

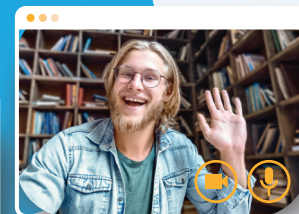
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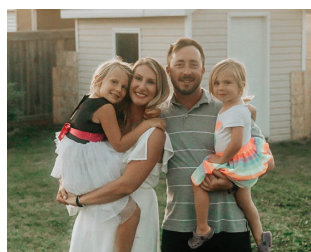
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## LOCAL NEWS

### Fine Haus Victims Move On

■ Three years after a high-profile real estate incident, which many today call an example of fraud, the victims must try to move on. As for the alleged perpetrator? There is little chance that the owner of Fine Haus, Jason Cianflone, will face justice.

Details on Pages 18-19

## LOCAL NEWS

### Boil Water Advisories Frustrate IDC Residents

■ Residents of Southside Estates in Île-des-Chênes have been contending with BWAs for about two decades.

Details on Pages 20-21

## SPORTS & RECREATION

### Nighthawks Gearing Up for Home Opener

■ The Niverville Nighthawks are getting ready to put on a big show when they hit the ice for the first time on September 17.

Details on Pages 13-16

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

### Local Artist Makes Her Mark on CRRC Bollards

■ The artwork on the bollards in front of the CRRC in Niverville is a fantastic showcase for an up-and-coming local artist.

Details on Page 24



## Four Municipalities Team Up to Build Cooperative Wastewater Treatment Plant

» READ MORE ON PAGES 3-4


BRENDA SAWATZKY

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Dated at Niverville in the Province of Manitoba, on August 30, 2022.

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Officials gather in Niverville to announce a major government funding initiative for a wastewater treatment plant.

BY BRENDA SAWATZKY

# Four Municipalities Team Up to Build Cooperative Wastewater Treatment Plant

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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The Town of Niverville's boardroom was the setting for a major public announcement on August 18. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of four municipalities in the rural southeast, plans can now move forward in the construction of a shared wastewater treatment plant which will serve Niverville and the RMs of Ritchot, Hanover, and Tache.

The project includes a large-scale treatment plant, lift stations, pump stations, and approximately 90 kilometres of effluent pipeline.

The total anticipated cost of the project comes to \$110 million.

Joint funding for the project will come from three levels of government. A total of \$39 million in grant monies will come down from the federal and provincial governments. The municipal cooperative will bear the \$71 million balance.

A variety of delegates were on hand to deliver the long-awaited news: Reg Helwer, Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services; Kelvin Goertzen, Minister of Justice; local MLA Ron Schuler and MP Ted Falk; and a broader collection of MLAs, mayors, and councillors.

"I'm pleased to share in a major infrastructure announcement today for not only Niverville but for the entire southeast corner of the

province," Helwer told the gathered crowd. "It is indeed a progressive area of the province."

Helwer says that the creation of a new wastewater treatment plant will help eliminate the need for community lagoons in the future and allow valuable farmland to be used for production rather than waste collection.

"Green infrastructure investment such as this new facility will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions," Helwer says.

He adds that the project will advance Manitoba's Climate and Green Plan, meeting international climate change targets and creating a greener province for everyone.

The proposed treatment plant, Helwer says, will easily serve the 30,000 residents of these four municipalities. It will also have the capacity to expand to service up to 70,000 residents as the communities grow or if other municipalities care to join the collective at a future date.

The funding announcement comes 14 years after the idea for a collaborative wastewater solution was first hatched in this part of the province.

In 2008, representatives from the four neighbouring municipalities met at an engineering firm in Winnipeg to discuss the feasibility of such a plan. The delegation was led by Hanover reeve Stan Toews.

Round table discussions

followed and eventually an oversight board was formed, called the Red Seine Rat Wastewater Cooperative (RSRWC). Members included a representative from each municipality.

Toews became the chairperson of the board.

"Today makes clear the cooperative, creative, and collaborative nature of all the stakeholders involved," Toews says. "[It's] an achievement that realizes a decade-long dream of working together as neighbours for the common good of our region."

Former mayor of Niverville and economic development consultant Gord Daman was contracted to assist the RSRWC in bringing the large-scale project to reality.

"The exciting thing... is that, because we have formed a cooperative, the actual borrowing will be done by RSRWC and so the individual municipalities will not actually have to grant anything back," says Daman. "That overall cost will be borne through the utility rates that will be set in three or four years when the facility opens up."

Working as a cooperative has its advantages, Daman adds, in terms of being able to secure lower interest rates.

Equally significant, though, will be the reduction in operational costs when the region moves from

(continued on page 4)



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(continued from page 3)

managing 13 separate lagoons to just one treatment plant.

For this reason, Daman foresees the possibility that rates for regional ratepayers may not increase by much at all, and they may even have the potential to go down.

Niverville mayor Myron Dyck says there's a real upside to the treatment plant in terms of commercial growth in all the communities involved.

"Aside from development on the residential side, there's also significant industrial companies in this area, and when they are looking to grow, they also need capacity for wastewater," says Dyck. "The reality is that, if you don't have [adequate] wastewater [capacity], they will then go to where infrastructure is available and you risk losing them."

According to a news release related to the treatment plant, lagoons may eventually be a thing of the past for most communities.

"Increasing environmental regulations are making it more difficult to operate with lagoons that were built at a time when environmental

impacts were unknown or not considered," the release states. "Repurposing existing lagoons to meet new regulatory requirements is either cost prohibitive or not possible without full replacement."

Apart from the collective treatment plant being a sound financial solution, though, it comes with innumerable other benefits, claims its champions.

According to the news release, the project will attract nearly \$1.9 billion in new capital investment and construction to the region, and create more than 3,400 new jobs over the coming decade.

The environmental impact is also expected to produce meaningful results.

Lagoon systems are known emitters of methane and nitrous oxide which contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions. Current emissions coming from lagoons amount to about 3,200 metric tons per year.

With a mechanical system, these emissions would be reduced to 23 metric tons per year—down by 93 percent. As well, there is significantly less

risk of wastewater seepage into ground water or nearby waterways, where bacterial contamination such as E. coli can occur.

In terms of value, it is expected that the treatment plant will provide a cost savings to the region to the tune of about \$60 million, as every one of the RMs involved were anticipating lagoon expansions or replacement within the next five to 15 years.

The preferred site for the new treatment plant is the same location as Niverville's current lagoon, approximately one and a half miles north of town. Although the 160-acre plot is located in Ritchot, an agreement was established between the two municipalities years ago at a time when Niverville needed to expand to a larger lagoon.

Mayor Dyck says that some of the unused 20 acres of the plot will be designated to the plant. If future expansion is needed, Ritchot and Niverville have first right of refusal to annex land adjacent to the lot.

Niverville's existing lagoon will continue to be used as a holding pond.



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# Feral Cats: Are They a Problem and What Should Be Done?

By Jennifer Lavin

✉ jlav@nivervillecitizen.com

Depending on who you ask, the Town of Niverville may have a cat problem. A multitude of feral cats roam free in the area, much to the delight of some and the chagrin of others.

Indeed, the people of Niverville have strong opinions about these cats. It's a hot topic on the community's social media pages.

## PELLET GUN ATTACKS

Niverville resident Laura Ode has a heartbreaking story.

Ode's cat escaped from her home a few months ago. While searching for him, she met a woman who had been monitoring the feral cat situation in Niverville for almost three years. This woman had given all the local feral cats names, and her main concern was a cat she had named Birdie.

For two years, Birdie had given birth to litter after litter of kittens.

"Some people would take the kittens away from her each time, and poor Birdie was deemed feral so they left her all alone," says Ode, who took on Birdie's cause. "This would cause her to go back into heat and the cycle would continue. I set out to capture her and at least get her spayed. I spent weeks tracking her and found a spot where she would come to eat. Food, a camera, and a trap were set up, but she was very skittish and did not go into the trap right away. My first attempt, I ended up with a young male cat. I took him in and had him neutered, vaccinated, and treated for a skin infection. He stayed in my garage for three days afterwards to recover and was released back outside."

On Ode's second attempt to catch Birdie, she came upon a young female cat who was believed to be one of Birdie's kittens. This kitten had also had a recent litter, and Ode took her to get spayed and vaccinated. She ended up in a foster home.

"Word soon got out in the



neighbourhood and it turned out someone was feeding Birdie and her kittens in their backyard," Ode says. "We teamed up and managed to trap all five kittens and Birdie. Her kittens were at least eight weeks old, so I brought Birdie in to get spayed."

At the veterinarian's office, it was discovered that Birdie had been shot with a pellet gun at least six times. The vet suspected that the pellet wounds were about a year old.

"Poor girl had to feed kitten after kitten and likely wandered through someone's yard to hunt," Ode says. "Just imagine how painful it must have been and no one to help her."

Samantha Simao tells a similar story. Her cat, called Chickapea, was a rescue from the Winnipeg Humane Society. She tried valiantly to keep Chickapea indoors, but as a former feral cat he was continuously trying to get out.

"It kind of became odd," Simao says. "He would disappear for long periods of time—weeks, months—and then show up in surrounding towns... Kinda like somebody was picking him up and dropping him off outside town. Last winter, he came home and after a couple days I noticed he wasn't doing super well. That's when I found the bullet hole in his shoulder and we ended up having to take him to the emergency vet."

At that point, Simao decided it

was best to rehome Chickapea so there would hopefully be no chance of him getting shot or forcibly relocated again.

## RCMP JURISDICTION

A Niverville resident who prefers to have her name withheld says that she has seen a local man shooting at small animals.

"[My husband] and I have seen him sitting at his patio door shooting at something near his garden," she says. "I wish I had videoed him. The worst part is he doesn't kill them, just wounds them."

Another resident, this time from the opposite side of town, mentioned that he too had seen a man in his neighbourhood shooting at small animals.

Pellet guns are subject to somewhat complicated laws regarding what is and isn't considered a "firearm."

Nonetheless, causing injury to an animal is illegal. According to The Animal Care Act of Manitoba, "No person shall inflict upon an animal acute suffering, serious injury or harm, or extreme anxiety or distress that significantly impairs its health or well-being."

Therefore, Niverville mayor Dyck strongly recommends that anyone who has knowledge of a crime like this should call the RCMP.

"The town has not been notified of any firearm misuse in the community," reads a statement from a town representative. "The enforcement of firearm matters is under RCMP jurisdiction and if any community residents are aware of the misuse of firearms, and by whom, those details should be shared with the RCMP in St. Pierre immediately."

Both of the anonymous residents who came forward to *The Citizen* have provided the name of the person they saw harming animals. That information has been passed along to the RCMP.

The St. Pierre RCMP didn't respond to requests for information by press time.

## ILLEGAL TO ROAM FREE

Although it's illegal to harm animals, it's also illegal to let one's cat roam free. The Animal Care Act goes on to say, "Except when permitted by a by-law of a municipality, no owner or person in charge of an animal shall allow it to run at large."

The Town of Niverville does not have an exception to this provincial law. Niverville's bylaw 819-20 states, "No owner shall permit his cat to run at large in the Town of Niverville. When a cat is found running at large in the Town, its owner shall be deemed to have failed or refused to comply with this section of the By-law."

## DANGERS OF FREE-ROAMING CATS

One particular conversation about cats on the Niverville Community Group on Facebook generated nearly 100 comments from residents expressing a range of points of view.

"I used to not mind [the cats] but we now have one near our house who likes to come right onto our deck in front of our patio doors and torment our inside cats," says Chelsea Brown of Niverville. "They would actually try to fight each other through the glass. I ended up having no choice but to buy a frosted film to cover the bottom half of my patio door window because the fighting would keep us up at night and we would have to physically chase the cat out of the yard in the middle of the night. Now one of my cats has started attacking his own reflection because he is paranoid that it's the other cat."

Similarly, Bill Gordon says that he's had to replace his window screens twice recently because a neighbour's cat kept trying to get into his home through the windows.

"My wingman Maui is an indoor cat," says Gordon. "If he goes outside he's always on a leash with me beside him. He's also licensed with the town. Having to replace my screens costs \$16 apiece. Cats outside don't bother me, until they damage my property."

Another local homeowner, Michelle Anderson, agrees.

"Ultimately, it is dangerous for the cats to be outdoors, particularly given some have been shot with pellet guns but also because unattended animals get into things that aren't good for them," says Anderson. "I believe in responsible pet ownership. I would no more allow my dogs to run free than I would a cat. I care too much about my pets to endanger them. They're members of our family and they're cared for as such. This just can't include letting them roam free."

(continued on page 6)



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Several people pointed out that they dislike having cats loose on their property because they have a tendency to defecate in gardens and flower beds. Cat faeces can be dangerous to human health, since it often contains different bacteria in addition to toxoplasmosis and intestinal worms, both of which can be especially dangerous to immunocompromised people and pregnant women.

Finally, John Robichaud pointed out that, with the exception of humans, cats are the biggest threat to natural wildlife.

"They have directly contributed to the extinction of numerous species of animals in North America," Robichaud says. "I don't agree with shooting them with pellet guns, that's simply cruel, but cats don't belong loose outside and heavy fines should be levied against owners."

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) would seem to agree with Robichaud.

"Outdoor domestic cats are a recognized threat to global biodiversity," reads an article on the organization's website. "Outdoor cats have contributed to the extinction of 63 species of birds, mammals, and reptiles in the wild and continue to adversely impact a wide variety of other species... The ecological dangers are so critical that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists domestic cats as one of the world's worst non-native invasive species."<sup>1</sup>

#### AN OPPOSING VIEW

There are also many people on local social media who support allowing free-roaming felines. Several people simply noted that they enjoy seeing cats around town and that their children like watching them as well.

"I think cats should be allowed outside if they are licensed with the town," says Diane Kroeker. "That way, the cat can have the freedom that we all enjoy to sit in the sun and wander around the yard... The cats

are needed to deal with the crazy number of rabbits. I can't even have a garden as the rabbits eat everything! As soon as our cat stopped going outside, we had mice issues instantly. We also trained our cat to poop in a particular spot outside so clean-up is easy and the neighbours aren't dealing with it. Spayed/neutered cats that have a good home do not wander and mostly just hang out on the back deck with the family. I don't think that should be illegal."

Another resident, who prefers to remain anonymous, felt similarly.

"My neighbours have several cats and they let them out daily and they come home every evening," says the anonymous resident. "I am very grateful to have their cats roaming free, as we live beside a field and in almost 30 years we have never had a mouse in our house!"

This view is also shared by Leslie Bardal.

"I love free-roaming cats... no mice, rabbits, or such around our yard," Bardal says. "The dog owners do way more visible damage by not picking up after their dogs on sidewalks and public spaces than cats. I mean, those of us who grew up on a farm or rural property know the benefits outweigh the risks. We never got sick, Grandma weeded her flower garden and never got sick. We have one on our street, the nicest cat ever, we love him, and we haven't had rabbits, mice, or squirrels since he moved in! No complaints here."

#### ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER

One possible reason for the problem of feral cats—or at least, a reason why the situation hasn't stabilized or improved—is that Niverville doesn't currently have an animal control officer. There hasn't been such an officer for some time.

In the past, Niverville's animal control officer could be contacted directly. The town's website now indicates that the procedure for reporting animal issues has changed; concerned residents must either call or email the town office.

Several Niverville residents say

they have indeed called or emailed about cats in their neighbourhood, but they either don't receive a response or continue to see the same cats around their property.

Mayor Dyck admits that the animal control issue has been difficult recently. He says that the town's long-term animal control officer retired less than a year ago, and the process of finding a new one has been exceedingly difficult.

Dyck remarked to *The Citizen* that a significant number of municipalities are currently without an animal control officer. He then indicated that a neighbouring municipality is taking the lead to find one for the greater region, including Niverville.

However, *The Citizen* reached out to that neighbouring municipality and they weren't able to confirm Dyck's statement.

"We are not looking for an animal control officer, nor am I aware of other municipalities who are," replied the CAO for this municipality.

A council member for another nearby RM was similarly confused. "Are we spearheading an initiative? No. That's interesting information and not quite accurate because we're very content and I wasn't even aware that there was an initiative taking place."

It remains unclear at this time whether anyone is actually searching for a new animal control officer for Niverville.

For the time being, some of Niverville's animal control issues are being taken care of by the bylaw enforcement officer, but the officer doesn't deal with feral or injured animals.

"Note [that] this relates to items such as dogs barking or other breaches of bylaw," says Mayor Dyck. "Items such as needing a trap to catch a critter, say, like a skunk or something, there is nothing currently."

Without an animal control officer in town, cats are likely going to continue to struggle.

#### LICENSES AND REGULATIONS

Barry Piasta, a local animal advocate, points out that a single female cat over its lifetime can give birth to more than 180 kittens.

"Stray cats need to be spayed or neutered, and so do house cats, to control 'oops' pregnancies," he says.

Piasta suggests that all municipalities must enforce spay and neuter programs to control the cat population. He would also like to see the Town of Niverville partner with a veterinary office to offer free or low-cost spay and neuter procedures.

Mayor Dyck says that the Town of Niverville used to partner with Graydon Veterinary Corporation in St. Pierre, but the program fizzled out during the pandemic and has not been restarted.

Piasta would also like to see a change to Niverville's cat licensing procedure. "Cat licenses need to be enforced and spay and neuter must be mandatory and included in the fee. Any captured stray or owned cat must be fixed."

All dogs and cats in Niverville are required to be licensed. The annual licensing fee for a cat, either fixed or intact, is \$20 plus proof of rabies and distemper vaccinations. If a cat is found roaming free and is not licensed, the owner is to be charged \$100. The owner of any cat found roaming free is also meant to be charged \$150 plus the cost of impoundment and \$300 plus impoundment for the second offence.

Niverville does not appear to require a found cat to be spayed or neutered.

Currently, though, none of these impoundment fees can be charged because there is no one to impound the cats in the first place.

The town of Altona has been held up by some as an excellent example of how to deal with local cats. Their license fee for felines is \$25 for the entire lifetime of the pet, and this requires proof of rabies vaccination.

Altona also has two cat-related programs in partnership with Furever Friends Cat Rescue.

Residents who find a homeless cat that they want to keep can use the Finders Keepers Program. According to the Furever Friends website, "This program provides an initial cat assessment by one of our volunteers, vet check, spay/neuter, vaccinations, and tattoo. All for the low price of \$99."

The partnership also offers a trap and release program.

"Cats and kittens are trapped, transported to the pound for evaluation, provided with vet care and spayed/neutered," reads an explanation on their website. "If the cat is tameable, it is claimed by Furever Friends Cat Rescue and put into foster care. If [it is] too wild, it is released back into the community and a feral shelter is set up to provide it with safe shelter and food."

Furever Friends website adds, "Maintaining a healthy feral cat population benefits our community by keeping the rodent population low. It reduces the incidence of homeless cats roaming in search of food and shelter, and reduces nuisance behaviour."

At the end of the day, many remain concerned that the cats of Niverville will continue to suffer as long as there is no animal control officer serving the town.

"Life is so heartbreaking for these feral cats," concludes Ode. "Yes, they help to keep the rodent population down, but at what cost? They are riddled with worms, repopulating into a life of suffering and... terrible sickness and diseases."

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ If you are interested in adopting Birdie, contact [davidsoncynaday@yahoo.com](mailto:davidsoncynaday@yahoo.com).

■ To donate to PAWS for a Cause contact their treasurer, [odelaura@gmail.com](mailto:odelaura@gmail.com).

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> "Cats Indoors," American Bird Conservancy. Date of access: August 25, 2022 (<https://abcbirds.org/program/cats-indoors/cats-and-birds>).



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### LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

## Are you satisfied with the level of candidate choice available in your area so far in the 2022 municipal election?

Yes. Where I live, we have plenty of good candidates to choose from.

29%

No. Too many candidates in my area are running unopposed, or the candidates aren't to my liking.

71%

### YOUR COMMENTS:

Where are all the women and non-white candidates?

St. Adolphe has a new Candidate for Council and it will be fantastic to have him in!

I always find this type of thinking and questioning a bit funny. Candidate choice is exactly reflective of who is willing to step up and serve. How it becomes an issue, or almost an implication that the community "deserves" something different boggles me. Candidate choice is 100% inclusive of everyone that signed up to run. How could it possibly be anything else?

# Council Seeks to Approve More Commercial Zoning Along 311 West

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

At a public hearing on August 16, Niverville's town council entertained a developer's request to rezone a parcel of land from Agricultural Limited to Commercial Corridor.

The parcel in question includes approximately 130 acres of bare land on the west side of town, bordered to the north by Highway 311 and to the west by Wallace Road. Council voted unanimously in favour of approving the first reading.

Second and third reading will be voted on at a future council meeting.

Two residents of The Highlands development were in attendance to voice their concerns on the rezoning request.

The first to address council demonstrated apprehension regarding the lack of information on the type of commercial development that will take place at the proposed location. Without that knowledge, she told council, it's difficult to know whether she should be for or against the rezoning proposal.

She admitted to being concerned about high-traffic volumes, light pollution, and the construction of tall buildings on concrete slabs which could turn her current pastoral view into an industrial-looking one.

Council set out to reassure those gathered that a rezoning request is simply the first in a process of steps that a developer needs to go through. Without council's approval for commercial zoning, Mayor Dyck said, it would be unreasonable for any developer to attempt to attract new businesses and franchises into the community.

"Anytime a business wants to set up, they have to come to council to get a conditional use [permit]," Councillor Funk clarified. "That's the time that you can speak up and say, 'I don't want that business there.'"

Mayor Dyck added that a conditional use request is also where council can flex its muscles, making sure a development agreement is in place which will set restrictions on lighting, building aesthetics, and so on.

"There's a lot of people who are kicking tires in the community of Niverville," Dyck said. "As the population grows... we have to imagine 20 and 30 years out so... where does Canadian Tire go? Where does Home Depot

go? That's why you have your commercial strip along [Highway] 311 all the way to the dike. If you were to think forward 30 years, realistically, we could expect both sides of the 311... to be commercial of some kind or the other, big box or otherwise."

In terms of aesthetics along this new commercial stretch, Councillor Stott said that this council doesn't intend to repeat the mistakes of the past, as can be seen along the easterly stretch of Highway 311. He referred specifically to the feed mill and other industrial-type businesses there that don't present the aesthetic appeal that highway commercial should.

As for why the developer has chosen to zone only the far northwest corner at this time, and not the entire stretch bounding the highway, council is unsure, but they say the plan is developer-driven.

"He obviously has something in mind, but his taxes change [once he rezones from ag to commercial]," said Councillor Stott, indicating that a higher tax rate is applied to commercial land.

That the developer would begin new development so far from existing development didn't come as a surprise to Mayor Dyck. He recalled that the residents of Steinbach once thought that developers were crazy for locating the Clearspring Mall about a mile away from any existing development. The open space that existed between the town and the new mall, he noted, drove up demand for those in-between lots in a hurry.

"You look at Highway 12 development now with all that's filled it in," Dyck said. "Niverville's going much that way. We don't know what will come or when... As [council], we are not the ones driving the growth, we're the ones managing the growth."

Even so, the resident indicated a concern over the identity of the developer and their motives.

"I'm a little worried because of how far they are starting out and how big [the area to be rezoned is]," the resident told council. "That it might be someone who has a lot of money that's not from around here... [so they'll be okay with constructing] just a massive building. It's very hard to feel great about it [until we know]."

Mayor Dyck was able to provide some reassurance when it comes to the developer, Len Peters, who owns Sunset Estates and

has developed The Highlands.

It is Peters' company that owns the entire undeveloped section of land running east to west from Krahn Road to Wallace Road and north to south from Highway 311 to Crown Valley Road.

Council believes that Peters' intent is to eventually create a development that would mirror The Highlands in terms of layout, beginning with a commercial stretch to the north and flowing into a variety of residential housing styles as it heads south.

A second Highlands resident raised different concerns about what this proposed initial commercial development could mean in terms of adding traffic stress to the already busy intersection of Krahn Road and Highway 311. Currently, this intersection serves as the primary access and egress for the entire residential development.

Council assured the resident that regular intersection traffic counts are carried out as developments evolve, which is the reason for the construction of new traffic lights at the nearby Mulberry Avenue intersection.

Ultimately, though, it's up to Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI) to decide what kinds of structural road changes are needed along provincial highways when traffic flows shift.

Regardless, it's pretty safe to assume, they said, that the Drover's Run service road will continue west to Wallace Road in the coming years in order to prevent an excess of access points directly off the highway.

In the end, Dyck reminded those gathered that, ultimately, what's good for the developer is also good for the community as a whole.

"We feel a huge obligation to... all the people who've moved here and they've invested as they have in their home and property, to assure that the investment that they've made grows," Dyck said. "And how does it grow? By continuing to create demand [for property in the community]."

Simply put, he adds, property values will continue to climb in communities where amenities abound and progress is an ongoing endeavour.

Council put the vote for second and third reading on hold until a date when they could be certain that MTI's questions regarding the zoning change had been satisfied.

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# New Water Treatment Plant Soon to Be Operational

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Niverville's water utility services have made some significant strides this summer with the near-completion of a \$5-million-dollar project located along Fifth Avenue South. The new water treatment plant is expected to be fully operational sometime before the spring of 2023.

According to Ryan Dyck, manager of the town's Operations Department, rapidly increasing water usage is the reason the current plant, now more than a decade old, is already obsolete.

"It simply can't filter the water fast enough to keep up with current demand," Dyck says.

The new facility is monolithic in scale compared to the old plant located on the same site. Dyck says that's for good reason.

"The equipment is bigger and there is room for expansion," he says. "We are trying to plan 20 to 30 years ahead. Our existing plant is only 14 years old and is too small already."

Eric King, the town's CAO, says it's all part of proactively planning for future surges in population. The new plant, he explains, will service up to 15,000 customers. Based on current growth trends, this means the new plant should have water treatment capacity to take the community into the year 2040.

It's not just new population growth to be considered,



Construction underway on new water treatment plant. **BRENDA SAWATZKY**

though. Dyck adds that there's still about 700 homes in the older developments of Niverville that aren't hooked up to the treatment plant. Instead they are fed from individual wells.

The inevitable installation of underground infrastructure to these parts of town, Dyck says, will result in a fairly dramatic increase in water usage.

In terms of the treatment plant, Dyck isn't concerned that extended periods of drought will affect water availability. It's anybody's guess, though, as to how long the town can count on its current wellfield, located east of town, to continue to meet demand.

Between 2014 and 2018, Niverville residents using treated water were frustrated time and again with council-legislated water bans. The problem, they found, was not with the treatment plant but with the poor water supply.

By the summer of 2018, the town had invested \$2.5

million into pipelines running from a new well site near New Bothwell. Half of this cost was subsidized by the province.

The large new treatment plant will work in collaboration with the old plant, which will continue to act as a pumphouse, getting water out to its many users.

King says that the water rates charged to customers are needed to manage the cost of operations and maintenance, not to cover the capital costs of the building and equipment. Thus, town residents need only expect typical inflationary increases in the coming months.

The filtration system inside the new plant is unique to Manitoba. Biofiltration is a relatively new technology and Landmark is the only other nearby community that has converted to the system.

"The reasoning biofiltration was chosen for this expansion was for its ability to remove iron and manganese

in the water," says Dyck. "Reverse osmosis filters out most impurities from the water, but to get the desired hardness and mineral content in the finished treated water, a portion of the unfiltered well water needs to bypass the filtering process. This bypassed water has naturally high iron and manganese content which settles out, causing rust stains on fixtures and rusting on metal. With the biofilters, most of the iron and manganese will be removed from this bypassed water, making the water even more aesthetically pleasing than it currently is."

The town currently employs two staff members with certification in water treatment plant management. A third staffer is working towards the completion of their certification and a fourth person, Dyck says, will be needed down the road.

"The province mandates that all water plant operators take schooling, write exams, as well as take ongoing training to gain and maintain water plant operator certification," says Dyck. "They want to ensure that the people running these plants understand water quality and how to make the necessary adjustments to ensure that end users get safe... potable water."

Courses are offered at RRC Polytech. Up to four levels of certification are offered. However, with Niverville's water treatment system, level two certification is all that is required.

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# NOTICE OF VOTERS LIST PERSONAL SECURITY PROTECTION

## HANOVER SCHOOL DIVISION

Hanover School Division has completed the VOTERS LIST, and the list may now be revised. If you are unsure if your name is on the voters list, you may contact Hanover School Division by phone, email or in person to confirm. If you are not on the list but are eligible to vote in the School Trustee Election on October 26, 2022, you will be asked to give evidence of eligibility which may require you to bring documentation to the offices of the Division at 5 Chrysler Gate in Steinbach. The Division office will be open weekdays from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm from Tuesday, September 6, 2022, to Tuesday, September 20, 2022, for constituents of the Hanover School Division to revise the voters list if necessary. On these dates and at these times, the Senior Election Official (S.E.O.) or an alternate elections official will be available to update the voters list by:

- a) checking the voters list to determine if the person's name is already on the list
- b) verifying that the person is in fact, an eligible voter
- c) adding the names of voters who are entitled to have their names on the list
- d) deleting the names of persons who are not entitled to have their names on the lists; and
- e) making such other correction of errors to the list as required

### **Voter Eligibility:**

A person is eligible to have his or her name added to the voters list if they are:

- 1) a Canadian citizen and at least 18 years of age on Election Day; and
- 2) a resident of the local authority for at least six (6) months prior to Election Day

### **APPLICATION FOR PERSONAL SECURITY PROTECTION**

A voter may apply in writing to the S.E.O. (at the address below) no later than Tuesday, September 18, 2018, at 4:00 pm to have their name and other personal information omitted or obscured from the voters list in order to protect the voter's personal security. The application may be submitted in person or by mail and must include your name, address, and include proof of identity. Persons who have done this may only vote by Mail-In Ballot.

All changes to the voters list must be completed on or before 4:00 pm on September 20, 2022.

Dated at Steinbach in the Province of Manitoba, on September 1, 2022.

Scott Bestvater, Senior Election Official (S.E.O.)  
Hanover School Division  
5 Chrysler Gate, Steinbach MB. R5G 0E2  
Phone 204-326-6471

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Niverville, MB  
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# Niverville's 2022 property tax bills have been mailed

Niverville's 2022 property tax bills have been mailed. If you have not received your bill you may request a copy. New property owners are reminded that they are responsible for the payment of the taxes whether or not they have received a tax notice in their name. If you would like to request a copy of the statement for your property or have questions regarding your property taxes, email [taxes@whereyoubelong.ca](mailto:taxes@whereyoubelong.ca) or call 204-388-4600 ext.1201.

All tax payments must be received in the Town Office by 5 p.m. on the due date. Cheques may be post-dated to the due date (Sept. 29, 2022) but must be received by the Town Office on or before September 29, 2022 by 5 p.m. or they will be considered late and will be subject to a penalty. Receipts may be emailed upon request or picked up at the Town Office.

All taxes remaining subsequently unpaid are subject by law to a penalty of 1.25% per month (compounded annually). **STATEMENTS CURRENTLY SHOWING ARREARS WILL HAVE ADDITIONAL PENALTIES.** Call the Town Office or log in to your eServices account for an updated balance on the day the payment will be remitted. (please allow at least 3 business days for bank processing)

Cheques or money orders should be made payable to the "Town of Niverville".

Visit [www.whereyoubelong.ca](http://www.whereyoubelong.ca) for the various payment options.

# NOTICE OF NOMINATIONS HANOVER SCHOOL DIVISION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that:

On the following days: **September 14, 15, 16, 19 and 20, 2022**  
Between the hours of: **9:00 am to 12:00 Noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm**  
At the following location: **Hanover School Division Office, 5 Chrysler Gate, Steinbach, MB.**

Nominations will be received for the offices of:  
**SCHOOL TRUSTEE FOR THE FOLLOWING WARDS:**

<b>Ward 1 West - Bothwell / Kleefeld / Niverville area</b>	<b>- Two (2) to be elected</b>
<b>Ward 2 North - Landmark / Blumenort / Mitchell area</b>	<b>- Two (2) to be elected</b>
<b>Ward 3 Steinbach - Steinbach area</b>	<b>- Four (4) to be elected</b>
<b>Ward 4 South - Grunthal area</b>	<b>- One (1) to be elected</b>

**The nomination deadline is Tuesday, September 20, 2022, at 4:00 pm.**  
Nominations cannot be accepted after this day/time.

All nominations shall be made in writing (Form 13) and shall be signed by at least twenty-five eligible voters whose names appear on our current voters list of the ward you wish to be nominated for.

Nominations must be filed in person by the prospective candidate on the date, hours and location specified above.

**The School Trustee Information & Nomination Handbook, which includes Candidate Nomination (Form 13), is available for pickup at the Hanover School Division Office or may be accessed by visiting the Hanover School Division website at [www.hsd.ca](http://www.hsd.ca).**

**Nomination papers not accompanied by the required documents and not properly filed shall be rejected.**

Dated at Steinbach, Manitoba on September 1, 2022

Scott Bestvater  
Senior Election Official (S.E.O.)  
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# Lemoine Joins Ste. Agathe Council Race

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On October 26, Ste. Agathe residents will go to the polls. Long-time resident Joel Lemoine is stepping foot into the political ring to challenge the incumbent, Curtis Claydon.

Lemoine has called Ste. Agathe home for almost half a century and his roots in the community go deep. His grandfather began a transport company here, operated a garage, and farmed a plot of land.

His parents made their mark in the area, too. His father took over the family farm and his mother worked as an early-years educator in the local school for more than 30 years.

"My mom taught me how to learn, but my dad taught me how to think," Lemoine says, musing about the importance his parents placed on education as well as the critical thinking he developed as a child on the farm.

Lemoine and his wife also chose the community to raise their children, now ages 13 and 15.

He says his decision to run for council has been five or six years in the making. The seed was first planted by former Ritchot council member Jeannot Robert, who encouraged Lemoine to run just as Robert was stepping down. Others from the community have also encouraged him over the years to consider the value he could add to Ritchot's council.

"It's a good feeling when you're just walking the dog on the sidewalk and people approach you and say, 'You should consider running for council,'" Lemoine says.

The timing is finally right for Lemoine, as he's about to step away from two terms as school trustee with the Division Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine (DSFM). This past year, the trustee position required his attendance at 83 meetings. Thus he's confident he can handle whatever time council work will require of him.

Aside from his role as school trustee, Lemoine's primary career is that of a financial business advisor with CDEM, the Economic Development Council



Joel Lemoine of Ste. Agathe is running for council.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

for Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities. He's been employed there for the past 20 years.

"My line of work is something that makes for a perfect transition to council work," Lemoine says. "My primary role with CDEM is to help entrepreneurs buy businesses, start businesses, and expand businesses. I also deal a lot with immigration and newcomers coming in, mostly looking for employment for them which I match up with my list of employers."

Assisting entrepreneurs with business start-ups and paving the path for business retention is Lemoine's passion. And with an RM that struggles in some areas to grow and keep its commercial sector alive, he feels he may have the expertise to help turn that around.

"To attract people to our communities requires growing the business aspect of it," Lemoine says. "I've always said that for a community to succeed or to stay afloat, you at least need a little gas bar, a restaurant, maybe a small grocery store, a school, and a bank, ideally. Once you have that infrastructure in place, I think people are encouraged. But as soon as you lose those core industries, you're in survival mode."

Lemoine's work as a business advisor on CDEM has also provided him an opportunity to sit on a number of community

development corporations (CDCs) in the southeast as an ex-officio member. That includes many years attending Ritchot CDC meetings and Ste. Agathe's version of the same, the CDI.

The objectives of the CDC and CDI are to create long-term visions for the community and, from that, establish economic development strategies for growth.

Lemoine recognizes that the many volunteers who make up the CDC and other local organizations are the real heroes of a community. Ste. Agathe seems to have a lot of those, he says. Even so, keeping growth focused on the residential side of things should result in new volunteers moving in to replace others as they age out.

While CDCs are effective, Lemoine adds, they need the support of a council that's willing to work together with them, to hear out their ideas and then provide the infrastructure to make them work.

Another advantage of working with CDEM over the years, he says, is the witness he's been to countless community projects around the province that were borne out of a community's ingenuity and creativity.

"If there's a project that I've seen in senior housing development or community development, tourism, or immigration attraction strategies, I'll bring

that to council and, rather than reinvent the wheel, try to adapt it for here."

As it is for so many others, a lack of seniors housing in his municipality is a real sore spot for Lemoine. He believes that it's unacceptable for the very people who have lived out their lives in the community and invested so much in it to be unable to find housing.

"The elderly population is being lost," he says. "Just because of housing, not because they want to leave. They've found ways to develop seniors housing in other communities and that's the knowledge I hope to bring to council."

Sometimes, he says, council members need to be long-term visionaries. It's not always a "build it and they will come" scenario when it comes to needed community projects. He uses the example of the Riel Industrial Park, which was laboriously slow in getting going and took a lot of effort to see through. Today, it's a major part of Ritchot's thriving economic success.

"Financially and emotionally, that project hurt before the light of day was seen," he says.

All in all, Lemoine is a community champion at heart with a desire to find new ways to serve his community.

"At the end of the day, I'd be there working for the municipality, but my heart is in Ste. Agathe. So I have to make sure that my constituents are happy and that I'm available to them."

On the campaign trail, Lemoine says he's hoping to get some door-knocking in, although in a growing community like Ste. Agathe he's trying to be realistic on that front. Residents can likely expect to see a flyer in their mailboxes or on their front steps in the coming weeks.

As well, he hopes to be available to the voters in his region and welcomes anyone to reach out by phone, email, or in person.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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## IN BRIEF

### Ritchot Gains New Service Request Tool

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

There's a new online tool residents of Ritchot can use to report concerns spotted around the municipality. It's called Service Request.

Dominique Lemoine, Ritchot's assistant CAO, says that out of the 200 requests for service received from residents this year, 50 percent came via the online portal.

"I believe council would like to see this used whenever possible," says Lemoine. "We have a list of available service types on our website that can be submitted directly from the resident. The [Service Request] allows staff to keep track of all concerns under one portal as well as provide reports to council when needed."

The tool was developed by All-Net, the company behind the RM's web design and Ritchot Connect, the municipal communication app available to all residents.

Submitted requests are received at the RM office and forwarded to the appropriate staffer or department. For instance, if a service request pertains to animal control, the bylaw officer is notified.

However, the portal should not be used to report suspicious criminal activity. These concerns need to be called in to the St. Pierre-Jolys RCMP detachment directly.

Lemoine says that RM staff do their best to reach out to residents who submit service requests in as timely a manner as possible. Lines of communication stay open until the request or concern has been satisfactorily resolved and the file is closed. If follow-up is required, the bylaw officer will indicate a date by which it should be carried out.

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## IN BRIEF

## Memory Garden Takes Shape

By Sara Beth Dacombe

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

On August 17, a putting green was installed at the Memory Garden at the Heritage Life Personal Care Home in Niverville as organizers work to complete the garden by fall.

The garden is located in the courtyard of the PCH and will feature a putting green, gazebo, water feature, shaded gathering areas, and many beautiful plantings including perennial bushes, topiaries, and flowers intended to attract butterflies.

"The garden will provide a social, restful, and/or active space and improve the quality of life for our seniors," says Shirley Hoult, for the local chapter of Communities in Bloom.

One key feature will be the ability-friendly circular paved walkway, which will allow residents of all mobility levels to access as much of the garden as possible.

Work on the garden officially began on July 9, but the organizing committee had been at the planning stage for quite a while.

Residents of the personal care home, their families, and any visitors will be invited to enjoy the gardens and the putting green.

"We will be providing putters, but it's not a golf course. There will be one or two holes, or maybe three at the most, that they can put into," says Hoult.

The organizers behind the project include Niverville Communities in Bloom, as well as Bonnie Friesen and Annette Fast. Contractors Creative Landscaping estimate they will have the garden finished by the end of September 2022.

Funding comes from private donations, the government, and the Thomas Sill Foundation.

# New Face Joins the Race for St. Adolphe Voters

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Jason Bodnarchuk, 42, is a five-year resident of St. Adolphe and the first in the RM of Ritchot to throw their hat into the ring to challenge a sitting member of council. On October 26, St. Adolphe residents will have a reason to head to the polls.

"I like a challenge," Bodnarchuk says of his decision to run for council. "Since [St. Adolphe] is our forever home, I want to see it get better, safer, and stronger, and I want to be the person to [help get it there]."

Bodnarchuk says he and his wife chose this community to raise their children because of its small-town, know-your-neighbour feel. It brings back fond memories, he says, of growing up in Charleswood when it still felt like a suburb. Parents could comfortably let their kids play in the neighbourhood, and children referred to the neighbourhood adults as "auntie" and "uncle."

With his oldest son starting Kindergarten this fall, Bodnarchuk says he is impressed by the supports available to his child in the smaller school system.

"[My oldest son] is special needs so there's a little bit more of a fear factor, I guess," Bodnarchuk confesses. "We've had numerous meetings with counsellors, the principal, and [special needs] workers and I have never felt so supported."

If elected to office, it will be Bodnarchuk's first time tackling politics. He's had a keen interest for a while, though, and follows closely in the decisions coming out of local council meetings and how they reflect on the community's needs.

He takes no issue with current councillor Ron Mamchuk or any other member of council, he adds, but a fresh set of eyes and a new vision could be of benefit.

For the past 15 years, Bodnarchuk has worked as a civil servant in a government office, so he understands teamwork and how to make decisions that are best for the whole, not just the individual.

His career and family provide him the flexibility to be available to the residents at this time of his life, he says. The strengths he can bring to council are his problem-solving abilities and listening skills.



Jason Bodnarchuk from St. Adolphe is running for council.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

In his words, he doesn't easily back away from a problem and isn't afraid to push for what's right.

Bodnarchuk says he sees a few gaps in the community and, while he doesn't know that he can fix them, he'd like to give it his best shot.

First and foremost, for Bodnarchuk, is the lack of RCMP presence in the community, resulting in Main Street operating like a daily race-track. He's terrified, he says, for the local children who cross the street twice a day to get to school, and he's hopeful that something can be done on a council level before there's a tragedy to reckon with.

"I don't know if we need to build a better relationship with the RCMP... but [I'd like to know] how we can work with them," Bodnarchuk says. "Can we get a cruiser car to sit at a certain spot for a week for maybe an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening?"

Of course, there's also something to be said for the condition of St. Adolphe's Main Street. If elected, Bodnarchuk says he'll spend time during the early weeks paying personal visits to the St. Pierre-Jolys RCMP detachment and the Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure offices, building personal connections right out of the gate.

"I want to talk to those people to make sure that our relationships are solid and in place," adds Bodnarchuk.

This past winter, Bodnarchuk says he became aware of another safety concern. This, he says, was in regard to the high snowbanks that were allowed to build up in front of the daycare, making navigation for pedestrians and vehicles perilous at times.

"I called [public works] every day for a week until that [snow barrier] got ploughed down... If I have to

call two times a day every day to get something done, because it's a safety concern for a resident, I'll do it."

Bodnarchuk also feels hopeful that, with council support, a community watch group could be formed to assist in providing even more layers of safety to the community.

Another gap that's deeply concerning to him is the lack of adult housing options so seniors can age out in their own community and stay close to their children and grandchildren.

"There's limited resources [for seniors]. We don't have that 55-plus housing that I want to see. We don't have that senior care home that I want to see. So who do we need to speak to at the province to get these projects going?"

The same conversations, he says, can be had at the other end of the age spectrum. As the Tourond Creek development swells with new young families, where will all these new children go to school?

Conversations with the province on this subject should be happening now, he says, not when the school is overflowing into huts that extend across the school grounds.

"[Huts] are a band-aid more than anything. It's not a solution to the problem."

One more gap in the community, he says, is the lack of interest businesses seem to have in setting up shop in town. St. Adolphe's proximity to Winnipeg can explain the lack of interest from larger-scale businesses like grocery chains, he says, but what stands in the way of small-scale business such as coffee shops, hair salons, and gyms?

"I've heard a lot of people say that we'd like a grocery store here, but we also want to make sure that whoever

brings that business in, we're setting them up for success and not to fail. We don't want to see businesses come in and then close down."

He cites the strip mall on Main Street as a prime example of static or even reverse commercial growth in the community.

"I want to sit down [and assess] why businesses can't survive out here. What's causing them not to want to come out here? And then to find the solutions on how we can draw businesses in."

In terms of recreation amenities, Bodnarchuk isn't convinced that the town is too small to support those either.

"I would love to see some development of more greenspaces, baseball diamonds, and multiuse fields so we can have areas for kids to play more sports," he says. "[It would] be nice to see baseball and soccer tournaments happen to bring more people out in the community."

Bodnarchuk says his campaign will also run on a platform of improving transparency between council and constituents.

"I want people to know what's going on in their town," says Bodnarchuk. "This council has done quite well with being transparent and the new Connect app is great, but I want everyone to know that [they can] email me or call me personally."

He says, too, that social media could be better utilized by the town for getting information out.

In the coming months, Bodnarchuk hopes to get to as many doors as possible. If he doesn't get to someone's door, he hopes residents will take the time to reach out to him, inviting him to meet or just chat by phone or electronically.

As well, he plans to meet with business owners and committee heads to find out if they feel supported or if council could improve on that in the future.

"I'm driving towards that finish line and I really hope [I'm elected]. If people want change, I'm willing to help them get that change."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Facebook: Jason for St. Adolphe  
Email: jasonforstadolphe@gmail.com



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# Tourond Creek Phase Two Met with Public Concern

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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On August 17, St. Adolphe residents voiced their opinions on applications made by the developers of Tourond Creek, SALCO, to enable the company to move forward with plans for phase two.

The first request included a proposal for subdivision which, if approved, would result in the creation of new public roads on the southeast corner of the development.

SALCO also submitted a request for variance on ten of the new lots, allowing the company to decrease the side yards from the standard ten feet to eight feet.

Brandon Powell, consultant to SALCO, attended the meeting virtually.

"The reason why we're proposing to subdivide is we are completely limited in terms of our inventory for single-family lots," Powell said.

Supply and trade shortages of the past few years, he noted, have resulted in build times that have increased from six months to about two years.

"Phase two will include Tourond Creek's first lakeview lots along the pond," Powell said. "This is a new amenity-style lot we haven't had the opportunity to market yet so we're very excited about this."

Powell noted that impact studies have been completed in respect to increased traffic flow along Highway 200 once phase two is complete.

Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI), he said, have not identified any vehicle capacity issues.

He also says that a recent review indicates that even after the completion of all proposed units, the Highway 200 intersection would still only operate at 35 percent capacity at peak hours and no additional access points would be required.

Three residents aired their concerns in person, whereas a fourth submitted her grievances by email. All echoed a common concern: the lack of a secondary access to the development which would be dedicated to construction vehicles and equipment.

As pointed out at the meeting, two more access points were promised in SALCO's original development plan. These intersections were to connect to St. Adolphe Road (also known as Old Dike Road) at points just north of the phase two development.

According to Powell, construction of these new access points has been stalled by outside agencies until further notice, tying SALCO's hands.

"We have one way in and one way out," Powell said of the single access point off Highway 200. "Construction vehicles, by way of our development agreement, must come through Tourond Creek Drive."

In response to this issue, one resident queried how the developer and the RM plan to set better controls during phase two development—controls, she said, that weren't in

place during the buildout of phase one.

"How will... large construction vehicles share the roadways with kids on bikes?" she questioned. "Will builders be accountable for trades to slow down when coming into... the development? Fifty kilometers an hour for a cement truck coming down Chimney Swift [Drive] when kids are playing on bikes is not safe."

These are similar to concerns shared with The Citizen immediately after the public hearing, where a Tourond Creek resident cited accidents caused by construction vehicles in the recent past.

One involved a ruptured line which created a hydraulic fluid spill on the street in front of resident mailboxes, causing traffic to be rerouted. The second accident included a natural gas leak which resulted from a construction vehicle breaking through a gas line very near to the development's sole entrance.

Another resident told council that, with a second development access point, construction traffic could be diverted down secondary roads which could in fact help reduce structural damage to St. Adolphe's Main Street.

"A fully loaded ten-yard cement truck weighs 70,000 pounds," he told council. "Dozens if not hundreds of commercial vehicles weighing this much and probably more travel on Main [Street] with the destination being Tourond Creek"

To those gathered, CAO

Duval provided details on the chain of events that need to occur before access points along St. Adolphe Road can be created.

Firstly, he said, there are pipelines running alongside the road which will require the establishment of a crossing agreement with Imperial Oil.

Secondly, St. Adolphe Road is currently under the province's jurisdiction. Also, a plan is in place to eventually raise the height of the community's ring dike by using dirt removed from St. Adolphe Road. Until that time, Duval said, it's difficult to consider the addition of intersections along this route.

However, Duval suggested that it may be wise for council to begin talks with the oil company on creating a temporary access point for construction vehicle use during the development of phase two.

Mayor Chris Ewen recommended that SALCO find a means of informing residents when street closures or blockages are imminent. To residents, he suggested that council be informed when issues arise within the development.

Duval then informed council that he will be in talks with legal counsel regarding additional wording in development agreements going forward which will hold the developer more accountable for the actions of builders on their sites.

Council voted unanimously in favour of accepting SALCO's two requests.



## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Board of Directors for Niverville Heritage Holdings Inc. are looking to grow a socially and culturally diverse Board from all sectors of the community and surrounding areas including new & growing families. All are encouraged to apply.

An independent Nomination Committee has been established to guide the selection process of qualified candidates for recommendation for 2-4 available board positions. The board positions are exciting and challenging as they deal with the complexities of operating a multifaceted, not for profit social enterprise campus with a staff of over 240 team members.

We are looking for individuals with strengths in Health Care, Spiritual Care, Human Resources, Fund Development and Management.

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If you have questions, or you are interested in serving in this capacity or would like to recommend an individual for consideration please email [wes@heritagecentre.ca](mailto:wes@heritagecentre.ca).

You can pick up application forms and information at:

- Niverville Physiotherapy – 61 Main Street Niverville
- Niverville Heritage Centre Admin R205 – 101 2nd Ave South
- Niverville Credit Union - 62 Main Street Niverville

## Thank you

Jason Kehler — Committee Chair Liaison  
On behalf of the Nomination Committee  
Andrew Neufeld, Nick Bergmann and Aaron Redekop



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## IN BRIEF

## Nivervillian Charged with Multiple Offences

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

In early August, a resident of Niverville was convicted of several criminal offences in relation to the illegal trafficking of furs. The investigation, which began in 2019, was carried out by conservation officers.

On June 28, the Niverville resident pled guilty to six counts of violating the Wildlife Act and was handed a two-year hunting suspension, in addition to fines in the amount of \$3,700 and a \$7,000 restitution order.

A search warrant was executed in October 2020 at a Niverville home. As a result of that search, cell phones, computers, documents, and an Arctic wolf pet were seized.

The investigation also revealed that this individual played a role in the killing of two moose out-of-season near South Indian Lake (January 2020), the killing and possession of a barren-ground caribou near South Indian Lake (March 2018), and fur dealing without a licence (September 2019 to February 2020).

In total, officers charged the individual with 23 violations of the Wildlife Act. The charges included killing big game during a prohibited time, possession of wildlife illegally taken, engaging in the business of trading furs without a licence, buying and selling wild animal parts without a licence and failure to submit transaction records.

Manitoba Natural Resources and Northern Development have not released the name of the person.

# The Fine Haus Fiasco: How the Victims Moved On

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

It's been almost three years since *The Citizen* first reported the story of a young Winnipeg couple whose dream of moving to Niverville was dashed in a high-profile real estate fiasco.

In 2019, motivated by a desire to escape the high crime rate of big city life, the Memic family fell victim to what would eventually be perceived by many as a well-played scam perpetrated by Fine Haus Building Company and its president, Jason Cianflone.

Laura Memic brought her story to the media in 2019 in order to help prevent other families from being likewise duped by claims of new house builds at low costs.

By the fall of that year, the couple and their young child were stuck in an Airbnb rental, awaiting the construction of their new home in Niverville—a home that would never be built—and living with the harsh reality that they may never see the return of the large deposit they'd put down on that home, a deposit which had taken them years to save.

Today, Memic declines comment to *The Citizen*, citing that it took them too long to recover from the trauma to revisit it again. They never did move out of Winnipeg.

Back in 2019, as the Memics were discovering the lies and deception behind their promised home build, others around the southeast were doing the same. In September 2019, a publicly accessible Facebook page called "Jason Cianflone The Scam" was launched, the moderator of which has remained anonymous.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the page was clear: to expose Cianflone and the realtors assisting him in Fine Haus



Chelsi Jawa and her family celebrate their home purchase in 2019.

sales. Soon after the page went live, customer review after customer review from Fine Haus's website was shared on Facebook. The comments demonstrated anger, heartbreak, and pleas to the building company for compensation.

Other Facebook posts came from Fine Haus customers throughout Manitoba, all of whom were left with homes in various states of completion before the work was abandoned. Their inquiries to Cianflone and his team were met with silence.

Still others, like the Memics, never even saw a shovel hit the ground. Just prior to their promised possession date, Memic discovered through a call to the Town of Niverville that no construction permit had ever been pulled on the lot that had been promised to them.

A further phone call to a representative of Fifth Avenue Estates, the development where the Memics' property was to be located, revealed that Fine Haus didn't even own the lot in question.

Fast-forward one year, to November 2020, and a post to the Jason

Cianflone The Scam page shows a photo of a letter sent out by a licensed insolvency trustee to one of the many creditors of Fine Haus.

The letter indicates that an interim receivership had been completed and that proceeds available for distribution were being paid out to 51 claimants. Just under \$40,000 was in the process of being doled out against claims totalling almost \$1.5 million.

As found on the website for PwC Canada, a firm providing professional consulting to Canadian business owners, the definition of interim receivership is "a remedy available under the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act for the purpose of protecting the assets of a company that is undergoing an insolvency process."<sup>2</sup>

### A VICTIM'S STORY

Chelsi Jawa and her partner were awarded a small settlement in court toward their claim against Fine Haus.

"Through the small court case, we were refunded... an insulting \$300," Jawa says.

The couple had a home built with Fine Haus on Wyldewood Crescent in Niverville, one street down from Briarfield Court where the Memics would have lived if their dream had been realized.

Jawa says that the family went to see a Fine Haus spec house in February 2019. They paid a deposit on a similar build and chose their design details. The possession date was scheduled for that summer.

"We were more fortunate than some, you could say, and our home made it to the final phases," Jawa says, "with the exception of our final grade and driveway being complete, which had been fully paid for [in advance]."

She says things began getting complicated almost from the start when the Fine Haus design manager contradicted what the realtor had told Jawa. Instead of custom finishings being credited toward the cost of the build, it would cost the couple extra.

"We [decided we] would just customize down the road and do all spec for now," says Jawa.

Shortly into the build, though, the couple paid the construction site a visit only to realize that a door that was clearly marked on the building plan had been overlooked in the actual build.

"[The realtor] informed us that our second copy of plans—which we had revised to change the plumbing—no longer had this door," says Jawa. "They removed it from the plan without informing us. But due to us signing off on the [second plans], we were now bound to it."

The couple paid the builder extra to have the door installed.

Come possession day, Jawa says that the driveway, landscaping, and exterior finish remained incomplete. Following many inquiries and delays, the stucco



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was eventually installed and the completion of the driveway looked promising.

"We got the supplies for the driveway delivered [and then] one day we came home and the supplies were gone," says Jawa. "The contractor informed us they were directed to take them to a Briarfield home to complete instead. Texts stopped being answered, calls were ignored... and our driveway was never complete. The realtor as well as the owner went MIA on us around August or early September."

While most of the couple's attempts at conversation with Cianflone and the realtor failed, Jawa's husband was able to make one last connection with Cianflone by phone.

"[Cianflone] made it a point to state that he was aware I had aired a grievance on Facebook and that he would press charges if I didn't remove this post," Jawa says. "That was the last time we heard from him before the news circulated that he had fled to the U.S. and Fine Haus was dissolving."

The whole experience, she says, left them feeling violated and disrespected. The couple was forced to borrow additional money to cover the cost of completing their driveway and landscaping, putting them deeper in debt and putting other projects on hold.

#### TRADESPEOPLE TELL THEIR STORY

Bryan Trottier commented in *The Citizen's* original story. His company, Trotco Electric, had over \$30,000 worth of labour and materials invested in the Niverville Fine Haus homes before he became suspicious and pulled out.

He, along with about four other tradespeople, put liens on the homes and waited while Cianflone disappeared and left everyone hanging.

Trottier was able to recapture only a nominal portion of his investment through the liens. Through some creative collaboration with other tradespeople involved, however, Trottier managed to recover almost his entire loss.

"We actually partnered with a couple of other guys and bought one of the houses from the receivership group and then finished it and sold it," Trottier says. "It was good, but you still have to pay for a house that you were already stiffed on so it's a bit of a challenge."

He'd like to reassure Fine Haus homeowners in Niverville that the tradespeople

Cianflone's crew hired were top-notch professionals performing excellent workmanship.

The same cannot be said for Cianflone himself. Thankfully, Trottier says, builders like him don't come along every day.

"[Jason Cianflone] is a one-off for me," Trottier says. "For some people, things don't go their way and everything goes south. But this is the first guy that I felt like he was trying to [scam us]."

Dave Unger of UDT Interiors Inc. was one of the tradespeople who collaborated on the house purchase with Trottier.

"In all the years we've been in business... this was a pretty unique one in the way that [Fine Haus] was just suddenly gone," Unger says. "We've had contracts go sour before but the company would still continue to operate or they would stick around and change names. [Fine Haus] was definitely not the norm."

#### OTHERS WEIGH IN

Ken Klippenstein was managing the sale of properties in Fifth Avenue Estates when Cianflone came along. Fine Haus purchased a few lots and put down deposits on others. The agreement stated that a house build could not begin on any lot until it had been purchased in full.

Red flags went up for Klippenstein in 2019 when he discovered a Fine Haus build that was well into the construction phase—indeed, the drywall was already in place—even though its lot had only been secured by deposit.

Reaching out to Klippenstein today, he says his company never filed a lawsuit against Fine Haus. Instead, thanks to contracts signed, Fifth Avenue Estates was able to reclaim all of the lots for which full payment hadn't been received. They resold those lots to different builders.

Finally, back in 2019 *The Citizen* also heard from the local Fine Haus representative who worked for Cianflone for those few fateful months before Cianflone fled. Like the others, he said that he'd been sweet-talked into the job by a Fine Haus president who made lofty promises of charity and goodwill.

That representative continues to seek anonymity for the sake of his family and reputation. He, too, was scammed out of \$30,000 worth of wages when Cianflone disappeared.

It was then that this rep knew it had all been a ruse.

"Most people, myself included, have some deep latent trauma caused by this horrible individual and it's legitimately painful dredging it back up," he says. "On the flip side, I would love to see justice brought to Jason Cianflone. And if keeping his name fresh in the news is the way to do that, [so be it]."

That representative never recovered a dime of his unpaid wages.

#### WHO IS JASON CIANFLONE?

Who is this man, Jason Cianflone? And where is he today? According to some rumours that have circulated, he could be pastoring a church in Texas.

Online searches reveal a religious blog attributed to someone named Jason Cianflone with a profile picture that looks similar to the man who is known to have operated Fine Haus Building Co.

According to this blog, the organization's mission statement reads: "Spreading the good news and spiritual knowledge to all of God's Children (TEXAS)."<sup>3</sup>

A search on LinkedIn reveals an account seemingly associated with Cianflone, where he posts on behalf of a publication called "Brighter Days Are Ahead For You." This page is filled with faith-based memes and Bible verses.<sup>4</sup>

*The Citizen* reached out to Cianflone on LinkedIn, providing an opportunity for the man to share his side to the story. As with previous attempts by the media to contact him, the request has been met with silence.

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> "Jason Cianflone The Scam," Facebook. Date of access: August 10, 2022 (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100067416278465>).

<sup>2</sup> "What Is an Interim Receivership?" PwC Canada. Date of access: August 10, 2022 (<https://www.pwc.com/ca/en/services/insolvency-assignments/what-is-interim-receivership.html>).

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<sup>4</sup> "Jason Cianflone," LinkedIn. Date of access: August 10, 2022 ([https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jasoncianflonebrighterdays-reaheadforyou\\_freedom-activity-6949749619887149056-z2JC](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jasoncianflonebrighterdays-reaheadforyou_freedom-activity-6949749619887149056-z2JC)).



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# IDC Residents Seek End to Boil Water Advisories

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

It may be difficult to believe that a neighbourhood in our corner of southeast Manitoba could be living under a regular boil water advisory (BWA) in 2022. But that's exactly what residents of Southside Estates in Île-des-Chênes have been dealing with for the better part of 20 years.

Southside Estates is a mobile home park first established in 1979. According to park operator Ben Wiens, Southside is home to 115 mobile home lots.

Twelve of these lots are privately owned and serviced by the municipal water system. The remaining 103 lots are rented on a month-to-month basis to residents who have purchased the trailer that sits on them.

All of the rental lots rely on an onsite well for their water. From the well, water is pumped through a small treatment plant also located onsite.

From January through June of 2022, residents on the well system have been subject to a BWA. After a short reprieve in July, the BWA went back into effect on August 3.

"It truly is disappointing to me as an operator to see a system go under a boil water advisory so frequently," Wiens says.

## RESIDENT'S FRUSTRATION

Tracey Wheeler has been a resident of Southside for the past eight years. A single mom with two kids in the household, she says she's tired of the perpetual cycle of BWAs in the park. She says they've been going on for as long as she's lived there.

"Nobody told me when I moved in that there were boil water advisories [in effect]," Wheeler says. "I had to find that out from my neighbours."

She's not surprised that the seller of her mobile home never mentioned it, pointing



Mobile homes in Southside Estates in Île-des-Chênes.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

out that no one would buy a trailer in the park if they knew about the constant BWAs. She fears that selling her trailer would be an impossibility, too, if she were to disclose the truth to potential buyers.

"It's frustrating to no end," she says. "You can't brush your teeth with the [tap water] and you can't cook with it. If you have [little kids], you can't even bathe them in the water. I think our [greater] community needs to know what's going on. Boil water advisories don't just affect reserves... It's happening in our own backyard."

The lease agreement she signed with the owner/landlord of the park clearly states that water is one of the amenities to be included in her monthly rent. Thus, she feels taken advantage of that she can't rely on the availability of safe water.

"We have to go out and buy water even though we're paying for it with our rent," Wheeler says. "In the last eight years, they have given us two \$20 store credits [to buy water]."

For Wheeler, whose children are teenagers, water purchases during a BWA amount to about eight five-litre jugs per month. When you have BWAs lasting six months, that cost adds up quickly.

But the BWAs are only one part of her frustration. She's also fed up with the frequency of water shutoffs to the majority of the park when repairs to the water system are being performed. When this happens, it's not uncommon

to get only a few hours' notice. Sometimes, she says, she's gotten no notice at all.

She recalls the water being off for three days last November. Her family couldn't flush the toilet, take a shower, wash the dishes, or do a load of laundry during that time.

Again, in April 2022, Wheeler returned home after a brief hospital stay only to find herself without water once more.

## EXPLAINING THE WATER ISSUES

Ben Wiens says that he's the certified water utility operator hired to manage the treatment plant, pump system, and network of lines and valves that service the majority of the park. He's also the son of Kathryn Wiens, an owner of Southside Estates, and he's a brother to Jessie Cahill, the park's office administrator.

According to Wiens, Wheeler's claims as to the frequency of BWAs in the park are true.

Regarding the six-month BWA that occurred this year, he says, "We had an influx of water [line] breaks since January and there were so many breaks so close to each other that it wasn't a good idea to rescind the BWA [in between repairs]."

Wiens adds that none of the BWAs which have occurred under his watch have been a result of unsafe drinking water. On the contrary, the water quality from the well is second to none, in his opinion.

The problem, he concludes, is the aging water distribution system of lines and valves, much of which is still the original infrastructure which was installed more than 40 years ago. Each time he needs to depressurize the water system to perform repairs to leaks, he says he's required to contact Manitoba Health and ask for a BWA to be issued.

It's a precautionary measure only, Wiens adds. Unfortunately, it's a process that takes time, requiring him to send water samples to a third-party lab once the leak is repaired and wait for the report to pass through a string of officers before a rescind notice is issued to the residents informing them that the water is safe to drink.

When a water shutoff is required, he says they try and get messages out in as timely a manner as possible. These go out by email, Facebook, or phone calls.

"If we can't give notice because the issue at hand is very, very critical, then we don't," Wiens says. "But we try to give notice as much as we can."

## THE HISTORY OF SOUTH-SIDE'S WATER SYSTEM

Living with BWAs at Southside Estates has become the norm for as long as Wiens can remember.

The first one was issued in 2001 when Wiens' father held ownership of the park. That BWA followed on the heels of the water crisis in Walkerton,

Ontario in 2000, a tragedy that caused six deaths and 2,000 others to become ill due to deadly E. coli bacteria which had infiltrated the community's drinking water supply.

The Walkerton situation garnered national attention and created big changes to water supply regulations.

"[Upgrading equipment] was so expensive back in 2001 that it was [a decision made to] go on a boil water advisory until technology was cheap enough," recalls Wiens, who was 11 at the time. "[It's either residents] can stay or we can spend a million dollars and go bankrupt and everyone's going to have to move. So it's kind of been a sustainability issue from the beginning."

According to Wiens, that BWA lasted until 2014—a total of 13 years. By that time, Wiens had been actively working alongside his father in trailer park management, especially in the field of water management.

The pair were able to make some occasional tweaks to the system to have the BWA rescinded for a few months here and there over the course of the coming years. But, mostly, the BWA remained in effect until 2018.

Between 2015 and 2018, Wiens says they were finally in a position to spend the money needed to upgrade the water treatment plant. He's proud of the upgraded facility, which operates on relatively current technology that uses ultraviolet light to disinfect the water that comes from the

well. It's also augmented by a digitized chlorination system.

There are sensors to detect air leaks in the system and an alarm which notifies Wiens of problems and their locations. The cost of the plant upgrade, he says, came to about \$80,000.

"[The treatment plant has] come a long way since 2001," Wiens says. "It's actually pretty much been rebuilt completely."

Unfortunately, Wiens lost his father tragically in the past few years. He has since taken on responsibility for picking up where his father left off. Wiens attained his Small Water Treatment Plant certification at Red River Polytechnic and manages the water system in the park solo.

He admits that he could use some backup since water quality testing is a daily requirement of being a plant operator. It means he's on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Indeed, it also means that, if for any reason he would be unable to attend to daily water checks, the park would have to go under a BWA until his return.

Following the recent upgrades to the plant, Wiens says that the park enjoyed about two years without a BWA, from 2018 to 2020.

Since that time, the rest of the water distribution system has been showing its age.

While about 25 percent of the service lines have been replaced since 2012, there is still a long way to go, Wiens concludes. Leaks in the old service lines and valves appear regularly to this day, which keeps the BWAs in an on-again, off-again rotation.

## WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

"[I've] learned a lot from the trailer park and all the problems that it has," Wiens says. "I've learned so much there that I could run a small little town myself."

That said, apart from a complete renewal of the underground distribution

system, he feels the park would benefit from a secondary backup treatment plant and curb stops placed at the entry to every bay.

With curb stops in place, Wiens could localize the depressurized water and BWAs to only one bay at a time, instead of affecting the entire park, as it does now.

Of course, there's also the option of connecting the entire trailer park to the existing municipal water system like the balance of Île-des-Chênes. For Wiens, this is not a cost-effective alternative.

Any way Wiens looks at it, park management has only two options: find a way to finance the great expense of a complete renewal or continue doing what they've been doing.

It's a catch-22, he admits, deciding whether tenants should pay more money or go on dealing with water problems indefinitely.

Current rent for each tenant is \$240 per month. Aside from water, this rate also covers the tenants' municipal sewer costs, property taxes, snow-clearing, and garbage removal.

"So when you're only pulling in \$2,880 a year for rent [per lot] and then you have to clear the roads and pay for garbage pickup and everything, [that's not easy]," Wiens says.

Wiens adds that management prides itself on the fact that they are one of the cheapest trailer parks in which to live in Manitoba right now.

In the meantime, Wiens will be searching government websites, looking for grant monies that could assist with infrastructure renewal.

#### OTHERS WEIGH IN

A shareholder in the business of Southland Estates, Kathryn Wiens, acknowledges that the park is not without problems. Even so, she says, they're a small family-run business faced with rising costs and tough economic times just like everyone else.

"I'm just so happy that there are so many [tenants] that are patient with us," Kathryn says. "It's not like we're [creating] the water line breaks. We just have to fix them when they come."

A major inhibitor, she says, is the Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB), which puts tight restrictions on her as a landlord in terms of raising rent. As a matter of fact, for the

years 2022 and 2023 the RTB has set the allowable annual rent increase to zero percent.

"We're not trying to harm our tenants," Kathryn says. "It's the Tenancy Branch that's holding everything up. Everything we do there, we lose money all the time because we can't raise the rent."

The possible loophole for Southside Estates within RTB regulation may be a clause called the Rehabilitation Scheme. The scheme provides opportunity for landlords to apply to make significant changes to their rental property. If RTB approves the changes, and changes are carried out adequately, it affords the landlord flexibility in adjusting rent rates during an exemption period.

"An exemption period is the amount of time a rental unit may be exempt from rent regulation," states the RTB website. "If your unit is exempt from rent regulation, it means that... your landlord can increase your rent, once every 12 months, by an amount they choose. They do not have to follow the rent increase guideline that the government sets each year. The length of the exemption period depends on how much money your landlord spends on their rehabilitation scheme."

Even with options such as this, Kathryn is sympathetic to the financial hardships it could cause her tenants.

"It's mostly senior citizens and single parents that live in there and they can't afford to [pay higher rent]," she concludes.

Jessie Cahill, office manager for Southside Estates and Kathryn's daughter, agrees that tenants may just need to be patient a while longer.

"We've been working really hard with Public Health," Cahill says. "It's just been a really unfortunate series of events with the harsh winter breaking some of our pipes. Out of 110 residents, most people have been super supportive and very thankful for our efforts."

*The Citizen* reached out to municipal leadership, inquiring into council's responsibility when it comes to residents of the RM who are living under long-term BWAs.

Ritchot Mayor Chris Ewen and Île-des-Chênes Councilor Shane Pelletier agree that it's a problem they don't like to see, but rectifying it is out of council's control.

"I encourage residents of the trailer court to contact the owner/operator of the facility and encourage them to become part of the municipal infrastructure," Ewen simply states.

#### ANOTHER RESIDENT, ANOTHER FRUSTRATION

Patrick Poirier has been a resident of Southside Estates along with his two sons for the past four years. He echoes all of Wheeler's frustrations, as well as one more: the lack of a private water shutoff valve to his mobile home.

For the first time since he purchased his trailer, Poirier experienced a major faucet leak at one of his sinks. As a plumber, Poirier saw it as a simple enough repair once the water shutoff valve was located and turned off.

He crawled beneath the trailer and located the connection where the park's water line entered his trailer, but there was no shutoff valve. Thinking this impossible, based on years of experience, he searched the entire area beneath his trailer and confirmed his suspicions: there was no way to turn off the water to his trailer without turning it off to the entire park.

He says he reached out to Wiens for help but was simply told the valve was there and he should keep looking. Outreach to Southside management, he says, resulted in a curt response: "Call a plumber."

"I don't have a service valve under there," Poirier says. "There's a possibility that there is in other [trailers], but I know for a fact that I don't have one."

Like Wheeler, Poirier is frustrated with the continual leaks and questions the integrity of the lines running throughout the park. Without a doubt, he says, the problems are always worst at the end of the winter season.

"What kind of water lines do they have in there that are shattering and rupturing?" Poirier asks. "Why are they not below the frostline?"

He says no one has ever made the effort to ask him whether a rent increase would be worthwhile in order to have a reliable water system.

"I have no problems paying a little more money if [it meant] having potable water all the time," Poirier concludes. "Instead they're just bandaiding it. They're not remedying it."

Wiens agrees that much of the breakage to lines and valves happens during times of extreme temperature fluctuation. He says tenants could help prevent some of it by ensuring that the skirt around the bottom of their trailer is intact and special heat sources called traces are attached to the lines beneath the trailer to keep the water from freezing.

#### A RESIDENT DEFENDS OWNER'S POSITION

A third resident of the trailer park reached out to *The Citizen* in order to support the owners' noncommittal approach to ending the BWAs. She chooses to remain anonymous but says there are many other residents who feel the same way she does.

"It's affordable," she says. "And I can't afford to live anywhere else."

She's been a resident of Southside Estates for the past 21 years and hopes to continue living there for years to come because it's a safe community to live in.

The BWA was in effect two decades ago when she first bought in and she's been buying drinking water ever since. It's a small price to pay, she says, for affordable housing.

"When it comes down to it, yes, the BWAs and the water shutoffs are inconvenient, but that problem exists in all of Manitoba," she adds. "Because the trailer park is old, obviously there's going to be plumbing issues."

She worries that some residents will try to force the owners' hand to end the BWAs. If they are successful, she imagines the owners will have only two options: to sell the park or close it altogether.

"For a lot of us, we don't have anywhere else to go," she concludes. "And I'm afraid that we could possibly lose our home. I hope it doesn't come to that, but this is my biggest worry."

#### TEMPORARY RELIEF

As of August 9, the BWA was rescinded in the park again.

"I expect things will be good until wintertime now," Wiens says.

*The Citizen* reached out to the media spokesperson for RTB, inquiring into a tenant's rights in terms of ongoing water issues.

As of this writing, no response had been received.



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Taylor has completed additional coursework in Acupuncture, Functional Movement Systems, Strength Training, and the CPA Orthopedic division Level 1 program.

Taylor has spent her career working with patients of all ages and with a variety of injuries and conditions. She utilizes different manual therapy techniques, patient education, and exercise programming to assist patients in achieving their health and wellness goals.

Niverville is now home for Taylor and her husband Macauley, but she was born and raised in Killarney, Manitoba. In her spare time she enjoys a wide variety of activities including; softball, hiking, mountain biking, camping, gardening, water sports, figure skating, downhill skiing, and learning new workouts.

Niverville Physiotherapy is excited to have Taylor as part of our team and she is now accepting new patients. She will be taking appointments for Mondays/Wednesdays/Fridays 7:00AM - 3:00PM and Tuesdays/Thursdays 12:00PM - 8:00PM.

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# Commentary

## Us vs. Them: How We Create Ingroups (and Outgroups)

By Daniel Dacombe

We've all felt it—we're out in public, minding our own business, when suddenly we come face to face with one of Them. Instantly our heart rate speeds up, we get a flood of adrenaline, and our breathing quickens. We didn't expect to see one of Them here, but here They are, and now we have to be in the same room with Them.

And who could blame us for such a strong reaction? After all, They are the ones wearing Saskatchewan Roughriders jerseys.

Those of us who grew up watching the Blue Bombers with the (mostly) vain hope of them winning the Grey Cup will recognize this specific experience, though the feeling itself is universal. Everyone has encountered an individual belonging to a group that make us uncomfortable.

By contrast, there are other groups in our lives that we strongly identify with.

Psychologists call these structures ingroups and outgroups, and considerable attention has been given to understanding them. And for good reason: group bias may be at the root of almost all human conflict.

Simply put, an ingroup is a social group that we psychologically identify with. This could include race, religion, gender, political party, or even a sports fandom. We usually belong to several different ingroups, even several at the same time, with one or more being primary group associations.

An outgroup is the opposite—a group that we don't identify with or don't belong to.

When we identify with an ingroup, it makes us feel safer, more welcome, more at home. We tend to experience greater freedom of expression. We also look positively on members of our ingroup, ignoring their faults, focusing on their positive features, and showing them favouritism.

This is what is known as ingroup bias, a tendency to believe and behave in certain ways when it



comes to dealing with our ingroups, bypassing conscious thought entirely.

But ingroup bias can produce negative effects. We're more likely to be suspicious or hostile towards people who aren't in our ingroup. We may also compromise our morals, making us more likely to be dishonest if it will benefit the ingroup, even if honesty is highly valued by the group. For example, see the many sexual abuse scandals across religious or sports groups, frequently covered up by members of those groups.

Another dangerous effect: when our personal beliefs are at odds with the expected beliefs of the ingroup, we may change our beliefs to match those of the ingroup without thinking critically. If you've ever noticed a loved one seem to change after they join, or become more devout in, an ingroup, this may be what's going on.

Group bias exists on a spectrum. Not everyone will feel inclined to lie to protect members of their ingroup when they're caught in an abuse scandal. For some, outgroups may inspire mild discomfort. For others, they may experience hatred, bigotry, and fear.

These biases can sometimes cause people to act in ways that dehumanize others, and so many examples of this exist that including

them here in a single article would be impossible.

So where does our tendency to classify the people around us into ingroups and outgroups come from?

Human beings evolved as social creatures. Cooperation, altruism, and protection are all powerful benefits of belonging to a strongly bonded social group. Ten people around a campfire at night can protect each other much better than two can! Thus, natural selection has always favoured those who were more naturally inclined to band together and form strong bonds.

Having a strong ingroup also allows them to protect themselves from other groups. Starting with other tribes and moving on to larger groups, city-states, and nations, conflict has arisen over land, food, and other resources throughout history.

Feeling a stable bond to our ingroup helps us feel safe in the world. When people leave the group, it can cause psychological distress. Studies have shown that we tend to automatically regard people who leave our groups as irrational or dishonest, which shields us from their legitimate reasons for leaving. We can even feel an inclination to attack, verbally or otherwise, those who leave our ingroup.

Some studies have shown that when we identify strongly with an

ingroup, our brains are flooded with oxytocin—a chemical that induces feelings of closeness and good will.

Neurologists have also found that our brains have a strong tendency to divide the world into us and them, and to change the definition of us based on the social situation we're in. This allows us to change the ingroup we're identifying with based on the current circumstances. (This is why we don't wear Bomber jerseys and face paint when we go to work).

Now that we know where ingroup and outgroup biases come from, how can we use this information to make the world a better place?

One example that has become even more relevant in the wake of COVID-19 is that people are leaving their religious groups in record numbers. According to Statistics Canada, religious group identification just dropped below 70 percent for the first time. American data is consistent with Canadian numbers, showing sharp declines not just in attendance to religious services (which one would expect when churches conduct services online), but with religious affiliation itself.

And when people leave our religious ingroup, suddenly the negative biases we held towards outgroup members apply to this person we otherwise care about. This is an automated and unconscious response,

yet it can lead to profound distress for everyone involved.

Social psychologists from the University of Waterloo have discovered a connection between the strengths of one's religious beliefs and one's willingness to associate with former members of the same religion; the stronger one's religious beliefs, the more willing one is to dislike, reject, ostracize, or dehumanize people who leave the religion. Our natural inclination to be altruistic to one another can be overridden by the strength of our ingroup bias, which causes real harm to those who may have left a religion for legitimate reasons.

Remember, our ingroup bias is designed to protect our own belonging to the ingroup and even our own survival. When people leave the ingroup, our instincts tell us that the ingroup may be weakened and less able to defend itself. Therefore, rejecting those who leave our ingroup protects the integrity of the ingroup... but it does so at the expense of our relationship with those who leave.

How can we prevent our ingroup bias from causing harm to those in our lives who move on from our shared religion? As always, the best defence is knowledge. Being aware of ingroup bias can help us avoid giving in to those feelings.

We can also remember that our natural psychological tendency to divide the world into us and them is something we can change.

We can redefine the boundaries of our ingroups. Some community-minded writers have started referring to this as creating a "tribe," a fluid ingroup that can be as inclusive as we want. In this way, we needn't lose those loved ones who happen to be leaving our religion, and we can avoid subjecting them to rejection and ostracization.

After all, the year is 2022. Our ingroup can be as large as we want it to be—and if we are willing, we can expand it to include all of humanity.



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# Sports & Recreation



Entrance to the Baudry Trails near Ste. Agathe.

JENNIFER LAVIN

## Ste. Agathe Trails Get Provincial Boost

By Jennifer Lavin

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The Baudry Trails project in Ste. Agathe has received exciting news: they have been given a \$30,000 grant by the 2022 Trails Manitoba Grant Program to help improve and enhance their trail system.

The grant is funded by the provincial government through an endowment fund with The Winnipeg Foundation.

This year's grants are part of a \$10 million investment in trails.

"These projects will develop new multiuse trail parks, trail extensions, as well as continued enhancements and maintenance to trails throughout the province," says Eric Dickson, president of Trails Manitoba.

Danielle Robert is a director of the Ste. Agathe Community Development Initiative (CDI) and head of a subcommittee that was formed in order to bring the Baudry Trails to fruition.

Robert says that when she heard about the trails grant, she immediately knew that it would be a good fit for the local project.

As part of her grant application, Robert pointed out that before the Baudry Trails there were no public walking trails in the Ste. Agathe area. She also mentioned that the trails were all-season.

"In the summer months, the trails can be enjoyed by anyone who wants to walk and hike, anyone who enjoys bird watching or wants to connect with nature," she says. "In the winter

months, they can be enjoyed by anyone who enjoys cross-country skiing or snowshoeing activities."

Robert adds that the trails are fairly untouched and home to a multitude of wildlife, including deer, birds, squirrels, and rabbits.

The CDI has applied for numerous grants and is fundraising for the Baudry Trails.

Robert says that once she has received word on all these potential grants, her committee will begin prioritizing projects.

"The top priority is the structure, some form of gazebo or picnic shelter—something with some shade and picnic tables," Robert explains.

The committee also has plans for interpretive signage, firepits, benches, and other features that will

make the trails even more of a draw to locals and visitors alike.

The CDI is planning a community clean-up day for the Baudry Trails in September. There is still work to do to get the area back to its pristine state after the spring floods along the Red River.

The Baudry Trails is the brainchild of brothers Denis, Richard, Gilbert, and Alan Baudry. They have lived in Ste. Agathe for a long time and often wondered what to do with the 50 acres they own along the river.

They eventually decided to leave the land almost exactly like it was and allow their community to explore it the way their ancestors did.

Baudry Trails can be accessed from Robert Road on the east side of the Red River in Ste. Agathe. There

is a parking lot and a welcome sign showing visitors where to begin their adventure.

"Manitobans love to get outside and enjoy the great outdoors, and our government is proud to share these investments in new and enhanced trails in our province," says Jeff Wharton, Minister of Climate and Parks. "We are excited to help provide new ways for Manitobans to connect with nature and explore our province."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- To volunteer for the September clean-up day, contact: daniellerobert@outlook.com
- [www.trailsmanitoba.ca/grants](http://www.trailsmanitoba.ca/grants)



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**FREE ESTIMATES**



# Arts & Entertainment

## Young Local Artist Behind CRRC Bollards

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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A local amateur artist now has a prominent new spot to display her artwork.

Over the summer, Jessica Banman, a recent graduate from Niverville High School (NHS), has been painting the concrete spheres in front of the CRRC. She now has five of the 13 spherical safety posts (called bollards) completed with her custom designs, and she intends to complete at least one more.

The painting project came about when staff at the CRRC saw the opportunity to beautify the entrance by adding some visual excitement to the dull grey bollards.

The high school, conveniently located right next door, seemed a good place to start looking for local talent and Warren Britton, manager for the CRRC, decided to bright it up with the art teacher.

Students have already been able to be involved at the facility, by creating murals for the west side of the old arena.

"I was speaking with [teacher] Tony Clarke one day about our current art project, the murals on the side of the old arena," says Britton. "Then I spoke to him that we were bringing in round bollards in front of the CRRC and that my long-term plan was to have them painted. Several months later, Tony contacted me saying he wanted to set up a meeting with myself and Jessica. She had a proposal and it all took off from there."

When Banman first heard about the project, she was keen to put her name forward for the job. As part of the senior class's art course, students were required to choose a final project and spend time outdoors on a large-scale project. It seemed like just the type of challenge Banman would enjoy.

"Clark came to me with the idea and I couldn't pass up the opportunity," she says. "I started compiling ideas based off of landmarks, events, and businesses from around town. I decided to stick with landmarks that represent our town and bring the community together. I created a proposal and a model of six bollards for the town council and was approved."

### THE CREATIVE CHALLENGES

This past winter, Banman spent time



Jessica Banman and her paintings on the CRRC bollards.

✉ SARA BETH DACOMBE

gathering materials and researching the process. The concrete had already been sealed with a compound that made it difficult to hold paint and she knew it would have to be removed. When the weather allowed for it, she, the teacher, and the staff at the CRRC tried out several methods to prepare the surface for the paint.

"We tried a lot of different things, but it was so difficult," Banman explains. "It was probably the hardest part of the process. We tried sanding, which didn't work. Then we tried soaking it in something to remove the sealant, but the thing that worked best was just to sandblast it off. We had to hire a crew to help."

Once the sealant was removed, Banman started painting it with a primer—and then she moved on to the final painting.

But that didn't mean the hard part was over. Painting around a sphere is a lot different than painting on a canvas.

"I would say, definitely, that working on a spherical surface is an obstacle," says Banman. "When I was drafting the images I realized that if I were to paint a straight line on the bollard it technically wouldn't look straight. This is when I did my research on the anatomy of a sphere and the curved lines that make up a grid-like pattern. I then made a

mini model of a bollard just out of Styrofoam and practiced painting. It's almost like painting an illusion."

To create what will look like a straight line to the human eye, she actually paints a curved line, like the longitude and latitude lines on a globe. The model and grid she creates need to then be recreated on the sphere in order to achieve the effect she wants.

"In addition, besides the logical aspect of figuring out the right proportions to create the painting, just painting around the bollard can be hard, as sometimes I end up laying on the sidewalk just to get underneath it or sitting on the curb."

The wet spring delayed some of the work, but the heat and sun of summer has produced its own challenges.

"It's been so hot out here," she says. "There are some days when I would plan to work and I'd come early in the morning. By noon I would need to stop for sure because it was just too hot and not safe to continue."

### DESIGNS AND INSPIRATION

Banman's ideas had to be approved at many levels before she could unleash her creativity on the bollards. With Niverville's rich heritage, she had a lot of inspiration to draw from.

One of the balls that is front and centre has the old Town of Niverville logo, and another has the old grain elevator that many in the community had a strong fondness for before it was demolished a year ago on September 15, 2021.

Another bollard features the original red barn from outside town before it was moved and converted into the Whitetail Meadow event centre at the intersection of Highways 200 and 311.

A tribute to the Niverville fair is featured on a dark black bollard, showing a Ferris wheel and fireworks in the night sky, while a tractor backlit against a fiery gradient of orange, pink, and red graces another.

For her last design, Banman is hoping to depict the Mennonite Memorial Landing Site, a meaningful landmark located where the Rat meets the Red River west of Niverville—an excellent choice given the young artist's interest and budding skill in landscape painting.

At just 18 years old, Banman has always been interested in art, but she says she's only just begun exploring what she can do with it.

"The only training and experience I have in art is taking classes with Mr. Clark, which helped me with techniques, principles, and theories," she says. "But I would say

I've always been interested in art and in the past few years I gained an interest towards landscape painting. This came about as Mr. Clark was able to push us students to try new mediums and colour outside of the lines. I did this by going through my dad's old art books of landscapes and started practicing techniques and mixing colours."

As Banman got more comfortable, she found she was able to keep up with some online tutorials. She began painting along with videos by Bob Ross and William Alexander, artists whose art instruction shows have recently resurfaced in popular culture and gained a significant following on social media platforms like YouTube.

"In the past I've taken a Bob Ross painting course, but I mostly just follow along with his videos online to take my time through the process and figure out what works for me."

She also began to branch out, exploring painting on various surfaces and with a variety of mediums.

"I decided to work on different surfaces, like slabs of wood or metal sawblades, to make it more unique."

### WHAT'S NEXT?

Banman's work has been well received and the CRRC is even looking to hire her to teach an art class in the fall.

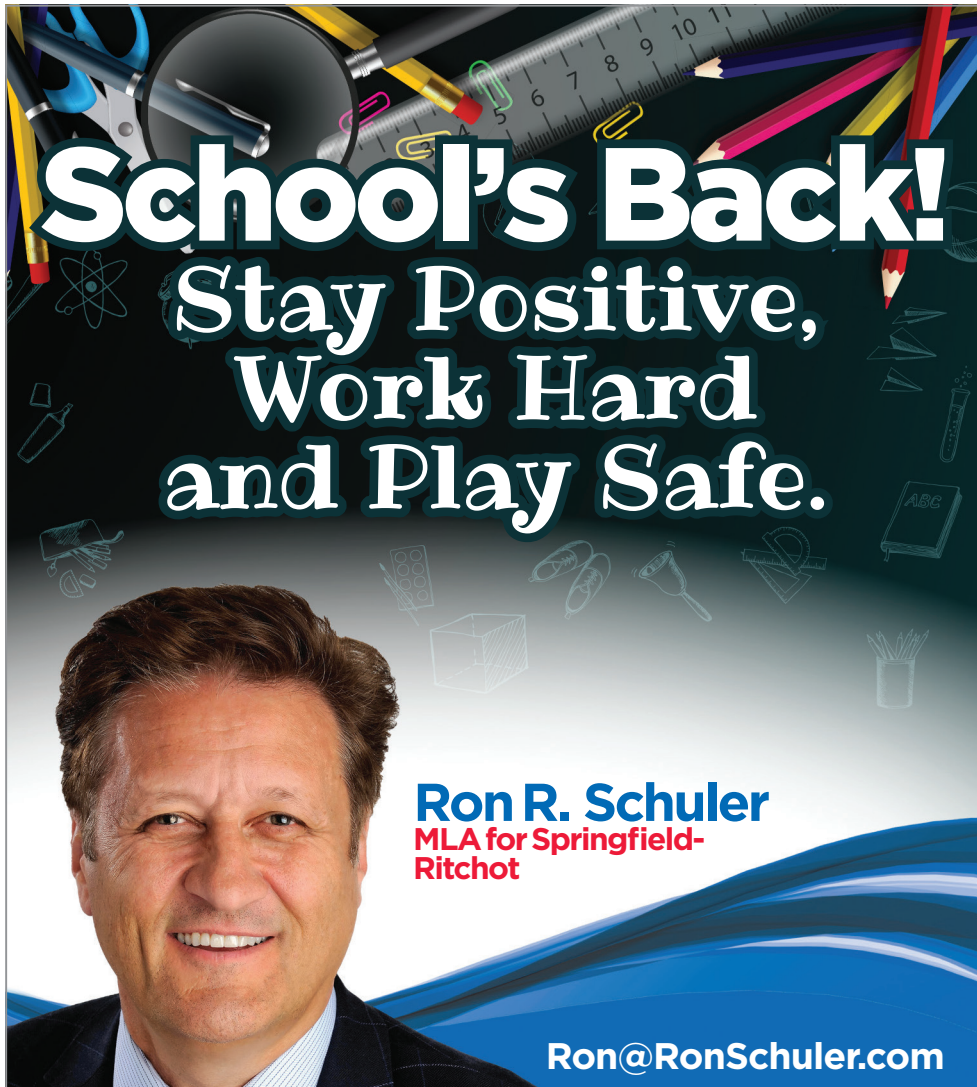
"I have been very impressed with Banman's artwork," says Britton. "She is incredibly talented and my programmers have even approached her about teaching an art class at the CRRC in the fall."

Fall might end up being a very busy time for this recent high school grad who has been accepted to attend the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Science. She is also accepting requests for custom requests for paintings and has started a small side business currently under the name Existential Designs.

"In my spare time I still like to paint for myself and I'm open to any commission pieces. In the future I definitely hope to be given more opportunities and get myself out there in the world a bit more."

In the meantime, Banman is focused on finishing the last bollard at the CRRC. While the summer weather holds, she will be putting the finishing touches of signing and sealing each piece.

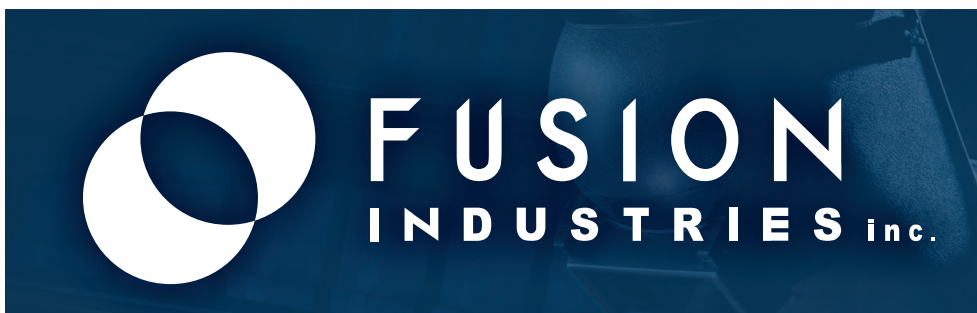




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# World-Renowned Artist Settles Down in Niverville

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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He has lived in Luxembourg, Holland, France, and Wales. He has lived in the Far East, Sumatra, and Egypt—during the 1956 Suez Crisis. He has lived in Chicago, Palm Desert, Anaheim Hills, and Sonora at the end of the Gold Rush Trail.

And now businessman-turned-fine-artist Ludolf Grollé has chosen to make Niverville his home.

Grollé began painting at the age of three and went on to study art in the United Kingdom. He has taught art to adults in Europe and the U.K. and was an extramural lecturer for the University of Wales. He has lived in Winnipeg since 2002 and turned professional artist in 2006.

After establishing Grollé Fine Art in Winnipeg, he began collaborating with local, national, and international artists.

In 2021, Grollé was inspired to move his gallery and studio from Fort Garry Place in Winnipeg to his home in Niverville. He and his wife Diane chose Niverville because of its rural setting as well as its proximity to a major urban centre.

## THE BUSINESSMAN

In contrast to his lifelong interest in art, there was a significant period of time when Grollé found himself flying high in the world of big business. As an investment banker and financial consultant, he travelled the world conducting marketing, acquisitions, and mergers for major clients in finance as well as high-pressure industries such as oil, electronics, and technology.

Looking at his abstract paintings, one wonders where the ability to reconcile facts and figures with creativity and art comes from.

"Is it a left brain-right brain sort of thing? I don't know," says Grollé. "I suppose if you look at the spectrum of some disorders, it's not autism that I have, but it's a sort of ability to see how things work together from a variety of different angles at the same time. I sort of realized that I was good with art, but I was also good with numbers and could see how they worked. If you work one angle of a business, it affects another angle. I realized I could help businesses grow because

I could see how everything worked together and would just end up working to create the growth the business would need."

Grollé found that he was also highly adept at understanding and communicating financial information through graphic representations and colour—for example, bar graphs. He realized early in his career that he could help non-numerically-inclined people better understand numbers through visualization.

"It was well-received, so I started doing analysis and found I was good at that," he says. "Because I was innovative, maybe, I could look at the bottom right corner of a spreadsheet and extrapolate its multidimensional matrices. Somehow it worked."

Grollé says it's really not any different with art. Mixing prime colours in different proportions changes their representation, and this can be looked at in a way that is almost similar to mathematics.

"When you look at my art, even though it flows, there's a lot of linear work in it. I use three prime colours, and I don't use other colours. So every painting, whether it's orange or has greens, it's just mixed from those three basic colours, and then shades of grey."

Though his wife has seen both sides of Grollé's personality—the businessman and the artist—she says he is better at being the artist.

"They're kind of two very different people," she says. "When he tries to go into business mode, he does lose that creativity and he's very focused on the linear," says Diane.

Grollé agrees that having the two skillsets can bring out the best or the worst in him. He says he used to be extremely rigid and unforgiving in the corporate world, but he's done with that now.

"Canada has mellowed me a lot," he says.

## THE ARTIST

Grollé is an established contemporary painter focusing on both abstract expressionism and impressionism. His work has been accepted into a variety of private and corporate collections, including esteemed art galleries around the world. His pieces have been displayed at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Manitoba Legislature, Inn at



Ludolf Grollé, renowned artist.

by SARA BETH DACOMBE

the Forks and other hotels, and in the homes of various private collectors and politicians.

His paintings demonstrate influences of Kandinsky and Pollock and are noteworthy for their imagination, simple colour palette, and textures. He has a reputation for selling his work as originals only, not as prints, because he wants everyone to be able to own a piece of original fine art.

Grollé's work also draws inspiration from music and the sights and smells around him. He says it's especially the meaningful moments which stick in our memories that are rich for inspiring art, such as a mother's perfume or Grandma baking cookies.

He incorporates passion and his love of the arts into everything he does, including when it comes to engaging with other artists. He's committed to creating a positive and nurturing environment for all artists at his gallery so they can succeed in their respective genres by striving for and promoting excellence.

"People, especially I've found in Winnipeg... don't know how to sell fine art," says Grollé. "What I do is, I take a shy artist... and I network. I've talked to other local businesspeople about renting out wall space, which is a common enough strategy. I say, 'Why don't you rent out to artists and give them a space?' And then both the artist and the business make out well."

It's not just businesses and artists where Grollé wants to see synergy. He wants to see

humans grow in connection to each other.

Though he made the decision to close the studio in Winnipeg right before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Grollé has re-established Grollé Fine Art out of his home in Niverville and hopes to create an initiative called the Prairie Creative where local artists can network as well as find support and opportunities to advance their art.

He has long been passionate about assisting local charities and has made a personal commitment to donate approximately one in four of his works. He is especially committed to dedicating a substantial percentage of time and effort to the local community and has donated works which have been auctioned off in support of St. Boniface Hospital and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, among other organizations.

## ON NIVERVILLE

Grollé has lived and travelled all over the world. His favourite places are London (for his mother), Canada (for his wife), The Hague (for his daughter), and Chicago (for himself).

However, Grollé says that there's nowhere quite like Manitoba, with its grain elevators, wheat fields, sunsets, and patches of green forests.

The decision to move to Manitoba, as well as the shift from businessman to artist, was largely made in order to facilitate his life with Diane, whose own career and children were located in Canada and

Manitoba specifically.

And although Grollé had been operating a successful art studio in Winnipeg, the appeal of living in a smaller town eventually won out.

"Give me a bear, a squirrel, a moose, or anything. Give me some space for my dogs," he says, referencing the couple's two small canine companions, Hunter and Marshall. "I want for nothing. I'm lucky, I know, because I've made some money and my art, it does okay. And now I'm here, in Manitoba, and I look around and I've found, truly, I want for nothing."

The couple live in a modest bungalow with a small yard. Their street is full of families with young children, so it's safe to say they make up the older demographic, but the couple welcomes the neighbourhood's noisy energy.

"Everyone on this side of the street has a smoker and everyone on the other has a swimming pool, and we all get along. They all have young kids and we're the oldest and they know I had a heart attack some time ago so we haven't had to mow the grass or snow clear in the two years we've lived here. This is the people who live here. It's phenomenal."

Grollé has organized neighbourhood art classes and held one for the children in the area, which he says was just as rewarding for him as it was for the kids.

"We worked on family portraits with the kids and one boy, he worked on it at home, and he comes back to me to show it to me. The look of accomplishment on his face, there's nothing like it. He completed his work and he showed it to me because he was proud of it and I'm lucky to be a part of that. That's community."

When COVID-19 hit and public health restrictions and social distancing were put in place, Grollé's world changed dramatically. His life of frequent travel and working in-studio with other artists came to a halt.

But instead of feeling constrained by the changes, Grollé found a new freedom to enjoy life right where he was.

"We found we truly loved where we live and I thought, why would I miss travel when I can invest in my own space here?" he says. "I can build a new deck or change up my space to make it what I want and what I need. Now everyone

who comes to my home says, 'This atmosphere is really nice. It's very calm, it's very peaceful.'"

Grollé's public persona is confident and in control. He can be organized and get things done, seeing massive projects through to fruition. But the persona he reserves for family and friends exudes congeniality.

"When you see the world, when you've lived in big cities, you realize eventually, that the charm is over," Grollé says. "And then living in Niverville, you can enjoy the city if you want to, but you don't have to live with all that goes on there. That's how I feel about Canada, too. We live in the best country, or one of the best, in the world."

## DEVELOPING ART LOCALLY

One could say that any professional artist would struggle, however, living in a rural town in a province like Manitoba where fine art isn't necessarily as valued as it is in larger centres.

But Grollé says this doesn't concern him.

"That's part of the settling, I'd say," he says. "I love Niverville and I want to give back to it, maybe even help put it on the map for art, if I can be so bold. People can be part of developing that part of Niverville's future legacy in this area, in these disciplines."

Grollé adds he has been utterly captivated by prairie culture and he would love to see the town become a portal for artistic development.

"Everyone has a culture and every culture brings a legacy, so wherever your ancestors are from—Germany, Ireland, Holland, Mexico—there's this fusion of culture here now that's been handed down over a couple of centuries... Just as Mennonites settled here a hundred years ago, which brought new culture, there's new blood here now again."

The more he gets to know Niverville, and the more people become comfortable gathering again, the more he would like to be able to offer the community opportunities to get to know him.

Aside from inviting residents to come and visit his home studio, this fall Grollé and his work will be introduced at a community event at Negash Coffee where he looks forward to meeting anyone interested in local art.



# Super Citizens: Scott Stroh, A Breath of Fresh Air

By Jennifer Lavin

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*In this new series, The Citizen will be profiling locals who strive to make our little corner of Manitoba a better place. Each month, we'll be featuring a person, family, or business that helps brighten the world in some way. If you have someone in mind for a future month, feel free to nominate them: jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com*

Scott Stroh—perhaps better known to local social media users as “Scott Kermit”—grew up in Winnipeg and chose to make a career with the Canadian Armed Forces. He spent much of his adult life on the east coast of Canada but posted back to Winnipeg in 2011.

In 2013, he was released from the Navy and began to consider his next move.

By 2018, Stroh had fallen in love with Niverville and was enjoying a new career as an independent sports photojournalist. He is deeply involved in hockey and loves to photograph the game, especially Junior teams. He will be taking photos for the Niverville Nighthawks when they begin their inaugural campaign in September.

Stroh says he joined the Niverville Community Group on Facebook when he moved to town but rarely spent much time on the



Scott Stroh of Niverville.

page. Earlier this year, though, the garbage pickup schedule in town changed and Stroh wasn't sure of his pickup day.

So he asked about it on the group. The rest is history.

“Years ago when I lived in Halifax, I did some amateur comedy, opening up for a bigger act... and I find that making people laugh is good medicine,” he says.

Although most people offered kind and helpful advice in response to his question on social media, there were also a few who were critical of the fact that he didn't know the new garbage schedule.

It occurred to him that the best way to defuse the situation would be to lean into his comedy roots and make light of the situation.

The next day, Stroh posted a short video showing him pulling his garbage bin along behind him, declaring that he was taking it to the Brady Landfill himself. Stroh got a lot of love for this video—and suddenly, Garbage Complainer Guy was born.

Since that time, Stroh has made many short videos and posted them to social media.

The people of Niverville seem to really enjoy his lighthearted take on life.

“I feel Scott is a breath of fresh air for the town,” says local resident Dean Ross. “He's an interesting, creative, and of course funny guy. Our town and the world, for that matter, could use more people like Scott to show us the lighter side of life and create a conversation for all to engage in. It helps bring people together.”

Carey Hawkins met Stroh at the barbecue competition held in Niverville earlier this summer. She found him just as funny and easy to talk to as she had expected.

“I enjoy his lighthearted videos,” says Hawkins. “The world could use more people like him!”

Bill Gordon feels that Stroh is a good ambassador for our town. “His posts brighten up our days and his humour on subjects often calm otherwise mean and negative people. He's the Bob Newhart of Niverville!”

Multiple people on social media have asked if Stroh would consider running for mayor (he will not) and whether he is single (he is).

“I have a great deal of gratitude for the good citizens of Niverville who have a light heart and enjoy my videos,” Stroh says.

Stroh lives part-time with his six-year-old son and full-time with his service dog Sasha, his other dog Coach, his cat Smoky, and his rabbit Sergeant Bunzo.

## Niverville Pavilion Hosts Music in the Gardens

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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Music in the Gardens was held at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, August 21, at the pavilion outside the Heritage Life Personal Care Home.

Despite the hot weather, the free event attracted more than

100 people, including friends and families of the PCH residents. Many set up lawn chairs to enjoy the concert while others took shade in the gazebo or viewed the concert from their balconies.

Music was provided by the Flatland Ceili Band, a traditional Irish folk band that plays a lively selection of jigs, reels, polkas, and

sea shanties. The pavilion shelter—which is shaped like a grain elevator—served as the shelter for the band and was an excellent backdrop for the musical event.

“It was a lovely time with everyone here,” says Shirley Hoult, representative for the local chapter of Communities in Bloom. “It was the first event of its kind that

we've held here at the pavilion, so we weren't sure what the acoustics would be like for the band. But it turned out quite well. Everyone enjoyed it.”

The event was sponsored by Heritage Lane Builders and Niverville Communities in Bloom, who also provided free lemonade, coffee, and Timbits.

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