking the law—and in

the moment it all may have seemed rational.

MOB PSYCHOLOGY

Mob psychology is the study of collective behaviour and how it may be different from how individuals normally behave on their own. This has been an area of interest for social psychologists for more than a century.

Flooding may help explain what happened to the rioters individually, but it cannot explain how being in a group sometimes causes individuals to make the switch from rational to emotional, from critical thinking to mob mentality.

Several theories exist to explain why certain types of crowds can turn to mob violence. Some psychologists suggest that crowds allow us to feel anonymous, thereby inspiring "consequence-free" behaviour. Sigmund Freud famously suggested that people in crowds sometimes get swept up or overwhelmed by the emotions of the others around them.

However, one of the most compelling theories is convergence theory. Convergence theory suggests that individuals in a crowd who turn to

violence are not simply being overwhelmed by the strong negative emotions of others—rather, the individuals bring their negative emotions and intentions with them. When their own desires join with the desires of the group, it creates feelings of reinforcement that inspire collective action.

As a result, when a charismatic individual who has a crowd's respect and attention decides to give the crowd a directive... it becomes very easy for that crowd to move, as one, to take violent action against their government.

It's relatively easy, of course, not to get caught up in a riot. Most of us have managed to avoid it our entire lives, and applying critical thinking can help us before we ever find ourselves in that kind of situation.

It's much more difficult to prevent our anger from flooding us, thus suppressing the prefrontal cortex and letting our amygdala drive our decision-making.

Fortunately, many resources exist to point us in the right direction. Counselling, psychotherapy, and meditation are all proven methods of reducing anger and emotional flooding and improving our emotional resilience.

As the saying goes, anger is a fine tool but a poor master. We can protect ourselves from being mastered by anger and faulty reasoning by: learning to control our anger, using critical thinking to avoid getting involved with potentially dangerous groups, and taking steps to improve our emotional resilience.

If it helps, think of it as intellectual vaccination, protecting us from being infected and harming others. And, if you're smart enough, preventing us from posing for photos while committing federal crimes.



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The Real Benefits of Imaginary Worlds

By Daniel Dacombe

"Keep your feet on the ground. Keep your head out of the clouds." Some of us may have heard admonishments like this when we were young. The implication, of course, is that the real world—the world of jobs, and taxes, and indoor plumbing—is the important world. It is the world you should be paying attention to.

By contrast, worlds of fiction and of fantasy are thought to be less important. It seems to be common knowledge that spending too much time in fictional worlds, whether in books, television, film, or role-playing games, can prevent us from engaging properly with the real world, which is of course detrimental, especially to children.

Not so.

Fortunately, what we've learned about human psychology shows us that spending time in fictional worlds may not only be harmless, it may also produce surprising benefits for our mental health and personal development.

Psychologists have confirmed a foundational truth that lovers of literature have known for generations: becoming immersed in a fictional world is good for you. The research indicates that exposure to fiction and fictional characters increases our empathy and broadens our social skills, as it requires us to experience a story from the characters' points of view—points of view necessarily different from our own.

When characters are significantly different from ourselves, exposure to their stories can even have the effect of reducing our internal prejudices. This is one of the reasons that representation in media of individuals from a wide variety of races, religions, and sexual orientations is so very important.

And these positive impacts aren't limited to fiction.

For more than 40 years, people of all ages have picked up pencil, paper, and dice to engage in the collaborative storytelling game known as Dungeons and Dragons (or D&D for short). D&D, and other role-playing games like it, require players to partner with a leader (typically called a game master or dungeon master) who guides them



DEPOSITPHOTOS

through a story where their choices—combined with randomized elements produced by dice rolls—determine the outcome.

From a small company in Wisconsin to a multimedia empire that includes video games, films, and a library's worth of books, D&D has evolved into a pop culture phenomenon.

While in years past D&D has been seen as a "nerdy" pastime, only suitable for individuals who are unable to play sports or do other stereotypically normal activities, in recent years it has hit the big-time. YouTube and other streaming services clock millions of views on wildly popular shows where players both ordinary and famous play D&D for the enjoyment of others, including the likes of Vin Diesel and Stephen Colbert. The game even made an appearance on Netflix's popular *Stranger Things* series.

D&D, and other tabletop role-playing games, have officially left the basement to become a mainstream form of entertainment.

Since the popularity of D&D and other pastimes like it is relatively new, the research on its psychological effects is still developing. However, what we have learned is universally positive.

Playing D&D and similar games has been connected with improved creativity, problem-solving skills, and interpersonal skills. There is also evidence that individuals who aren't neurotypical—people with autism, severe ADHD, or developmental

disorders—can benefit from D&D and other role-playing games as it gives them opportunities to practice social skills in a virtual setting where failure doesn't come with real-life consequences. D&D has been used in this way with both children and adults to great effect.

Others have found that D&D can play a part in their healing process for mental health issues. Role-playing games have been shown to improve symptoms of depression or anxiety. They have even been used as therapy tools by cognitive behavioural therapists. Several organizations, including Game to Grow, Take This, and The Bodhana Group exist to help promote and support the use of role-playing games in clinical settings.

And if the countless stories in the D&D community are any indication, many people have found the problem-solving and collaboration aspects of the game to positively contribute to their mental health. This has been especially true during the pandemic, when online and virtual D&D groups have skyrocketed in popularity. These role-playing games present a new way for us to connect.

To be fair, there have been criticisms of D&D in the past. In the 80s and 90s, there was some concern that role-playing games would lead to psychological damage, moral degradation, or even satanic involvement.

However, every bit of evidence suggests the opposite. Researchers from the

Department of Psychology at the College of Charleston found that by engaging in the complex "social dilemmas" present in role-playing games—that is, by solving problems together while acting out the roles they choose to play—players show improved moral development.

This suggests that role-playing games can serve as a training ground to help people determine how to solve social dilemmas in their real lives. This is an especially important process for child and adolescent development. Playing pretend, at any age, seems to be good for developing our "real-life" characters.

The evidence about Dungeons and Dragons is clear—it, and role-playing games in general, can produce tangible mental health benefits. By solving imaginary problems, we help ourselves feel capable enough to solve our real problems. By overcoming adversity as an imaginary character, we help ourselves imagine how to overcome adversity in our own lives.

While the real world is quite important, and worth living in to the fullest extent, we should not neglect the imaginary worlds that help make us who we are.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To get connected with a gaming group in your area, try contacting your local gaming store and asking if they can connect you. In our region, we recommend Arctic Board Games in Steinbach or Amuse n' Games in Winnipeg.

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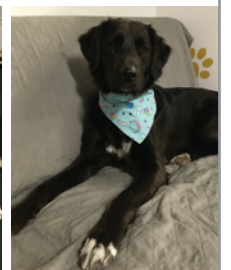
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Niverville Rec Encourages Residents to Embrace Winter

By Sara Beth Dacombe

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Niverville's outdoor parks and public spaces feature many options for winter activities. There is an outdoor skating rink at the Niverville Arena, snowshoeing and snowshoe rentals available through the town's website, a groomed cross-country ski trail at Hespeler Park, and tobogganing.

Cassandra Falk, recreation programmer for the Town of Niverville, says the low amount of snow early in the season created some challenges, especially when it comes to the cross-country ski trail, but the situation has improved in the last couple of weeks.

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

The trail runs three kilometers in length around Hespeler Park, with an additional trail located in the trees from the main parking lot to the splash pad.

This is where some evaporation and melting occurred in the first half of January.

Fortunately, some additional snowfall and cooler temperatures more recently has allowed those unseasonable problems to work themselves out.

The trails are maintained by a

new cross-country trail groomer, purchased in 2020 in accordance with the town's plan to host the Manitoba Winter Games in 2022.

"The organizing committee has purchased the groomer to leave as a legacy from the Games," says Angela Janz, co-chair for the Games. "This groomer is already in operation, and trails have been opened as of last week in Hespeler Park. Town staff are creating and maintaining the trails, and getting up to speed with how the new groomer functions."

The town is also in the process of deciding whether to purchase a snow-making machine. Such a machine could be deployed during seasons of particularly low snowfall, such as the one we had earlier this winter.

"Right now nothing has been purchased, but we are looking at it as being a potential in lots of areas," says Warren Britton, facility manager for Niverville's Community Recreation and Resource Centre. "We obviously do have a fear that a lack of snow in 2022 could be detrimental to the Winter Games and [purchasing a snowmaker] could alleviate some of the stress with it."

The trails have seen some use by both skiers and walkers. Walkers should avoid these trails, however,

since they leave footprints which can disrupt the quality of the experience for the skiers for whom the trails were designed.

The trails aren't too hard to find, but some Niverville residents who've used the toboggan hill at Hespeler Park have said they had no idea the town had cross-country ski trails. Only a few residents said they knew the town offered snowshoe rentals.

SNOWMOBILING

Yet another resident we spoke to pointed out that the only winter pastime they enjoy is snowmobiling.

Indeed, snowmobile tracks are prevalent in the parks around Niverville.

But Niverville Recreation warns that there are not supposed to be any motorized vehicles in the park.

"Only town vehicles or our park maintenance equipment are allowed to drive off the road into the park," says Falk. "There should be no walking or motorized vehicles impacting the trails because it really affects the quality of the trail."

Additionally, the operation of snowmobiles on school properties and in town parks is prohibited.

Operators of snowmobiles are permitted to operate snowmobiles on street boulevards or private

property within Niverville for the purposes of taking the most direct route in and out of the town, provided that permission has been obtained from the owner of such private property.

Falk recommends that any snowmobilers wanting to get gas should avoid entering town to access Country Snacks.

Instead, she points to the Shell station on the outskirts of town, which has a more accessible location.

Snowmobilers of Manitoba (Snoman) provides maps of marked trails and further guidelines as to safe snowmobile operation in the province.

SNOWSHOEING

For anyone wishing to enjoy walking in the snow in Niverville parks, there are snowshoes available to rent from the town office.

"Snowshoers can really explore," Falk says of this sometimes underappreciated activity. "You're basically free to go wherever there is snow, being mindful of where the public property and private property begins. The benefit of snowshoes is you can go across deeper sections of snow, or you could go alongside the cross-country ski trails, just not directly on the groomed trails."

OUTDOOR RINK

Niverville's outdoor rink has a schedule with specific times allotted for pleasure skating or playing hockey and ringette, with the town providing some nets and equipment.

Sticks and pucks are permitted on Mondays and Wednesdays, as well as the first and third weekends of the month.

Pleasure skating is permitted on Tuesdays and Thursdays, as well as the second and fourth weekends of the month. Individuals or groups must maintain at least a two-metre distance from other skaters, unless they are from the same household.

The schedule and guidelines are posted at the rink.

Falk wishes to remind people that Niverville Rec's Facebook page has the schedules and is a good resource for people looking for the most recent updates.

"We also have rental information available for the snowshoes on the town website under the recreation tab," she adds. "Eventually we hope to offer cross-country ski rentals, but there's been a delay. We've ordered new equipment, but there's such a high demand for it right now, so the distributor is working on sending that to us."

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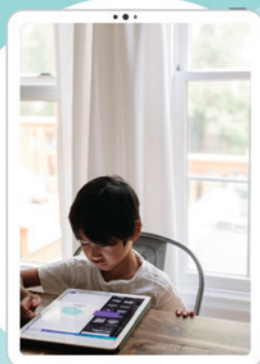
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