

The Citizen

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LOCAL NEWS

The Citizen Turns Ten

■ It's been ten years since *The Citizen* published its very first print edition back in the halcyon days of September 2015. We look back on our first decade in print.

Details on Pages 3-4

LOCAL NEWS

The Impact of AI

■ With the advent of generative artificial intelligence in the last few years, our lives are changing fast—and there's no forcing this tech genie back in its bottle.

Details on Page 6



LOCAL NEWS

Stuck in No Man's Land

■ Aging is never easy, but in Manitoba the transition from independence to long-term care often requires our seniors, often at their most vulnerable, to endure long and painful hospital stays while they wait for PCH beds.

Details on Pages 8-9

SPORTS & REC

Nighthawks Get Ready for Season 4

■ The Niverville Nighthawks have concluded training camp and are getting ready for their fourth season in the MJHL.

Details on Page 22



St. Adolphe Parents Fundraise for New Play Zone

» READ MORE ON PAGE 21

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The Citizen team: Brenda Sawatzky, Dylan Zacharias, Dustin Krahn, Ray Dowse, Cara Dowse, and Evan Braun.  JOEY VILLANUEVA

Ten Years of Local News: The Citizen Looks Back on Its First Decade

By Brenda Sawatzky
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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In September 2015, a team of hometown-proud individuals broke ground with a rather out-there venture: *The Niverville Citizen*. This new publication, at first available in print with only a minimal online presence, was a direct response to a lack of local news, save for the very occasional reference to Niverville or Ritchot from outlets based in Steinbach and Winnipeg.

It was a gamble. All evidence suggested that print newspapers would soon be extinct. And despite significant local growth, there were questions as to whether the region would generate enough news to fill a monthly paper.

Ten years later, it seems very clear that the gamble was worth it. *The Citizen* has been broadly embraced, and the reason for its success is due, in large part, to

its strong commitment to local relevance.

“Our little corner of southeastern Manitoba has always been great at bucking trends and all the local communities have been supportive from the beginning,” says Evan Braun, *Citizen* shareholder and managing editor. “What I’ve since realized is that we were living in a news desert. Despite being a bustling, growing region, we didn’t have a dedicated news source. Who was telling stories of local importance? Literally nobody.”

The original four included Braun and three others: Ray and Cara Dowse and Dustin Krahn. Together, they brought to the table business savvy and writing and publishing expertise.

Since that time, two more have joined the ownership team. Dylan Zacharias is *The Citizen’s* marketing manager and Brenda Sawatzky is the paper’s lead journalist.

Even now, the operation remains

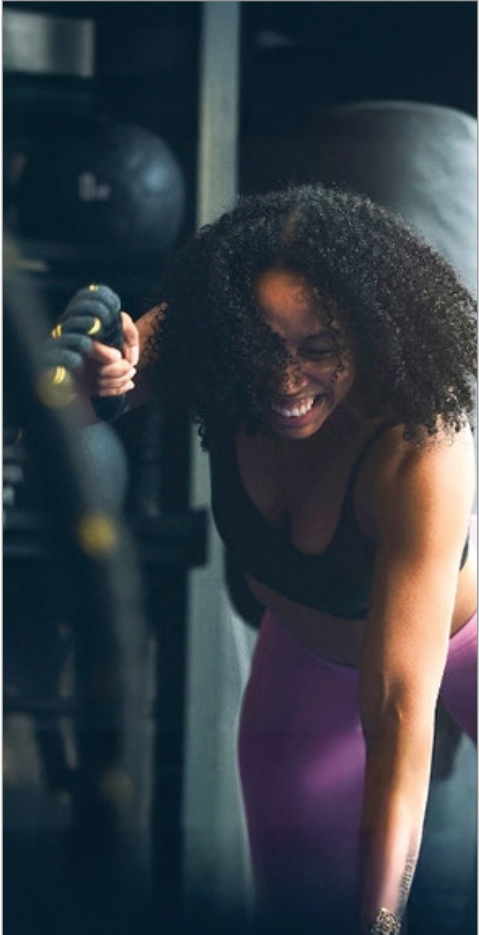
100 percent locally owned.

In the past year, *The Citizen* rolled out a new and improved website with a range of features. Its articles are published online as events happen, on average once per day, with a print edition following at the start of each month and delivered straight to residents’ mailboxes.

Is there enough local news to write about? You bet! Since 2015, the region has grown by thousands. And with continued growth reasonably assured, the need for dedicated local news coverage will only grow with it.

Another key component to *The Citizen’s* success, of course, is its advertisers. Because of their support, the paper is available at no cost. So shop local. And when you do, thank these great business owners for all they do to make our larger community an exceptional place to live.


(continued on page 4)




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(continued from page 3)

THE STORIES THAT MATTERED TEN YEARS AGO

At its inception, *The Citizen* focused on Niverville, although its intention was always to expand. In just a few short months, it began covering Ritchot and its many vibrant communities as well.

That very first edition was 24 pages in length and printed in full colour. It looked just like it does today, with a few exceptions. The early editions included crossword puzzles, local recipes, and a kids colouring page, features which were dropped as story content grew.

From the start, residents were encouraged to offer feedback through a monthly opinion poll. This feature is still around ten years later.

The first edition arrived with some very big announcements. Its front cover boasted an artist's rendering of the newly proposed Niverville recreation multiplex, the facility that would eventually become the CRRC. It looked nothing like the actual building does today and isn't attached to the old arena as originally planned. But it did introduce a dream that residents could latch onto.

Also in the pages of that first edition were early renderings of Niverville's proposed splash pad, coming in 2016. The paper carried the story, too, of the upcoming Heritage Life Lease project.

Another big article: some reassurance that the promise of a golf course in Niverville wasn't dead, despite delays. Under new ownership, the nine-hole course was set to begin construction within the year.

In coming issues, other important announcements broke through, including the imminent arrival of traffic lights for the intersection of Highways 311 and 59.

A new \$2.5-million wildlife



hospital and education centre was about to undergo construction in Île-des-Chênes and an expansion to the Niverville Elementary School would add 6,500 square feet of classroom space.

St. Adolphe soon made the news with the promise of Tourond Creek, a 300-acre commercial and residential development southeast of town.

Open just about any issue of the paper over the last ten years and you're likely to read of commercial growth somewhere in the region. In the early years, Hemp Oil Canada in Ste. Agathe underwent a massive merger and Adventure Power Products in Île-des-Chênes built a sprawling retail outlet.

Niverville would soon get a second gas station and a bona fide fast food chain: Tim Hortons. It would be the first of many.

Within its first year, *The Citizen* set out to help answer some big questions. It explored the issue of overcrowded schools, dug into challenges related to water infrastructure, and chased the provincial government for answers on whether Highway 59 would ever see more twinning.

Unfortunately, that last one is still up in the air a decade later.

In the third issue, *The Citizen* covered news of Justin Trudeau's first big federal win. Not long after, the

provincial Progressive Conservatives swept to victory under Brian Pallister.

Locally, residents came to expect timely and unbiased updates on all the details coming out of Ritchot's and Niverville's council chambers, relaying the good, the bad, and the (sometimes) ugly ways in which municipal politics affects us all. A perennial concern has been crime rates and law enforcement issues that can make our communities feel a little less safe than they once did.

There have also been a few natural disasters, with flood vigilance constantly required along the banks of the Red River. There was also the freak occurrence of seven inches of rain falling in 20 minutes, as happened in the fall of 2015.

An issue of provincial importance cropped up that first year when a local parent, Michelle McHale, confronted the Hanover School Division over its curriculum and policies. Accusations of discrimination in the division have recurred in the intervening years.

In the summer of 2016, perhaps as a result of those allegations, Steinbach had its first Pride parade roll through town. Hundreds of supporters showed up to promote inclusion.

HOMETOWN HEROES

In the past decade, many local heroes have been celebrated in *The Citizen's*

columns. In the first year, quite a number stand out.

David Richert of Niverville was already an accomplished race car driver in 2015. The paper covered his rise to fame from small-town roots to driving circuits around Europe. An early development captured by *The Citizen* was his signing by Cram Motorsports and later a partnership with Casamigos Tequila, owned in part by George Clooney.

For other local heroes, age was irrelevant. In 2015, at 12 years old, Brynne Abgrall prepared to compete at the World Dance Championship in Poland. She returned to Niverville with four gold medals and a bronze.

At the same time, Abgrall's friend Maddie Thompson was making waves of her own. At 13, Thompson created her own clothing line that was picked up in Triple Flip stores across the country.

Both of those girls have since expanded their dreams into businesses. Abgrall recently founded the Form Dance Convention and Thompson created MAD Social Agency, a digital marketer with clients across North America.

While teens like Isaiah Klassen scored high in gymnastics at the esteemed Western Canada Cup, local hockey players like Tyler Anderson and Jessie Stott were recruited by

teams in Kelowna and Austria.

Women like Danica Cuddeford were nominated for the Women of Distinction award and Colleen Dyck, maker of GORP clean energy bars, received the prestigious Momprenneur of the Year award.

The region is also home to many notable musicians. In 2015, Amanda (Falk) Cook released her fourth solo album after a series of Juno and Covenant wins.

Plain as Ghosts debuted their first solo album in 2016. Since then, that band's lead singer, Trevor Lux, has ventured out on his own, creating locally shot and produced music videos to accompany his work.

Few artists have garnered as much interest, though, as Niverville's Jordan St. Cyr. *The Citizen* has followed St. Cyr throughout his climb. He now resides in Nashville and has won a long series of prominent awards.

WHAT'S IN STORE?

The Citizen intends to keep covering local news and hometown heroes long into the future, although no one can predict exactly what the future of this bustling corner of Manitoba will look like.

One thing we can promise is that we will always strive to share local news quickly and responsibly, and to share it in exhaustive, meaningful detail.

In the meantime, we tip our collective hat to every one of our dedicated readers. Your support has resulted in our current success and we never take it for granted.

Reach out to *The Citizen* whenever you have an inside scoop on local people making waves in the world. And if a subject requires investigation, we'll be there.

To get the daily news story that most matter to you, be sure to check our website often: www.niverville-citizen.com



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If you do not receive a copy of the bill, please feel free to contact the Town Office for a copy by email at taxes@whereyoubelong.ca or call 204-388-4600 ext. 1109.

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.

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AI: How It's Changing Our Lives

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Like it or not, artificial intelligence (AI) is here to stay. For many, this provokes fear and dread. Others feel cautious optimism over the powerful ways in which AI will alter, and is already altering, our lives.

What is AI? To start, we can address this complex question with a basic answer: it's any computerized system capable of performing tasks once thought to be unique to humans. These abilities include, but are not limited to, learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making.

It may be possible to assuage some fears by looking back to another major breakthrough in information technology: the arrival of the Gutenberg printing press.

In the fifteenth century, writings like the Bible were first printed and bound in the form of a book. The printing press completely changed the way information was broadcast to the masses. This invention helped shape language and culture on a global scale.

Fear of the printing press surely abounded in those early days, despite the clear promise of the nascent technology. Perhaps ironically, many of those fears echo the ones espoused about AI technology today.¹

The prospect of printed books making their way to the public held profound social and political implications, especially in terms of their potential to spread ideology and misinformation. The church and other authorities worried about losing their stronghold on the flow of information, resulting in stringent new laws to control the free press.

The result back in those years was the proliferation of heavy-handed censorship.

Few nowadays would oppose access to the virtually unlimited information made available to us by books, the internet, and other forms of publication. Censorship, to a large degree, has gained a bad rap. Most would agree that the widespread sharing of information has propelled society forward, especially in the past

one hundred years.

This isn't to say, of course, that AI doesn't pose some risk, potentially great risk, if it's not managed wisely. A plethora of articles could certainly be written from that perspective.

Like the printing press, though, there's no putting the technology back in the bottle. And as AI evolves and becomes more commonplace, its uses appear to be almost limitless.

EVERYDAY APPLICATIONS

AI is nothing new. In one form or another, the underlying technology has been in use for decades. Only in recent years, though, has it become a mainstream tool. Virtually everyone has used AI in one form or another by now, whether they know it or not.

For many, it's such a frequent tool that they can hardly imagine life without it.

Teachers use it to save time in grading report cards and developing lesson plans. It can help you find time-saving recipes based on the ingredients you already have in your fridge. Travellers use it to plan vacations, including gas stops, checkpoints, sightseeing tours, flights, and accommodations. It can even book those services so you don't have to.

Somewhat more controversially, you can use AI to write your school paper, create a personalized and heartfelt obituary, edit your email, or build an impressive resume.

Rozz Nicole of Niverville says she uses AI in her makeup business to create marketing campaigns. She also uses it for meal planning and developing grocery lists. Sometimes she even uses it as a therapist.

"It's amazing to bounce situations off of, like you would with your friends," Nicole says. "And it will give you pretty good advice. You can tell it different scenarios—how a situation made you feel, how you'd like to respond or react—and it will work with you. You can also copy and paste text into it and have it analyse hidden cues. It's better than a therapist because it's instant gratification in the moment when you need it."

On the flip side, she warns, a certain level of emotional intelligence is needed in the user to recognize that AI is a fallible tool that can

demonstrate bias.

For Chantelle Falk, AI has become a valuable tool in developing gardening and landscaping designs. She's used it to create a logo, and her daughter uses it to come up with workout routines.

For all its usefulness, though, Falk says she's seen enough AI-generated errors to understand that trust in the system should only go so far.

"AI is far from perfect," Falk says. "I've seen misspelled words on logos or menus. I use it as a springboard to further my own ideas, but mistakes in AI are prevalent. I use it with a critical eye, no matter the application."

Evan Braun, a local author and book editor, was admittedly slow to adopt AI into his everyday life, due to the existential threat it may pose for writers—notably, he says that he never uses it to generate writing—but he's beginning to believe that AI and humans can co-exist.

"As a novelist, I think it's a fairly effective tool for outlining," says Braun. "It helps me to organize my ideas well. And in terms of brainstorming, the process often sparks new thoughts I probably wouldn't have had if I'd just been sitting alone with my own mind and a piece of paper."

Braun does worry that relying too heavily on AI in writing may dull a person's ability to effectively convey their own thoughts in their own particular voice.

"I see a profound difference between the writing AI attempts to produce for me and my own efforts," Braun says. "The AI work feels sanitized, predictable, and generic. Proceed with caution."

AN IT PERSPECTIVE

Nhat Doan from Ste. Agathe is the University of Manitoba's relationship management consultant for IT. Doan works daily with institutional instructors and departments on IT strategies and investments.

About 85 percent of his time in the workplace, Doan says, is spent using AI. He can barely remember the days of using Google alone and already thinks of the search engine as an archaic mode of collecting information.

"At the end of the day, the most popular search engine in the world is Google, and they're scared of AI," says Doan.

He points out that a basic search engine like Google is limited by the keywords the user plugs in. AI, on the other hand, has the capacity to understand the user's language and interpret their thought processes and intent.

Essentially, it's capable of reasoning and reading between the lines.

Traditional AI has the capacity to rapidly review massive databases, understand and process the data, then produce results in very short periods of time. Think Johnny 5, the fictitious robot from the 1986 film *Short Circuit*, who had the ability to process an entire encyclopaedia in milliseconds.

The game-changing innovation of the last few years is generative AI, which takes this process a step further. It not only analyzes existing data but then takes that data and creates altogether new content in the form of text, images, or music.

For example, Doan recently asked his preferred AI system, Microsoft Copilot, to provide the top three chocolate cake recipes on the internet along with a writeup as to why each one stands out. Within seconds, those recipes and their critiques were at his fingertips. He then asked Copilot to extract the best features of each one and create a whole new recipe. Seconds later, he was in possession of instructions for a one-of-a-kind cake.

A further prompt by Doan had the system creating an image of exactly what the cake would look like.

One of generative AI's greatest appeals, he says, is the fact that it's capable of providing options and solutions that may never have occurred to the user. Analysts and engineers are making major gains through its out-of-the-box thinking.

It's also why so many people now turn to AI like it's an old pal, seeking relationship advice when needed.

But the same characteristics that mimic human creativity can lead users down the path of misinformation.

If you ask generative AI a question it can't find an answer to, it often

makes something up, disguising it as fact. When this happens, it's not necessarily malicious. It's just that generative AI always aims to please.

"AI should never be used as a source for truth," says Doan. "And if you use it as a source of truth, you'll easily be in the wrong. Especially using AI that's generative."

Doan simply can't emphasize enough the importance of fact-checking AI responses. It's as simple, he says, as asking it to provide the sources from which it derived its information and then reviewing each source to verify authenticity.

MAKING IT UP AS IT GOES

On the importance of verification, Braun agrees with Doan wholeheartedly. The confidence with which AI spits out information can make it a very deceptive tool.

"I once asked AI a question about a character's past in a story I wrote, and the answer it gave me was entirely invented whole cloth, with no connection to what I'd actually written," says Braun. "This is a classic AI 'hallucination.' When I called it out, the AI apologized to me and explained that it had tried to answer my question, couldn't find an answer, and instead of giving me nothing opted to fill in the blanks to the best of its abilities."

Of course, that's highly troubling.

Braun says that generative AI is so hardwired to appease its users that its responses often reflect what it thinks the user wants to hear rather than what is reality.

"If you talk to an AI chatbot about your personal problems, it will always take your side, no matter what," Braun adds. "There can be workarounds, of course. You can try insisting that the AI give you objective feedback and not merely appease you... good luck with that. But in many ways, it's only there to keep you talking, to make sure you keep using it, which can lead a person up the proverbial garden path."

REFERENCE

¹ "Printing Press," Britannica. July 26, 2025 (<https://www.britannica.com/technology/printing-press>).

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Council Talks Education, Healthcare Expansion, and Future Energy Needs

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On August 19, Niverville's council unanimously approved a subdivision request by Sunset Estates.

This proactive move paves the way for a fourth school to put down roots in the community sometime in the future.

The location lies within the Highlands West development. Developer Len Peters says that once a sale is complete, infrastructure such as water and sewer will already be underway. He anticipates that this could happen as early as next spring.

According to CAO Eric King, land for new schools is generally purchased by the school division itself, using funding supplied by the province when a school has been approved.

As of yet, neither council nor the developer have indicated which division has been inquiring about building a school here.

Across the highway, in Fifth Avenue Estates West, council also approved a request by developer Cornell Friesen for the closure of one public road and the opening of a new one.

The new road, Ridgemont Drive, will run east to west between Mulberry and Krahn. Ridgemont will serve as the primary access and egress road for a new development to begin just north of Centre Street.

According to Mayor Dyck, this roadway change will prevent the addition of intersections along Centre Street where traffic volumes from the school and CRRC can already be high at times.

"We're just trying to limit the



Mayor Myron Dyck and CAO Eric King.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

number of vehicles coming onto Centre," Dyck clarified. "Especially after times of big events so that we don't have a bottleneck."

MAYORAL MUSINGS

Mayor Dyck used part of the meeting to address some thoughts he and council have been entertaining in recent months.

With the new school year just around the corner, Dyck says, he has had the opportunity to consider the gaps in vocational education in

Niverville, as well as ways in which council might address those in the future.

He hopes to work alongside school divisions, addressing ideas for trades and other vocational options outside of the typical school curriculum. This may even involve workshops offered to school-age children through the CRRC.

Infrastructure and energy have also been on council's mind.

"We were very happy to have members of Manitoba Hydro in town,

as well as members of the provincial planning branch, to look at what Niverville's energy needs are, and will be going forward, so that Niverville can remain open for business," Dyck said.

Over the coming weeks, council also hopes to entertain a visit by the minister of health.

"We're looking to expand upon our clinic," Dyck said. "It's full. We want to speak to the minister about that. If we're to grow, where can we grow?"

Dyck believes there are expansion options, possibly at the current

location. Creating a secondary satellite location may also be on the table.

Beyond space, council hopes to engage the minister on an expansion of services, such as diagnostics. What the province's financial role in this could be remains unclear. Dyck says that a hybrid model may need to be considered.

Finally, a lack of sufficient daycare spots has been weighing heavily on council's mind.

"If we're going to be a place where people can raise families, we need a place where they feel they can move to," Dyck said. "My question for council this next year is, 'What role does a municipality have to play in ensuring that there are daycare spaces for those that want to come and live here?'"

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

Other items on Tuesday's agenda included parking restrictions which are about to go into effect.

A ten-minute parking bylaw is being established at 21 Main Street, home of Growing Minds Childcare and Atelier Cycle. This restriction applies during the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

A one-hour parking restriction will also be in effect along Drovers Run between Mulberry and Krahn.

Finally, parking will be eliminated along a stretch of Cambridge Way where visibility is less than ideal.

In terms of financial outputs, one major expenditure was noted at Tuesday's meeting involving approximately \$55,000 in splash park upgrades. King says the repairs should help curtail future breakdowns like the kind they've experienced so often in the past couple of years.



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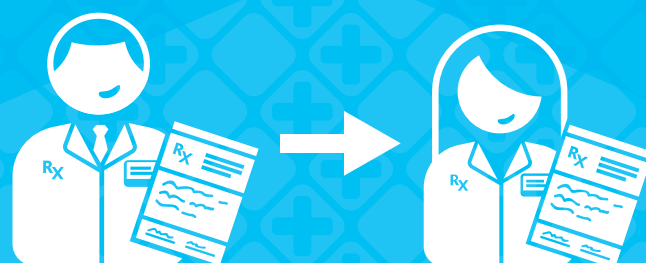


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Stuck in No Man's Land: The Wait for Long-Term Care

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Getting old is never easy. For most aging adults, it's a slow letting-go of the family home, life-long treasures, and one's most valuable possession: independence.

For many, the period of life between complete independence and long-term care is ameliorated by transitional living options, like assisted and supportive housing. Homecare helps seniors live independently longer.

But there comes a time when it becomes necessary to move to a personal care home (PCH). And this is when Manitoba's aging adults, oftentimes when they're already at their most vulnerable, can fall into the healthcare abyss, a veritable no man's land.

It's called the PCH wait list—and in much of the province, and right across the country, the wait can take years.

Not just anyone can qualify for a PCH. It requires a homecare assessment to determine whether a person's mental or physical state is such that it's unsafe for them to continue living independently. For many seniors, this happens after a fall or a series of falls.

Since the fall often results in an emergency room visit, the hospital becomes the patient's new home as they wait for a suite to open up at the care home of their choosing. Until then, they're at the mercy of a system, and ward of a facility, that was never meant to provide long-term care in the first place.

Manitoba Health begins to charge a daily stipend for the costs the person incurs as they languish in a hospital room. That cost is shared with the province.

In Manitoba, you can expect to spend your days in a hospital within the health region in which your preferred PCH exists. So if your facility of choice were to be Niverville's Heritage Life Personal Care Home



Sadie Friesen of Niverville is on a long wait list to be admitted to the Heritage Personal Life Care Home, and she's not alone. **BRENDASAWATZKY**

(HLPCH), your wait could take place in any hospital within the Southern Health-Santé Sud (SHSS) region. That could see you land anywhere from Emerson or Vita to Carmen, Portage la Prairie, or Winkler. The region is vast and residents can find themselves far from loved ones, not to mention far from home.

Worse still, residents can be shuffled from hospital to hospital as these facilities feel pinched for valuable acute care beds.

Health authorities do their best to accommodate families by keeping aging parents as close to home as possible. But the shuffle is inevitable in a system where space is at a premium.

SADIE FRIESEN

Sadie Friesen, a lifelong resident of Niverville, is currently panelled for the HLPCH. Two of her children and many of her grandkids and great-grandkids live in the community.

Sadie and her late husband John once bought into an aging-in-place ideal. They were quick to invest, perhaps before they were quite ready, in one of Niverville's first seniors living facilities, Silver Courts. Like so many,

they dreamed of living out their final years in their hometown.

When the dream of an actual full-circle seniors housing complex was proposed, in the form of the Heritage Centre, the Friesens championed the cause.

Sadie eventually lost her partner and, at 90, made the move to the Niverville Credit Union Manor, an assisted living facility.

In November 2024, following a series of falls, it was determined that she should be panelled for the HLPCH.

For the next five months, Sadie continued to live in her assisted living suite. In March 2025, however, Sadie suffered another fall that sent her to hospital for observation. She sat in the waiting room for nine hours before being seen. While she had no fractures or concussions, the doctors deemed it too risky to send her back home.

It's not that Sadie couldn't have managed in her home with a wheelchair and the continued help of homecare. According to her daughters, Sandra Martens and Phyllis Peters, the reason was that homecare didn't provide nighttime services and there was a measured risk that Sadie

might need to use the washroom at night.

"She lost [the last bit of] her independence," says Martens.

This was a challenge for someone as fiercely self-reliant as Sadie. From this point on, decisions were no longer hers to make.

"You have to go to bed at a certain time," Martens says of hospital and PCH life. "You have to do what [the staff] tells you. You can only have a bath once a week, even if you're used to one more often."

Within weeks, Sadie was scheduled to be transferred from the St. Boniface Hospital to her home health region. Her daughters say it took some firm advocacy on their part to get their mom into the De Salaberry Hospital in St. Pierre-Jolys, just a half-hour from Niverville.

The facility was adequate. She had a small private room with a large window, enough to see the world go by on the outside.

Unfortunately, Sadie was there for less than two months when a staff member woke her in the middle of the night to let her know that she would be transferred to another hospital. Her daughters weren't informed until the next day.

Within days, Sadie found herself placed in a transport vehicle with just the clothes on her back, en route to Notre Dame de Lourdes, about 120 kilometres away, feeling confused and unsure what was going on. The family was told to collect her belongings from De Salaberry as quickly as possible and deliver them to Notre Dame.

"They called me at 10:00 at night, saying they'd had a meeting and that they would have to move my mom," Martens says. "I said, 'Really? She's 97 years old. She's sometimes confused. If you move her, it's not going to be good.'"

They gave Martens only one alternative for reconsideration: pay the \$3,000 per day hospital rate.

For Sadie's kids and grandkids in Niverville, the move meant a 90-minute one-way trip for visits. For her Winnipeg son and his family, the drive was closer to two hours.

The daughters wasted no time and started advocating for their mom. Their hard work paid off and, within weeks, Sadie was moved again, this time landing in Morris, just 35 minutes from Niverville.

To meet Sadie, you'd say she's strong, feisty, and clear of mind for someone who's about to turn 98. In conversation, she skillfully injects humour and wit, followed by her signature mischievous grin.

But deep down she admits to feeling forgotten by her community. She doesn't understand why they aren't advocating harder on her behalf so she can finish off her race on home turf.

"They're not thinking of us older people that have built the town," she says. "How we worked to get it this far."

Indeed, Sadie has been a resident of Niverville since her family emigrated to Canada when she was just two years old. Niverville is where she eventually married and raised a family of her own. It's where she supported John as he started his own business.

(continued on page 10)



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(continued from page 9)

Sadie and John were heavily invested in the community all their lives. They dedicated themselves to community and church and countless hours of volunteering.

John was among the early founders of a funeral aid society that allowed every resident of Niverville, regardless of means, to access a plot and decent burial in the local graveyard.

In 1974, Sadie and four other women were instrumental in the opening of Niverville's first MCC Thrift Store. Sadie volunteered there through all its stages of growth until she was 90 years old.

Now she spends her days in a crowded shared room at the Morris General. Her roommate is another Niverville resident awaiting placement at the HLPCH. Their space is about 10 by 15 feet, including a bathroom that's too small to fit a mobility device. Every bathroom stop requires aid.

The small window, their only source of natural light, is too high up for them to look through.

The hospital itself is about 75 years old and in need of renovation. The paint is drab and the lights either brightly on or entirely off, without any dimming to accommodate sensitive eyes.

Suffice it to say, the hospital staff do their very best under the circumstances. Sadie recognizes and appreciates their daily effort and tries hard to be a bright spot in their day whenever she can.

According to her daughters, there are at least five Niverville residents and one New Bothwell resident currently living in this state of limbo until a spot opens up at the HLPCH. Ten months into her wait, Sadie is still only thirteenth on the list, so it's conceivable she'll remain in limbo for at least another year.

At this point, her greatest desire is to be settled back in Niverville in time for her one hundredth birthday.

SOUTHERN HEALTH AND THE NIVERVILLE PCH

The Citizen reached out to Southern Health-Santé Sud for some insight into the wait times in Manitoba for placement in a PCH.

"Wait times vary significantly by community within Southern Health," replied a media spokesperson. "Over the past four to five years, wait times in Southern Health-Santé Sud have

consistently been around six months."

The situation, however, looks different from the perspective of administration at the Heritage Life Personal Care Home.

Shelly Mall, the facility's director of care, works alongside executive director Ron Parent to advocate to the health authority on behalf of patients on their wait list. She says their wait list has held steady between 35 and 50 people for many years. For the average senior, that translates to a two-year wait, give or take, from the time of their first assessment.

According to Mall, this isn't unique to Niverville. It's a province-wide concern.

Parent himself goes one step further by suggesting that some places in Manitoba, like the Interlake, have even longer wait times. Equally true, he points out, there are some care homes with lower wait lists, which affects the overall average.

Only the province has the authority to invest in and build new personal care homes in Manitoba. So the crumbling bridge between independent living and long-term care falls directly in their lap.

The problem is multi-layered. Firstly, the tail end of the baby boomer generation is now entering their senior years, creating greater demand for space. At the same time, many of the early PCHs built in the 1960s are crumbling and in desperate need of restoration. This is all happening during a period of austerity which has left precious little funding for healthcare in general.

The province may be stuck between a rock and a hard place, since the baby boomers will eventually die off. The risk is that further investment now could lead to Manitoba having too many PCHs in the future, when demand falls.

But according to Statistics Canada, millennials now outnumber baby boomers in this country, largely due to the number of immigrants who have arrived on Canadian soil in recent years.

"On July 1, 2023, for the first time, the millennial generation comprised a greater number of people in the population than the baby boomer generation," states a report by Statistics Canada.¹

It could be argued that the current gap in seniors housing needs won't be resolved naturally.

Parent can understand, though, why this issue has become such a behemoth for the provincial

government. He says that the cost to build a new personal care home today, thanks to inflationary pricing and increasing regulation, comes with a price tag of between \$400,000 and \$500,000 per bed.

"So if you wanted to build a 100-suite personal care home, it could cost [the province] from \$35 million to \$50 million," Parent says. "Provinces across Canada are facing a double-edged sword. They have a lot of old care homes that need to be replaced, plus they need to build new spaces."

DETERMINING PRIORITY

Seniors on a wait list aren't necessarily prioritized based on where they fall in the queue. Neither do residents naturally get priority over non-residents. For administrators of a health authority, greatest consideration goes to those deemed in greatest need.

Generally speaking, those living with dementia or physical impairments get highest priority.

"For me and Shelly, we've advocated for individuals who have a connection to Niverville, or they have a spouse in the care home or some other circumstances," Parent says. "We will ask the question, 'Could you consider this admission sooner versus later?' We're mindful that the healthcare system is meant to treat everybody equally, as much as reasonably possible, and I believe in that."

Of course, those taking up space in a valuable acute care bed, like Sadie, are also prioritized over others. Priority may also be given to someone requiring personal care whose spouse is already in personal care.

"Keeping spouses together is shown to have tremendous therapeutic benefit," says Parent. "So if they know that there's a man in the hospital and his wife is in a personal care home, even though the man hasn't been panelled as long as others, they will sometimes allow for him to move to the personal care home to get them back together."

In the meantime, people like Sadie wait. Many will die in the hospital before ever getting to their care home of choice.

According to Parent, about 20 percent of hospital beds across the province are occupied by those awaiting PCH placement. They are considered "alternative levels of care."

"Hospitals are not set up to support our elderly population," says Parent. "Plus, you don't thrive in a hospital setting."

He's not convinced, either, that working to keep aging residents at home longer is the ideal answer, especially if they live alone. The social component of living in a care home facility plays an important role in a resident's mental health.

"We have a bit of a hybrid [system at HLPCH]," Parent says. "We have additional resources, such as resident companions to address helplessness, loneliness, and boredom. We can do a much better job when we focus on those three plagues versus just the clinical part."

ADVOCATING FOR LONG-TERM CARE

Sue Vovchuk is the executive director of the Long Term and Continuing Care Association of Manitoba (LTCAM). This non-profit represents about 10,000 aging adults across the province. Most of the work they do is in advocacy to enhance the quality of care for older adults.

"What we're trying to do is ensure that we are providing our older adults in Manitoba with the right resources and the right housing to live a dignified life," Vovchuk says.

Vovchuk worked in healthcare for more than 30 years. For some of that time, she managed the wait list in Winnipeg.

Nothing much has changed, she says. Thirty-three years ago, when Vovchuk attended one of her first healthcare conferences, there were already warnings about the necessity of getting ready for aging baby boomers.

It takes a lot of lobbying and advocacy, she says, to get new personal care homes built.

"It's not just [about new care homes]," Vovchuk says. "It's, 'How do we keep the 124 PCHs already in Manitoba open?' The cost of operating these facilities, with the funding model that we have right now, is astronomical. There hasn't been a funding increase in more than 15 years. We're on the precipice of a crisis here."

That's not to say that nothing has improved in the past few decades. Early PCHs were built with parking spots for residents, suggesting few stopgaps between complete independence and round-the-clock care. Now, with assisted living and supportive living options, as well as homecare services, independence can be maintained much longer.

In Manitoba, PCHs are the only long-term care facilities that are

governmentally controlled, regulated, and funded. Assisted and supportive living facilities are entirely private.

But Vovchuk says there might be lessons to learn from provinces in Atlantic Canada, where governments subsidize a broader scope of housing.

"There, if an individual can no longer live in their own home but they're not eligible for a personal care home, the government will subsidize them to move into assisted living or a different model of care."

More can be done, as well, in terms of supporting the resources and services that help people stay in their homes longer.

If 24-hour homecare was available, residents like Sadie might never need a PCH bed. Indeed, the 20 percent of hospital beds occupied by adults on a PCH wait list might be freed up for the use they were intended to meet.

"I think what we're continually saying is that long-term care is a huge part of healthcare," says Vovchuk. "Right now, acute care seems to be the focus. But if we don't do our work with long-term care, we're never going to fix the problem in the hospitals. It's all a part of the same system."

Vovchuk encourages everyone to make some noise, since we are all at risk of one day finding ourselves in the same position Sadie is in today, spending her twilight years in no man's land. She recommends writing letters and emails to MLAs and MPs, as well as the federal minister of health, demanding that more be done for our aging population.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the LTCAM, visit: www.ltcam.mb.ca

Contact information for pertinent officials and elected representatives:

- Southern Health-Santé Sud: info@southernhealth.ca
- Ron Schuler, MLA for Springfield-Ritchot: Ron.Schuler@leg.gov.mb.ca
- Uzoma Asagwara, provincial Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care: minhsltc@manitoba.ca
- Marjorie Michel, federal Minister of Health: hcminister.ministresc@hc-sc.gc.ca

REFERENCE

- ¹ "Millennials Now Outnumber Baby Boomers in Canada," Statistics Canada, February 21, 2024 (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240221/dq240221a-eng.htm>).



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Should the provincial government maintain a greater focus on keeping people living independently longer or creating personal care home spaces?

☐ Independent living. With greater homecare and support services, people can stay home longer, free up hospital beds, and eliminate the need for new and expensive facilities.

☐ Personal care homes. In addition to their healthcare role, these facilities fill an important social need that often goes unmet in the lives of aging adults when they live on their own.

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LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

Considering the inherent risks, should our government consider enacting legislation that restricts the use and/or ownership of cellphones among young people?

Yes. New laws around cellphone ownership, such as enacting a minimum legal age, would help protect young people.

47%

No. In our current day and age, it is unrealistic to restrict cellphone ownership or usage to those of a particular age.

53%

YOUR COMMENTS:

The benefits far outweigh any risks. Also... define "young people." My 16-year-old son is young... but absolutely needs his cellphone for my peace of mind. The onus is on parents to teach their kids responsible cellphone usage.

In any and all situations, government overreach is enough. Parents need to step up and begin taking responsibility with their children. The lack of parenting is the issue here.

Ritchot Mayor Won't Run for Re-Election Next Fall

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Municipalities in Manitoba host elections every four years, and the next one is scheduled for October 2026. With one year to go, Mayor Chris Ewen of Ritchot has announced his intention to make this term his last.

"Since the age of 29, I have had the honour of serving as your mayor," Ewen wrote on social media. "I was elected at a time when strong leadership and unity were needed most. My goal was simple: to bring council together and help move Ritchot forward on a path of continued success."

Ewen points to the growth that's taken place across the entire municipality during his years in office. So much so, he says, that higher levels of government have taken notice. That growth has extended beyond residential and commercial development, he adds, to include many new recreational options and a host of new infrastructure projects.

"Our success in securing grants and funding is unmatched," he adds, "and the relationships we've built with



Mayor Chris Ewen of Ritchot.

C/O CHRIS EWEN

leaders across Manitoba and Canada have made Ritchot a place others look to as a model."

With a legacy like this one, Ewen concludes that he's ready to move on and won't pursue re-election next fall. This comes with an assurance, though, that he will continue to serve with the same level of passion and advocacy until his time is done.

The decision to advertise his intention early, he says, was made so others can begin to consider the part they might play in finding a new mayor.

EWEN'S TIME IN OFFICE

Ewen first assumed the mayoral role in July 2017. He won in a

byelection called as a result of a dysfunctional council led by then-mayor Jackie Hunt.

In that election, Ewen surpassed Hunt by a little more than 100 votes.

Only two of the four existing councillors, Jeannot Robert and Ron Mamchuk, were re-elected to join Ewen on council that summer.

Fast-forward to October 2018 and Ewen won again, this time by acclamation as a result of no other challengers throwing their hat in the ring. Prior to the election, Ewen reflected on his first year in office with optimism and honesty.

"I believe that building a strong council that listens

to one another and can be respectful during difficult decision-making sessions is our biggest accomplishment," he said. "My big push was to bring better communication to residents and the RM. This is a difficult topic for every municipality, and unfortunately I haven't tapped into the golden ticket of communication yet. I am continuously looking at how to make this more fluid and efficient."

Four years later, and many projects seen through to completion, Mayor Ewen was once again elected by acclamation in October 2022.

"I'm honoured that the residents of Ritchot have faith in me to continue for another four [years]," Ewen said of that election. "I'm a huge proponent of an election and how the process works. Sometimes acclamation isn't always the best thing. It can be [seen as] a form of apathy. But because of feedback I've heard from residents in the past few days, I believe it was because of the faith they have in me."

By the time October 2026 comes around, Ewen will have served his municipality in the capacity of mayor for a little better than nine years.



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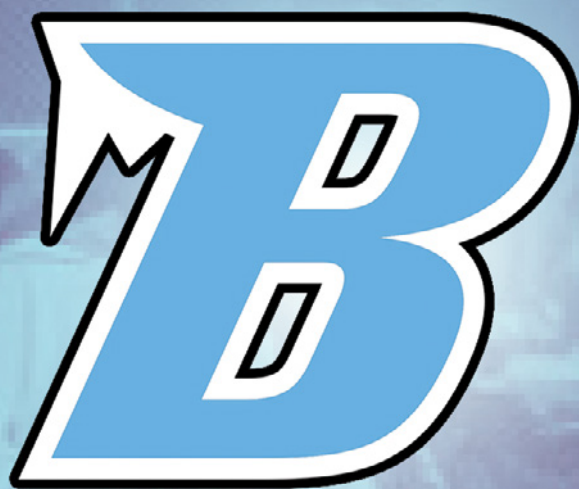
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DAN MASSE

Ritchot Considers New Waste Management Pilot Project

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On August 20, a delegation from Carbon Lock Tech made an in-person presentation to Ritchot's council, asking for partnership in a pilot project which would make use of their relatively new technology.

Kevin Danner, the CEO of Carbon Lock Tech, presented at Wednesday's public meeting. He describes his company as a Manitoba startup which specializes in converting organic waste and biomass into a stable form of biocarbon.

Their innovative technology is already patented in Canada and the U.S.

"[Biocarbon] is a very interesting material that eliminates carbon from the atmosphere and is a climate change solution," Danner told council. "It's a product that can be used in agriculture, infrastructure, construction, mining, filtration of wastewater, and all of the other areas that we are starting to research."

Carbon Lock technology uses a patented reactor system which converts biowaste into stable bio-char pellets. The process, called pyrolysis, applies high heat to the biomass in the absence of oxygen so that it doesn't combust. That

creates a stable carbon bond.

While the system isn't the answer to all waste, it is proving to be an effective means of dealing with biowaste, which is a significant component of the waste entering a landfill.

Organic waste, or biowaste, includes grass clippings, leaves, branches, cattails, and food waste.

In a landfill, that waste becomes an environmental problem since stored carbon is released back into the atmosphere as greenhouse gases.

It's also a problem for municipalities that own landfills. The biomass takes up landfill space, creates noxious odours as it decomposes, leaches into the groundwater below, and attracts unwanted pests.

The carbon pellet solution not only allows a municipality to manage those problems but serves a secondary purpose: providing a clean commodity which is useful to a variety of industries across the province.

In the agricultural sector, biocarbon pellets are useful for their water retentive characteristics when added to soil.

The pellets can also be added to concrete in order to reduce the carbon footprint created in road construction.

They are now being tested as a

filtration medium for wastewater and mining liquids.

All that said, Danner believes that a win/win scenario can come out of a collaboration between his company and the RM of Ritchot.

His ask was that council consider entering into negotiations toward a memorandum of understanding between the two parties. If approved by council, Carbon Lock Tech would be in a position to seek investors and government funding for the project.

The project, once complete, would involve a one-acre parcel located next to the Mid Canada landfill near Île-des-Chênes. Here, a number of buildings would be constructed, one to house the pyrolytic reactor system. Also, storage bins for the finished product would be located there.

Danner says there's two ways the RM can financially benefit from an industry like this.

"I understand that you're generating revenue by taking organic waste into your landfill," Danner told council. "It comes across the weigh scale and you make some money. But if you take that waste and turn it into carbon [pellets], you can sell that to concrete companies or agricultural interests."

The profits don't stop there, he added. Large corporations like Microsoft, Google, and Amazon

are looking for opportunities to purchase carbon removal credits from innovative companies such as Carbon Lock Tech.

"This will be up to a \$5 million processing plant in the pilot phase," Danner said. "Those costs will be borne by us and we will comply with all federal and provincial regulations."

If the RM is happy with the project after two years of operation, a second phase would be introduced. This would include a commercial aspect.

Councillor Joel Lemoine asked about the facility's energy and water demands, to which Danner replied that both will be nominal.

"What's interesting about the pyrolytic process is that it produces its own energy," Danner said. "Once it's up to temperature, there is a combustion gas that comes off that is then [turned] into a fluid and pumped back into the system. And then it just goes under its own steam. So all the energy to run the system is actually in the biomass itself."

CAO Shane Ray recommended that council enter negotiations with Carbon Lock Tech, assuring council that they will have final approval once negotiations are complete.

Council voted unanimously in favour of proceeding.

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Veteran Makes PTSD Awareness His Mission

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Locals have come to know and appreciate Scott Stroh, a military veteran and resident of Niverville, for his satirical takes on social media in the guise of Scott Kermit or the Garbage Complainer Guy. For Stroh, making fun of life's simple things is his way of keeping himself and others smiling.

Meanwhile, every day he is faced with the task of managing his post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. Thirteen years out of the military, he says he's made great strides and hopes to help other sufferers do the same.

This year, for the fourth year in a row, Stroh joined The Rolling Barrage PTSD Foundation in their annual event intended to reduce the stigma of PTSD. As well, the national not-for-profit organization raises money to support programs that assist PTSD sufferers.

The Rolling Barrage's annual motorcycle event takes riders across the country, from coast to coast, over a 20-day period every July to August. It draws together thousands of Canadian riders in a nation-wide spectacle that attracts thousands more spectators.

It also provides a way for military veterans and supporters of all stripes to join forces in a common cause. The event helps build friendships and resilience for so many who live with the daily reality of PTSD.

Riders can join in for one leg of the Canadian ride or the "full pull," beginning in St. John's, Newfoundland and ending in Aldergrove, British Columbia.

Stroh's participation has typically been local, although he hopes to join the ride from Manitoba to B.C. for the organization's tenth anniversary two years from now.

On August 9–10, The Rolling Barrage paraded through Manitoba, with stops in Steinbach and Winnipeg. Much of the parade route was escorted by either a fire brigade or police patrol.

In Steinbach, the group gathered at Big Freight Systems to enjoy a lunch and camaraderie with one of The Rolling Barrage's big sponsors.



Scott Stroh of Niverville is looking to raise awareness about PTSD, especially among military veterans.

📷 C/O SCOTT STROH

"People that want to be a part of the full pull, but you don't want to drive all the way to the [east coast starting point], Big Freight has a truck that's decal'd up with the Rolling Barrage [logo] and they will ferry your bike free of charge," says Stroh.

Another Manitoba pitstop took place at Harley Davidson in Winnipeg, also a sponsor. A Winnipeg police escort guided the motorcycles through the city from there.

"The most exciting thing for us, aside from getting together and raising awareness, is the illegal left turn from Main Street onto Portage," Stroh muses. "Newfoundland has the cliffs, New Brunswick has that long wooden covered bridge, and B.C. has the mountains. Winnipeg has Portage and Main, and that's a highlight for us."

While Stroh is a motorcycle enthusiast, he brings up the rear of the parade in his Ford Bronco, donning his signature car wrap which pays tribute to Canada's fallen heroes.

"The whole purpose is to create a rolling tribute to those that we've lost," says Stroh. "It doesn't necessarily have to be in combat, but just through their service."

It's a moving visual aid that has given Stroh many an opportunity to connect with other ex-military PTSD sufferers. It provides a means for him to engage in his own personal awareness campaign.

It takes a lot of people to make

something like The Rolling Barrage a success and Manitoba motorcycle groups are instrumental in making that happen on a local level.

Stroh recently began his own motorcycle group, called CAN-MB Veterans.

"I'm focusing on Manitoba-based veterans, or anybody that has put on a uniform," Stroh says. "A firefighter, paramedic, police officer, or military. They are all under that umbrella."

ADDRESSING THE STIGMA

One of the ways in which The Rolling Barrage helps erase the stigma of PTSD is by changing the way it's labelled. They prefer a more suitable moniker: PTSI.

"Instead of calling it a disorder or a disease, we want to recognize it as an operational stress injury," says Stroh.

He says there's primarily two reasons for PTSI to occur.

One is due to trauma connected to specific circumstances one has encountered, oftentimes horrific in nature.

The other is the result of being pushed beyond a person's moral boundaries. He gives the example of someone who is forced to make a life-altering decision which may result in death. This can happen to those working in the military or law enforcement.

Much of the stigma attached to PTSI stems from the fact that mental injuries aren't visible. Stigma

often begins in the workplace itself where PTSD can be suppressed for years in order for a person to keep performing their daily work routine.

MILITARY START

Stroh joined the Navy reserves as a 17-year-old in 1996. After basic training, he was posted to a Canadian warship.

He was on an international exercise near Scotland in 2001 during the 9/11 attack in Manhattan. His crew, along with many others, went into high alert, preparing for potential attacks in other parts of the world.

Immediately his ship was dispatched to the Persian Gulf.

"It was the beginning stages of what they would refer to as the war against terror," Stroh says. "It was not a war against a country with a conventional soldier. We were fighting a [new type of] narrative."

While their position was defensive, providing safe escort for commercial ships and stopping weapons and information smugglers, their presence wasn't appreciated by certain military groups in the Middle East.

During those years, Stroh operated the weapons systems on board the ship. Eventually he transferred to the intelligence branch of the Navy before moving on to air patrol reconnaissance.

In March 2010, Stroh was deployed to Afghanistan. His role included the use of drones and

other unmanned aerial vehicles to watch the everyday comings and goings of locals in order to try and pick out people or circumstances of suspicion.

"You're [watching for] weapons recognition—the difference between a guy holding a broomstick versus a guy holding a rifle. And from 10,000 feet, they can look very similar."

At the same time, Stroh kept a vigilant eye out for militants dressed as civilians, there to dig explosive devices into the ground along the paths of coalition troops.

Tough decisions occasionally had to be made, he says, when suspicion was high but not necessarily certain.

"That's where a lot of PTSD comes into play, because you're witnessing things that you shouldn't have to witness, on top of the fact that you feel helpless. There were a lot of [successful] operations, but unfortunately a few bad ones outweigh them."

Stroh began to show signs of PTSD shortly after. He took his military leave in 2013 and was provided medical disability coverage after being diagnosed with the injury.

"I had high levels of anxiety where I couldn't function, couldn't think."

These symptoms were further exacerbated by people or events in everyday situations that took him back to those traumatizing moments of his military past.

Today he works as a sports photographer, which has helped him to hyperfocus and block many triggers. Mindfulness and other psychological techniques are also useful tools.

PTSD, he says, never leaves you. It can be managed, though, with the right tools, including therapy. Eventually you should be living with it more than you are suffering from it.

Thanks to organizations such as The Rolling Barrage, Homes for Heroes, Soldier On, and others, he says that strides are being made year after year.

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When Dining Out Becomes a Luxury

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Since the turn of this decade, consumers have been met with rapidly rising costs for goods and services across every sector. Nothing seems to be immune in these tough economic times, and that certainly includes restaurant dining.

Data compiled last year from more than 7,000 hospitality businesses and 43 million transactions indicates that it's more than just a perception. We really are paying much higher prices at restaurants than ever before.

A report from MOBI, a company specializing in tech solutions for business in the hospitality industry, suggests that Canadian consumers are paying 34 percent more to eat out than they did in 2019.

For example, the cost of the humble burger now averages around \$20.

Consumers are pulling back, many forced to recategorize restaurant dining as a luxury. Demand for eating out, the study says, has decreased by 10 percent, year over year.

"Menu prices for dining in, take-out, and delivery have all increased by 4.3 percent over the past year, reflecting the ongoing rise in the cost of living and dining out," the report states. "The MOBI Index data closely aligns with the CPI (Consumer Price Index) from Statistics Canada's July 2024 report. Hospitality inflation is at 4.8 percent, surpassing the national CPI for all goods of 2.5 percent. Since August 2019, the cost of dining out has surged... leading many consumers to seek more budget-friendly dining options."¹

Jamie Short of Niverville says that the cost of eating out has dramatically changed her perception towards restaurant dining.

"When I dine out, I feel I am now paying more for significantly less quality and customer service than I did 10 years ago," says Short.

Megan Gyles of Ritchot says her family's eating out frequency hasn't changed a lot in recent years, but it's



more specifically geared these days towards getting the best value for their dollar.

"If you get a large meal [that's] filling and really good, it's worth the money for us," says Gyles. "For example, I loved to take my daughter out for crepes, but it's \$30 to \$40 for us to get one each, and you aren't even full after. [That's] not worth the dough for me."

As well, Gyles has resorted to a more traditional approach to tipping. If the server goes above and beyond and she feels like she's enjoyed a great dining experience, she considers leaving a tip.

She doesn't feel guilty, though, for not tipping at all.

Hilary Lungal feels a level of guilt in eating out when there's a fridge full of expensive groceries at home that she can't let go to waste.

"It feels wrong to pay for a steak dinner that's only okay when we can have a bigger portion at home and cook it the way we like for half the price," Lungal says.

For Andrea Kay, even fast-food dining has become something of the past—almost.

"I can feed my family of four one meal for the price of a Big Mac," Kay says. "Eating out is a treat for us, otherwise it's just too expensive to do with any regularity."

Lyn Belanger says that it's been a long while since her family dined out. On the odd occasion when they

choose to indulge, they are very intentional about where they eat.

"We try to stay away from high-end establishments and frequent local establishments," says Belanger. "On very special occasions, like an anniversary or milestone birthday, we do [spend more]."

Thankfully, there are small-town eateries, she adds, that still serve great food for a great price.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE COST INCREASES

With consumers noticing sharp price increases everywhere from high-end steakhouses to the fast-food burger joints, it's safe to assume that restaurants are responding to the bane of inflation. This makes sense considering their two primary cost inputs: food and staff wages.

According to the Consumers Council of Canada, the price of almost every grocery item today is markedly higher than it was just four years ago. In some cases, items have more than doubled in price.

Based on Canada's Food Price Report 2025, it is expected that food prices will continue to climb this year by three and five percent.²

Part of this lack of optimism likely stems from the additional costs incurred by U.S.-imposed tariffs in the past few months.

The cost of wages in recent years has also played a significant role. In 2022, the minimum wage in

Manitoba was \$11.95 per hour. By October 2025, following a series of hikes, it will reach \$16 per hour.

While not all restaurant employees pay the minimum wage for all positions, it's safe to assume that wages across the board have had to increase in order to maintain an adequate gap.

In a review of the 2025 James Beard Independent Restaurant Industry Report, *Forbes* writer Stephanie Gravalese says that 91 percent of restaurants have raised their prices to offset the costs of labour and ingredients.

Most of those increases are in the realm of five to ten percent. For some, however, a 15 percent hike was still barely enough to allow for any profit margin.³

In order to survive, restaurateurs are needing to get creative.

"The [James Beard] report found that over 85 percent of independent restaurants experimented with non-traditional revenue models in 2024," Gravalese writes. "Some are testing prepaid memberships where regulars pay upfront for exclusive perks. Others are shifting to ticketed dining events, pop-ups, and limited-time tasting menus—offering high-value experiences that diners are more willing to spend on."

SUPPORTING LOCAL

At the end of the day, the best bang for your dining-out buck is probably

realized by visiting a local establishment.

Generally speaking, restaurants located in rural areas can be more competitive thanks to reduced overhead costs compared to those found in cities.

Spending local also boosts the immediate economy, which benefits everyone in some form or fashion. The stronger the commercial industry a community boasts, the greater the property tax benefit for all residents.

Finally, local restaurants play a significant role in giving back to the community in which they serve, whether they're providing jobs or supporting community fundraising initiatives.

"It's clear that local businesses benefit from a strong community, therefore the owners tend to be more engaged members of the community themselves," says Joseph Lustberg for *Forbes*. "Small businesses donate 250 percent more than large businesses to local nonprofits and community causes, creating a positive cycle of giving back locally."⁴

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REMINDER NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

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The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation (MPI) has filed the 2026 General Rate Application before the Public Utilities Board (Board) for approval of Basic Autopac vehicle insurance rates and premiums effective on April 1, 2026 through March 31, 2027.

For further details, please contact MPI at inquiries@mpi.mb.ca or visit the Board's website at www.pubmanitoba.ca.

A public hearing on the proposed rate application will be held beginning:

Tuesday, October 14, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.

Please view the hearing via the PUB website link: <http://www.pubmanitoba.ca/v1/live-stream.html>

If you are interested in learning more about this rate application, you are encouraged to attend the hearing, observe the hearing via live streaming, or provide your perspectives through the Board's online comment tool.

If you wish to speak at the hearing or make a written submission, please contact the Board Secretary, Dr. Darren Christle at 204-945-2638 or toll-free 1-866-854-3698, no later than **September 30, 2025**.

For more information, visit www.pubmanitoba.ca

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HSD Trustee Board Reinstates Friesen and Wiebe as Chairs

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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On September 2, the Hanover School Division (HSD) announced their trustee board's newly appointed chairs for the 2025-26 school year.

Trustees from Ward 1, Dallas Wiebe and Jeff Friesen, have respectively agreed to the positions of chairperson and vice chair. Ward 1 covers the schools of Bothwell, Kleefeld, Crystal Springs, and Niverville. Both were voted in by acclamation by their peers.

Wiebe and Friesen provided the trustee board with this same leadership last year, only in reverse roles. This year, Friesen says he found himself getting a little busier with family matters and chose not to run for the chair position.

Friesen says that he looks forward to another year of working together with Wiebe, who he adds holds many of the same values and passions he does.

He also feels that one of the reasons they're good candidates for these roles is their flexibility, which comes from being self-employed farmers.

"I'm happy to follow if there's a strong leader [like Dallas]," Friesen says. "We have a lot of great trustees, but not everybody has the same strengths. And some have different time constraints."

The position of chairperson, he says, is not an easy one. The chairperson must attend meetings on behalf of the board and sift through



countless emails coming in daily from the province, the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS), the Manitoba School Boards Association, as well as regular correspondence from individuals and organizations in the community.

Then the appropriate information must be relayed to the board at their regular meetings.

Last year, Friesen says that he and Wiebe became a much tighter collaborative team than the board has likely experienced in years prior.

"In the past, the vice chair has been kept at arm's length," Friesen says. "Conversations were had with the chair that the vice chair didn't even know about."

Now, says Friesen, there is a mutual agreement to include each other in every relevant conversation.

Even so, he doesn't want to fill either of these positions indefinitely.

"I would like to see everyone [on the board] take a chair term because it builds a very strong board," says Friesen. "You get better board members if they understand what it takes to lead."

Perhaps one factor responsible for others' hesitancy in letting their names stand is the fact that the role comes with much greater responsibility and expectations with little more compensation.

All HSD trustees, Friesen says, serve as volunteers. While they are compensated with nominal stipends for attending meetings and mileage reimbursement, it doesn't reflect, in today's day and age, the countless hours everyone invests.

"We are one of the lowest paid divisions and one of the biggest divisions," says Friesen.

This topic has been discussed around the board table on more than one occasion in recent years.

One argument for giving trustees a salary is to attract more people to the board. Others on the board believe that trustees should be driven by a passion to serve.

Going into the new school term, Friesen says he plans to maintain the same ideals which drove him to serve three years ago: to be a voice for the values that matter to HSD parents in the face of what many see as government and MTS overreach.

"Keeping the local HSD values and traditions relevant and respected in the schools," Friesen says of his mandate. "That is actually in the Public Schools Act as to what we are supposed to do as trustees."

It's the erosion of these values and traditions, he says, that pushes parents to look for alternative options, such as private schools and homeschooling. Not everyone can afford these options, says Friesen.



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Holding Fast, Pressing Forward: Providence Hosts Centennial Celebration

By Holly Dunphy

Providence University College just got finished celebrating its one-hundredth anniversary. The festivities kicked off over the weekend of September 5–7, beginning with an awards reception and gala in Winnipeg on Friday, September 5.

The following day, Providence hosted a free on-campus festival, followed that evening by the first major concert at the Southeast Event Centre in Steinbach with Grammy-winning Christian music artist Zach Williams and Niverville's own Juno-winning Jordan St. Cyr taking the stage.

Families visiting the campus on Saturday took advantage of bouncy castles, facepainting, a petting zoo, and food trucks. Those interested in learning more about the campus were able to participate in a self-guided tour or meet English literature and science professors hosting interactive activities for guests.

Sports fans got the chance to spectate as Providence Pilots took on Université de Saint-Boniface in a morning soccer match. Music lovers enjoyed live performances from alum and southern Manitoban musicians such as Brandon Post and Trio, Amy Peters and Friends, and Joel and Howard Jolly.

To top it off, the afternoon featured a celebratory flyover by Harv's Air, a longtime aviation partner of the college.

The community was also invited for a commemorative outdoor worship service at the campus the next day at 2:00 p.m.

"We really want the greater community to come out and be part of these events," says Kathryn Mulolani, Providence's director of marketing. "The festival is not only for students, friends, and alumni but for the surrounding community in southern Manitoba because they have supported us so well throughout the years."



Providence's campus opening celebration in Otterburne in 1970.

© C/O PROVIDENCE

She adds that many of the school's alumni have gone on to become educators, healthcare professionals, counsellors, business leaders, and pastors.

Founded in 1925 in Winnipeg by H.L. Turner as the Winnipeg Bible Training School, the college has grown from a small faith-based institution with just 26 students in its first year into a university with far-reaching influence while maintaining its

Christian mission.

After several moves within Winnipeg, it relocated in 1970 to the former location of St. Joseph's College (Maison Saint-Joseph) in Otterburne, where it has remained for the past 55 years.

This legacy of growth and faith is reflected in the centennial theme: "Holding fast, pressing forward."

"Holding fast, pressing forward" has become our theme, honouring

our mission while moving ahead," Mulolani says. "We found this phrase in our archival work. The first part is drawn on from the book of Titus, where leaders are called to 'hold fast the faithful word,' and the full phrase felt like the perfect fit for our centennial."

Mulolani adds that the school also used the occasion of the anniversary to honour 26 people with the Distinguished Service Award.

These individuals, including past faculty, donors, and integral members of the community, have all made a remarkable impact on Providence.

From its earliest days, Providence has also stood out for the role women played in shaping the school. When the Winnipeg Bible Training School opened its doors in 1925, a number of women were among the founding faculty and continued to be central to its growth.

Among this year's honourees is Muriel Taylor, a founding faculty member who dedicated 25 years of service to the school and, since 2020, has been the namesake of the women's residence on campus.

Another is Gail Tiessen, whose leadership in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) earned her the Lieutenant Governor's Medal for Literacy in 2006.

Their stories, among others, highlight a century of women influencing Providence's mission and success.

The athletic department is celebrating its own milestone this year. It has been 50 years since it was first established in 1975 under founding athletic director Dr. Dennis Hiebert, now a sociology professor.

Currently, the Providence Pilots have teams spanning basketball, soccer, volleyball, futsal, and a newly formed cross-country team. Recent highlights for the athletic department include the women's soccer team winning a national championship in 2022, women's basketball taking the Northern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (NIAC) title in 2024, and the men's team earning their first in 2025.

This past spring, Providence and the Town of Niverville co-hosted the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association Men's Volleyball National Championships, bringing the national stage to southern Manitoba.

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Non-Profit Looks to Create a Safer Environment for Seniors with Alzheimer's

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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For anyone connected to a senior citizen living with Alzheimer's or dementia, a new organization is aiming to offer a breath of relief.

That organization is called There Is Someone Canada (TSC). Through a North America-wide database, registered individuals can be identified and returned to safety when they wander or experience confusion as they go out into the world.

Danielle Zwaagstra is TSC's Canadian director as well as a resident of Niverville. Her mother, Marcy MacPherson, is the founder of the organization, which launched in Florida in 2024.

MacPherson is a certified Positive Approach to Care coach and Alzheimer's and dementia awareness trainer to professionals. Less than a year after introducing the initiative, it's making waves across the United States.

It's Zwaagstra's goal to do the same in Canada.

For the cost of an annual subscription, seniors who live with cognitive challenges are provided with a purple bracelet, the colour associated with Alzheimer's and dementia.

The silicone bracelet is lightweight and non-restrictive, helping to ensure that the wearer won't pull it off. It bears the name of the organization as well as a six-digit number that's registered to the wearer. Up to two caregivers can be registered in the database along with the senior so they can quickly be notified when a client is in trouble.

"[The registry] shows a picture of the person wearing the bracelet so they can be positively identified,"



Danielle Zwaagstra, director of There Is Someone Canada.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

Zwaagstra says. "It also includes all of the health concerns, allergies, and what to look out for if they're combative or if they're non-verbal. It pretty much gives a summary of the cognitive challenge so that [people] know how to accurately and effectively deal with this person."

First and foremost, Zwaagstra's goal is to create awareness of the program to local first responders, law enforcement personnel, and personal care home staffers.

Should an individual find a senior who looks lost or out of sorts, a

quick call to local authorities with the bracelet number can be made.

Creating broader public awareness is also imperative, so everyone recognizes the significance of the purple bracelet and can jump into action when needed.

Without a doubt, broad recognition of the bracelet will help alleviate the fears and stress felt by so many family members and caregivers when their loved ones go missing.

The program can be of use, too, when people with varying degrees of dementia deal with any kind of

confusion or disorientation while out in public.

"Pharmacists regularly come across seniors who are easily confused," Zwaagstra adds. "They think they're paying with their debit card, but it's actually their driver's license."

In times like these, a quick call to the registry can help reach the caregiver for help.

To register for the program, there is a one-time signup fee of \$15. From there, the annual subscription is \$125. Zwaagstra says it's a small price to pay for peace of mind.

She adds that the program is best utilized when the primary caregiver also registers for the program and wears their own purple bracelet with a number that corresponds with that of their loved one.

"This way, we're verifying that you have a connection to [the senior]. If you're not actually listed as their power of attorney, we want to make sure that you actually are linked together."

If you're a spouse or a full-time caregiver, wearing a bracelet can have other implications, too.

"The [caregiver] goes out and they are running errands," Zwaagstra says by way of a pertinent example. "If they are in a car accident where they're unable to speak for themselves, first responders can see that they're wearing a bracelet which means there might be [a senior with dementia] left at home."

This information can help alert other family members to step in when the caregiver cannot.

In time, as the program gains momentum across the country, Zwaagstra imagines the tool being expanded to include those living with ALS, Parkinsons, or even children with autism or other neurodivergences. It's like a national neighbourhood watch, in a way, for the mentally challenged.

Should anyone wish to make donations to the non-profit, Zwaagstra says they are accepting funds to help the program get off the ground. Once it's in full flight, it's expected to be self-sustaining.

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Sports & Recreation

St. Adolphe Parents Fundraise for New Play Zone

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Earlier this year, the old play structure at École St. Adolphe School (ESAS) had to be deconstructed after many decades of use. It was deemed, by a safety officer of the school division, to have reached the end of its functional life.

A group of parents has now come together to ensure that the playground is replaced, forming a fundraising committee to raise the \$250,000 needed to undertake the first phase of reconstruction.

They have planned a fundraising social for September 20. The event will take place on the upper floor of the St. Adolphe arena. From 8:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. attendees will enjoy dancing and a DJ, a silent auction, a 50/50 draw, a bar, and a late lunch.

"It'll be a good way for everyone to get together and have fun," says Michelle Prairie, committee spokesperson. "It's for a really great cause and it's our first big fundraiser, so we're really excited for people to attend."

How many people does Prairie hope to see there? 352, Prairie says, the venue's maximum seating capacity.

Since the play structure is used by ESAS students ten months of the year, it is primarily parents of these students who have answered the fundraising call so far.

Still, they recognize that the playground serves the whole community. Its location at the heart of St. Adolphe makes it a prime gathering place for families.

They believe the entire community will get behind their push for a true community playground.

Tickets for the fundraising social sell for \$15 and are available at the school, the Esso gas station, and Caisse Populaire. Support tickets are also available for those who can't attend but still want to contribute. A separate prize draw will be held for all those who purchase



Shannon Philippe, Lea Takacs, Michelle Prairie, and Kristy Boyko.

BRENDASAWATZKY

support tickets.

The committee has already secured coveted prizes for the silent auction, including Blue Bombers tickets, a blowup screen and projector for watching outdoor movies, and a barbecue package that includes a backyard arbour and grill.

Sponsorships are another way to support the event. So far, many businesses and organizations have gotten on board, including Barrtech Mechanical, the RM of Ritchot, Duke's Burgers, Cornerstone Café, Mighty Ducts, Mach 1, the St. Adolphe Market, Richard McKenzie Insurance, and Affinity Insurance. But there's still room for more.

The bigger sponsors will have their logo displayed on all the event advertising. Others will have their name announced from the stage throughout the evening.

If all goes as hoped, sponsorships will cover 100 percent of the overhead costs so every penny can be applied to the play structure project. Prairie says it could conceivably bring them \$10,000 closer to their goal.

All donors, large and small, can receive a tax receipt through the

committee's charitable designation: Friends of the Playground.

The social is the second fundraiser this committee has planned so far. The first took place on the opening day of school, with a Krispy Kreme donut sale that profited the committee \$1,200.

They ask everyone to keep their eyes open for more fundraisers throughout the year.

Prairie says that, optimistically, all the funding could be in place by the end of this school year, allowing for the play structure to be ready for active play in time for next September.

In the meantime, a collection of outdoor toys have been placed where the old structure once stood. For this year's elementary aged kids, it will have to do.

ABOUT THE NEW PLAY STRUCTURE AND KID ZONE

Prairie isn't just a playground committee member. She's also president of the school's parent advisory council (PAC).

The PAC has seen the need for a new play structure for some time. Indeed, the old one had been modified time and again over the years

to keep it safe for use.

This time, no amount of patching would suffice.

In June, the council called a parent meeting to discuss next steps. The fundraising committee was thus formed and they spent their summer organizing, searching for grants, and getting professional renderings drawn up.

According to Shannon Philippe, principal of ESAS and also a member of the committee, outdoor play equipment in Manitoba is rarely a capital cost that falls on the division.

Generally, she says that these kinds of features fall into the portfolio of the PAC.

Phase one of the playground plan revolves mostly around the play structure and the surface area beneath it. A number of elements are important to the committee, including accessibility.

"There are some play structures that are accessible by definition, where kids can make their way up to the [play area]," says Philippe. "But they remain on the outside. Our goal is to have ramps and places where they can actually be included in the play."

Even accessibility for adults

matters, Philippe adds.

"One of the grandparents in the area said, 'As a grandparent, I can't go up on the play structure. But if there were ramps and so on, I could play with my grandchildren.'"

Of course, accessibility can matter even when a person has no long-term mobility issues.

Some kids live with reduced mobility when they've fractured a bone. Others suffer from a fear of heights, necessitating ground level play features. This means the ground surface, too, must allow for accessibility. The committee is considering a compressed wood chip product.

The next area of importance for the committee was that the structure include features that encourage physical activity for those kids who are able, such as climbing, hanging, and swinging components.

It's harder to attach a dollar figure to the project's second phase, since the details aren't yet refined. It will eventually include a natural play area surrounding the structure, possibly including hills and tunnels. They also hope to include easy-access hardscaping that connects the school to the playground.

For now, the committee is grateful for each and every donation. Cheques can be dropped off at the school, made out to the Seine River School Division with a memo indicating it's for the ESAS play structure project. Donors who give \$500 or more will have their names engraved on a plaque located near the play structure once it's erected.

But the project will require more than just money. People power is equally important.

"If there are people that want to help with the social, or someone has an idea for fundraising, send us an email," Prairie says. "New ideas and help is always welcome."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Max Dowse (Niverville), Seth Hooper (St. Adolphe), Noah Hudson (Niverville), Niko Lemoine (Ste. Agathe), and Owen Law (St. Pierre) suit up for the Nighthawks.

SARAH HUNT

Nighthawks Open Training Camp with High Expectations

By Bill Burfoot

The Niverville Nighthawks opened training camp on Tuesday, September 2, bringing together a mix of seasoned veterans and promising young talent all aiming to earn a spot on the opening night roster in just over two weeks.

This year, Niverville was one of the earliest MJHL teams to hit the ice, hosting their combined prospect and main camp in mid-August. The early start was a shift from previous seasons.

According to head coach Dwight Hirst, the decision was made to get ahead of the competition and establish a strong foundation for the upcoming season.

"We wanted to do something different and get ahead of the process this year," Hirst explains. "The players were informed last spring that we'd be holding a mid-August camp, followed by a return after the September long weekend."

Mike McAulay, the team's general manager and director of scouting, says he was impressed with how the players came into the camp ready to compete.

"The first thing that stood out was the pace of play," says McAulay. "I thought the 2009s acclimated themselves really well, and the older players in camp really led the way."

Veteran forward Adam Vigfusson, fresh off a standout 2024-25 season in which he led the Nighthawks with 62 points and 31 goals, returned to the CRRC in August with great enthusiasm.

Vigfusson praised the energy and intensity on day one, highlighting the strong competitive spirit displayed by both the returning veterans and the younger prospects.

"For day one, it was great," Vigfusson says. "The pace was high, the pucks were moving well, and overall it was a lot of fun."

Hirst was equally impressed with the quality of play, noting

that the veterans, like Vigfusson, are expected to lead by example both on and off the ice.

"We expect our veterans to set the standard for how we want the young players to compete," Hirst says. "It's all about leading through example, and we want the younger guys to push themselves and show what they can do and compete."

The enthusiasm from fans was also evident on day one, with many supporters turning out to watch the opening sessions.

"Our fans always bring so much energy," Hirst adds. "And we really appreciate them coming out today."

Now, with the arrival of September and the regular season just a couple of weeks away, it's time for the full training camp. McAulay and the coaching staff will be looking to the team's veterans to set the tone, while also evaluating younger players who could step into key roles.

With a strong core returning from last season, the focus will be

on rounding out the roster.

Hirst is entering his second full season behind the bench, and he's made it clear that expectations are high.

In 2024-25, Hirst guided the team to a nine-point improvement in the standings—including five more wins than the previous year. The Nighthawks then pushed the MJHL's top-ranked Winkler Flyers to a hard-fought six-game playoff series, with five of the six contests decided by just one goal.

"I want to continue what we started building last season, especially how we finished in the playoffs last spring, and build upon that," says Hirst.

Training camp sessions were held all week at the CRRC and were open to the public.

The Nighthawks have now begun their preseason schedule. On Sunday, September 7 they hosted the visiting Selkirk Steelers in a game largely played by rookies.

Niverville opens its regular season Friday, September 19, welcoming the Winnipeg Blues to the CRRC.

GETZLAF COMMITS TO NCAA'S CASTLETON SPARTANS

Veteran Nighthawks defenceman Holden Getzlaf has committed to Castleton University, where he will suit up for the Castleton Spartans in NCAA Division III hockey this upcoming season.

Getzlaf joined the Nighthawks prior to the 2024-25 campaign and quickly became a key contributor on the blue line. He recorded 11 assists over 41 regular-season games and elevated his play in the postseason, tying for the team lead in defenseman scoring with four points (2 goals, 2 assists) in six playoff games.

Getzlaf's strong play was a key contribution to the Nighthawks' playoff series against the Winkler Flyers last spring.

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Public Notice Board of Revision

Public notice is hereby given that the 2026 Assessment Roll for the Town of Niverville has been delivered to the Town Office at 329 Bronstone Drive and is open for public inspection during regular office hours. Applications for revision may be made in accordance with sections 42 and 43 of The Assessment Act.

Application for Revision

42(1) A person in whose name property has been assessed, a mortgagee in possession of property under section 114(1) of The Real Property Act, an occupier of premises who is required under the terms of a lease to pay the taxes on the property, or the assessor may make application for the revision of an assessment roll with respect to:

- a) liability to taxation;
- b) amount of an assessed value;
- c) classification of property; or
- d) a refusal by an assessor to amend the assessment roll under subsection 13(2).

Application Requirements

43(1) An application for revision must:

- a) be made in writing;
- b) set out the roll number and legal description of the assessable property for which a revision is sought;
- c) state the grounds on which the application is based; and
- d) be filed by
 - (i) delivering it or causing it to be delivered to the office indicated in the public notice given under section 41(2), or
 - (ii) serving it upon the Secretary, at least 15 days before the scheduled sitting date of the board as indicated in the public notice.

The Board of Revision will sit on **November 18th, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.** to hear applications. Location to be confirmed at a later date.

The final date on which applications must be received by the Secretary of the Board is **November 3rd, 2025 by 5pm.** Applications can be either mailed to the address noted below or delivered to the Town Office at 329 Bronstone Drive, Niverville. Please ensure application(s) is (are) submitted in accordance with Section 43(1) noted above.

Eric King
Board of Revision
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