

# The Citizen

**Free** PLEASE TAKE ONE

VOLUME 12 - ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2026

[www.nivervillecitizen.com](http://www.nivervillecitizen.com)

DISTRIBUTED FREE TO NIVERVILLE, ÎLE-DES-CHÊNES, STE. AGATHE, ST. ADOLPHE, TOUROND, OTTERBURN, NEW BOTHWELL, AND GLENLEA



**SANTA LUCIA  
PIZZA**

Catering for any Occasion Large or small  
Birthdays • Weddings

#1 - 31 Main Street, Niverville 204-388-9990



**ORDER YOUR  
Favourite FOODS**

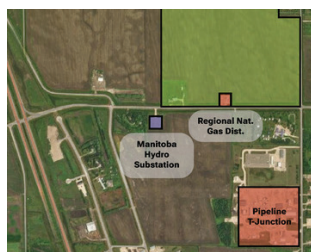
**Online!**



**Niverville CREDIT UNION**

## REWARDS FOR REFERRALS

REFER A FRIEND AND BE ENTERED TO WIN A \$250 GIFT CARD AND A CHANCE TO WIN OUR GRAND PRIZE AT OUR AGM.



### LOCAL NEWS

## Major AI Data Centre Proposed

■ A massive new data centre is being proposed for a parcel of farmland near Île-des-Chênes, delivering big economic and technological benefits. However, there are concerns about the potential overuse of our natural resources.

Details on Pages 8-9

### LOCAL NEWS

## Big New Residential Developments on the Way

■ From Oak River in Île-des-Chênes to Highlands West in Niverville, developers are unveiling new local housing proposals.

Details on Page 10

### SPORTS & REC

## Nighthawks Show Why They're Still #1

■ The Nighthawks continue to fly high this year. In December, the team was ranked the best junior team in all of Canada.

Details on Pages 14-16

### ARTS & CULTURE

## Finding Their Voices

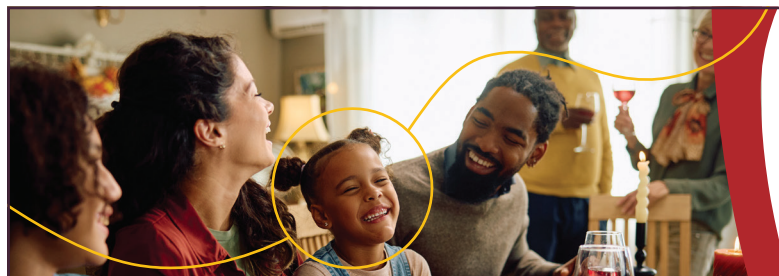
■ A local music teacher is behind a local adult choir, a youth choir, as well as a drama club. All these groups are actively seeking new members in the new year

Details on Page 18

# Province Offers New Optimism for Highway 59 Twinning

➤ READ MORE ON PAGE 7

JOEY VILLANUEVA



**Life's a journey. Save for it.**

Whatever you're saving for, we'll help you get there.

[SCU.MB.CA/SAVEFORIT](http://SCU.MB.CA/SAVEFORIT)

**SCU**

EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES®



**Red River Co-op Pharmacy - Niverville**  
103-101 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave S. | (204) 388-6910



**You can quit.  
We can help!**

*Your health. Our expertise.  
Personalized care solutions.***CARE****Enhanced  
Services**

**PRIVATE WEALTH  
MANAGEMENT****COURCELLES  
GROUP**

## Do you have a *real* financial plan?

<sup>1</sup>56% of financial plans don't address estate planning needs. A *real* plan should include tax strategies, investments, retirement, and more.

Contact us today by phone or email to receive your complimentary Estate Planning guide.



**Dean  
Melnychuk****Don  
Courcelles**

**204-792-2489 | [donald.courcelles@igpwm.ca](mailto:donald.courcelles@igpwm.ca)**  
<sup>1</sup>IG Wealth Management Estate Planning Study, 2025  
IG Wealth Management Inc., Mutual Fund Division



**16.01.2026**  
**GRAND  
OPENING**  
**NIVERVILLE'S EXCLUSIVE SPIN AND BARRE STUDIO**

**SEE OUR SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ALL GRANDOPENING  
DETAILS @ATELIERCYCLE.NIVERVILLE**

**NIVERVILLE****autobody  
Collision & Glass**

**COLLISION REPAIR  
AUTO GLASS REPAIR & REPLACEMENT**

**directrepair**

**Ferd Klassen**  
Phone: 204.388.4657  
Fax: 204.388.4394  
Email: [info@nivervilleautobody.ca](mailto:info@nivervilleautobody.ca)

**[www.nivervilleautobody.ca](http://www.nivervilleautobody.ca)**  
**autopac** | **ACCREDITED**  
A Manitoba Public Insurance product



WHAT'S INSIDE

Cannabis Store Signage, Emergency Alerts, and Fire Hall Donations	3
Commerce Group Hands Out Awards at Annual Gala	4
Niverville High School Well Represented at Youth Parliament 2025	5
Planning Session 2025: Micro-Suites, Recreation, Healthcare, and Daycare	6
Niverville Council Sets Goal for 300 New Daycare Spots	6
Province Offers Early-Stage Optimism on Highway 59 Twinning	7
Major AI Data Centre Proposed for Ile-des-Chênes	8
Roads and Zoning Plans Discussed for Highlands West	10
Oak River Phase Two Plan Unveiled at Stakeholder Meeting	10
Ritchot Homeowners Eligible for Free Energy Efficiency Evaluations	11
Ritchot's Council Talks Crime Stats, Bilingual Libraries, and Rail Park	12
MLA Ron Schuler to Hang Up Political Hat	12
New Report Finds Escalating Food Insecurity in Manitoba	13
Still on Top: Nighthawks Show Why They're #1	14
Finding Their Voice: Choirs and Drama Club Welcome New Members	18



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

**Managing Editor:**  
Evan Braun

**Sales Manager:**  
Ray Dowse

**Operations Manager:**  
Cara Dowse

**Design/Production Manager:**  
Dustin Krahn

**Contributors:**  
Evan Braun, Brenda Sawatzky,  
Holly Dumphy, Bill Burfoot

**CONTACT US**

**Letters to the Editor:**  
editor@nivervillecitizen.com

**Advertising Sales:**  
sales@nivervillecitizen.com

**Classifieds/General Information:**  
info@nivervillecitizen.com

**Artwork/Ad Proofs/Graphics:**  
ads@nivervillecitizen.com

The Niverville Citizen is published monthly and distributed through Canada Post to all those with a postal box in Niverville, Ile-des-Chênes, St. Adolphe, Ste. Agathe, New Bothwell, Otterburne, and Tourond. Additional copies are distributed to businesses in the aforementioned communities. The paper is printed in Canada by Derksen Printers Ltd. Republishing of this paper in whole or in part without prior approval is strictly prohibited.

Funded by the Government of Canada  
Financé par le gouvernement du Canada

**Canada**

The advertising deadline is 5:00 p.m. on the 20th of each month. The paper will be distributed the first week of every month.

Our commitment to the reader is to provide a professional and reliable means of communication that both residents and businesses will value. This newspaper is 100 percent supported by those who choose to advertise within it. Readers who support the businesses who advertise in this publication are also supporting the development and circulation of future issues of this newspaper. Together, we can help build stronger communities.

**FREE TO SHARE. PLEASE RECYCLE.**



Council meets for a regularly scheduled public meeting in December. BRENDA SAWATZKY

# Cannabis Store Signage, Emergency Alerts, and Fire Hall Donations

**By Brenda Sawatzky**  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Niverville's council had a number of topics to deliberate at their December 16 public meeting.

One of these was a request by the owners of Urban Flavours to allow their exterior signage to include references to the cannabis and vape products they sell.

If approved, this would require a revision of their conditional use agreement with the town, which originally denied the use of words or graphics on the exterior of the building that referenced cannabis in any way.

The current manager of the store, Chris Friesen, made a presentation to council indicating his intent to simply add the words "cannabis" and "vape" to the existing logo. No graphics would be used.

"The intent is to clearly identify the nature of our licensed business for customers while remaining compliant with all municipal bylaws," Friesen told council.

Friesen admitted that it's not uncommon for walk-in traffic to presume they are a bakery, based on the similarity of their name to that of a local bake shop just a few doors down called Forgotten Flavours.

"Even if they haven't heard of Forgotten Flavours, we're still mistaken for a bakery or a café," Friesen added.

One objection letter was received to the proposal, sent from Hanover School Division's Dallas Wiebe on behalf of the board of trustees.

"The board's concern is not limited to the existence of the business," Wiebe said. "Rather, it focuses on the proposed shift to more external promotion of cannabis and vape which increases exposure and normalization for minors."

Looking back, council reviewed the reasons for the original decision to deny explicit exterior references to cannabis. CAO Eric King suggested that the intent at the time was to ensure that the business maintained a professional aesthetic, unlike some other cannabis stores they've seen around the province.

Councillor Chris Wiebe reminded council that there is already a vape store with explicit signage located at Niverville Commons, not far from the entrance to Opa's Park. He said that he supported the Urban Flavours request, especially in light of the confusion that a lack of good signage causes for patrons.

In review of the visual aid provided by Urban Flavours, members of council determined that their proposal for the added wording appears both professional and unobtrusive.

They voted unanimously in favour of the request.

Also approved by council was a proposal to register the Town of Niverville with the Alert Manitoba

program in order to bring timely and direct cellphone alerts to Niverville residents in times of local emergency and disaster.

According to King, taking this step to integrate local communication with the provincial system further enhances the town's emergency preparedness and response capabilities.

He further clarified that these would not include natural disaster emergency alerts, which currently come through Environment and Climate Change Canada. Missing child alerts, similarly, come from the RCMP and are not a part of the Alert Manitoba program.

"This includes anything that is a life safety event that affects Niverville," said King. "So if a train derails and some chemical falls off the train and it requires a shelter-in-place to be [sent out], I can submit something to the provincial system which would allow it to be sent to anyone who has pinged off a local cell tower."

He gave the example of forest fire alerts he received this past October while driving through Nova Scotia.

Finally, following a very successful firefighters perogy dinner fundraiser, council will be issuing donor receipts for the \$7,255 collected that night. Proceeds are earmarked for the construction of a new fire hall.

Another \$1,000 individual donation was provided to the Town of Niverville for the same purpose.



**SUBWAY**

**NIVERVILLE**



**AF**



**Global Transformation Challenge**

**JOIN FOR \$1\***

SEE STORE FOR DETAILS.



**ANYTIME FITNESS**

**204-961-1919**

40 Drovers Run, Niverville

facebook.com/anytimefitnessniverville

FOR DETAILS VISIT [ANYTIMEFITNESS.COM](https://www.anytimefitness.com)



# Commerce Group Hands Out Awards at Annual Gala

By Holly Dunphe

On November 29, the TC Energy Centre in Île-des-Chênes filled with entrepreneurs and businesspeople from across the rural southeast.

Hosted by the Manitoba Southeast Commerce Group, and made possible by sponsors, the third annual business gala brought the business community together for a Vegas-style evening featuring table vendors, wine and cheese networking, a live pianist, business awards, and gaming.

Elisa Griffin-Boily attended for the first time as the newly appointed executive director of the Southeast Commerce Group, a chamber of commerce representing businesses from the RMs of Ritchot, Ste. Anne, and Tache.

Only 14 days into her new role, she says she is already working alongside board members on initiatives focused on strengthening connections and raising awareness.

As a fourth-generation farmer operating Porchland Produce, Griffin-Boily recognizes the importance of expanding the chamber's social media presence to increase visibility while emphasizing the continued need for in-person social events.

"We are working on expanding our presence on social media. It's very important," Griffin-Boily says. "We want to pique people's interest and still have the kind of social outings where we can talk face to face. We're



Award winners at the Southeast Commerce Group's annual gala.

HOLLY DUNPHE

so connected online that we're almost losing the ability to be truly connected in person."

Gavin Wall, chamber vice-president and director of the food division for Clearview Co-op, echoed Griffin-Boily's emphasis on connection.

"There is an effort being put forth to connect businesses in the southeast," says Wall. "Everyone is a bit spread out compared to Winnipeg, and with the strength of a larger group in the southeast we have the power to accomplish more together."

Wall also emphasized the importance of increasing awareness of the chamber's role and the opportunities

it provides for its members and the broader community.

"We aim to serve as a glue for businesses and entrepreneurs in the region," he adds. "We want to open opportunities to talk and communicate, but also to bring about action through those conversations."

The evening's awards highlighted a range of businesses and individuals who contribute to the local economy.

There were 15 nominees—and although there were initially intended to be five awards up for grabs, seven ended up being distributed.

Seine River Telecom was named business of the year, and Villa Youville

was recognized for its non-profit excellence. For customer service, the prize went to a pair of tied businesses, A Maze In Corn and Fleuriste XO Flowers and Gifts Ltd.

A special subcategory award, for entrepreneurial excellence and business leadership, was announced and awarded for the first time to Marc Palud, a founding member of the original Ritchot Regional Chamber of Commerce. Palud was pivotal to the rebranding of the chamber as the Manitoba Southeast Commerce Group.

The Rising Star Award was presented to Sippin' Pretty, owned and

operated by Krista McCullough of Lorette. McCullough, who transitioned from custom drinkware to candle-making, said that her work is rooted in creating experiences that connect people to memory, creating a sense of nostalgia.

"Scent is the strongest sense tied to memory," McCullough says. "One of my friends told me one of my candles reminded her of going to her grandmother's house and coming inside after playing for hot apple cider. It's not just a candle, it's an experience."

Anna Hunter, owner of Longway Homestead, was named entrepreneur of the year. Based near Ste. Geneviève, Longway Homestead is a family-run sheep and fibre farm and wool mill focused on sustainability, education, and advocacy. While the business serves customers across North America, Hunter spoke of the importance of remaining rooted in local, community-focused agriculture and hands-on learning.

"We think a lot about where our food comes from," Hunter says. "But we don't often talk about where our clothing comes from."

Hunter also emphasized the importance of strengthening local infrastructure and awareness, noting that many residents are still unaware of what exists in their own region.

"Local is really important," Hunter adds. "We need to know what we have for sustainability in our own backyard."



**KitchenAid®**

**RED HOT SAVINGS**

Offer valid only at participating Canadian authorized KitchenAid appliances dealers. See sales associate for details and list of qualifying models\*

JANUARY 8 – FEBRUARY 25, 2026		
Buy any 3 qualifying major kitchen appliances, <b>SAVE \$600*</b>	Buy any 4 qualifying major kitchen appliances, <b>SAVE \$800*</b>	Buy any 5+ qualifying major kitchen appliances, <b>SAVE \$1200*</b>

**wiens**  
FURNITURE & APPLIANCES

132 MAIN STREET  
NIVERVILLE, MANITOBA

PHONE: 204-388-4149  
sales@wiensfurniture.ca

TOLL FREE: 888-33-WIENS  
[www.wiensfurniture.ca](http://www.wiensfurniture.ca)

\* Before taxes. Instant savings of \$600 when you purchase three (3) qualifying KitchenAid® built-in and selective freestanding kitchen major appliances (freestanding induction range, freestanding slide-in ranges with true convection and freestanding 36" French Door Bottom Mount Refrigerators) or instant savings of \$800 when you purchase four (4) qualifying KitchenAid® built-in and selective freestanding kitchen major appliances (freestanding induction range, freestanding slide-in ranges with true convection and freestanding 36" French Door Bottom Mount Refrigerators) or instant savings of \$1200 when you purchase five (5) or more qualifying KitchenAid® built-in and selective freestanding kitchen major appliances (freestanding induction range, freestanding slide-in ranges with true convection and freestanding 36" French Door Bottom Mount Refrigerators). Multiple purchases must be made at the same time from the same participating authorized Canadian KitchenAid® appliance dealer. Qualifying purchases must be made from January 8 - February 25, 2026. Offer excludes, Countertop Microwaves and second channel models. Open to Canadian residents only. Offer cannot be combined with any other KitchenAid® major kitchen appliances offer. Offer is not available to second channel, dealers, builders or contractors. All models may not be available at all dealers. No substitute models qualify. Dealer prices may vary. Dealer alone has sole discretion to set retail prices. ©/™ © 2026 KitchenAid. Used under license in Canada. All rights reserved.





Participants gather for Youth Parliament at the Manitoba Legislature.

YOUTH PARLIAMENT OF MANITOBA

# Niverville High School Well Represented at Youth Parliament 2025

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

This Christmas break, while many teenagers were gaming or sleeping late, one group of Niverville youth was undertaking a deep dive into provincial politics.

This year marks the 104th session of Youth Parliament of Manitoba (YPM), a week-long event running from December 26–31.

A handful of Niverville youth were accepted to participate in the 2025 session, ranging in position from pages to backbenchers to mock cabinet ministers.

Founded in 1922, YPM is the longest-running mock parliament in the world. While supported by the provincial government, it is organized and fully run by Manitobans under the age of 25.

This year's session drew in more than 90 members from eight different communities. Registration capacity was reached in less than half the usual time.

For Naomi Sarmiento, a senior at Niverville High School, it was her second time participating in YPM. Last year she came in as a backbencher. This year she's pleased with

her assignment as the Minister of Public Relations.

Regardless of her position, she says that it's a thrill to be accepted to YPM out of the many youth who apply.

"They need to make sure they're choosing the right people for it," Sarmiento says. "The ones that will commit their time throughout the winter break. If [youth] aren't participating or they don't feel passionate about using their voice, then we're losing the opportunity for someone else that may have wanted [to be there]."

Being selected is a relatively stringent process, she says. One must successfully win favour by answering a series of questions.

As well, you benefit from proof of active involvement outside of YPM.

Sarmiento is a natural fit, already a vocal advocate for social justice and inclusivity. Currently in her final year of high school, she presides as co-president of the student leadership team and is actively involved on the Student Action Committee.

Last year, Sarmiento organized her high school's first Asian Heritage Awareness event, inviting a group of Manitoba's Asian politicians

to speak about their culture.

"Youth are very [good at] communicating ideas," says Sarmiento. "They are also fresh and open to information. [YPM] gives the younger generation a chance to get out there and be more involved."

She was introduced to YPM through former NHS student Eddy Paez.

Paez is back this year, too, as Minister of Labour. It's her job to oversee the committee responsible for all the meals and banquets during the five-day event.

For Sarmiento, spending a week alongside so many intelligent and passionate youth has influenced her enormously.

"I've been interested in politics for a long time now," Sarmiento says. "I'm going into political science next year after I graduate and then I can go into law."

The YPM itinerary is intense for these young people. The participants' off-time during the five days will be spent at Kelvin High School. Every morning they are bussed to the Legislature where they sit in chamber to debate and vote on three bills related to the Senate Reform Act, Alcohol Regulation Act, and Universal Post-Secondary

Education Act. In between, they rub shoulders with actual members of the four official parties and learn about the parliamentary process.

"We get to meet them all and have lunch with them. We get to immerse ourselves through conversations and asking questions, which is amazing."

Each YPG week also includes a Bear Pit session where former politicians are invited to sit with the youth and respond to questions about their careers and views on various political subjects.

"This year we have two NDP alumni, one PC and one Liberal," says Sarmiento. "[This lets us] have more transparent conversations with people... and they can be more honest because they're not tied down [by decorum]."

YPM is a non-partisan corporation and registered charity. Its primary purpose is to provide opportunities for young adults to improve their communications skills, learn about the Canadian democratic parliamentary tradition, and meet other like-minded Manitoba youth.

YPM alumni include names like Lloyd Axworthy, Bill Blaikie, Darren Praznik, and Bill Norrie.



## UPCOMING HOME GAMES

JANUARY 3 @ 7:30 P.M.

STEINBACH  
PISTONS

JANUARY 4 @ 3:00 P.M.



FAMILY FUN DAY

JANUARY 9 @ 7:30 P.M.

SWAN VALLEY  
STAMPEDERS

JANUARY 15 @ 1:00 P.M.

SELKIRK  
STEELERS

FEBRUARY 7 @ 7:30 P.M.

VIRDEN  
OIL CAPITALS
[www.mjhlighthawks.ca](http://www.mjhlighthawks.ca)


## CHRISTOPHER HOFER

YOUR LOCAL REAL ESTATE AGENT

CALL ME TODAY FOR A FREE MARKET EVALUATION!



204-807-5701

chrishoferrealtor@gmail.com

www.christopherhofer.ca



## IN BRIEF

## Niverville Council Sets Goal for 300 New Daycare Spots

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Ahead of the new year, Niverville's council set for themselves a resolution to produce 300 new daycare spots by 2030.

In the end, the province has final authority over daycare spots. Still, council believes that, with some encouragement, more local spaces might be expedited.

With that in mind, council created a four-point strategy to be implemented immediately.

"Businesses need to attract workers for our community to continue to thrive," says Mayor Myron Dyck. "The lack of access to daycare for parents should not be the reason that we can't attract workers, and that is one reason why council has created this comprehensive daycare strategy."

To begin, council will advocate for the province to create reasonable licensing requirements to encourage more interest from daycare providers.

At the same time, they plan to work alongside developers and building owners, providing land where possible and encouraging the provision of daycare space in new and existing buildings.

In the near future, council hopes to expand opportunities for childcare training to be offered locally.

Finally, they'll continue to promote their current grant for home-based daycare businesses. That grant, created in 2022, offers \$2,000 towards a new daycare's startup costs, provided they've obtained a license to operate from the province.

Existing daycares are also eligible to receive the grant, on a one-time basis, when they increase their daycare spots by a minimum of five.

Growing Minds Childcare Centre is currently Niverville's only licenced daycare. They operate out of three locations: the Heritage Centre, 25 Main Street, and the Niverville High School.

In spring, Growing Minds had an enrolment capacity of 204 childcare spaces. That amounts to less than three percent of Niverville's population, posing a dire concern when it comes to attracting new families to the community.

At the same time, Growing Minds had a waiting list of 700.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

feedback@whereyoubelong.ca

# Planning Session 2025: Micro-Suites, Recreation, Healthcare, and Daycare

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On November 21–22, Niverville's council mustered for a 20-hour planning session in an effort to pinpoint the most important aspects of their next budget.

When they emerged, they had narrowed their focus to a few critical priorities they wish to work on in the coming year.

## PROPERTY TAXES AND RECREATION SUBSIDIES

Two items directly affecting the 2026 budget include property taxes and recreation subsidies.

In terms of property taxes, council has set a 2.5 percent increase next year. This is lower than the recommended 2.9 percent cost of living adjustment.

"We're able to do this thanks to growth," Mayor Myron Dyck says. "If it wasn't for growth, we'd either have to do [fewer things] or that number would have to be higher."

New this year, council plans to provide subsidies for Niverville families who may not otherwise have the means to ensure that their kids are enrolled in recreation programming.

In order to do this, council will partner with ROC Eastman, a local charitable organization whose mandate is to create recreational opportunities for children.

"We wanted to partner with a third party," Dyck says. "We don't want staff to [make those decisions]. Also, for privacy, you know. It's a small town."

## CHANGING BYLAWS TO MAKE WAY FOR MICRO-HOUSING

At least one planning session decision will require changes to the town's current bylaws, which in turn should lead to improved housing affordability.

The conversation in question revolves around the development of micro-suites in multifamily housing units.

"It's something that council has been talking to developers about for ten-plus years," says Dyck.



Back row: Meghan Beasant, Nathan Dueck, Bill Fast. Front row: MYRON DYCK, Myron Dyck and Chris Wiebe. BRENDA SAWATZKY

"Would they want to include a smaller sized unit into some of their larger scale projects? It's this year that we're seeing some traction on that."

For the first time, he says, developers have come to council seeking their feedback on the creation of open-concept studio suites in their larger apartment complexes.

As a result, council has decided to eliminate their 600-square-foot minimum bylaw. They await developers to see where the new square footage requests will fall.

"We have proposals before us right now [asking] for as small as 270 square feet, but most are kind of in the 400 range," says Dyck.

Taking it one step further, council has also decided to reduce their minimum parking stall requirement from two stalls per door to one per door when it comes to micro-suites.

According to Dyck, this development concept is already being embraced by developers and city officials in Winnipeg.

At present, council hopes to keep the micro-suite focus to areas

of new construction as opposed to situations of urban infill throughout the community.

## MUNICIPAL CONTROL OF DAYCARE AND EXPANDED HEALTHCARE

In 2020, when Niverville Open Health's future looked grim, Niverville became one of Manitoba's first municipalities to take over its medical clinic and turn it into a social enterprise.

After this year's planning sessions, council wants to build on that potential by seeking ways to expand Niverville's existing healthcare services.

At the same time, they're looking for ways to add more local daycare spots.

Despite a recent addition to the medical clinic, the demand is so high that Open Health still can't keep up. Patients are frustrated, Dyck says, when the clinic advertises same-day appointments, yet they still can't get in.

"We have physicians that have interest in coming, so we just want to make sure we have space," Dyck says. "We've been fortunate in that,

due to our proximity to Winnipeg, it gives doctors options, even if it's for a day per week."

For Councillor Nathan Dueck, liaison on the Niverville Open Health advisory board, it would take too long to simply wait for the province to fix the healthcare system.

"Healthcare is a massive [concern] and requires a lot of attention," Dueck says. "We're taking it on from a municipal standpoint. Instead of being a part of the problem that no one is fixing, we're going to be a part of the solution by making healthcare better in our community."

For now, council will actively assist the Niverville Open Health advisory board in seeking more healthcare space. Although they may find that there's additional space on the Open Health campus to expand, more likely they will end up developing a satellite location off-site.

"We are very excited with the medical concept in our community and our partnership with Southern Health and the province to move forward," says Dueck. "We have the support to make it work and ideally be a model for other communities in the province."

Daycare availability is also a big issue. A recent report from Growing Minds Childcare in Niverville indicates that they have a waiting list of around 700 children.

"We're hearing from people like developers who are saying, 'This might start costing us employees' or 'It might start costing us housing sales,'" says Dyck of the concern. "This technically isn't a municipal issue. It's a provincial issue. We can stand by and wait for the province to do things or we can ask, 'Is there a role to play and what would our role be?'"

To that end, Mayor Dyck reached out to the executive director of Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning for some answers.

All council is currently prepared to share is that they've created a comprehensive, multi-point strategy to tackle the local wait list.

The right mortgage  
is right around the corner.

Visit Caisse.biz

Caisse Financial Group

Caisse Assiniboine Credit Union





There has been some recent movement on the intention to twin Highway 59 south of Île-des-Chênes.

JOEY VILLANUEVA

# Province Offers Early-Stage Optimism on Highway 59 Twinning

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

For 20 years, commuters along Highway 59 have been waiting on the province to pick up where they left off and twin this major transportation corridor south of Île-des-Chênes.

There is at last some glimmer of hope that the work will finally get underway.

In recent weeks, the province has announced that they've put out a tender for a functional design study on the highway route from Île-des-Chênes south to the intersection of Highway 52, as well as from that same corner east to Mitchell.

While the project is, in fact, closer to reality than it's ever been, commuters should still anticipate a long wait.

Over the last two decades, advocacy groups have been rallying the province for twinning. This includes The Highway 59 Partners, a five-municipality collaborative that was headed up by the mayor of St. Pierre-Jolys.

It wasn't until September 25 of this year that a shift was felt. On that day, members of the Eastman Regional Municipal Committee (ERMC) met

with Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI), and later Lisa Naylor, Minister of Transportation. The ERMC's goal was to nudge the province into providing some concrete assurances regarding the twinning of Highways 59 and 52.

They left with the promise of a functional design study, which is expected to begin sometime in 2026, once a design consultant has been selected. The study will consider traffic volumes and patterns as well as area topography and land acquisition.

The ERMC is comprised of 12 communities or municipalities from across southeast Manitoba, including Ritchot, Steinbach, and Ste. Anne.

When the group organized three years ago, they received a memorandum of understanding from the province. The ERMC's mandate is to advocate for the rural southeast in four areas of public service: waterways, highways, health, and environment.

Marc Proulx is a councillor for St. Pierre-Jolys and member of the ERMC.

"We're basically saying, 'If there's an issue in Ste. Anne, the other 11 of us will support them,'" Proulx says.

"It's a strength in numbers sort of thing. Let's put it this way: [the province] notices us."

The ERMC also shares resources, helping to bring down fiscal costs for all its members.

"We're taxed to the nines," Proulx says. "And it's not just one municipality. They're all taxed too high. So how do we become fiscally responsible? We work together, sharing ideas and sharing technology. It's just better."

Now that Highways 59 and 52 have made it into the province's five-year highway investment strategy, Proulx says the gears are finally in motion. The functional design phase brings it that much closer to a done deal.

That's not to say, of course, that other highways may not sneak higher up the queue if road conditions deteriorate quickly and significantly.

But Proulx says the province can only put off the 59 and 52 for so long.

"The population has been increasing exponentially in the southeast corner of the province," Proulx says of recent steady growth. "Niverville, Île-des-Chênes, Steinbach, Mitchell, and even St. Pierre... we met with [MTI] and they assured us that 52 and 59 is on the five-year plan because of that corner where they meet. It's a

horrendous corner."

All this widespread growth has put an intense strain on both highways. The intersection that connects them, he says, is downright dangerous at peak times.

It doesn't help, either, that Highway 59 serves as a major trucking route between Winnipeg and the United States.

While the functional design tender is, indeed, good news, Proulx adds that it's still a matter of "hurry up and wait."

The design process, he points out, will take a minimum of one year to 18 months to complete. At that point, stakeholders will weigh in and public consultations will take place.

The design may undergo various changes throughout this process.

Once the design is finalized, it will still take another three to five years before a shovel hits the ground.

"People expect things to get done within six months to a year," says Proulx. "Every politician knows it doesn't work that way, but when they tell you three to five years, now you're going, 'Okay, there's a light at the end of the tunnel.'"

The twinning of Highway 59 from Winnipeg to Île-des-Chênes

was completed in 2006 at a cost of \$41 million. At this stage, the costs for further twinning haven't been revealed—and they likely won't be until the design phase is complete.

It was evident even 20 years ago that the province recognized the importance of continued improvements to the highways south of Île-des-Chênes.

"The growing traffic volumes between Winnipeg and communities in the southeast region reflect the booming local economy," stated a government news release of the day. "This expanded corridor will enhance capacity, promote tourism, and increase safety at the same time."

In those 20 years, Niverville's population has almost tripled. The population of Île-des-Chênes has seen a similar surge following the initial twinning of the highway. Two hundred new condos and townhouses were added soon after and were sold faster than they could be built.

Virtually every community in the southeast has a similar story of growth.

Still, new highway infrastructure to keep up with demand has been slow in coming.



**Drs Graydon, Joshi and Funk**  
PROUDLY SERVING THE AREA SINCE 2009

St. Pierre: 204-433-7956  
Vita: 204-425-3264

[www.graydonvet.com](http://www.graydonvet.com)



Plumbing • Heating • Air Conditioning

**204-388-5366**





# Major AI Data Centre Proposed for Île-des-Chênes

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

If all goes as planned for one corporate tech collaborative, Île-des-Chênes (IDC) will soon be home to Manitoba's first major AI data centre. Jet.AI, a Nevada-based provider of GPU (graphics processing unit) infrastructure and AI cloud services, made their formal public announcement on December 4.

Jet.AI has joined with Consensus Core Technologies Inc., a company from Vancouver offering similar services, to form Convergence Compute. Their intent is to open at least two new AI data centres in Canada.

The Midwestern Project, scheduled for construction on 350 acres of land on the north side of IDC, is described by Jet.AI as "a large-scale development designed to meet rising North American demand for AI and high-density compute."

Already, they say, the proposed Manitoba campus is garnering interest from hyperscale tenants looking for the kind of infrastructure in which AI-related services can be produced on a massive scale.

A second major AI data centre, dubbed the Maritime Project, is in the works as well, presumably somewhere along the east coast.

"The energy and natural resources we need are already present in abundance at our sites, and the next milestone is about turning that advantage into action," says Mike Winston, founder and CEO of Jet.AI. "We're making sure we don't just have places to build data centres, but also the energy commitments to make them run. Overall, we're encouraged by the progress and believe the odds of success for both projects have now moved in our favour."

Also propelling their odds of

success is the provincial government's recent endorsement of Manitoba-based data storage infrastructure initiatives.

The goal, Premier Kinew said in a speech to the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, is to make Manitobans less reliant on U.S.-based tech giants like Google and Microsoft.

Greater domestic capacity, he added, would help protect Canadians' privacy and allow enforcement under Canadian law.

"How do we keep your privacy so that our kids and grandkids will be able to develop as individuals and have that freedom to express themselves in a way that is truly free in the future of our society?" asked Kinew. "Well, it probably means that we should stop sending all of our information south of the border."

So far, the RM of Ritchot is maintaining a wait-and-see stance.

"To date, nothing has come before council for consideration," the RM communications coordinator told *The Citizen*. "Until something is presented, it would be premature for us to provide a comment."

## RARE FIND

Jet.AI's promotional material for the Midwestern Project describes IDC as a Goldilocks site for data centre development. An important component is finding a large tract of land, and locating 350 contiguous acres bordering key energy infrastructure is a relatively rare find.

According to a site map provided by Jet.AI, the land is situated between Arnould Road and Highway 59 to the east and west. North to south boundaries include Mondor Road and Highway 405, also known as Van Gorp Road.

Of strategic importance, too, is the availability of local cost-effective energy sources. Data centres require

substantial energy inputs to power their advanced cooling systems and maintain reliable backup supports.

Six operational turbines are expected to be required to run the Midwestern Project.

The parcel of land in IDC sits adjacent to a Manitoba Hydro substation, the Riel Converter, with a hydroelectric transmission corridor running directly overhead.

Immediately south of the site lies one of Canada's principal long-haul natural-gas transmission and distribution stations, TC Energy, providing direct access to a second reliable power solution.

"As AI compute demand accelerates, energy-advantaged sites like this are becoming increasingly difficult to secure," says Winston. "The combination of power, redundancy, and buildable scale here is extremely hard to replicate."

Not to be dismissed, too, is the nearby high-speed fibre internet corridor which can provide the data centre with large bandwidth volumes which are critical for computing operations of this scale.

"This site aligns with the long-term compute and energy profile the industry is moving toward," says Wayne Lloyd, CEO of Consensus Core. "It offers the reliability, connectivity, and acreage required for multi-phase hyperscale deployment."

Having achieved their first and second milestones of finding and securing land, Convergence Compute has moved on to completing milestone number three.

"For the Midwestern Project, the submission of the Transmission Power Load Study application is substantially complete," says Jet.AI in a November 14 press release. "We have made significant progress in securing confirmation from the natural gas utility supplier to provide sufficient

flow to operate the six proposed turbines. Conversations with the natural gas utility supplier are ongoing and we do not expect their confirmation to present any bottlenecks."

As for the Maritimes Project, Convergence Compute says they are working on acquiring needed energy from a proposed wind farm.

## CANADA HOLDS PROMISE

According to a Norton Rose Fulbright Data Protection Report, thanks to energy infrastructure, policy landscape, and its environment position, Canada is uniquely poised as a desirable location for AI data centre development.

"AI data centres require large amounts of electricity to power high-performance hardware such as GPUs," the report states. "As demand for AI and cloud services grows, this is driving a sharp rise in energy use by data centres."

In 2024, they say the transmission of data consumed somewhere between one percent and 1.4 percent of the world's electricity use. The International Energy Agency expects this number to more than double in the next four years.

For this reason, large tech companies are looking to sign long-term contracts with local energy providers who are providing rates that are, on average, lower than many other developed countries.

"In addition to high electricity demands, AI data centres also generate significant heat as a byproduct of powering AI-related hardware," the report continues. "Managing this heat... is critical to maintain system performance and prevent hardware failure. Canada's cooler ambient temperatures could help reduce the need for these energy-intensive cooling systems, thereby resulting in lower operational costs."

Also fuelling the interest in Canadian prospects is the federal government's Canadian AI Compute Strategy, introduced late last year.

This strategy will result in \$2 billion in funding over the next five years to help mobilize private sector investment and build public super-computing infrastructure.

## POTENTIAL RISKS

As AI data centres emerge around the globe, so too does news of the exponential threat they may pose to one of the world's greatest natural resources: water.

According to Water Security News Wire (WSNW), an online source for water industry professionals, AI data centres are water guzzlers and the risks they pose to humanity are still widely ignored.

Already it's at the point, they say, where some regions are experiencing increased water scarcity. As demand for AI increases, however, the industry is expected to soon surpass other water-intensive industries such as cattle and textiles.

"The international community lacks a clear understanding of data centres' impacts on water resources as there are no uniform regulatory requirements for data centre operators to track and report their water use," says WSNW.<sup>3</sup>

Why the high consumption of water? In many data centres, it's used as a coolant to help maintain manageable temperatures for the high heat-producing computing equipment.

Drinking water is optimal for use since it's already free of impurities that could corrode server systems.

Water consumption can be slightly minimized by investing in closed-loop cooling systems that limit evaporation. Unfortunately, they are more expensive to install than open-loop

# Advertise With Us!

sales@nivervillecitizen.com

The Citizen



**YGP** YOUR GROCERY PEOPLE

FULL SERVICE GROCERY,  
LIQUOR & BEER VENDOR

259 MAIN STREET, NIVERVILLE



**prairie soul**  
DANCE COMPANY

REGISTER TODAY!

[prairiesouldancecompany.ca](http://prairiesouldancecompany.ca)

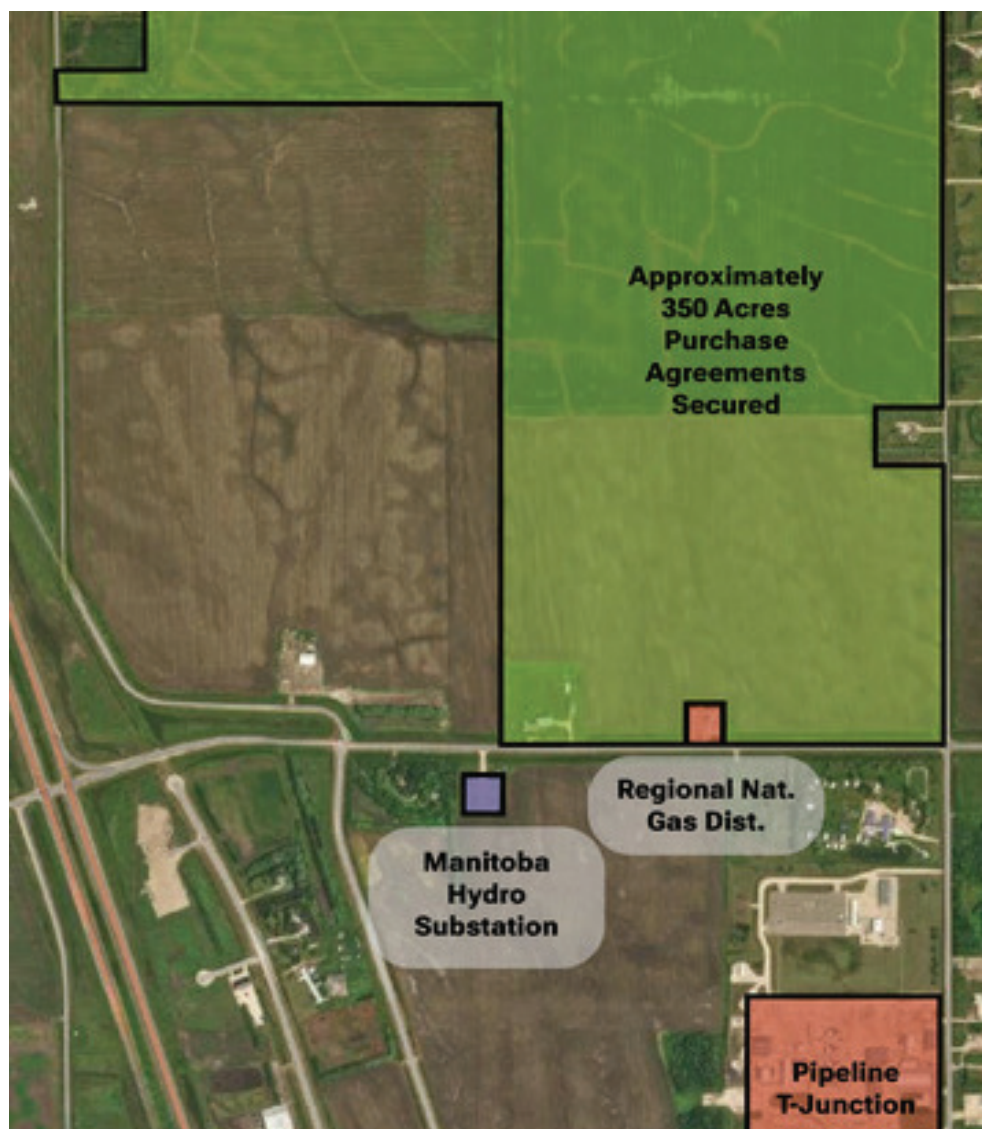
ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE  
REGISTERED TEACHER

**Directors:**  
Melanie Ducharme  
Danielle Auld

info@prairiesouldancecompany.ca  
204-392-5624  
10 Cedar Drive, Niverville

Follow us on  
f i





The proposed location of the data centre.

JET.AI

systems.

So far, studies have been able to determine that a small one-megawatt data centre can use up to 26 million litres of water per year.

This equates to the same average consumption of 62 American families.

Right now the average annual use by data centres across the entire United States is the same as the average annual water consumption

of two million families.

Even with this knowledge, data centres are appearing rapidly around the world.

“Developing economies have prioritized data centre expansion to advance national digital transformation and digital sovereignty goals, benefiting transnational tech corporations,” says WSNW. “In addition to gaining access to new markets, these corporations are often incentivized

or rewarded... through tax subsidies, low-cost real estate contracts, and promises of minimal monitoring.”

But the effects are also being seen in advanced economies.

The freshwater consumption of a Meta-owned data centre in Virginia shows a 250 percent increase in the area’s water use since 2019. This has resulted in drought-like conditions for residents.

Meta’s plans for a new data centre in the Netherlands have been met with massive public opposition, primarily based on its potential to impact ground-water reserves.

In states like Oregon and countries like Chile, citizen action groups are similarly responding to Google’s data centre initiatives.

In 2024, the EU set a new precedent which imposes water and energy use reporting on data centres operating in their region.

“Meanwhile, local utilities and elected representatives, incentivized by tax subsidies, enter into confidentiality agreements with corporations that limit information-sharing,” says WSNW. “These postures ultimately undermine accountability and public trust, while pushing already stressed water resources into further precarity.”

The Citizen reached out to a Jet.AI investor relations representative for a comment regarding some of these tough questions. No reply was received.

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Steve Lambert, “Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew Endorses Call for Servers, Data Centres to Be Built in Province,” CBC, October 31, 2025 (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/ai-report-servers-9.6962507>).

<sup>2</sup> Imran Ahmad, Domenic Presta, and Sandeep Patel, “Canada’s Place in the AI Data Centre Boom,” Data Protection Report, July 14, 2025 (<https://www.dataprotectionreport.com/2025/07/canadas-place-in-the-ai-data-centre-boom>).

<sup>3</sup> “AI Data Centers Threaten Global Water Security,” Water Security News Wire, December 23, 2024 (<https://watersecuritynewswire.com/treatment-security/2024/12/23/ai-data-centers-threaten-global-water-security>).

#### CITIZEN POLL

### Are you concerned about the size, scale, and energy and water usage of the proposed data centre in Île-des-Chênes?



Yes. The massive scale of the facility and its impact on our natural resources should be a matter of great consequence for locals.



No. The economic and technological benefits outweigh worries about the potential use of local resources.

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



**VOTE NOW AT**

[www.nivervillecitizen.com](http://www.nivervillecitizen.com)

#### LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

### Should other Manitoba school divisions follow DSFM's lead in reducing homework and revising AI-related policies?

Yes. Kids are kept busy learning and studying all day in school. They shouldn't have to take schoolwork home with them as well.

61%

No. There are kids who don't learn as quickly as others and may fall through the cracks if there is no expectation to complete work at home.

39%

#### YOUR COMMENTS:

The AI policy needs to not only be for kids, but for teachers as well. I have caught a teacher fully using AI to create assignments.

I think we should never get homework again.

#### N+A TRUCKING NOW A PROUD MEMBER OF:



- Safety Inspection Station (COI 4500kg up)
- Truck and Trailer Repairs All Makes & Models
- Industrial/Construction Equipment Repairs
- Parts Sales All Makes & Models
- Hydraulic Hose Manufacturing

**COME SEE OUR PARTS  
DEPARTMENT AT 369  
BRONSTONE DRIVE**

[www.nandatrucking.com](http://www.nandatrucking.com)

204-388-4509



**SMITH • NEUFELD • JODOIN**  
LAW OFFICES

- Real Estate Transactions
- Corporate Law
- Agriculture Law
- Wills and Estate Planning
- Estate Administration

204-388-9300

[www.snj.ca](http://www.snj.ca)



## IN BRIEF

## Oak River Phase Two Plan Unveiled at Stakeholder Meeting

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Landmark Planning and Design (LPD) met with stakeholders on December 8 to unveil conceptual plans for phase two of the Oak River development at the south end of Île-des-Chênes.

Roads and utility installation for the first phase are nearly complete. Housing builds will begin soon for the 161-acre residential development.

Phase one will accommodate 44 single-family homes, 42 two-family homes, and one multi-family parcel, along with a retention pond, two parks, and walking paths.

Phase two is the larger 90-acre section. "There is no set timeline for when phase two construction would begin," says LPD. "As the development of phase one progresses, the project team is considering how infrastructure, such as pipes and roads, may eventually connect to the phase two area, and how land uses between phases may integrate. This is a long-term planning effort."

The original stakeholder open house was held at the TC Energy Centre in June 2025 with the goal of garnering feedback. From that feedback, LPD developed four conceptual plans which were presented at a second meeting in September.

On December 8, a final preferred land use drawing was proposed.

In keeping with the phase one plan, the majority of the phase two exit and entry points will connect to Old Highway 59.

Just under half of phase two will be comprised of single- and two-family homes. The majority of the multi-family units and potential commercial space is designated for the section of land bordered on one side by Highway 59 and on the other by Old Highway 59.

Just over ten acres will be set aside for green-space, ponds, and walking paths.

Efforts have been made throughout both phases of development to ensure that sidewalks and paths connect the new development with existing sidewalks in Île-des-Chênes.

LPD is still collecting stakeholder feedback online. Once collated, a development application will initiate the formal approval process. A public hearing is expected to take place sometime in spring.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To learn more, visit:

[www.landmarkplanning.ca/oakrivermeadowconceptplanning](http://www.landmarkplanning.ca/oakrivermeadowconceptplanning)

■ To provide feedback, visit:

[www.surveymonkey.com/r/OakRiverMeadowPh2](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OakRiverMeadowPh2)

# Roads and Zoning Plans Discussed for Highlands West

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On December 16, Niverville's council voted unanimously in favour of approving an application by Len Peters, representing Sunset Estates, to begin the development process of Highlands West.

The application included a request to construct new roads on the 116-acre parcel as well as prepare for the addition of 155 commercial and residential lots. Highlands West is located immediately west of the existing Highlands development between Krahn and Wallace Roads.

While no public opposition was received by council, one resident of Carnoustie Cove attended the meeting to voice concerns shared by his neighbours whose backyards look out onto the upcoming development.

He wondered whether the development would roll out in a style similar to that of the Jette Studios building at the north-west corner of Highlands West, a project to which a number of Carnoustie Cove residents stood opposed to from the start.

"The assurance from the owner's representative was that this building, the movie studio, would blend into the existing surroundings and that they would meet with concerned residents to explain, but none of this ever happened," he told council. "That building still sits vacant, surrounded by dirt and weeds."

Of equal concern to him was how this new development would affect Krahn Road, a problem area due to high traffic volumes and speeding.

"I would hope that construction access [will be] limited to Wallace Road," he said. "Krahn Road is tired and can't handle much more."

He also inquired about the lack of action on the proposed reconstruction of Highway 311, which is expected to add a traffic light at the corner of Krahn Road

and a roundabout between Krahn and Wallace.

In terms of future housing, he says that residents of Carnoustie Cove are concerned about the possibility of facing obstructive apartment buildings from their backyards.

"I would hope [these would be limited to] a two-storey maximum," he said. "There are already plans to flood Niverville with six-storey highrise-like structures and this would be unacceptable directly across from a legacy neighbourhood that stood here first."

Drainage, too, is a matter of concern after the issues experienced in this area last summer during periods of heavy rainfall.

Mayor Myron Dyck opened the dialogue, beginning with the Highway 311 reconstruction project.

"We're getting close," Dyck said. "Hopefully 2026 will be the year that we can announce something... We've done the design and the province is on board with it. It's just a matter of whether they'll fund it."

As for how the 155 lots will be zoned, Dyck said that council will address this at a public meeting in the near future. Announcements will go out to keep the public informed.

Regarding the seemingly idle state of the movie studio, Dyck could explain the lack of progress, at least in part.

"Putting 100 percent tariffs on Canadian film hasn't helped," he said.

He had a rationale, too, for the drainage problems of this past summer, caused by beaver dams in the community's west-side drain. Conversations are underway with the RM of Ritchot, he said, to help prevent it from occurring again.

While the Tuesday meeting was not intended to address the housing and commercial plans for Highlands West, Peters was glad to share his plans regardless.

For the sake of council and

the Carnoustie Cove residents in attendance, the developer provided assurances that the new development would, in many ways, mirror the design of Highlands East.

"Typically, when you go through a development, you go through commercial and higher density [first], and then as you progress through the development you have less and less density so that traffic dissipates [as you go]," Peters said.

Different in the new development, though, will be the proximity of an east-west commercial corridor, known as Scotland Street, to Highway 311.

"Drovers Run isn't ideal because of how close it is to the highway, so we need to make a correction there," said Peters. "Scotland Street is going to be in line with Dochart [Gate]. We always try and make intersections line up with other intersections so that they're not sporadic and all over the place."

Still, he says, there'll be a way to connect the sidewalk along Drovers Run with the commercial area planned for Highlands West. This extra setback from Highway 311 will allow for commercial space to run along both sides of Scotland Street.

"There are no major areas [left] for commercial development," Peters said. "This is pretty much the only game in town right now, so we felt the need to have some extra commercial there."

As for housing, Peters assured Carnoustie Cove residents that the area immediately across from their neighbourhood would be dedicated to single-family homes and duplexes. Heading west, housing density would slowly increase. Apartment blocks will be located at the far end of the acreage, near Jette Studios.

Councillor Meghan Beasant weighed in, reassuring those in the gallery that three-storey apartment blocks are the tallest allowable height in Niverville's bylaws without special approval.

Medium-density housing would take up the centre of Highlands West in the form of five- and six-plex housing options.

Public Reserve B, as shown on the concept map, will consist of approximately four acres of land dedicated to greenspace and a large retention pond. This pond will connect to the existing ponds in Highlands East, improving drainage on the east side.

"We're devising a plan in which we can use gravity to empty all the ponds rather than having to pump [the excess] into the 311 ditch," Peters said. "The end result is that we'll be able to open up a gate and [let it] flow into the west ditch beside the [movie] studio."

Unfortunately, he says, this project will result in the brief closure of part of the golf course next year.

On the very south side of Highlands West is a section zoned educational and institutional. Peters explained why this plot of land fell to weeds this past year.

"I needed to give the school division access to do their due diligence, drilling, and those sorts of things," Peters said. "That area will get cleaned up in the springtime."

In addition to the anticipated reconstruction of Highway 311, Peters indicated that it is his intention to widen Krahn Road where it meets the highway to develop right and left turning lanes. Eventually, the entirety of Krahn Road will be repaved.

Once the roundabout is built along Highway 311, he added, it will connect directly to Highlands Drive, which travels south through Highlands West and eventually connects back to St. Andrews Way.

"A lot of people in the current Highlands are going to skip Krahn Road and come down Highlands Drive and have a much straighter [route] to get to their place."

As for construction traffic, he says that Krahn Road will likely sustain the bulk of it until the roundabout and Highlands Drive connection is built.



Real Estate Appraisals | Property Management | Reserve Fund Studies | Real Property Consulting

1-855-371-5833 | [www.redrivergroup.ca](http://www.redrivergroup.ca)

NIVERVILLE  
Event Centre

**All-Inclusive Event Centre**  
 Ceremonies, Receptions, Fundraisers,  
 Grads, Birthdays and more

Complimentary Tours & Estimates

[events@heritagecentre.ca](mailto:events@heritagecentre.ca)  
 204-388-2150



# Ritchot Homeowners Eligible for Free Energy Efficiency Evaluations

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

For a limited time, Efficiency Manitoba will be accepting applications from 100 Ritchot homeowners for no-cost energy efficiency home evaluations.

These home inspections, generally valued at \$550 for residents outside of Winnipeg, will be completely free and conducted by a registered energy advisor.

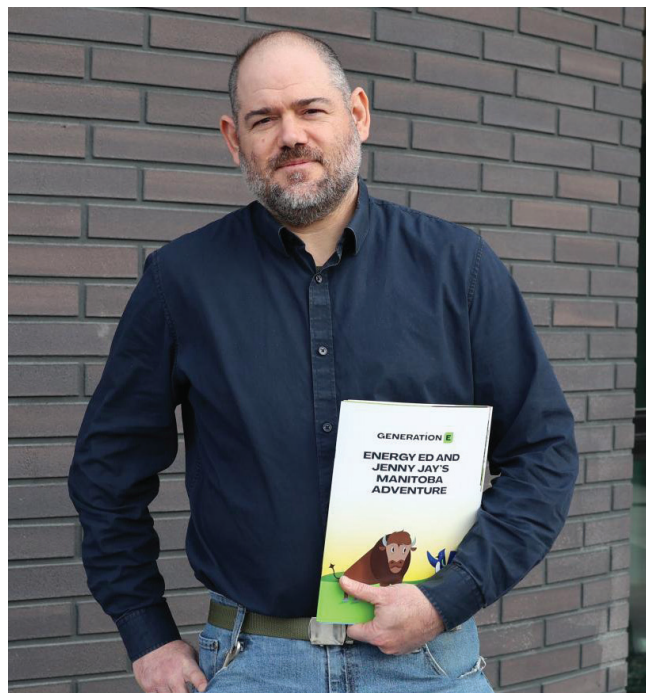
The goal of the evaluations is to measure a home's energy consumption and identify opportunities for homeowners to reduce their use and save on monthly utility bills.

"We're excited to bring this opportunity to residents across Ritchot," says Uriel Jelin, the energy efficiency advocate for the RM of Ritchot. "Energy efficiency makes our homes more affordable, more comfortable, and more resilient. This program supports our community's long-term sustainability goals while helping residents access valuable expertise at no cost."

The RM of Ritchot will coordinate scheduling between the homeowner and the energy advisor.

Those living outside of the RM, or applying after the first 100 are approved, may still be eligible for a \$400 rebate towards a personal evaluation.

While onsite, the energy advisor collects information



Uriel Jelin, Ritchot's energy efficiency advocate.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

about the home's insulation, windows and exterior doors, heating and cooling systems, and overall air tightness.

According to Efficiency Manitoba, the resulting report provides comparisons in energy use to that of a typical new home.

As well, the evaluations outline recommendations for improving a home's energy efficiency and estimates energy savings with each recommended upgrade.

"Efficiency Manitoba is committed to making energy efficiency more affordable and accessible for all Manitobans,"

says Colleen Kuruluk, CEO of Efficiency Manitoba. "Supporting municipalities like Ritchot to offer no-cost EnerGuide evaluations allows us to offer homeowners and landlords in this community a clear path toward improved home comfort, reduced energy use, lower energy bills, and better long-term performance."

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more, visit: [www.ritchot.com/p/ritchot-energuide-offer](http://www.ritchot.com/p/ritchot-energuide-offer)

To apply, visit: [efficiencyMB.ca/rm-evaluation-offer](http://efficiencyMB.ca/rm-evaluation-offer) (Use the password: Ritchot100)

**Please Remove Collection Bins Promptly!**

To help ensure that our streets are cleared efficiently, we ask all residents to remove their collection bins from the end of driveways by **11:59 PM on collection days**. This also helps prevent collection bins from being damaged.

If a bin is damaged due to it not being removed promptly, it would unfortunately be the responsibility of the owner to have it replaced.

Visit [www.wheretheyoubelong.ca](http://www.wheretheyoubelong.ca) to learn more about waste and recycling collection in our community.

329 Bronstone Drive  
Niverville, MB  
ROA 1E0

**Niverville**  
WHERE YOU BELONG

1-204-388-4600  
[feedback@wheretheyoubelong.ca](mailto:feedback@wheretheyoubelong.ca)  
[www.wheretheyoubelong.ca](http://www.wheretheyoubelong.ca)

**"We lowered our energy bill. You can too."**

— KEN & LYNN

Like Ken & Lynn, you can:

**GET A FREE HOME ENERGY ASSESSMENT.**

With the **Energy Efficiency Assistance Program**, you can also:

- ✓ Get your home insulated for FREE (including the materials and the installation).
- ✓ Get a subsidized heating system upgrade.\*
- ✓ Get FREE energy efficient light bulbs, showerheads and aerators, air sealing products, and other energy saving items.

Find out if you qualify today  
[efficiencyMB.ca/EEAP](http://efficiencyMB.ca/EEAP)  
204-944-8181 or toll free 1-888-944-8181

**EFFICIENCY MANITOBA**

\*Dependent on existing heating system.

**Alignments- Brakes-Tire-Safeties**  
**Diagnostics-Free Shuttle and Courtesy Car**

30 CEDAR DRIVE, NIVERVILLE, MB  
**204-388-4888** [www.sparkline.ca](http://www.sparkline.ca)



## IN BRIEF

## MLA Ron Schuler to Hang Up Political Hat

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

After 27 years in the political arena, MLA Ron Schuler has decided not to seek re-election when his current term ends in 2027. Until then, he will continue to represent and serve the constituents of Springfield-Ritchot.

By the time of the next election, Schuler will be 64 years of age.

"I think now is the right time to retire," Schuler says. "I would like to do something else for the last few years of my working life."

He's one of very few MLAs with such a long uninterrupted run in provincial politics. Kelvin Goertzen is another, having served 22 consecutive years representing Steinbach in the Legislature.

Goertzen also announced his decision not to run in the next election.

In the end, Schuler says, it's good to have turnover in representatives in order to bring new blood and fresh ideas to the table.

Representing Springfield-Ritchot has been a challenge, he adds, with the incredible diversity there is between communities. The needs from one end of the riding to the other are vastly different.

He adds that both Niverville's and Ritchot's councils have been exceptional to work with.

Highlights from his nearly three decades of service include the road improvements to Dugald Road around 2006, resulting in traffic lights in Dugald and a complete bridge renewal at Winnipeg's east floodway.

As well, Schuler was thrilled to be the MLA to officially open the major interchange at the North

Perimeter and Highway 59.

Not to be dismissed are the many big developments coming out of Niverville in recent years, including the community centre and high school project as well as Jette Studios.

"The high school, the CRRC, and the movie studio, they give the community excitement," Schuler says. "I would say the movie production studio was probably the most fun project that we've had."

Working alongside both Niverville and Ritchot has been memorable, he concludes, thanks to the dynamism of their community champions and overall can-do spirit.

Schuler first took office in September 1999 after winning a tight race for the Springfield riding.

He took on critic positions when the Progressive Conservatives were in opposition, including Labour, Immigration, Environment, Energy, Science and Technology, and Manitoba Hydro and Housing.

In 2006, he served as caucus whip, and by 2016 he was appointed as the minister responsible for all Manitoba crown corporations, including Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Public Insurance, Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries, and the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation. He then became Minister of Infrastructure in 2017.

By 2019, Schuler took on the newly created riding of Springfield-Ritchot and the role of vice-chair of the Treasury Board. He later became interim deputy premier when Kelvin Goertzen took over the premiership after the resignation of Brian Pallister.

His re-election in 2023 marked his seventh consecutive win.

## Ritchot's Council Talks Crime Stats, Bilingual Libraries, and Rail Park

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Ritchot's council convened for their bimonthly public meeting on December 2 with a variety of topics on the agenda.

### CRIME STATS

Staff Sergeant Ron Poirier joined council virtually to provide an overview of the quarterly crime stats for the period of July through September.

To date, Poirier says, there have been seven checkstop campaigns, run mostly in St. Adolphe and Île-des-Chênes.

These checkstops are part of the detachment's short-term enforcement programs (STEPs), operating for short periods of time, usually 30-minute increments, but in more locations.

"We're finding, with the advent of social media and all the ways to communicate today, our checkstop [locations] get shared really quickly and then we find our numbers are kind of dropping," Poirier said.

Provincial traffic offences were down across all parts of Ritchot, he said, while incidents of causing a disturbance and disobeying court orders were up in both St. Adolphe and Île-des-Chênes.

Overall, there was a drop in crimes committed against persons, except for Île-des-Chênes, which had a number of situations involving harassment and assault.

"The most interesting one for me was property crime," Poirier said. "The increase in the RM is all related to thefts."

As for Ste. Agathe, Poirier says his detachment is looking forward to seeing the bridge reconstruction completed.

"It continues to hinder our travel, but we haven't had any serious situations yet," he said.

Councillor Janine Boulanger reminded Poirier that drag-racing continues to be a



Ritchot's council gathers for a public meeting.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

problem along Waverley Road, west of the Red River.

"There's constant speeding and they stole our speed reader sign," Boulanger told Poirier. "[This area] is a gold mine. If you guys wanted to sit there, you'll make a lot of money. I see on your stats that there's an actual decrease in offences there, but I just wonder if you guys haven't been there."

### BILINGUAL DAYCARES AND LIBRARIES

Madeleine Arbez, executive director of CDEM, also joined council virtually, there to introduce a French daycare provider interested in offering bilingual services in Ritchot.

"French daycare in Île-des-Chênes would meet a need," Arbez said. "It's infrastructure that favours employment for educators and parents, it's an attraction factor for new families, and it's a long-term investment into the community fabric."

French daycare programs, she added, are supported both provincially and federally if Ritchot would like to consider them.

At the same time, council voted unanimously to decline an opportunity to join the southeast Manitoba regional library collaborative.

According to CAO Shane Ray, Councillor Jason Bodnar-chuk and the Ritchot library director met with representatives from the regional library initiative, which includes

communities like Ste. Anne, Piney, and Niverville.

"There are a number of concerns regarding the current or future level of bilingual services that the new regional library may or may not be able to provide," Ray told council.

Instead it was recommended that Ritchot's council reach out to the Association of Bilingual Municipalities in order to gauge their interest in the idea of a regional library shared between bilingual communities.

"I think it would be a better fit for regionalization," Bodnar-chuk told council. "We'd have a bit more control over the bilingual aspect of it."

### JOHN Q PUBLIC AND THE RITCHOT RAIL PARK

Following Mayor Chris Ewen's decision not to run in the upcoming municipal election, Deputy Mayor Shane Peller was appointed by council to take Ewen's place on the board of John Q Public Inc.

John Q Public advertises itself as a voluntary municipal participation corporation formed in 2018 to support growth and infrastructure development in the Winnipeg Metro Region.

According to Ray, John Q purchased about 1,000 acres in Ritchot several years ago. The land, purchased directly from a local farmer, is located west of Highway 75 and immediately south of Victory Lane Speedway.

The purpose of the

acquisition was to construct a rail park similar to that of CentrePort, northwest of Winnipeg. In 2023, the province approved \$18 million in funding for John Q to secure the land in Ritchot.

According to the John Q Public website, the location will be designed to improve connections from Manitoba businesses to global markets.

"This location is close to major sources of grain and minerals, two drivers of Manitoba's economy," the corporation's website states. "Crucially, it is situated along some of the most strategically significant trade corridors in North America, offers unique access to three class-1 railways, and can directly connect to highways to further link key supply and consumption markets."

At Tuesday's council meeting, Ray confirmed the significant opportunity posed by the rail park for the RM's commercial and industrial development.

"The RM of Ritchot, in the form of a grant, will share 50 percent of the taxes collected with John Q," Ray says. "This grant will be distributed equally from John Q directly between the shareholders [municipalities] that are part of John Q. It's important to note that this will only occur after any Ritchot development expenses are covered and only once the rail park development is ongoing."

At the December 2 meeting, council was faced with another decision regarding the rail park. That decision revolved around the wording of a document created by John Q Public which gives council the opportunity to contribute to onsite infrastructure upgrades if they so choose.

Council voted unanimously in favour of leaving the wording as proposed and using any future development agreement to negotiate terms.



ARE YOU IN THE *market?*  
I'm your local real estate expert!



204.914.2522

staceyheiderealtor@gmail.com

www.StaceyHeide.com

real





DEPOSITPHOTOS

# New Report Finds Escalating Food Insecurity in Manitoba

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Food insecurity in Manitoba continues to trend upwards according to a recent report undertaken by Harvest Manitoba. About 60,000 Manitobans currently turn to foodbanks, and since 2020 the need for foodbanks has increased across the province by a whopping 150 percent.

Across all provinces, Manitoba sadly boasts the highest child poverty rate. Here, one of every four children lives in poverty conditions.

"Overall, one quarter of all Manitobans are living in some form of food insecurity and one in ten are living in what would be considered severe food insecurity," the report states. "In a recent Statistics Canada Survey, almost half of Canadians expressed that rising prices affected their ability to make ends meet."

Equally startling is the demographic shift that's taking place in Manitoba. Over the past five years, the average foodbank-reliant household has grown from two persons to three. Surprisingly, foodbank recipients holding postsecondary education have increased from 33 percent to 61 percent.

"Sixty-two percent of families [accessing foodbanks] go hungry once a month or more because they cannot afford food," the report adds.

## WHO WAS SURVEYED?

Harvest Manitoba is one of the largest food distributors of its kind across the country, collaborating with many smaller

foodbanks in rural communities. From May to September of this year, thousands of foodbank clients across the province were invited to participate in the study. A total of 597 adult responses were received.

"Given that 50,000 people attend foodbanks monthly, this means that we have 95 percent confidence in our results with a four percent margin of error," the report states.

Sixty-eight percent of foodbank clients are female, and the average age is 41. Just under half are unmarried. Only eight percent own a home; the remainder live in some form of rental housing. The majority don't own a vehicle and thus rely on public transit.

Challenging some popular beliefs is the fact that only 14 percent have temporary resident status. A full 70 percent are Canadian citizens.

As well, while 35 percent identify as First Nation, Inuit, or Métis, an equal number of recipients are of European descent.

The remainder consist of a combination of Black, Latin, or Asian descent. More than one-third have a post-secondary education and one-fifth hold university degrees.

"Nearly half of clients have accessed foodbanks for less than a year, doing so only as a safety net, most often because they do not have enough money to make ends meet," states the report.

Sixty-five percent of households using foodbanks earned \$20,000 annually and 34 percent brought in less than \$10,000. The balance fell into the \$21,000 to \$50,000

category.

Almost half of foodbank clients struggle to work due to disability, a limiting medical condition, or the loss of a job. Many others are forced into unemployment in order to provide family childcare.

## WHAT'S DRIVING UP THE NUMBERS?

According to the study, rising housing costs are a huge factor.

In the past five years, the average rent has gone from \$732 to \$1,084. Total household expenses have risen about 27 percent, including the cost of supermarket food.

"Canada's Food Price Report (CFPR) estimates that one of our key demographics, single women aged 31 to 50 years, spends an average of \$3,865.60 each year on food," the report says. "This means that many of our clients would spend nearly half of their total income on food costs."

According to the CFPR, pantry staples have all gone up in price in the past year. This includes items that are Canadian-sourced and unaffected by tariffs.

One such example is ground beef, which has increased in price by more than 17 percent in one year.

Between meat, vegetables, fruit, dairy products, cereals and tea and coffee, every kind of food has increased between 21 percent and 60 percent in the past five years.

## PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

The report also proposes a number of solutions.

"The root causes [of poverty], such as inadequate income support, unaffordable

housing, insufficient childcare, and barriers to employment require coordinated action across all levels of government," the report states. "Harvest Manitoba's recommendations focus on systemic change such as implementing a Livable Basic Needs Benefit, increasing the Canadian Disability Benefit to \$500 per month, building affordable housing with integrated supports, expanding employment training, ensuring accessible childcare, and establishing a province-wide food security strategy."

Stephanie Mikos, the marketing and communications manager for Harvest Manitoba, says that this is the fifth in a series of reports the organization has developed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each report is submitted to the provincial government.

Elected officials are likewise invited to a tour of the Harvest Manitoba facility and to participate in roundtable discussions.

In December, Mikos says that the 2025 report was brought up for debate in the Legislature during question period.

"No Manitoban should go hungry in a province of such abundance," states the report. "Addressing food insecurity requires more than charity. It requires policy change informed by those with lived experience, investments in the social determinants of health, and a collective commitment to ensuring that all Manitobans can meet their basic needs with dignity and respect."

# Advertise With Us!

The **Citizen**

[sales@nivervillecitizen.com](mailto:sales@nivervillecitizen.com)

**Bristol**  
HAULING

**PAUL'S SEPTIC SERVICE**  
Call: 204-883-2403  
Email: rick@paulsseptic.ca

**St. Adolphe 204-883-2403**  
**Regular Septic Cleaning Advantages**

- Prevent overflow around septic tank or field
- Prevent foul odours
- Prevent slow drainage
- Prevent sewage back up into home
- Prevent pooling areas around septic tank or field
- Prevent sludge blockages in pipes

**Porta Rental Services**  
Wedding Events  
Corporate Events  
Private Events  
Construction Use  
Handicap Rentals  
Hand Wash Rentals

**Septic Services**  
Septic Tanks  
Holding Tanks  
Business Parks  
Emergency Pump Outs



# Sports & Recreation

## Still on Top: Nighthawks Show Why They're #1

By Bill Burfoot

Although December didn't deliver another perfect unbeaten stretch like November, the Niverville Nighthawks continue to ride high, ending 2025 at the top of the MJHL standings and ranked second in the country.

One impressive streak that continues is the simple fact that the Nighthawks still haven't lost a road game this season.

### DECEMBER 2

**WAYWAYSECAPPO WOLVERINES, AWAY**  
The Nighthawks kept their dominant season rolling on this Tuesday night, erupting for five unanswered goals en route to a commanding 6-1 victory over Waywayseecappo.

Niverville controlled play from the drop of the puck, not even allowing their opponents a shot on goal until midway through the opening frame.

Despite the chances favouring Niverville, the period looked like it would remain scoreless until the Nighthawks broke through with just 22 seconds left. Loik Leduc buried his ninth of the season, redirecting a perfect cross-ice feed from Calyb Moore past Wolverines goaltender Jase Wareham.

The Wolverines briefly clawed back early in the second, tying the game on a power-play rebound tapped in by Kurt Rookes, but the celebration was short-lived.

Parker Rolston restored



Austin Dubinsky between the pipes for the Niverville Nighthawks.

YOUR\_PICTURES\_HERE

the lead at 9:58, finishing a backhand setup from Leduc to make it 2-1.

Just 62 seconds later, Hayden Wheddon broke in alone after a save from Austin Dubinsky and a quick outlet from Parker Carrier, slipping a five-hole shot past Wareham for his twelfth of the year.

Thirty-seven seconds later, Ryken Arran powered to the net and scored amid a chaotic collision that knocked the goal off its moorings. After discussion,

the officials ruled it good.

Then, at 12:48, Moore intercepted a clearing attempt from Wareham on the right wall and fed Evan Panzer at the left side of the crease, who tucked home his seventh of the season.

Niverville continued to press in the third, and late in the period Adam Vigfusson capped the night off with his thirteenth goal of the season after Wheddon picked off a pass at the blue line and sent him in on a breakaway.

### DECEMBER 5

**STEINBACH PISTONS, AWAY**

The top two teams in the MJHL went head-to-head at the Southeast Events Centre, and the matchup lived up to the hype.

The opening period felt like a playoff matchup, with both teams coming out flying and trading chances.

The Pistons struck first less than three minutes in while on the power play when Marek Miller chipped the puck deep, circled the

net, and fed a cross ice pass to a wide-open Rory Gilmour.

Niverville answered midway through the frame. Thomas Phillips joined a three-on-two rush, took a pass from Vigfusson, and buried his own rebound past Easton Thvedt.

Panzer then won an offensive-zone draw, drove straight to the net, and tipped Aaron Krestanowich's point shot to give Niverville a lead.

Steinbach pressed late, including a scramble off a

fortunate bounce from the end boards that found its way back in the crease, but Dubinsky kept the puck out.

The pace didn't slow in the second. After both teams traded early chances, Steinbach pulled even when Brett Kaiser dropped the puck to Evan Gradt just inside the Niverville zone. Gradt moved the puck through the right circle and patiently took the puck just below the goal line before banking a backhand off Dubinsky's leg.

Niverville responded quickly. Moore sprung Arran down the left wing, and the speedy forward ripped a glove-side shot home for his seventh of the year, putting the Nighthawks back in front.

Steinbach had a chance to tie things up on the power play midway through the period, firing multiple quality chances at Dubinsky, including a one-timer from Kaiser that required a stellar right-pad save, but they were unable to light the lamp.

Almost immediately after the man advantage expired, the Pistons appeared to score during a scramble in the crease, but the play was blown dead as the official lost sight of the puck.

In the dying seconds of the frame, Kaiser nearly tied it again when his shot found its way through Dubinsky, but Krestanowich swept the puck off the goal line.

## CHURCH OF THE ROCK™ NIVERVILLE

**Join us on Sundays at 10:25AM**

NIVERVILLE HERITAGE CENTRE, 100C HERITAGE TRAIL

**See what our church family is all about!**

KNOW GOD LIVE FREE FIND PURPOSE

## TR Bookkeeping Service



**Full Cycle  
Bookkeeping**



**Payroll  
Processing**



**Income  
Tax**

**Providing bookkeeping services for over 25 years.**  
We can help you prosper with reliable, affordable and quality service.

# 204-333-6757



**tammy@trbookkeepingservice.ca**



The third period felt similar to the second, with more odd-man rushes and chances at both ends. Steinbach continued to apply pressure, and their effort was rewarded.

With under seven minutes remaining, Niverville had an opportunity to clear their zone but failed to do so, allowing Luke Bogart to hold the puck in and set up the tying goal. After his first centring attempt was blocked at the side of the net, Bogart slid to the opposite side and fed Gradt in the slot, who ripped a one-timer past Dubinsky to make it 3-3.

Dawson Zeller generated the first quality chance in overtime, flying down the left wing, only to be denied by Thvedt's glove.

Seconds later, a Pistons two-on-one was thwarted by a sharp defensive breakup from Krestanowich.

With two minutes to play, Kaiser, who was all over the ice on Friday night, found Gilmour alone in the slot, and the forward wasted no time, snapping a shot over Dubinsky's glove to secure the 4-3 victory and halt Niverville's remarkable streak.

The Nighthawks did earn a point, however.

#### DECEMBER 7 VIRDEN OIL CAPITALS, HOME

After spending three weeks away from the CRRC, the Nighthawks returned home and gave their fans plenty to cheer about.

Following their first loss in almost two months, the Nighthawks bounced back in a big way, routing the Virden Oil Capitals 11-2. It was the second time in history the Nighthawks scored 11.

Panzer stole the spotlight with a four-goal performance while linemates Moore and Arran each recorded four points. They combined for 12 points on the night.

Eight Nighthawks finished with multi-point games.

Niverville buried four goals in a span of just 3:40 before the game was seven minutes old, then added three more to take a commanding 7-0 lead into the first intermission.

Panzer opened the scoring less than three minutes in, burying a rebound off a setup from Moore. Moments later, John Scott finished a

pass from newcomer Renat Nghaniev.

A fortunate bounce led to a 3-0 marker from Wheddon, who capitalized after collecting a loose puck at the side of the Oil Capitals net and beating a surprised Braxton Burdeny.

Virden called a timeout, but it didn't help, and just over a minute later Panzer deflected in his second of the period off a perfect feed from Arran, chasing Burdeny from the Virden net.

Panzer completed his hat trick midway through the period with a glove-side rocket on relief goalie Micky Gross. Twenty seconds later, Moore extended the lead to 6-0 with another perfectly placed shot over the glove.

Merik Boles capped off the Nighthawks' most explosive period of the season when he found a loose puck at the blue line, walked into the slot, and fired a shot blocker-side.

The scoring barrage continued in the middle frame. Vigfusson scored twice to reach 15 on the season, Scott added his second of the game, and Panzer buried his fourth to stretch the lead to

11-0 through 40 minutes.

Virden tallied a pair of late goals in the third, but the damage had long been done.

"Yeah, it's a good response," said head coach Dwight Hirst. "You lose a game to one of your rivals in overtime in a full barn with an electric atmosphere and you wonder if there will be a setback, but I thought the boys handled it well."

He also praised the team's blistering start.

"The first ten minutes was one of the best starts I've been involved in with a hockey team in a long time."

Moore extended his point streak to four games with his four-point effort, recording three goals and ten points in that span. After weeks on the road, Moore says he was excited to be back in front of the Niverville faithful.

"We've been away for a while, so it's nice to get back on home ice in front of our fans and get a big win," Moore said. "It's not every day you get to put up 11."

Moore also praised the chemistry of his line.

"I think the big thing is our line has a lot of speed and

consistent effort every shift. We make a lot of good plays."

#### DECEMBER 9 SELKIRK STEELERS, AWAY

The Nighthawks continued their red-hot play, scoring six unanswered goals in a commanding 6-1 road win.

Selkirk struck first late in the opening frame when captain Owen Brandson converted a feed from Carter Haney to put Selkirk up 1-0. From that point on, it was all Niverville.

Vigfusson led the way, scoring for Niverville just five minutes into the second, receiving a cross ice pass from Carrier in the right circle, faking out a defender, and sliding the puck blocker-side past Selkirk goaltender Ethan Sawyer to even the game.

Three minutes later, Scott buried his tenth of the season off a gorgeous backhand feed from Leduc, giving the Nighthawks a lead they would not relinquish.

Vigfusson struck again on the power play, finishing a setup from Boles.

About a minute after that, Zeller pushed the lead to 4-1 with his sixth of the season,

jumping on a loose puck created by a strong faceoff win and net drive from Leduc.

Vigfusson completed the hat trick with another power-play marker late in the period, finishing a perfect cross-crease feed from Wheddon.

In the third period, Moore added the final goal, extending his own point streak to five games. Panzer, who earned the primary assist, also stretched his streak to five games.

With their strong play as of late, the MJHL on Monday recognized both Panzer and Moore by naming them MJHL stars of the week.

#### DECEMBER 10 PORTAGE TERRIERS, HOME

In this collision of top teams, the Portage Terriers came out on top, earning a 3-2 victory and handing the Nighthawks just their second regulation loss of the season.

Both teams traded chances in a high-tempo opening frame, but it was the Nighthawks who capitalized and jumped out to the early lead.

(continued on page 16)



**THE SIGN OF A  
BETTER  
BUSINESS<sup>SM</sup>**

Find one at **BBB.org**



(continued from page 15)

Nhanieiev notched his first goal as a Nighthawk after Leduc delivered a no-look backhand pass from above the crease to a wide open Nhanieiev, who tapped it in.

Four minutes later, Leduc's magic struck again, spinning off a defender in the Portage zone and sliding a perfect feed to Rolston, who tapped home his third of the year to make it 2-0.

The strong start wasn't enough to carry through the full 60 minutes, however.

The second period swung the momentum dramatically. Niverville took three penalties in the first 10 minutes, giving the Terriers extended time on the man advantage.

While on the power play, Trevor Hill worked the puck down low to Rhett Platt, who took the puck to the net and wrapped it around Dubinsky to cut the lead to 2-1.

Just 68 seconds later, Platt set up Jonah Lemoine in front, who redirected the puck between the legs of Dubinsky to tie the game.

Portage outshot Niverville 13-7 in the frame and dictated most of the play.

"I thought tonight we were second to the puck too many times," Hirst said after the game. "We made some adjustments after the first period, but for some reason it just kept going against us."

The third period tightened up, with chances limited to the final minutes.

Leduc nearly regained the lead for Niverville, cutting hard to the net, but Terriers goaltender Mitchell Kathler sprawled out, using every inch of his 6'1 frame to make a crucial stop.

That save turned out to be a game-changer.

Less than a minute later, a rebound off a Drayden Uhrina shot sat loose beside Dubinsky. Platt poked it free to Hill at the top of the crease, who fired home his twenty-second of the season, giving Portage the 3-2 edge, and ultimately the win.

"They came in and they

beat us, it's as simple as that," Hirst said. "It's a learning opportunity for everyone. Where we are in the standings, you're going to get the best from every team."

The Nighthawks coach also credited the Terriers.

"Hats off to Portage. Every time you play them, you know you're going to get a hard effort, and they executed what they had to do properly to get the win."

#### DECEMBER 13 WINKLER FLYERS, HOME

On a night dedicated to honouring the past, the Nighthawks put on a dominant performance.

The evening began with Legacy Night, as four local MJHL alumni—Roger Chammartin, Dave Martin, Cameron Funk, and Jason Klippenstein—were honoured prior to puck drop. The four grew up playing minor hockey together in Niverville before advancing to the MJHL. They received a rousing ovation from the near-capacity crowd.

With the stage set for a celebration, Winkler struck.

Coming off their first regulation loss in nearly two months, the Nighthawks were looking to rebound with a solid effort, but the Flyers silenced the crowd just 21 seconds in. Winkler captain Kam Thomas finished a two-on-one, converting a pass from Jacob Michelson to give the visitors an early lead.

The goal served as a wake-up call. The home team responded with six unanswered goals in the next 39 minutes, beginning with Leduc, who tied the game with his tenth of the season. Leduc moved into the slot and snapped a shot just under the crossbar.

Moments later, the Flyers had an opportunity to regain their lead, but instead Phillips sent a perfect stretch pass to Arran at the red line, who broke in alone and beat 6'5 Winklers goaltender Leif Ekblad.

In the middle frame, Leduc struck again



Merik Boles.

YOUR PICTURES HERE

when Kole Mears chipped a pass to the streaking forward. Leduc outwaited the Ekblad and slid the puck under his left pad to make it 3-1.

Mears then got on the scoresheet himself, redirecting a point shot from Zeller.

In a stunning 11-second span, Boles, who was suiting up in the two hundredth game of his MJHL career, took over.

While on the power play, some great puck movement saw all five Nighthawks touch the puck before Wheddon found Boles with a cross-crease feed.

Off the ensuing faceoff, Wheddon and Vigfusson broke in on a two-on-one. Wheddon's shot was blocked, but the rebound landed right on Boles' stick, and he ripped a glove-side shot past Ekblad to chase the goaltender from the game.

Winkler showed some push early in the third. Tanner George displayed great hand-eye coordination by tipping a point shot past Dubinsky to cut the lead.

But any thoughts of a comeback were erased as Krestanowich scored twice in the final frame. It was the first multi-goal game of his MJHL career, sealing the 8-2 victory for the Nighthawks.

#### DECEMBER 14 WINNIPEG BLUES, AWAY

In the midst of a gruelling stretch of games, the Nighthawks showed resilience by battling through fatigue and adversity to secure a 1-0 overtime victory.

After playing seven games in just 13 days, the Nighthawks could have been forgiven for looking tired.

The Blues, on the other hand, came into the game well-rested.

Both teams welcomed back some important pieces. Blues head coach and GM Josh Gratton was back behind the bench for the first time since helping Team Canada West win silver at the 2025 World Junior A Challenge. For the Nighthawks, Mike Aulay, GM and director of scouting, also did Niverville proud, bringing home a silver medal himself and serving as director of operations for that same squad.

On the ice, the Nighthawks came out firing, dominating possession and controlling play. They were awarded an early power play but were unable to solve Blues goalie Kanne Kirkwood, who stood like a wall all night long.

As the game progressed, both teams traded chances in a tightly contested second period. Niverville continued

to press in the third but couldn't break through Kirkwood. Winnipeg had a few looks of their own, but Ben Chornomydz made several key saves when called upon.

Nothing could be decided after 60 minutes.

Just a minute into overtime, Vigfusson thought he had scored the game-winner after driving to the net and putting the puck past Kirkwood. The referee immediately waved it off, ruling that the puck had been kicked in.

With the clock ticking down and a shootout looming, Leduc carried the puck into the Blues' zone, circled the net, carried the puck to the left circle, and found Phillips in the slot. Phillips then dropped a pass to a wide-open Zeller, who ripped a shot past Kirkwood's glove to give the Nighthawks a 1-0 victory.

When all was said and done, the Nighthawks outshot Winnipeg 46-17.

Chornomydz turned aside all 17 shots he faced, earning his first career shutout and improving to a perfect 7-0 on the season. He has not allowed more than two goals in any of his seven starts.

For Zeller, the overtime goal was his second extra time winner of the season.

#### DECEMBER 20 WINNIPEG MONARCHS, AWAY

The Nighthawks wrapped up their pre-Christmas schedule in convincing fashion, rolling to a 5-1 victory over the Monarchs on the road.

After having a pair of games postponed during the week due to province-wide blizzards, the Nighthawks showed no signs of rust.

The Nighthawks wasted little time getting on the scoreboard. Less than two minutes into the opening period, Zeller struck after Carrier held the puck in at the blue line. Mears fed Leduc in the left circle, who sent a cross-ice pass to Zeller for a one-timer that beat Monarchs goaltender Austin Ball.

Niverville continued to pressure throughout the

period.

The teams traded chances late in the period, with Dubinsky coming up with a big save on Monarchs forward Carson Legault. Moments later, Ball robbed Vigfusson with a glove save on a chance from the right circle.

Before the period ran out, though, the Nighthawks doubled their lead. Moore notched his eighth of the season, showing great eye-hand coordination to knock down an Panzer pass before beating Ball blocker-side.

Winnipeg made things interesting midway through the second. Legault led an odd-man rush and dropped the puck to Ian Lavallee, whose shot from the top of the left circle slipped past Dubinsky to make it 2-1.

Just when it appeared the Monarchs would head into the third down by one, Niverville's top line took over. Vigfusson, Boles, and Wheddon generated multiple chances before Vigfusson tucked in a wraparound attempt at the buzzer. After a brief review, the goal stood.

Niverville put the game away in the third. Following a faceoff win in the Monarchs zone, Leduc collected the puck in the slot, dangled around a pair of defenders, and snapped a shot past Ball.

Later, while short-handed, Phillips blasted a point shot past Ball after another offensive-zone faceoff win, marking Niverville's fifth short-handed goal of the season.

#### LOOKING AHEAD

The MJHL now pauses for the holiday break, giving the Nighthawks some well-deserved time off.

Niverville will return to action with a pair of home games, beginning with a marquee divisional showdown against the Steinbach Pistons on Saturday, January 3, featuring the top two teams in the East Division.

The home stand wraps up with a Sunday afternoon matchup against the Winnipeg Blues on January 4 at the CRRRC.



**NOW OFFERING FINANCING**  
GET THE ROOF YOU NEED AT A PRICE YOU CAN AFFORD  
**CALL OR TEXT 1(204) 232-8492**

VISIT OUR SITE





MITT

## Save the Date Open House

Thursday, February 19

Join us for a night of exploration—tour campuses, meet instructors, and discover your path at MITT.

Register today at  
[MITT.ca/OpenHouse](http://MITT.ca/OpenHouse)



## PRICKLY PEAR

ORGANIC BODY SUGARING

"I love how prickly  
your legs feel."

-Said no one ever



Unit B, 10 Cedar Drive, Niverville

204.782.8610 [pricklypearsugaring@gmail.com](mailto:pricklypearsugaring@gmail.com)



[pricklypearbodysugaring](https://www.instagram.com/pricklypearbodysugaring)



chamber of  
NIVERVILLE  
commerce

CHAMBER  
news

EMAIL: [chamber@niverville.com](mailto:chamber@niverville.com)

PHONE: 204-388-6140

President: Elvin Krahn | Vice-President: Ben Dueck | Executive Director: Bre-Ann Boulet  
Treasurer: Nicholas Bergmann | Members: Ferd Klassen, Chidera Anadi-Mbanefo,  
Andrea Dempster, Annie Ross, Dean Delorme, Jenn Elliott

**Seeking one additional board member - join today!**

[www.niverville.com](http://www.niverville.com)

# Happy New Year

Mark your calendars for our upcoming  
2026 events, which help connect, educate,  
and celebrate our business community:

FEB  
3

**Winter Education Series  
and Employer Roundtable**

APR  
10

### AGM, Awards and Dinner

Join us for our Annual General Meeting followed by a delightful dinner. This is a wonderful opportunity to connect with fellow members and discuss the future of our community.

APR  
22

### Chamber Portugal Trip

MAY  
1

### Pizza Wars and Summer Market Kick Off

Get ready for a week of cheesy goodness! Vote for your favorite local pizzeria as they compete for the title of Niverville's Best Pizza. May the best slice win!

AUG  
20

### Annual golf Tournament

Tee off with us at our annual Golf Tournament! Enjoy a day on the greens, followed by dinner and awards. Perfect for golf enthusiasts and beginners alike. Stay tuned for more details on each event. We can't wait to see you there!

To join or for any inquiries, contact us at 204-388-6140 or email [chamber@niverville.com](mailto:chamber@niverville.com).  
Be part of our growing community, and let's work together towards a prosperous future!



Richard Kirwan  
204.392.5665  
[richard@mightyducts.ca](mailto:richard@mightyducts.ca)  
[www.mightyducts.ca](http://www.mightyducts.ca)

**RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL DUCT CLEANING**



**Niverville**  
Family Chiropractic



**We've got  
more than  
just your back.**

### Our Services:

- Chiropractic
- Pelvic Floor Physio
- Massage Therapy
- Naturopathic Medicine

Ph: (204) 881-5555  
[nivervillefamilychiro.com](http://nivervillefamilychiro.com)

**Delaquis  
Antiques  
FURNITURE**

- SALES •
- REFINISHING •
- REPAIRS •

**204-388-4850**  
[pgdelaquis@gmail.com](mailto:pgdelaquis@gmail.com)



# Arts & Culture

## Finding Their Voice: Choirs and Drama Club Welcome New Members

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

If you love to sing or act, Niverville might be just the place to explore those passions. Active this winter are two community choral groups: an adult choir for ages 18 and up as well as a youth choir for kids ages nine to 13.

Behind both musical groups is Susan Simcoe, Niverville Middle School (NMS) teacher and choral director. Simcoe also instructs the NMS school choir for students in Grades Seven and Eight.

New this year to Simcoe's lineup of arts initiatives is the Niverville Youth Drama Club. She runs this program with friends Emily Hyde and Abigail Friesen. Hyde and Friesen are also local and come with training in the performing arts.

"We aren't able to fit drama into the NMS curriculum," Simcoe says of the club's origin. "So I wanted to give that to the community. It's a missing piece. Some kids don't want to sing, but they want to act. I've seen drama transform a life. Kids that struggle with anxiety and all sorts of things, they can find their on-stage voice

because they become somebody else."

Simcoe stepped in as adult choir director just over a year ago after local music instructor Rob Bonefaas had to give it up for health reasons. Soon after, she began directing the community youth choir as well.

She secured space for the adult choir to practice at the United Church, a building which she says provides excellent acoustics.

The youth choir meets regularly in the NMS band room and the youth drama club has for now found space at the curling rink.

The adult choir already gave their first performance of the season in New Bothwell for the MCC Thrift Store's Christmas party.

Next on the roster was the Niverville Foundation's candlelight choir service on December 2 at the Heritage Centre. The event was free to attend and open to everyone.

On December 5, the adult and community youth choirs performed outdoors at the community tree lighting event being held at 6:00 p.m. at the Heritage Place Pavillion.

Then, on December 7, Simcoe's choirs, including



Susan Simcoe is inviting people to consider trying out her local choral and drama clubs.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

her NMS student choir, performed for the senior residents of the Heritage Centre.

"I take kids there to visit with seniors so that's why we're getting the space, which is lovely," says Simcoe.

In 2026, residents can watch for the choir's spring concert, which will take place

either at the Heritage Centre or the Maranatha Church.

All of Simcoe's arts groups have room for more.

This year, the adult choir is at 25 members, down from last year's 40.

Still, she says, there's a great ensemble of voices to work with.

The community youth choir has 20 kids coming regularly despite the fact that's it's relatively new. Many of these kids have had no formal music training.

"They're not usually kids I've taught in the past, so I'm basically teaching them how to sing," Simcoe says.

After this opening year,

she anticipates being able to take the community youth choir to the next level and get them performance-ready.

No previous experience is needed to join the drama club or any of the choirs and there are no auditions. All it takes is having an interest.

So what kind of person joins an adult community choir?

"It's a lot of people who have past experience singing but have had no outlet to sing," Simcoe says. "A lady that joined our choir this year said, 'I didn't know that this was a void in my life until I came.' Others are people that are looking for community. That's one of my passions is helping people find community through music."

For young people, the draw isn't so very different. Most often these are kids looking for a group that isn't a sports team.

Simcoe, too, was a child when her musical passion blossomed, thanks to someone much like herself.

"When I was in the fourth grade, a music teacher moved to our small town of Virden and transformed it," Simcoe says. "Everything that I do today is what she gave to us."

Since those days, Simcoe has been immersed in music, whether playing piano or choral singing. She's performed with Prairie Voices, Sweet Debut, and Pride of Manitoba, which was a choir sponsored by the provincial government to perform at summer fairs.

Her choral career took her

to venues across Canada and Europe as well as New York.

She studied music at Briarcrest Bible College and Canadian Mennonite University, where she obtained her degree.

Since then, she's been giving back, investing volunteer hours so others can love music the way she does.

Since beginning these local performing arts groups, though, one thing has become painfully clear to her: Niverville has no facility dedicated to such an endeavour. As for school gymnasiums or the CRRC, Simcoe says the acoustics just aren't there for a quality performance.

Ideally, she hopes town council or a special interest group might take the need seriously as the town continues to grow at a breakneck pace. She's confident there'd be plenty of support for a performing arts facility.

Meanwhile, Simcoe, Hyde, and Friesen encourage youth to come out and explore the new youth drama club.

"We are using acting games and exercises to encourage creativity, bold movement, teamwork, and confidence," says Friesen. "We are learning acting basics and expressive freedom while having lots and lots of fun."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the drama club or any of the choirs, contact: nivervillearts@gmail.com

**New Year. New Goals. New Address.**

Call Taylor for a free home evaluation!

**21 CENTURY 21**  
Carrie Realty

**Taylor Jaman | REALTOR®**  
Taylor.jaman@c21.ca

Helping families buy and sell since 2017



**MEL'S**  
SEPTIC SERVICES  
SINCE 1989

Year round service  
Servicing Southeast Manitoba  
24 hour Emergency Services  
Residential and Commercial

call or text  
**204-388-4201**

**MUNICIPALITÉ**  
**RITCHOT**  
MUNICIPALITY

Country Skies. City Ties.  
Sous le ciel de la campagne.



# KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

Registration Opens January 5, 2026

**Register for the 2026-27 School Year**

Families are asked to register by **February 28** for fall enrollment so schools can prepare for the upcoming school year and coordinate spring orientation activities. If you do not have internet access, please contact the school nearest your residence for assistance with the initial step of registration.

**Eligibility**

Children must be five years of age on or before December 31, 2026, to be eligible for registration. Students are required to attend the school within the catchment area of their residence to ensure balanced enrollment across the division. General catchment maps are available at [hsd.ca](http://hsd.ca). If you have recently moved or are unsure about your specific catchment (boundaries) or school assignment, please contact the HSD Transportation Department at 204-320-2347.



**Registration Process:**

- 1. Complete the online registration form at [www.HSD.ca](http://www.HSD.ca).
- 2. Provide supporting documentation to your designated school.



Questions?  
Please email [info@hsd.ca](mailto:info@hsd.ca)

# YOUR FUTURE SELF WILL THANK YOU

SET YOURSELF UP FOR THE LIFE YOU WANT



See one of our friendly advisors to plan for your future.

RRSP | RRIF | TFSA |  
GIC | RDSP | RESP



YOU COULD  
**WIN**

JACKPOT IS OVER

**\$12,000**

**EVERY MONDAY AT SMITTY'S NIVERVILLE**  
DOOR PRIZES FROM 6:00 PM - 8:30 PM | FOOD & DRINK SPECIALS

**SKIP  
THE LINE**



**BUY  
ONLINE**

Purchasers do not need to be present to win. If a winner is not present, they will be contacted by phone. If required, 3 attempts to make contact will be made over the course of 5 minutes. If a winner does not respond within that time a new winner will be drawn. Cut-off for ticket purchases will be at 8:15 p.m. every Monday. Sales for the following week will resume approximately 1 hour after each draw. Draw time is 8:30 p.m. Tickets may only be purchased by those 18 years of age and older who are residents of Manitoba or who are in Manitoba at the time of the purchase. LGCA 8417-RF-48289





# Happy New Year

**Ron R. Schuler**

Ron@RonSchuler.com

MLA for Springfield-Ritchot



## Health plans to suit you and your family

Buy a plan today at [mb.bluecross.ca](https://mb.bluecross.ca)  
or contact your trusted broker.



MANITOBA  
**BLUE CROSS**®  
THE COLOUR OF CARING®

\*Trademark of the CABCP †Trademark of the BCBSA



## TWO MODES. ONE PASS. NO MERCY.

DUAL-MODE CAZADO™

NOTHING CONTROLS WILD OATS IN WHEAT LIKE DUAL-MODE **CAZADO™**.

You needed a breakthrough to keep your fields cleaner,  
and ADAMA delivered. With best-in-class results and  
first-ever innovation, CAZADO™ controls Group 1 and  
Group 2 resistant wild oats like never before.

It feels good to be in control.



Scan the QR code to  
contact Andrew Kaminsky,  
your local ADAMA Area  
Business Manager.



[CAZADO.CA](https://cazado.ca)

Always read and follow label directions. CAZADO is a trademark of ADAMA Agricultural Solutions Canada Ltd. ©2026 ADAMA Agricultural Solutions Canada Ltd.

