

The Citizen

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LOCAL NEWS

School Taxes Going Up

■ No matter where you live in southeastern Manitoba, the education portion of your property taxes are set to see a significant hike this year.

Details on Page 15



LOCAL NEWS

Habitat Manitoba: Volunteers Needed

■ Although there are 45 chapters of Habitat for Humanity across Canada, currently none operate in the rural south-east. The organization would like to change this, but volunteers in the local area are needed to make it happen.

Details on Page 17

SPORTS & REC

Hockey Teammates Head to Elite Tourney

■ Tristan Bray and Will Lux of Niverville have both earned spots at the prestigious Brick Invitational tournament in Edmonton.

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ARTS & CULTURE

Rock Friday, Country Saturday

■ The Trews and The Washboard Union are set to headline separate nights at the Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair.

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Nighthawks Finish Regular Season with Best MJHL Record in a Decade

▶▶ READ MORE ON PAGES 24-25

YOUR PICTURES HERE

MEMBERBONUS

\$15 Million In Cash

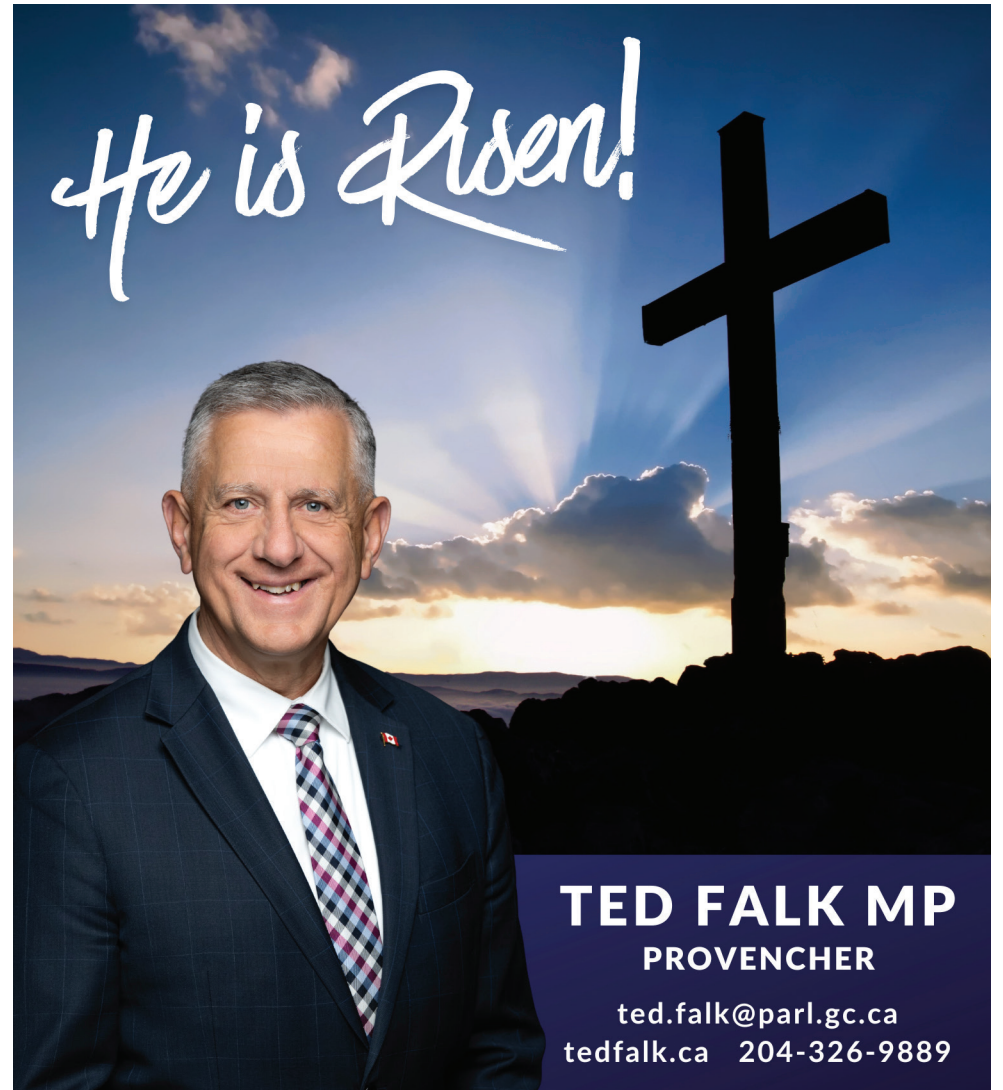
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Public Hearing for 2026 Financial Plan

On **April 21st, 2026**, at **7:00 p.m.**, the public is invited to join Council at the **Niverville Community Resource & Recreation Centre, 501 Centre Street, Niverville, MB**, for a Public Hearing where Council will hear any person who would like to make a presentation, ask questions, or register an objection to the 2026 Financial Plan as presented.

A copy of the 2026 Financial Plan is available for review and may be examined by any person during regular office hours at the Town Office, 329 Bronstone Drive, or online here: <https://www.whereyoubelong.ca/town-services/financial-services/>

Eric King, CPA CGA
Chief Administrative Officer
Town of Niverville

Questions? Please contact feedback@whereyoubelong.ca



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Consultations are underway on twinning Highways 59 and 52.

JOEY VILLANUEVA

Design Study Underway for Twinning of Highways 59 and 52

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
 bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On March 3, Ritchot's council was given the first opportunity to provide feedback on the future twinning of Highways 59 and 52.

In the coming weeks, representatives from Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI) and WSP, the Winnipeg-based design firm contracted to perform the functional design study, will meet with the councils of three other municipalities—Hanover, Tache, and De Salaberry—for a similar purpose.

The design study is anticipated to take approximately two years to complete, from early stakeholder consultation, happening now, to the submission of the final report to the province by the end of 2028.

In total, about 30 kilometres of highway are under consideration for twinning, from Highway 210 to Highway 52, and then a second stretch along the 52 to Mitchell.

Public engagement will continue through the spring of 2026. By the

end of this year, WSP expects to have created a number of conceptual highway alternatives.

One year from now, they will be back to collect feedback from stakeholders regarding those alternatives.

After some refinement following feedback, they'll return for one last stakeholder session to present the preferred design.

"It's in the early phase of the design process where we identify the road right-of-way and roadway layout based on projected travel patterns and demand," says Meagan Boles of WSP. "These studies are informed by both technical aspects and public input."

Affected landowners, business owners, and local interest groups will be among the many stakeholders WSP reaches out to throughout the process. The general public will be invited to open houses during phases two and three.

Some key components informing a design study are property boundaries and land ownership bordering the highway. As well, WSP will analyze collision history, general

traffic and school bus patterns, and environmental impacts. The goal is to develop a design based on a 20-year projection of traffic needs.

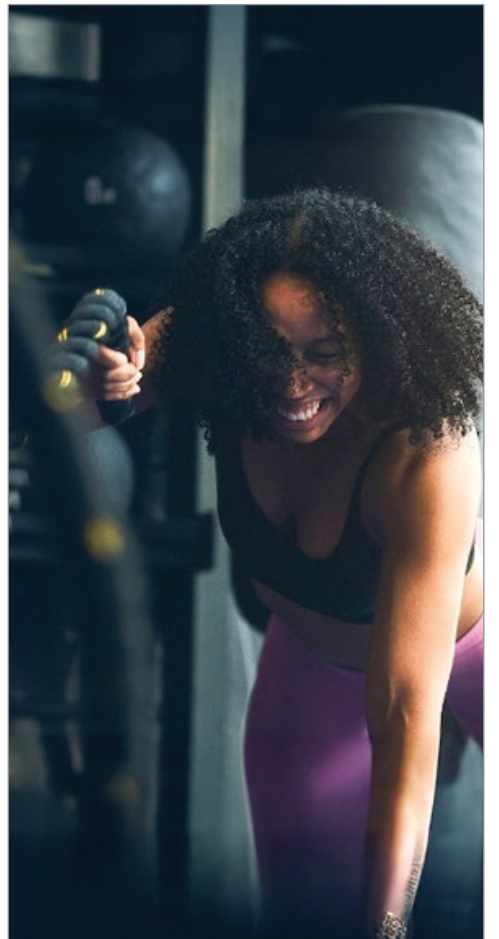
Other items for consideration are overall cost of the project as well as social and economic impacts, including minimizing the need for land acquisition.

"The detail design portion of the project will be contingent on if there's any kind of land acquisition needed and how smoothly that goes," Boles says. "If we end up where we have an issue with purchasing and/or acquiring land, that can delay the process."

They will do their best to work around existing homes, businesses, and buildings, according to Boles, although that's not always possible.

When WSP's job is done, MTI will step in to create a detailed design plan. This process will take anywhere from 12 to 18 months. Only then can construction begin.

In other words, commuters can expect at least another three to four years, or more, before the pylons appear and detour signs go up.



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IN BRIEF

Still No Charges for Burglars of 88 Carats

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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It's been almost a year since owners Travis and Danielle Wiebe showed up for work at 88 Carats Co. only to find the place ransacked and about \$300,000 in valuable merchandise missing.

Now, 11 months later, the thieves are still at large and the Wiebes say they're no closer to charges being laid.

The day after the burglary, on April 16, the couple posted videos online describing the crime and pleading for the public to reach out to the RCMP regarding suspicious activity they might have witnessed the night before.

They received feedback which seemed to match evidence found in the store and on their own video surveillance. They hired a private investigator to dig for more.

Local businesses and the town turned over footage from neighbouring surveillance systems. But this footage wasn't clear enough for the police to use.

No fingerprints were left behind, although there were muddy footprints both inside and outside the store.

"The RCMP were great to talk to, but their resources were obviously tapped out," Travis says.

In the end, the evidence they collected wasn't substantial enough to warrant the RCMP taking certain people in for questioning.

According to Corporal Mélanie Roussel, media relations officer for the RCMP, the police can't act without being able to demonstrate reasonable suspicion.

"The officers did what they could at the time," Roussel says. "We're not giving up. It's still ongoing. Hopefully we'll have people with evidence still come forward."

Anyone with information, great or small, is asked to contact the Niverville or St. Pierre-Jolys RCMP detachment or Crime Stoppers.

The Wiebes are confident, based on evidence, that more than one perpetrator was involved in the heist.

The theft proved to be a rude awakening for the couple, who have since invested an additional \$25,000 in security. They advise other businessowners to do the same. The more tangible evidence you can provide to police, they say, the more likely criminals can be caught and convicted.

"All these cop shows on TV leave us feeling like police are able to investigate into things and that they have access to super technology to find perpetrators," says Travis. "But their hands get tied up by legalities."

Travis says he maintains the same level of respect for the RCMP as before. He was encouraged to hear from an officer who checked the treads in a shoe store while out shopping with his wife, hoping to find a match for the footprints they had on file.

The Wiebes aren't fooling themselves into believing they'll see the stolen items again. Still, a crime was committed and they're concerned about similar thefts and local vulnerabilities.

They continue to offer a \$25,000 reward to anyone who reports evidence that can lead to a conviction.

The couple has since picked up the pieces and moved on, but at great personal cost. The customers and suppliers who lost jewellery in the heist have all been compensated. 88 Carats continues to thrive with a consistent and steady customer base. They have since onboarded their son, who is training as a goldsmith.



Ritchot's council meets in the RM office in St. Adolphe.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

Ritchot Approves Developer for Ste. Agathe Housing Project

By Brenda Sawatzky

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After reviewing proposals from two different developers for a new housing project in Ste. Agathe, Ritchot council made a decision on February 18.

Schinkel Properties has been awarded the deal, pending a condition that a mutually beneficial development agreement can be reached.

In the event that a development agreed isn't reached, council has instructed the RM's administration to proceed with negotiations with the second developer, NuVision Design.

Council first sent a call out to developers for expressions of interest last October.

The goal was to entertain options for affordable housing units to be constructed on 1.29 acres of RM-owned land, bordered by Samoiset Avenue to the east and Highway 75 to the west.

"The expression of interest process included five criteria by which applications would be scored," says Ryan Faucher, Ritchot's economic development officer. "Schinkel's proposal scored highest in

commitment for number of units, affordability, and time-frame to be completed."

He adds that the development agreement council is seeking will speak to fencing requirements, street parking, and items of concern raised by locals.

"Should the RM administration and Schinkel come to a mutually agreed development plan, this will be brought back to council for final approval at a future date," says Faucher. "The land will not be sold or transferred until a development agreement is completed and approved by council."

Through this negotiation process, council will need to determine whether the land will be sold to the developer or awarded to them at no cost.

In presentations made at council's January 6 public meeting, representatives from both companies requested that the RM forfeit the land to the developer in an effort to make affordable housing options more feasible.

As council prepared to vote for the developer of choice, Councillor Joel Lemoine voiced his concerns as a representative of the residents of Ste. Agathe.

"The process was good," Lemoine told council. "I understand that side of it. I surveyed the community... the street residents. We wanted a 55-plus [development], garages and parking off the streets. We lost the potential to put up a secondary condo unit somewhere else for 55-plus. Based on this mathematical equation, I can see why [Schinkel was chosen], but I think I'm going to go in favour of what the residents are looking for."

In the end, all but Lemoine voted in favour of accepting Schinkel's proposal.

THE OPTIONS

The two proposals council was given were as different as the developers themselves.

Alan Klippenstein of Schinkel Properties proposed the development of 16 three-bedroom, two-bathroom duplex homes designed with families in mind. Each of the 1,400-square-foot homes would be created with an identical layout, but with no parking garages.

All the units would be rentals, with about one-third offered at affordable rates as established by CMHC.

Once started, the project

would take around 15 months to complete.

"We're willing to bet \$4.7 million that this project will work," Klippenstein told council. "We think that the lower return [on investment] will be offset by long-term tenants that want to stay here and raise their family."

The second proposal, from NuVision Design, came from Jean-Claude Gratton, who has lived with his wife in Ste. Agathe for many years. They are landlords both inside and outside the community.

Gratton made his pitch to introduce nine mobility-friendly homes on this tract of land, perfect for aging couples or two young adults just starting out.

The detached 1,400-square-foot units would offer two primary bedrooms, each with its own three-piece ensuite and a double attached garage. Further, Gratton would build a sound barrier wall between the homes and Highway 75.

"These lots [are within] walking distance to the church, arena, post office, pharmacy, healthcare, and convenience stores, [which] makes it ideal for seniors," Gratton told council.



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TOWN OF NIVERVILLE PROPOSED MUNICIPAL PESTICIDE PROGRAM

Public Notice is hereby given that the Town of Niverville intends to conduct the following Pesticide Control Program during 2026:

1. To control noxious weeds on road allowances, public preserves and parks within the municipality, the Town may use the herbicides Fiesta, Round Up, and 2-4-D Ester 700. The Program will run from May 1st, 2026, to October 31st, 2026, using a ground sprayer.
2. To control populations of nuisance mosquitos, the Town may larvicide using Vectobac 200g.

This program will commence from May 1st, 2026, to October 31st, 2026.

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

The public may, within 15 days after this notice is published, submit written comments to the department or register a written objection to the use of pesticide next to their property.

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▣ C/O PROVIDENCE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Providence Slashes Budget While Building New Revenue

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

It would be an understatement to say the past two years have been challenging for Providence University College. Recent decisions at both the federal and provincial levels have trickled down, requiring the faith-based school to make major budget cuts.

The current environment has pushed the school to rethink its educational strategy.

In early 2024, when the federal government announced its plan to cap the number of international students seeking to study in Canada, Providence's international student enrolment potential was cut by more than 50 percent.

In consequence, their total revenues were also cut in half.

For another school, the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technologies (MITT), it meant the end of a 40-year run in Winnipeg.

In the short term, Providence will let go ten percent of its workforce. At the same time, non-salary expenditures are being cut by \$1 million.

In courses where enrolment has declined, programs will be dropped while the school retains focus on those areas where student demand is still strong.

"Nobody wanted this,"

says Providence president Dr. Kenton Anderson. "It was not in the plan that we would let go of people that we love. But given the impact of these government choices, we really had no choice."

New revenue streams are being explored and implemented as quickly as possible.

To start, Providence will soon add to their athletic offerings in order to attract a greater number of Canadian students. Soon women's rugby, cross-country running, and curling will enhance the already robust lineup which includes volleyball, basketball, soccer, and futsal.

Other educational institutions across the country are cutting athletic offerings, Anderson says.

Providence has never put a great emphasis on scholarships, which at this stage could be an advantage.

But with a historical emphasis heavy on international outreach, the institution is moving forward with an initiative called Providence Global, which will launch on a small scale this coming fall.

Under this new program, Providence will bring education to foreign students who cannot currently come to study in Canada.

"This fits to our long-standing sense of mission," Anderson says. "[Our early founders] talked about a vision for the

world, which is quite consistent with our vision as a Christian institution."

In the beginning, Anderson says that course selection will be limited to business- and management-related degrees.

They've already settled on the country where the program will begin and relationships are already strong: the Philippines.

Launching a global initiative is no easy feat. It requires collaborations with trade commissioners, education governances, and recruiting agencies. The curriculum, too, needs to be completely rebuilt to fit the new mould.

"It's a different model of learning. We're doing this in order to create a niche for ourselves. If we were just going to go over there and do conventional education, the market is pretty crowded. So far we're quite encouraged in what we're seeing."

In recent weeks, Anderson announced his upcoming retirement from Providence.

With that retirement set for May 2027, he'll have one more year to help Providence implement these new strategies before passing the baton.

"God has been faithful to preserve this work through a lot of tight moments. This one feels particularly immense, but we have a path forward and we're following that path. We'll see where it takes us."

BINGO

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Niverville Presents New Budget and Big Infrastructure Improvements

By Brenda Sawatzky
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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Niverville's town council presented their 2026 budget on March 18. At the same time, a list of major infrastructure improvements was announced.

In order to prepare for proposed expenditures, council has determined that a slight tax increase is needed.

Come fall, the homeowner with a midrange assessment value of \$399,800 will see a 2.5 percent hike on their municipal tax bill, equating to an additional \$57.

In 2025, municipal taxes increased by about four percent, due in part to the fact that the average home increased in value by 20 percent.

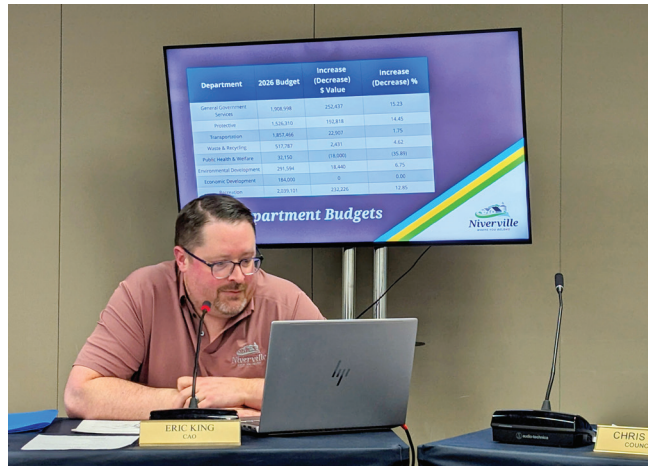
In recent weeks, the Hanover School Division also announced a 2026 mill rate increase, meaning that Niverville residents will see their school taxes go up by approximately the same amount this year as their municipal taxes.

According to CAO Eric King, the tax increase is below the average inflationary rate.

"The goal with this year's budget is to have affordability as a key metric on how we set our budget," King says. "The goal is to try and do as much with as little as possible."

Mayor Myron Dyck says that town growth is a reason that taxes can remain low, with the budget able to be spread out across a larger taxpayer base.

"We're just trying to



Niverville CAO Eric King.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

manage efficiently," Dyck says. "Especially now in light of fuel prices. We realize that the average age in our community is in the thirties and we also hear from our seniors on fixed incomes. Council just has a mindset that we're trying to be mindful that these are real people with real [financial challenges]."

Based on King's financial plan, an additional \$250,000 will be needed for general government services to support more town planning and development as well as additional cybersecurity.

Another \$200,000 increase is required for administrative costs at the RCMP detachment, as well as a salary increase for fire and EMS staff.

Recreation is another department to receive increased funding, to the tune of \$230,000.

"We're working towards expanded program offerings and staffing," says King. "We have also talked about the

work that we are undertaking with ROC Eastman to help those who can't access recreation due to financial reasons."

A number of big projects are getting underway this year. Construction on the wastewater treatment plant just north of Niverville has already begun. King estimates that it will take about three years to complete.

The much-anticipated reconstruction of Highway 311 west will also start up. The project will widen the highway, introduce a new set of traffic lights at Krahn Road, and see the construction of a roundabout another half-mile west.

Phase one of the new fire hall and operations department will get started in May.

"First Street North is going to get a complete makeover over the next two years," King adds.

This project will include a reconstruction of the street and sidewalk from one end to

the other.

Another 2026 project will be the replacement of the old sewer lines that run underneath Main Street. Most of the work will be done via horizontal drilling, minimizing surface disruption.

Around five years ago, Dyck says, a number of sewer line breaks in the area resulted in an assessment of the entire system.

"When we put a camera in the lines, back in the day, some of them are like clay," Dyck says. "While it doesn't look like they're broken, we're wondering how much the soil is holding the cracks together. We know that these lines were installed in the late 60s."

Although this concern extends to the entirety of Niverville's older neighbourhoods, the plan is to begin with Main Street to ensure that businesses can avoid unnecessary closures due to sewer line breaks.

In anticipation of the potential for a \$61,000 grant, council intends to hire a tree management specialist to assess Niverville's current urban canopy and make recommendations for future growth of the community's tree population.

As well, with only two to four years of payments left on the CRRC, considerations are being given to next steps when it comes to recreation funding. This will provide an opportunity for community groups and individuals to weigh in on what direction they feel the town should go in the coming years.



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Niverville Awards Highway 311 Project, Approves Lagoon Land Sale

By Brenda Sawatzky
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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On March 3, Niverville's council had a productive meeting, voting unanimously in favour of awarding a tender for the Highway 311 construction project as well as proceeding with the sale of land on which the lagoon currently occupies.

HIGHWAY 311 RECONSTRUCTION

Council awarded the reconstruction of Highway 311, from Wallace Road to Mulberry Avenue, to Maple Leaf Construction Ltd, which submitted the lowest bid at just under \$10 million before taxes.

"They are hoping to put shovels into the ground this year, and in the next two years to complete the project," Mayor Myron Dyck told

council. "This is the first step in a multi-scope process. There are still other costs yet to be incurred."

Those additional costs, he says, will include things beyond Maple Leaf's responsibility, such as the installation of street lighting and the relocation of utility lines that run underground along this stretch.

Dyck says that the total cost of construction will be shared between the town, the province, and multiple developers in the area.

At this point, he isn't at liberty to indicate the province's share, since the government intends to make that announcement themselves in the coming weeks.

Over the course of the two-year project, the entire stretch of highway will be widened, with a traffic circle installed



Niverville's town council meets in early March.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

approximately halfway between Krahn and Wallace Roads. The roundabout will connect to Highlands Drive, a north-south street proposed for the new Highlands West development.

Early designs of this project also indicate an intention to close the intersection at Highway 311 and Wallace Road and install traffic lights at Krahn Road.

"For the next two years, for commuters going west, I'm not going to lie, it's going to be a mess," Dyck says. "But it's going to be much better when it's done."

SELLING LAGOON LAND

Council also approved the sale of land on which the town's sewage lagoon sits.

While currently owned by the town, this land is situation

immediately north of Niverville in the RM of Ritchot. It was purchased from the neighbouring municipality at a cost of just under \$500,000.

This tract of land is also the proposed site of the new regional wastewater treatment plant, the tender for which was recently awarded to Aecon Group Inc.

In preparation for the treatment plant's construction, the town is proposing to sell the land to the Red-Seine-Rat Wastewater Cooperative (RSRWC), comprised of Niverville and the RMs of Ritchot, Tache, Hanover, and De Salaberry, as well as the community of La Broquerie.

"The amount is just over \$1 million, I believe," Dyck says. "What it will do is lower the amount of Niverville's contribution to the entire RSR project. The land that the lagoon is

needed by everyone and it's not just in Niverville's interest. It's in the RSR's interest."

The 160-acre parcel comprises the entirety of Niverville's current lagoon. Since sewage containment cells spread out over only a portion of the land, there is already available space here to construct the treatment plant without compromising those cells.

Once the plant is built and fully functioning, Niverville's sewage cells will be repurposed as auxiliary overflow storage.

"When you get a seven-inch rain, and you have a whole ton of water, where are you going to store that?" Dyck asks.

For this reason, he adds, likely every community within the RSRWC will retain their existing lagoons for overflow purposes.

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Francois Grenier, road manager of the Our Potential, Our Purpose exhibit.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

NHS Hosts Exhibit Inspiring Youth to Become Global Changemakers

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

During the first week of March, Niverville High School (NHS) played host to Our Potential, Our Purpose, a two-year travelling national exhibition designed to inspire youth to become global changemakers.

For each day of the exhibition, students toured interactive and immersive displays that address major global challenges such as inequality, climate change, and poverty.

As citizens of the greater world, they were encouraged to ask themselves how they could be part of the solution, helping to build a future in which everyone is able to thrive.

The exhibition was created by the Aga Khan Foundation Canada and Global Affairs Canada.

With headquarters in Ottawa, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, the Aga Khan Foundation seeks to break the cycle of poverty by building strong, healthy, and inclusive communities where people can achieve their greatest potential.

In Canada, a country rich in opportunity, the goal is to empower and educate students in international development, sustainability, and real-world issues.

François Grenier is the event manager and host of Our Potential, Our Purpose.

“We’re actually showcasing how to help people achieve a better quality of life through access to healthcare, education, women’s rights, nutrition, access to technology, and all that good stuff,” says Grenier.

While the foundation has a global focus, Grenier says that there are also endless ways to improve the lives of people close

to home.

“Nobody’s too young or too old to help people around the world achieve a better quality of life,” Grenier says. “And locally, as well, there’s always [someone who needs] help. We’re here to try and trigger their minds to maybe discover how they can make a difference.”

The tour officially kicked off in August 2025 and will continue to move around the country until the fall of 2027. Grenier has busily been setting up in schools, festivals, and event venues along the east coast and throughout Ontario.

Niverville has been the only Manitoba stop on this leg of the tour.

From here, they head to the west coast. Grenier is hopeful that they’ll gain more traction in the prairie provinces as their mission becomes better known.

Students of NHS participated

class by class, tuning into video reels featuring real-life changemakers from around the world.

Students weaved a ribbon into an art mosaic to demonstrate the belief that we are stronger together.

They also wrote letters to themselves as if speaking from the future, guiding and encouraging themselves towards specific goals. These letters, now in the hands of the Foundation, will be returned to the students by email a few months from now.

After the exhibit has moved on, students can continue in the pursuit of changemaking by joining the Youth Advisory Committee or Youth Leadership Academy, or by taking part in global development opportunities, all provided through the Aga Khan Foundation.

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Newcomers, Community, and the Ties that Bind the Two

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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For immigrants landing in a new country, finding community is among the greatest imperatives. From there, all other steps can fall into place.

That's the premise underlying Eastman Immigrant Services, founded in 1999 as a program through the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce.

This non-profit currently has two offices in Steinbach.

On March 10, four EIS employees stopped in Niverville to host an information evening, the goal being to build partnerships, foster connection, and make themselves more visible to anyone who might need their integration services.

"We are hugely [instrumental] to the area," says Emily Schott, EIS program coordinator. "Especially now as things like racism are on the rise. Cultural differences that cause miscommunication can turn into misunderstandings. That's where we come in. We can teach people how to integrate smoothly."

EIS's community information sessions are intended to draw in newcomers and longtime residents alike.

"Longtime residents are the key to integration," Schott adds. "People who grew up here are exactly who we want to connect newcomers with, to build relationships and invite them into community. It's so easy to isolate as an immigrant."

This isn't a fundraising initiative. EIS derives all its funding from the provincial and federal governments. They also don't deal in the immigration process in any way. Their entire mandate is to help the already landed immigrant transition into the Canadian culture as seamlessly as possible.

Over the years, they've helped



Sviatoslav Baliuiev, Emily Schott, Emily Hildebrand, and Tiffany Froese.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

nearly 19,000 newcomers find homes, schools, and jobs. They offer settlement and employment services and English instruction through a variety of modes. They host invaluable programs like Settlement Workers in School (SWIS) and Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY). As well, they run countless daytime and evening programs for adults and kids from their facility on Reimer Avenue.

The idea, Schott says, is to provide a one-stop shop.

"In places like Winnipeg, you will often go to one place for your settlement needs, one place for your employment needs, and one place for your SWIS needs," says Schott. "We try not to do that because transportation is a huge issue. In most rural areas, there's no public transportation."

EIS employs 25 workers, 95 percent of them immigrants themselves. Among them, at least 14 languages are fluently spoken. Behind them stand a team of dedicated volunteers, many of which have also benefited from EIS programs.

Sviatoslav (Slava) Baliuiev is the program coordinator for Eastern Region Immigration Partnership, a branch of EIS.

Baliuiev and his family came to Manitoba from Ukraine in 2022.

His role takes an indirect approach to newcomers. Working behind the scenes, he creates partnerships with government agencies, corporations, local politicians, and nonprofits to find ways to work together for the betterment of immigrant families.

Baliuiev is also the liaison between EIS and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

"We see the issues [in the system], but we can't really do much about it," Schott says. "Slava forms working groups and invites our staff to tell him [the problems] we are seeing. He's then able to work outside of [our limitations] and have conversations with policymakers and politicians."

Baliuiev also regularly meets with employers in the region, encouraging them to look to the immigrant community for employees. Many of these are agricultural companies that rely

on workers to fill jobs that aren't necessarily considered the most desirable, like work in hog barns.

"In Blumenort, we have one of the biggest poultry companies," Baliuiev says. "They have thousands of people working in this company and most of them are immigrants."

Tiffany Froese and Emily Hildebrand are employed by SWIS and serve newcomer youth between the ages of five and 30, helping them integrate into the school system, getting them involved in after-school programming, and assisting them in finding postsecondary study options that meet their needs.

"There's a lot that goes on within the schools that parents don't see or aren't aware of," says Froese. "Immigrant families are coming from abroad where the school system functions differently, so we go into the schools and actually spend time with the kids and see how they're doing. We're trying to get that inside perspective to relay back to the parents."

SWIS also liaises with teachers

and administrators to help them understand a child's situation.

While school itself is a lesson in English instruction, SWIS workers ensure that kids get further instruction through a volunteer buddy program and after-school social clubs.

In a similar vein, EIS runs the HIPPY program for parents of preschoolers. These workers go into the home to provide young moms with English skills and social interaction. At the same time, they equip mothers with skills to help ready their young ones for school.

Baliuiev's wife became a HIPPY worker after her youngest started school.

At this point, with recent federal government cutbacks on immigration, the robust program created at EIS is seeing a little less use than before. This puts the organization in a catch-22 situation.

"For this year, they will allow 380,000 new immigrants for all of Canada," Baliuiev says. "Previously it was 700,000, so almost 45 percent they cut back."

The crew at EIS recognize the value of living in a country that welcomes newcomers. They've all experienced it, directly and indirectly, through the people they serve.

In fact, few Canadians can look back on their own familial past and not point to a generation that was thankful for the better life they found here.

For this reason, Schott says it's imperative that we all continue to pay it forward.

"My parents grew up in Russia, but they were called Germans because they had a German passport," Schott says. "When they went to Germany, they were called Russians. In Canada, we can all just be Canadian. It doesn't matter where you came from. It doesn't matter what language you speak. We are all Canadian."

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Winter Range, Political Rhetoric, and a Parking Lot Protest

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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It was -20 degrees with drifting snow on February 22 at noon. In front of MP Ted Falk's office in Steinbach, eight electric vehicles (EVs) and their passengers pulled up. Among them were Trevor Kirczenow and Blair Mahaffy, both of whom ran against Falk in the last federal election, Kirczenow for the Liberals and Mahaffy for the Greens.

The pair called this gathering for a very specific reason: to demonstrate the practicality and benefits of EVs in response to a flyer sent out by Falk in August 2025. According to Kirczenow and Mahaffy, the mailer implied that EVs are impractical in cold climates.

They say the same flyer and sentiment has circulated through other PC ridings.

"That's not just one guy's opinion anymore," Mahaffy says. "That's an advertising campaign against EVs."

The Citizen reached out to Falk about what some feel is an anti-EV message.

"I'm not opposed to electric vehicles," Falk said in a statement. "I'm opposed to the 2035 EV mandate. This should be about individual choice. EVs may work well for some people, but in our winter climate battery performance can drop significantly, in some cases upwards of 50 percent."

As the small crowd enjoyed a chilly afternoon in that Steinbach parking lot, no emission clouds hovered overhead, even while the vehicles sat running to keep their interiors warm and toasty.

2035 EV MANDATE

The 2035 EV mandate referenced by Falk was retracted by Carney's Liberals this year. It began as a plan by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to ensure that, by 2035, all light-duty vehicles sold in Canada had zero emission capability.

Mahaffy says that many people, including Falk, seem to harbour some misunderstands about that mandate—and EVs in general.

"People got it into their head that, as of that date, they were going to have to buy an EV," says Mahaffy. "That's not



EV supporters meet outside Ted Falk's office in Steinbach. BRENDA SAWATZKY

what that was. It was that any new car sold after that date had to be electrified in some way, whether a pure battery EV, a [gas] hybrid, or a plug-in hybrid. You could still buy used gas cars."

The spread of misinformation like this, according to Mahaffy and Kirczenow, is a primary reason for the slow uptake of EVs in Manitoba.

They add that this idea of battery performance dropping by half in cold weather is a misconception. Both own fully electric vehicles and live in rural Manitoba, Mahaffy as far east as West Hawk Lake. Both use their EVs to commute in every driving condition.

"There's no doubt that you lose range in the winter, for sure," Mahaffy says. "That just means you have to think about [your trip] a bit. If I have to stop for 10 or 15 minutes to get a charge, no big deal. I get a cup of coffee and chill."

Where he gets 550 kilometres on one charge in summer, it's more like 300 in winter. Even with a 300-kilometre range, he can drive to Winnipeg, run errands, then drive back to West Hawk without stopping to charge.

When he does charge at home, it costs about \$10 in electricity compared to likely more than \$100 at the pumps.

COMPARISON POINTS

Where EVs outperform gas-powered vehicles in winter is their ability to start easily in the cold. And they have very few mechanical parts at risk of breaking down when it's -40.

"An EV has about 20 moving parts and a gas vehicle has over 1,000," Mahaffy says.

EV drivers are also learning

to appreciate their high-energy batteries for other reasons. With the use of a simple adaptor, the EV battery can power regular electrical appliances while on the road.

This was demonstrated at the EV gathering in Steinbach as the group enjoyed hot chocolate from a kettle heated on an induction stove plugged into one of the car's batteries.

"Try putting that on your V6 block," Mahaffy laughs. "It's totally fun and totally nerdy."

Some EV trucks, he adds, come with 110-volt outlets so construction workers can run power tools from the box.

LONG-DISTANCE DRIVING

As for long-distance road trips, both Kirczenow and Mahaffy have experience. Mahaffy has driven his EV to Vancouver Island and back. You have to plan a lot, he says, as you would with any big road trip.

Typically, stops at a rapid charger along the route add a couple of extra hours. Mahaffy enjoys this downtime from inside the comfort of his vehicle, catching up on emails or reading a good book.

In fact, he says it's a good time to grab a coffee or meal, or even take a nap.

More and more of Canada's national parks provide charging stations at their trail heads, too, giving people the opportunity to stretch and enjoy a hike while their car charges. It's part of the adventure, Mahaffy says, as long as you choose to see it that way.

EV INFRASTRUCTURE

"Instead of saying EVs are impractical, what I would like to hear from someone like Ted Falk is, 'These are great

vehicles and I would support having more infrastructure around southern Manitoba,'" Kirczenow says.

As for infrastructure, it's about more than just increasing the number of charging stations. For Mahaffy, it's also the facilitation of Canadian-owned battery recycling facilities to establish a full-loop system to ensure the smallest environmental impact.

"I've heard that there are three companies in North America that recycle EV batteries," says Mahaffy. "They claim that they can recover up to 95 percent of the materials and put them into new batteries. When you can extract the materials out of that battery, you're pretty much not having to dig up new resources anymore."

What's often missing from the messaging, as well, is the value that used EV batteries pose for those who run solar systems and need low-energy storage options.

"I think for me and Blair, just having the conversation is really important," Kirczenow concludes. "Conversation is such an important part of our democracy, and I'd like to see that stronger, specifically in Provencher."

GAS PRICE VOLATILITY

With another war raging in the Middle East, causing gas prices to surge, it's become increasingly volatile to count on crude oil imports in a country like Canada that's looking to create economic sustainability.

At the pumps, in just a few short weeks, Manitobans have watched gas prices jump by about one-third.

This is a predicament not shared by EV drivers.

Tough times like these, along with the fresh availability of federal EV rebates, might just turn the tide for electric vehicle adoption in Canada.

"I have had an EV for more than a year now and have been thrilled with its performance through all four seasons," says Paul Lavin of Niverville. "Now, as gas prices rise, I also feel quite a bit of gratitude for the fact that my car has a full charge every morning and I don't have to think about the cost of gas today or how high it might get tomorrow."

CITIZEN POLL

Given the dramatic spike in the price of gasoline in recent weeks, would you be more likely to consider an EV for your next vehicle purchase?

- Yes. EV technology interests me, and it would be a relief not to have to worry so much about price volatility.
- No. I have concerns about the practicality of EVs and prefer to stick with a gas-powered vehicle, even if it costs more to operate.

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



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LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

Has the Braeden Martens case affected your trust in the school system's ability to protect students?

Yes. This incident raises big questions about how teachers are hired in Manitoba.

48%

No. Despite this disturbing case, the system largely does a good job of vetting teachers.

52%

YOUR COMMENTS:

The school system has long been a hive of sexual abuse. This would just be par for the course

I am concerned about the girls who were damaged by this man. Seems to be more worry about the school than the children.

No child predator should ever have been put in this situation. The Minister had no record of them being allowed to teach. Coincidence that they have multiple family members employed in the division?

Confidence in Aging

Menopause is confirmed at 12 months after the final menstrual cycle. The average age this happens is 51 years old, but for many it can be earlier or later than this.

Through the early and late stages of menopause many changes can happen.

This can include: lengthening/shortening of cycles, loss of muscle mass, decrease in bone mass, hot flashes/chills, night sweats, slowing of metabolism, vaginal dryness, and more. Symptoms and experiences through this phase of life can vary a lot!

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Niverville Fire and EMS First in Province to Get AFA Certification

By **Brenda Sawatzky**

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

After years of waiting and much advocating, the Niverville Fire and EMS department will be the first in the province registered as Advanced First Aid (AFA) service providers.

The program officially launched on March 1.

For local EMS members, the newly created program grants them the credentials to act as medical first responders with the completion of a 75-hour training course.

For residents, it means that a much broader cross-section of fire and EMS members can be called upon to respond to medical emergencies.

"Before, there were times that we weren't able to respond to a call due to not having somebody that was licensed," says fire chief Keith Bueckert. "Out of the 258 medical calls that we did last year, there were ten calls that we weren't able to respond to."

That's not to suggest that certain Niverville residents experiencing medical distress were left unattended. It simply means that they were required to wait until an ambulance arrived for medical assessment and treatment to begin.

When one of Niverville's limited number of licensed first responders were available to attend, they could do so in minutes.

Under the new AFA certification model, the number of Niverville members now qualified to provide first responder services has risen from 14 members to 30.

Under the new AFA model, members with advanced first aid training can respond to medical emergencies with the stipulation that they communicate, by phone, with the Virtual Emergency Care and Transfer Resource Service (VECTRS) before administering certain medications.

Prior to 2022, EMS services in Manitoba were accountable to Shared Health, the provincial body governing health services. Following the pandemic, the province found themselves in a predicament in terms of paramedic shortages.

Bueckert says that this predicament may have helped push Shared Health to partner with the College of Paramedics in overseeing EMS going forward.

In 2022, these bodies made changes to the first responder training requirements that added the need for paramedic training to their certification.

That change affected both urban and rural EMS departments equally.

"That course, which used to be about 120 hours, jumped up to 350 hours," Bueckert says. "So our ability to train new staff as first responders basically came to a standstill due to the hours required [to license] just so they could volunteer in their community."

Because Niverville doesn't provide ambulance services, the first responder course became prohibitive and didn't offer any further value to the department or community.

Additionally, the College of Paramedics required rural fire departments to pay an annual fee to belong to the

organization, costing local taxpayers while they gained no additional services.

A working group was created which included representation from the Association of Manitoba Municipalities.

Their goal was to encourage Shared Health and the College to consider alternatives for rural EMS departments who rely on volunteer labour.

Finally, in 2024, Bueckert says they introduced the much improved 75-hour first responder course.

Last January, 14 of Niverville's 40 fire and EMS staffers took the course and received certification.

It took another year for Shared Health to work through the red tape to allow them to use that certification.

"Late last week, we [heard] from the Manitoba Licensing Compliance Branch and they informed us that we have become the first department in the province to be moving ahead with the Advanced [First] Aid program," Bueckert says, relieved. "We've had a lot of people throughout the province working extremely hard on this. Hopefully it catches on and we can have more of a voice in the province on directing how this program grows in the years ahead."

In the meantime, the Niverville Fire and EMS are always looking for more members willing to serve the community.

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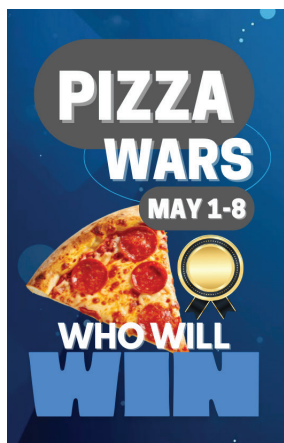
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MAY 1 Pizza Wars - May 1st to 8th
Back for its third year. Local restaurants will compete for Best Tasting and Most Creative Pizza in Niverville. Get out, try them all, and support local.

MAY 6 Niverville Farmers' Market - June to September
The market returns for the season, bringing together local vendors, home-based businesses, and fresh products. A great way to shop local and connect with the community.

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The Hanover School Division's offices in Steinbach, Manitoba.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

School Divisions Introduce Budget Drafts for 2026–27

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Every spring, following provincial funding announcements, school division trustees set to work preparing budgets for the coming school year.

In early March, the Hanover and Seine River divisions publicly released their newest budget drafts.

A new consideration for every Manitoba school division this year is the provincial mandate for teacher salary harmonization, ensuring that teachers in every school are on equal footing in terms of payrates, regardless of where they work.

For that reason, the province has set aside an additional \$11 million in funding for the purpose of helping divisions adjust teacher salaries.

HANOVER SCHOOL DIVISION

Due in part to a projected overall enrolment increase of nearly 300 students, the Hanover School Division is predicting total operating and capital expenditures in 2026–27 to come to \$146.7 million, just over \$10 million more than the previous budget.

Provincial funding will increase

by \$73.5 million over last year, a figure that takes into account the wage harmonization subsidy.

“The 2026–27 budget... provides funding for approximately 20 teachers to address growth, along with eight additional teaching positions,” states the HSD’s budget announcement. “Of the 28 positions, six are designated as literacy and numeracy support teachers, along with a \$500,000 allocation for Grade 1 literacy initiatives. The budget also includes funding for 22 additional educational assistants.”

Unlike last year, where the education tax mill rate saw a minor dip, property owners in the division will actually see an increase this fall of almost eight percent.

The new mill rate comes to 13.32, which will equate to an approximate \$53 increase in school taxes for homeowners with a property value assessment of \$354,000.

SEINE RIVER SCHOOL DIVISION

The Seine River School Division is facing similar enrolment challenges.

Since 2020, SRSD’s student enrolment has increased by nearly 20 percent.

Couple this with cutbacks required to recover from two years of financial deficits and the result

is slow but steady improvement.

Thanks to increases in provincial funding and internal austerity measures, the SRSD shows a modest surplus this budget term of \$1.78 million.

Still, this only reflects 2.2 percent of their overall budget, leaving them somewhat short the provincial guideline of four percent.

SRSD saw a 5.7 percent provincial funding increase this year, or \$2.4 million to be applied towards their \$81.5 million expenditures. Approximately 20 percent of this extra funding is designated for salary harmonization.

According to the SRSD’s budget announcement, the harmonization funding will cover only half of their cost to equalize teacher pay.

Despite another tight budget, though, the division is still trending in a positive direction when it comes to pupil-teacher ratios.

With the addition of more staff this year, SRSD’s ratio, when including principals, VPs, and clinicians, will go from 14:1 to 13.5:1. Even so, they remain tied for second-last place province-wide when it comes to teacher-students splits.

The EA to student ratio is also improving after budgetary cuts in recent years.

“We have made noticeable

progress in hiring EA support for our schools and currently have one EA for every 30 students,” the announcement states. “Continuing to restore much needed classroom assistance remains a priority this year.”

While these ratio gaps continue to close, however, the disparity is growing in terms of student investment.

“Assessment per student, already in the bottom third in the province, declined this year by about \$4,000 per student.”

Also facing a drop in divisional funding is maintenance, going down by \$500,000.

Each of the division’s 15 schools will receive around \$10,000 to aid in smaller maintenance projects while other projects will be deferred.

“This creates risk, as our average building age is 57 years and all facilities are experiencing more rapid wear and tear due to enrolment growth. Many are at or exceeding capacity.”

Last year’s mill rate, which remained steady at 12.67, will increase this year to 14.12.

For the homeowner with a \$375,000 assessed home valuation, this will mean an education tax increase this fall of approximately \$144.

IN BRIEF

Ritchot Education Taxes Go Up Across All School Divisions

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Residents across Ritchot will see the education portion of their property tax bill go up this year.

In total, five different school divisions have catchment areas in Ritchot.

“Collectively, the average increase in mill rate is about nine percent,” says Shane Ray, the RM’s CAO. “The hardest hit here will be Seine River School Division (SRSD) and Louis Riel. It’s going to be an interesting season with the tax increases that some of our residents will see.”

Considering that 2025 was a property assessment year, SRSD’s mill rate will have the effect of a 14.5 percent increase when considering adjusted home valuations.

For those living in the Louis Riel catchment area, the effect will be similar at almost 14.4 percent.

With assessment impacts, residents in the Red River Valley catchment area will see a 12.1 percent increase, Hanover a 10.8 percent increase, and Sunrise coming in lowest at 10.2 percent.

While the Sunrise and Louis Riel school divisions have no schools in Ritchot’s boundaries, a handful of Ritchot homes just south of the city fall into their catchments.

Only the Sunrise division provided a letter of explanation to the RM regarding the increase.

It’s a response, they said, to inflationary increases. The majority of these higher costs are wage-related.

“Although provincial funding increased by \$500,000, the division must still collect an additional \$2.7 million from property owners, placing an unfair share of inflationary costs on taxpayers,” reads a statement from Sunrise. “This continues a long-term trend in which the provincial share of education funding has dropped by about 20 percent over the past 20 to 25 years. The only way to reduce the burden on property owners would be to cut resources in schools, an option the board chose not to consider for the 2026–27 school year.”

Taxpayers in Ritchot will be glad to know that the municipal tax mill rate is remaining the same this year as last.

“I commend council on their continued commitment to the residents for keeping taxes at a zero percent increase once again,” Ray told council.



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Niverville and Ritchot Reps Accept Leadership Roles on Planning Region Board

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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It's been 18 months since the Winnipeg Metro Region halted its Plan20-50 proposal due to public and municipal backlash. In that time, much has transpired, including a name change for the organization to the Capital Planning Region (CPR).

A pair of new CPR board members have been selected to represent the multi-municipal organization.

On March 19, Niverville mayor Myron Dyck was elected to the position of board chair. Ritchot's deputy mayor, Shane Pelletier, was elected as vice chair.

These elections are a first for the CPR board. Prior to 2026, those in leadership roles were appointed by the province.

"This past year, we have all worked hard to bring forth the concerns and suggestions to the provincial government from the people we serve so as to bring forward a new plan to replace the 20-50 plan," Dyck told the board

at his election. "I commit to working with you, my fellow board members, to bring about the changes and work required to ensure that this Capital Planning Region board is working to make the people and communities we serve better, not worse."

Dyck's faith that the province is listening and ready to enact change has him feeling hopeful for the future of the CPR. He himself was critical of Plan20-50 in 2024, following a failed public hearing on the initiative.

The board he and Pelletier now lead is much smaller than it once was, as only eight municipalities, including Winnipeg, are still represented.

Following Premier Wab Kinew's decision to make board membership optional, many municipalities stepped away, including the RMs of Tache, Springfield, East and West St. Paul, St. Andrews, Rockwood, Macdonald, and the city of Selkirk and village of Dunnottar.

The current board also includes two members at large. Chief Gordon Bluesky provides Indigenous representation and Lorne Pelletier

speaks on behalf of the Manitoba Metis Federation.

Each CPR member, including the chair and vice chair, serve on a voluntary basis.

Dyck's conviction is that it's better to be part of the solution than part of the problem, which is what led him to say yes when nominated as board chair.

Being part of the solution means advocating for change. That change began in September 2024 when each represented member of the previous board was provided an opportunity to voice their concerns on Plan20-50 with former Minister of Municipal Relations Ian Bushie.

One of the changes since then has been the removal of CPR's power to expropriate land from residents.

"No property owner needs to be afraid that the CPR is coming to expropriate their land," Dyck told the board. "No one needs to fear that their freedom to move about is limited."

This is a reference to Plan20-50's mention of 15-minute cities, which some members of the public took

to mean that the government could restrict people's right to travel beyond their home jurisdictions.

Finally, Dyck says that no municipality represented in the CPR should feel their autonomy threatened by decisions made by the greater regional body.

"I anticipate this new plan will not just allow our residents to live, but to thrive, which I know is the goal of every member around this table," Dyck said.

Being a part of this collaborative organization, he adds, will result in the generation of cost savings and funds accessibility.

Cost savings come in terms of volume-buying, something the CPR members already benefit from when it comes to fire equipment purchases. Sharing costs on consultants, engineers, and other professional services is another way to benefit when creating economies of scale.

Government grant monies are also on the table for those belonging to the CPR.

"There are funds available from the

federal government to capital planning regions only," Dyck said. "Funds that board members, if applying on their own, would not have access to. We need to do all we can to use these grants to our benefit and to help with the costs associated with serving the people of a growing region."

Not to be dismissed, though, are the relationships built on a board such as CPR.

"I've really grown to appreciate the hard work and efforts of each appointee around the table, and their passion for wanting to make their municipality better," Dyck says. "It's actually quite inspirational when you sit down with them. They just want to do the right thing and make things better."

Dyck implores members of the public to exercise patience as the CPR works at restructuring Plan20-50, a document mandated by the province.

"We have heard you and are working hard to bring about the necessary changes you have spoken to us about. I invite you to continue to work with us... to not weaken our communities but to make them better and stronger."



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Volunteers for Habitat Manitoba.

C/O HABITAT MANITOBA

Volunteers Needed to Establish Local Habitat Manitoba Chapter

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

There are approximately 45 chapters of Habitat for Humanity across Canada, but at present none exist in south-eastern Manitoba. For this reason, the non-profit would love to influence a chapter in Niverville, Manitoba's fastest growing community.

Christina Falk is the chapter support person for Habitat Manitoba.

"The culture of Niverville is a giving and serving culture," Falk says. "The population is growing fast, and availability of affordable housing is starting to become more of an issue. So there's definitely a need."

Although a chapter was active in Steinbach not too long ago, it recently folded. Falk's desire is to see that baton passed on as quickly as possible so deserving families in this region can continue to benefit from homes built and financed through Habitat.

While the federal government has been incentivizing affordable housing builds in recent years, in many cases it simply results in more rental housing. For Habitat, there's a big difference between affordable rentals and the organization's model of affordable home ownership.

"Rentals are needed, for sure, but they don't help families to get out of difficult financial situations," she says. "They don't necessarily help them move forward and that's what we're trying to do."

Falk adds that Habitat homes also don't fall into the category of low-income housing, since they aren't geared for people living on social assistance.

The vetting process to apply

for a Habitat home is rigorous. Habitat's administrative team looks at a person's bank accounts, credit card statements, and credit histories. Eligible families are required to undergo credit counselling and budgeting instruction.

"We make sure that their mortgage payments are going to work according to how they're spending their money now," Falk says. "So even if they have a lower income, they are managing the money that they have well. The reason they typically can't move forward is because it's just impossible for them to save up that down-payment when they're paying rent and have a few kids."

First and foremost, Habitat homes are meant to assist people who are already living and working in or near a community.

In order to establish pride of home ownership, adult family members are required to assist in the build. The homes are built to Habitat specs, including the use of energy-efficient materials to keep utility costs low down the road.

What makes the Habitat model unique, though, is the mortgaging structure. Habitat families receive their financing directly from the organization, not a bank. No down-payment is required and the first 15 years of their payments are interest-free. To ensure success, the amount of monthly installments is then determined by the household's income.

Behind all this, from land acquisition to the final choice of families and overseeing builds, is the local chapter, made up entirely of volunteers.

This local chapter is also responsible for collecting mortgage payments, which

in turn fund the next Habitat home. The chapter must have 75 percent funding in place before the next build begins.

"It means that every Habitat family is a partner in getting the next family into their house," Falk says. "It makes it self-sustainable in the community and works really well in rural Manitoba."

Being on a Habitat committee takes some commitment, Falk says. She recommends a committee of about ten people, some of which will head up subcommittees.

"It's a way to get people from all different [walks of life] in the community to come together. It's a really cool bonding experience because it's coming from within."

For towns like Niverville, attaining land for a Habitat build might seem like the most daunting task.

In some communities, the local council may choose to donate municipal-owned land. As well, the committee should develop relationships with developers who might set aside properties for Habitat builds if shown the value in it.

"It can feel like a lot of work in the beginning, but it is such a rewarding volunteer experience. You see deserving families who are working hard, and you get to be a part of their life journey."

Habitat Manitoba saw 29 homes built in the province through their various chapters last year.

More than 500 homes have been built since the Manitoba chapter first opened in 1989.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To learn more about Habitat Manitoba, visit: www.habitat.mb.ca

■ To contact Christina Falk or volunteer: cfalk@habitat.mb.ca

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IN BRIEF

Locals Call for Immediate Action at Dangerous Intersection

By Brenda Sawatzky
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After years of inaction, some residents of Ste. Agathe are tired of waiting for the province to improve safety at the intersection of Highways 75 and 305.

This month, a petition including nearly 1,000 signatures was presented to MLA Ron Schuler.

"This intersection is heavily used by community members, commuters, and commercial traffic, making safety improvements critical," the petition states. "Immediate action is needed to mitigate accidents and prevent further loss of life."

The petition was started by Councillor Joel Lemoine and local resident Guy St. Hilaire. According to them, at least 20 major accidents have occurred here over the past seven years.

In 2022, the province conducted a road safety review that resulted in recommendations for improvements.

Now, four years later, residents want to see an action plan in writing. The plan, they say, should include traffic lights or another form of traffic control system. They also want reduced speed signs and rumble strips.

They also believe that dedicated turning lanes would reduce collisions.

"Every accident affects people we know, our neighbours, friends, and families," says Schuler. "When collisions continue to happen at the same location, we have a responsibility to take a closer look and act."

For Lemoine, who actively advocates for growth in Ste. Agathe, the risks posed by this dangerous crossing will only increase with time.

"The community of

Ste. Agathe has residential and multifamily housing developments underway which will increase the town's population," says Lemoine. "We also have potential lot sales in the Riel Industrial Park as well as an eventual expansion, which will increase commercial traffic to the intersection."

By presenting the petition to Schuler, Lemoine and St. Hilaire hope for an opportunity to grab the attention of Lisa Naylor, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Schuler said that he would begin reading out the petition in the Legislature on March 18 and continue to do so until summer break.

Meanwhile, Lemoine and St. Hilaire believe the province should respond with some short-term solutions.

"Until a more permanent solution is found for traffic control, we should insist on additional signage on Highway 75 for incoming traffic from both the north and south," says St. Hilaire. "Reducing the speed to 80 kilometres per hour near the intersection and installing 'Important Intersection Ahead' signs at a safe distance could serve as a temporary measure while the province consults with the municipality on a permanent solution."

In a political world that's focused on budgets and cost-saving measures, Schuler says that the human aspect simply can't be overlooked.

"Highway safety is not just about infrastructure," he says. "It's about protecting people. Every driver, every family,

and every worker who travels this route deserves to know that everything possible is being done to prevent further tragedies."

Police Campaign for Scam Literacy During Fraud Prevention Month

By Brenda Sawatzky
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March was Fraud Prevention Month in Canada, and the Manitoba RCMP and Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) are ramping up their efforts to spread awareness to help keep people safe.

According to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre, Manitobans lost approximately \$31 million dollars to scammers in 2024, based on the number of scams that were reported.

Considering that only about one if five victims reports a fraud, the actual number is expected to be much higher.

"Fraud is increasingly a problem in Manitoba, across Canada, and around the world," says Staff Sergeant Kevin Cavanagh of the Manitoba RCMP Major Crime Services Cyber and Financial Unit. "We encourage Manitobans of all ages to remain vigilant and do your research before making payments or sharing banking and other personal information, particularly when individuals you don't know are reaching out in person or online for any reason."

In February, the Manitoba RCMP became aware of a whole new scam—and they were the ones being impersonated.

The online phishing scam saw victims receiving random emails ostensibly from the Manitoba RCMP.

The recipient was encouraged to click on a link to a video conference call with an officer.

Once clicked, the victim was threatened with arrest unless they sent bitcoin or gift cards.

The fraudsters went so far as to provide the actual phone number for the Manitoba RCMP's general line, to demonstrate their legitimacy.

In recent years, senior



DEPOSITPHOTOS

citizens across the country have been singled out as easy targets.

Grandparent scams involve phone calls from a fraudster posing as a grandchild or family member in distress.

They often use elaborate voice-cloning technology and bear personal information derived from social media or data breaches.

The goal is always to obtain money through the use of fear, secrecy, and a deep sense of urgency.

In 2024, almost \$350,000 was reported lost by Manitobans over 60 to this crime.

For this reason, the WPS recently introduced the Just Hang Up campaign.

The goal is to strengthen fraud literacy among seniors, giving them the confidence to pause, hang up, and report to trusted family members and the police.

"With advancements in technology, grandparent scams have become a serious threat, causing financial hardship for families and eroding trust in institutions as fraudsters impersonate authority figures to exploit vulnerable seniors," says Inspector Jennifer McKinnon of the WPS Major Crimes Division.

This year, the provincial government has allocated more than \$643,000 to the

WPS from the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund (CPF) for a variety of projects, including the Just Hang Up campaign. The CPF's funding is derived from the sale of seized criminal property.

Over the course of the next six months, the plan is to engage more than 700 older adults in in-person training sessions.

But you don't need to be a senior to be vulnerable. Scammers will target people of any age, gender, and ethnicity.

According to provincial sources, Canadians in their forties lose as much to scammers, on average, as those in their eighties.

There are relatively simple scams, like phishing texts which ask for payment information in order to deliver a package you didn't order.

Other very elaborate scams pull in victims slowly over months, using convincing documents and friendly discourse to gain trust in order to lure people into fake investments.

DOS AND DON'TS

Becoming fraud-literate these days means learning to recognize red flags and know what to do, and not to do, when they're spotted.

First, don't click on links or attachments in unsolicited

emails or texts, or those that come from an unfamiliar sender. If you've already clicked on a link or provided personal details, contact your financial institution immediately so they can watch for suspicious activity on your accounts.

Unless you're completely certain of the legitimacy of a website or message sender, never provide personal info, credit card, or banking details.

Always take the time to verify the source of messages you receive. Strange-looking email addresses can give it away.

Be suspicious if the sender makes requests for cash, bitcoin, or gift cards or asks for credit card information.

Never provide remote access to your computer.

"If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is," reads a provincial news release. "Strangers offering large inheritances or lottery winnings in exchange for hundreds of dollars in processing fees aren't legitimate. Neither are the people trying to buy the item you've posted online for sale for more than the asking price. The grandchild calling you out of the blue for bail money may not be real. The person that's threatening to cut your cable if you don't pay an overdue bill may not be from the telecommunications company. Ask pointed questions to confirm identity and, if need be, call people or companies back at known phone numbers."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ St. Pierre-Jolys RCMP detachment: 204-433-7908, www.villages-tpierrejolys.ca/p/law-enforcement

■ Niverville RCMP detachment: 204-388-9330

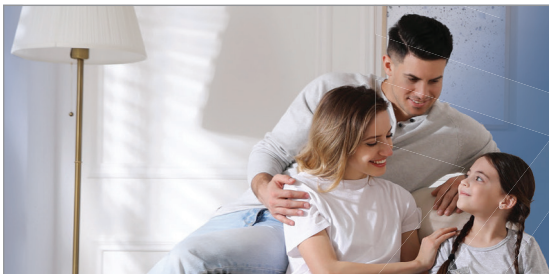
■ Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre: 1-888-495-8501, www.reportcyberandfraud.canada.ca

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Ray Dowse, on behalf of the Nighthawks, receives a cheque from Cameron Rennie. CARA DOWSE

Seminar to Guide Philanthropists on Leaving a Lasting Legacy

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Cameron Rennie of Niverville understands the importance of philanthropy.

More specifically, he and his team at IG Private Wealth Management understand the importance of gifts that keep on giving.

In May, Cameron Rennie and Associates plan to host a seminar in Niverville on legacy giving that makes a lasting impact.

"It's about how to leave a lasting legacy, not just a one-time gift," Rennie says. "I've served on charitable boards before and there is so much more value to a recurring gift than there is to a one-time lump sum. Not only that but it's about how to make the most of your investments and save the most tax when making the donation."

Legacy donations can be drawn up in a person's estate plan, he says, but they could just as easily be part of a person's living plan, allowing the beneficiary to witness the impact of their gift firsthand.

Rennie is someone who puts his money where his mouth is. At this year's Nighthawks fundraising gala, he was quick to jump on board when

long-time junior hockey supporter Tom Kleyson put out a challenge.

Kleyson's offer was to match donations, up to \$250,000, for the construction of the Nighthawks' much-needed dressing room.

"I saw the opportunity and I knew that I wanted to help out, so I stepped up at the gala with a cheque made out for \$10,000," Rennie says. "But then I said, 'There's a Sharpie in my pocket and I'm not afraid to use it. If other people step up, I'll go as high as \$25,000.'"

With a head for finance, Rennie recognizes the power in donation-matching strategies. With his and Kleyson's offers on the table, his donation had the capacity to effectively quadruple in size—and Rennie's goal was achieved that night.

These are the kind of powerful financial strategies that Cameron Rennie and Associates have become known for. From their office on Sterling Lyon Parkway, they cater to a rather niche market in ways that go well beyond financial planning.

"The majority of what we do is investment, retirement, and tax and estate planning," Rennie says. "We also do mortgages and insurances and

[pretty much] everything. We lead with the financial planning—that is very important to our approach—and then we just identify shortfalls and opportunities within the plan. We then recommend mortgages or insurances to fill those gaps."

Rennie's own credentials include CFP (Certified Financial Planner) and RRC (Registered Retirement Consultant), and more recently he's become certified as a Master Financial Advisor in Philanthropy (MFA-P).

He has access to a team of lawyers, accountants, and insurance specialists to offer a complete private wealth planning experience. They collectively have been in the business for more than 20 years.

"We love to start young families off on the right foot, but we do our most impressive work with the newly and newly retired," he says.

In his free time, Rennie is a hockey dad to two young sons and a billet parent to a Nighthawks player, Dawson Zeller.

Thanks to Rennie, Kleyson and a host of other generous donors at this year's Nighthawks gala, the team is almost \$300,000 closer to their goal of building a Junior A-calibre dressing room of which the players can be proud.

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Sports & Recreation

Niverville Teammates Earn Spots at Elite Brick Invitational

By Holly Dunphy

Two young hockey players from Niverville will represent Manitoba at the end of June at the Brick Invitational Hockey Tournament in Edmonton, Alberta.

Ten-year-old teammates and long-time friends Tristan Bray and Will Lux have earned spots on the Manitoba Junior Ice team after competing against more than 130 other players.

Each year, the Brick Invitational welcomes teams of top-performing nine- and ten-year-old hockey players from across North America, bringing together some of the strongest youth players on the continent.

"The kids just love to play," says Lux's mother, Carisa. "They were scouted for spring hockey while playing at a winter league tournament in Steinbach. We didn't realize it started this early. But we thought, let's see what happens. And now here we are."

The path toward the Brick Invitational typically begins through participation in spring hockey, which generally operates between April and June after the winter season ends.

Spring hockey offers additional skill development and higher levels of competition.

"Regular hockey is crazy, but spring hockey is crazier," says Bray's mother, Amanda. "We've always



Tristan Bray.



Will Lux.

been very supportive of Tristan. He has always pushed himself to be better and do better. When he goes out on the ice, he puts in 110 percent effort as much as he can."

Although many athletes who have competed in the tournament have later gone on to play at higher levels, Bray and Lux remain focused on the upcoming challenge, with the support of their families.

The boys began their hockey journeys on Timbits teams at the age of five, but their love for the game started even earlier.

"From the time that Will could walk, he was carrying a hockey

stick," says Carisa. "There was no question of if, there was just when. He just took to it. It was a passion from day one. [Hockey] teaches them so much about teamwork and friendship. He can walk into almost any rink in Manitoba and know someone. They are building not only physical skills but social skills as well. For me, it's all about helping Will follow his passion."

Founded in 1990 by Bill Comrie, owner of The Brick Furniture Store and father of three NHL players, including current Winnipeg Jets' goalie Eric Comrie, the Brick Invitational has grown into one of the

most significant youth hockey tournaments in North America.

Held annually at the West Edmonton Mall's Ice Palace, the tournament gives young athletes the opportunity to skate where many famous players once competed. Originally capped as an eight-team event, the annual competition now hosts 14 teams from across Canada and the United States and has seen many alumni go on to play in the NHL.

For the two young players, the opportunity to compete at the Brick Invitational is beginning to sink in.

"It's just joyful," Lux says. "At

first, it's kind of scary because you don't know if you made the team. But once you find out, it's just so exciting and cool. It's an honour to wear the jersey, and it's a pretty cool experience to represent Manitoba."

Bray says the opportunity to compete at the Brick Invitational is something he is especially proud of.

"I'm proud that I get to represent my province and play with some other great players from Manitoba," says Bray. "I'm looking forward to all of it. Playing lots of different teams, playing in West Edmonton Mall, seeing my name on the wall when I get there and all the fun events."

Like many young players, Bray and Lux look up to their favourite NHLers. Bray's favourite is Connor McDavid of the Edmonton Oilers, while Lux looks up to Cole Caufield of the Montreal Canadiens. Both players competed at the Brick Invitational at the same age.

Amanda and Carisa say they are appreciative of the coaches and community volunteers who continue to support the boys, and supportive of fundraising events that opportunities like this often entail.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For full schedule details and to access a live video stream of the late June tournament, visit: www.brickhockey.ca



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A STEP BEYOND & ASSOCIATES



Nighthawks Gala Raises \$300K for Dressing Room Project

By Bill Burfoot

The Niverville Nighthawks held their annual fundraising gala on March 14, and it was a resounding success.

The event was a sellout, with a waiting list and more than 350 people in attendance.

Centred around the theme “All Night Long,” the evening delivered a celebratory atmosphere and overwhelming show of community support.

Guests were treated to a lot of entertainment, including a live auction and duelling-piano performance that kept the crowd energized late into the night.

The funds raised will support a variety of initiatives, with the top priority being the development of a Junior A-calibre dressing room for the players.

Since joining the league in the 2022–23 season, the Nighthawks have operated out of a rented trailer that sits just outside the CRRC.

The need for a permanent, upgraded space has steadily grown in importance over the years.

Thanks to the generosity of attendees and sponsors, approximately \$150,000 was raised in support of the dressing room project. This includes a \$25,000 contribution from IG Private Wealth Management, Cameron Rennie & Associates, one of the evening’s title sponsors.

Adding to this momentum, Tom Kleyson, a long-time supporter of junior hockey and member of the Nighthawks board, committed to matching all funds raised up to \$250,000.

As a result, the total impact from Saturday night reached close to



This year's Nighthawks fundraising gala was a night to remember.

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\$300,000, providing a strong start toward the overall fundraising goal of \$1.5 million, the approximate cost of the dressing room project.

The team’s recent success has also been a key help.

To illustrate, the Nighthawks finished the regular season atop the MJHL standings with a franchise-best record of 51–6–1.

“Fundraising is a major part

of running a Junior A team,” says Clarence Braun, president of the Nighthawks board of directors. “Across the MJHL, it typically makes up about a third of a team’s budget. It wasn’t easy in our early years, but to see our gala grow from 250 attendees to a sold-out event with a waiting list is incredibly rewarding. It speaks to the dedication of our volunteers.”

Braun credits the efforts of the team’s volunteers—led by Cara Dowse, Fran Giesbrecht, Heather Wallace, Jennifer Leoppky, and many others—for making the event possible.

Sponsorship is another critical piece of the puzzle.

“Sponsorships generally account for another third of our budget,” Braun adds. “While we may not

have the size of some larger markets, our corporate community has really stepped up. We’re especially grateful to the Niverville Heritage Centre and Cam Rennie of IG Private Wealth Management for their leadership as primary event sponsors.”

Beyond fundraising and sponsorship, Braun highlights the importance of the team’s ownership and support structure.

“Our 67 founding members are the backbone of this organization,” he says. “Their commitment, along with our legacy members, play a huge role in supporting both operations and capital projects.”

Now in its fourth year, the organization’s growth continues to be both exciting and humbling.

On the ice, the Nighthawks have qualified for the playoffs in each of their first four seasons, a testament to the work of general manager Mike McAulay, head coach Dwight Hirst, and their staff.

“It’s incredible to see how far we’ve come,” says Braun. “What started as a vision has taken thousands of hours from dedicated people. Our board, volunteers, and staff have built something special... Our hockey operations group has done an outstanding job developing players and giving them a path to succeed.”

As a non-profit organization rooted in community, the Nighthawks rely on the continued support of locals of all stripes.

The reality is that it takes a lot of resources, including approximately \$1 million annually, to operate a Junior A program, and the annual gala remains the single largest fundraiser of the year.



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Head coach Dwight Hirst behind the Nighthawks bench.

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Niverville Nighthawks Take Home MJHL Hardware

By Bill Burfoot

On Wednesday, March 4, the Manitoba Junior Hockey League announced the winners of its annual awards.

Among those winners, the Niverville Nighthawks are strongly represented in multiple major categories.

The Muzz MacPherson Award. Head coach Dwight Hirst was named the league's coach of the year. Hirst has guided the Nighthawks to their best record in franchise history, with the team finishing atop the MJHL standings with a 51-6-1 record.

Since taking over behind the bench on February 12, 2024, Hirst has led Niverville to an outstanding 93-32-3-2 record.

The Frank McKinnon Memorial Award. Merik Boles captured this award, given to the player who most exemplifies both ability and sportsmanship.

Boles, a 21-year-old from Lorette, recently committed to playing for the University of

Regina Cougars next season.

He's enjoying a career year and is the only Nighthawk to have played in every game this season. He sits second on the team in scoring with 69 points.

What makes his season even more impressive is his discipline. Boles has spent just four minutes in the penalty box all year while playing in every situation.

The Ed Belfour Award. Austin Dubinsky was named the top goaltender of the MJHL, having played a dominant season between the pipes.

The 20-year-old from Ardrossan, Alberta leads the MJHL in wins (32), ranks second in save percentage (.931), just behind teammate Ben Chornomydz, and sits third in goals-against average (2.19).

He also ranks second in the league in minutes played (2,215).

In two seasons with Niverville, Dubinsky has compiled an impressive 56-14-0 regular season record.

The Steve "Boomer"

Hawrysh Award. The most valuable player award went to Niklas Gudmundson of the Winkler Flyers, although Hayden Wheddon was named a finalist.

Wheddon led the MJHL in scoring with 90 points, including 36 goals. His 60-point improvement from last year has been a major reason for the Nighthawks finishing on top of the standings.

All-Star Honours. In addition to the individual award nominations, the MJHL also announced its first and second-team all-stars and rookie all-stars.

Wheddon and Dubinsky are both first team all-stars. Captain Adam Vigfusson made the second team. Jaden Mah was named a rookie all-star.

With finalists across coaching, scoring, goaltending, and sportsmanship categories, the Nighthawks have firmly established themselves as one of the MJHL's premier teams this season and look to carry that momentum into the playoffs.



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Niverville Funds Recreation Subsidy So All Kids Can Participate

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On February 17, the Town of Niverville officially launched its recreation subsidy program. By doing so, town council hopes that every child, regardless of financial means, will be able to access recreation programming this year.

“[We want to] make sure that people are aware that these programs exist and that no one is getting left out,” said Councillor Nathan Dueck. “Whether it’s cooking lessons, badminton lessons, or volleyball sessions, it’s a way to incorporate kids into the community as opposed to them feeling segregated from it.”

The municipal funding, to be capped at \$350 per resident per year, will be applied towards memberships, classes, and camps run through Niverville Recreation.

This includes any children’s programs found in the local leisure guide.

Numbers are limited in each program offered and will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis, with no special exceptions for those receiving subsidized funding.

The subsidized programs don’t include hockey, soccer, or sports



The CRRC in Niverville, the town’s recreation hub.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

activities which aren’t directly run through Niverville Recreation. According to Dueck, many of those programs have subsidy options available through provincial sporting associations.

Applications for Town of Niverville subsidies will run through Recreation Opportunities for Children (ROC) Eastman in order to provide an arms-length vetting process to ensure measured privacy

for applicants.

ROC Eastman is a registered charitable organization whose mandate is to reduce barriers that prevent access to recreation opportunities for kids in the southeast.

For Niverville’s council, it just makes good sense to partner with an organization that already operates under these guidelines.

“ROC is thrilled to be a tiny part of Niverville’s recreation funding initiative,” says Moni Loewen, ROC Eastman’s executive director. “Council’s decision speaks volumes about their commitment to residents’ overall well-being and the power of recreation in healthy communities.”

Until the subsidy program sees some interest, though, the local need is unclear. Council hopes that this year’s applications will provide a gauge for future budget planning.

“The long-term benefit of this [program] is that, if we can find ways to involve everyone in recreation, they are going to be more involved in the community,” says Dueck. “They’ll be willing to give back to the community because the community found ways of giving to them.”

He adds that there is mounting evidence to suggest that involving kids in healthy programming helps them steer clear of unhealthy involvements down the road. As such, ensuring that everyone has access to health recreational activities could be an effective means of minimizing crime.

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Nighthawks Ride Historic Run into Playoffs

By Bill Burfoot

The Niverville Nighthawks closed off the regular season with an 11-game winning streak, coming in first place and securing the best record of any MJHL team in ten years. They now turn their attention to battling the Winkler Flyers in the playoffs.

FEBRUARY 25 PORTAGE TERRIERS, HOME

Although Niverville dictated the pace from puck drop, Terriers goaltender Donovan Bodnar kept the game scoreless with key stops early on.

Hayden Wheddon broke through with under three minutes remaining in the opening frame, ending a goal-mouth scramble by slipping the puck behind Bodnar.

Just 29 seconds later, Wheddon struck again. After Merik Boles set up Ryken Arran in front, Arran's shot produced a rebound that Wheddon snapped home blocker-side.

The crowd of just over 600 was anticipating another goal for Wheddon, and they didn't wait long.

Only 59 seconds into the second period, Jase Konecni fired a perfect stretch pass from in front of his own net, sending Wheddon in alone behind the Terriers' defence. His shot from the left circle was partially blocked, fooling Bodnar as it trickled through his legs.

The Terriers responded when Trevor Hill capitalized on a defensive breakdown. Set up by Dylan Karran, Hill found himself alone in front of Austin Dubinsky and beat him glove-side to cut the lead.

Niverville answered swiftly. John Scott redirected a Konecni slapshot at the top of the crease to restore the three-goal cushion.

Late in the second period, Krestanowich sent Wheddon in alone on a breakaway with another perfect pass, and Wheddon finished on the backhand for his fourth goal.

Niverville blew the game wide open in the final frame, scoring four unanswered. Kole Mears, Marlen Edwards, and Boles struck in a rapid 1:21 span, with Boles adding another to cap the scoring.

"It was nice to see the guys get rewarded tonight. Because in that stretch where we had a few losses, they were one-goal games," said head coach Dwight Hirst. "We could see the guys were gripping it a bit."



Hayden Wheddon had 90 points in the regular season, best in the MJHL.

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FEBRUARY 27 SWAN VALLEY STAMPEDERS, HOME

The Nighthawks found a way to earn a gritty 3-2 victory over the Swan Valley Stampeders in this tense contest.

Despite heavily outshooting the Stampeders 11-4 in the first period, the Nighthawks couldn't solve goaltender Easton Falls early. The breakthrough finally came in the second after killing off a Swan Valley power play. With a man advantage of their own, Evan Panzer wired home a shot from the slot.

But with 48 seconds remaining Tristan Langan finished off a wild sequence to tie it up at one apiece.

Despite controlling much of the play in the second, the Nighthawks and Stampeders headed to the third period deadlocked.

The home side reclaimed the lead early when John Scott's centring attempt deflected off Karson Connelly's skate and beat a surprised Falls to make it 2-1.

Marlen Edwards extended the lead to 3-1 on the power play, finishing a one-timer from the right circle.

Swan Valley refused to go quietly, and Langan struck again, burying a rebound to cut the deficit to 3-2 and

set up a tense finish.

The visitors pressed hard with the net empty in the final minute, but Chornomydz came up with two key late stops to preserve the win.

FEBRUARY 28 WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES, HOME

The Wolverines came into this contest as one of the hottest teams in the MJHL, winning 13 of their last 15 games. They also outshot Niverville 41-22, forcing the home team to lean heavily on their goaltending.

"I felt really good tonight," said Dubinsky, who turned aside 39 shots. "Our team is finally getting going again and getting stronger as we head toward the playoffs and I feel like everything is starting to come together."

On the game's first power play, Wheddon danced around a defender and slid a backhand pass across the crease to Boles, who buried the opener.

Two minutes later, Luke Wagner worked the puck down low and centred for Parker Rolston, whose shot was redirected by Calyb Moore at the top of the crease.

Scott extended the lead to 3-0 late in the first, scooping up a loose

puck behind the net and beating Wolverines goaltender Mariko Bercier on a wraparound.

Waywayseecappo answered before the intermission. On the power play, Sebastian Hicks fired a cross-ice pass to Kurt Rookes, who redirected it past Dubinsky to cut the deficit.

Scott struck again in the middle frame, finishing a one-timer from the right circle off a feed from Jaden Mah to restore the more comfortable three-goal lead.

The Wolverines pushed back on a two-on-one rush when Connor Roulette and Hicks executed a perfect give-and-go, with Roulette finishing the play to make it 4-2.

Nighthawks maintained control, thanks largely to Dubinsky's steady presence in net, and put the game firmly out of reach with two goals in a 2:40 span from Mears and Wheddon.

MARCH 3 WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES, AWAY

After beating the Wolverines by a 6-2 margin on Saturday at the CRRC, the Nighthawks were forced to grind out a tighter contest in the rematch.

The Wolverines opened the

scoring late in the first period.

Moments after Dubinsky made a spectacular save on a two-on-one to keep the game scoreless, Waywayseecappo broke through. Aidan Herring found Mikey Thomas streaking into the zone, and Thomas snapped a blocker-side shot from the top of the right circle to give the visitors a 1-0 lead.

Niverville answered before the intermission thanks to an end-to-end rush from Leduc. Picking up a loose puck behind his own net, he carried it the length of the ice and wired a wrist shot over the glove of Bercier.

The second period saw the Nighthawks kill off three penalties and surrender the lone goal of the frame. Max Collyer manoeuvred between his own legs to slip around a defender in the Niverville zone and lifted a shot over Dubinsky.

Just past the midway point of the final frame, Panzer sprung Leduc on a two-on-one with Dawson Zeller. Leduc slid the puck across to Zeller, who ripped a shot bar-down from the left circle to even the score.

The momentum swung quickly. Only 40 seconds later, Edwards moved into the Wolverines' zone but ran into Scott at the blue line. The puck found its way to Mears, who moved to the top of the right circle before ripping a shot blocker-side to give the Nighthawks their first lead.

Scott sealed the win late with an empty-net goal, taking a pass from Tyler Bernier at centre, skating around a defender and depositing the puck into the open cage.

MARCH 6 WINNIPEG MONARCHS, HOME

The Nighthawks closed out their regular season home schedule in style, defeating the Winnipeg Monarchs 5-1. It was also the first game back for captain Adam Vifussion, who had missed 16 games with an upper-body injury dating back to January 24.

Vifussion made an immediate impact, forcing a turnover inside the Monarchs blue line, driving the net, and sliding the puck past goaltender Dylan McFadyen.

The Nighthawks doubled their lead just 44 seconds later. Panzer carried the puck from the corner into the slot and snapped a shot

blocker-side.

Late in the period, Rolston extended the lead to three. After Arran fired a shot from the left circle that McFadyen stopped, the rebound bounced to the crease and deflected off Rolston's skate and into the net.

The Monarchs answered before the intermission. Idris Alameddine picked up a loose puck at centre ice, split the defence, and lifted a backhand over the right shoulder of Chornomydz to cut the lead.

That was the only surrendered goal of the game.

In the second, Carrier spun away from a check behind the Monarchs net, then delivered a perfect backhand pass to a wide-open Vigfusson in the slot, who snapped a shot over the glove of McFadyen and in for his second goal of the night.

Vigfusson's return was a major boost for the Nighthawks both on the ice and on the bench.

"Energy," Hirst said. "He brings pace and brings calmness on the bench. Just the things you want your captain to bring, he brings it. Having his energy, pace, and leadership back on the bench is really big."

The Nighthawks rounded out the scoring late in the third period on a nice passing play. Leduc found Panzer, who moved the puck below the right circle before sending a backhand pass to Zeller for a tap-in to make it 5-1.

MARCH 7 WINKLER FLYERS, AWAY

The Nighthawks battled from behind to clinch first place in the MJHL, defeating the Flyers 4-3 in overtime.

Midway through the first, Tanner George fired a one-timer from the top of the left circle after receiving a pass from Nik Gudmundson. The power play goal beat Dubinsky.

Winkler nearly doubled the advantage minutes later during a goalmouth scramble, but Dubinsky held his ground.

Late in the period, the Nighthawks were awarded a power play and Leduc produced a moment of individual brilliance. He picked up the puck at his own blue line, carried it through the neutral zone on a one-on-four rush, split the Flyers defence, and broke in alone before slipping a backhand past Liam Ernst.

Winkler regained the lead in the final minute of the period when George tipped a Rhylan Baxter point shot past Dubinsky.

In the second, Panzer fed Zeller from behind the net, and Zeller buried the chance from in tight to tie the game 2-2.

Niverville grabbed its first lead shortly after on the power play. Mears beat Ernst, Jaden Mah collecting his twenty-second assist and Boles adding his forty-sixth.

The Flyers dominated the

opening minutes of the third period, firing the first 11 shots of the frame as they searched for the equalizer. Dubinsky continued to frustrate Winkler.

When a point shot from Jacob Michelson was stopped by Dubinsky, Kam Thomas found the rebound at the top of the crease and tucked it in to tie the game 3-3.

Niverville nearly regained the lead moments later, but Zeller's shot rang off the crossbar.

The game moved to overtime, but Niverville's single point was already good enough to clinch first place.

After another key save from Dubinsky, Krestanowich and Zeller broke in on a two-on-one rush. Krestanowich slid a pass across the slot, and Zeller, with a defender on his back, tucked a backhand past Ernst to seal the victory.

MARCH 10 SELKIRK STEELERS, AWAY

Although the Nighthawks' second-ranked power play had an opportunity to open the scoring early, it was the Steelers who struck first. Wyatt Witham stole the puck at the Selkirk blue line and broke in alone on Chornomydz, beating him for the 1-0 lead.

Niverville responded later in the period when Leduc set up Edwards at the top of the right circle. Edwards skated into the slot before firing a shot through traffic that beat Ethan Sawyer, tying the game at one.

The Steelers took an early penalty in the second period, and the Nighthawks capitalized quickly. Just 18 seconds into the power play, Krestanowich moved to the middle of the ice and fired a wrist shot past Sawyer.

The Nighthawk got two more power plays in the middle frame but were unable to convert.

Selkirk tied the game at two when Landon Pue pounced on a rebound and slid a backhand under Chornomydz.

The Steelers nearly grabbed the lead moments later when Cole Babych had a golden chance from the top of the blue paint, but Chornomydz slid across the crease to make a remarkable left-pad save, a stop that proved pivotal.

One minute later, Mah fired a shot from the right point that was redirected by Arran in front, restoring the Nighthawks' lead.

Both goaltenders traded saves in the closing minutes before Edwards sealed the win in unusual fashion. The Nighthawks forward was taken down by a high stick while attempting to score on an empty net and officials awarded the goal to make it 4-2.

MARCH 13 PORTAGE TERRIERS, AWAY

Mears opened the scoring when Edwards slid a cross-ice pass to the right

circle, where Mears fired a one-timer past Terriers goalie Logan Cunningham.

The Nighthawks doubled their lead midway through the period when Wheddon and Boles worked the puck in the corner before Wheddon found Vigfusson open at the top of the crease. Vigfusson lifted the puck over Cunningham's blocker to give Niverville a 2-0 lead.

The Terriers finally got on the board midway through the second period.

After Dubinsky stopped the initial shot on a two-on-one rush, Tyler Kendall gathered the rebound and slipped a backhand pass to Dylan Russell, who tapped it in from the top of the crease.

But just as Portage began building momentum, Niverville's power play struck again, breaking away with goals in 59 seconds midway through the second period.

Dubinsky started the sequence with a perfect outlet pass that caught the Terriers during a line change. Wheddon broke in alone and beat Cunningham.

Only a few seconds down the line, Demone carried the puck from his own end behind the Portage net before centring a pass to Scott, who finished from the crease to extend the lead.

Niverville wasn't done. Just 21 seconds after that, Zeller took a pass from Leduc in the left circle and wired a wrist shot bar-down to cap the outburst and make it 5-1, which held as the final score.

PLAYOFF PREVIEW

The Nighthawks not only finished the regular season in first place but boasted a .888 win percentage, second-best in MJHL history.

Looking back to September, the team strung together streaks of 15 games, 16 games, and an 11-game run to close out.

Offensively, the Nighthawks led the league with 280 goals and placed five players in the MJHL's top 20. Wheddon topped the league with 90 points, while Boles finished with 72, Vigfusson had 61, Leduc recorded 60, and Panzer added 55.

Defensively, the Nighthawks allowed a league-low of 117 goals. Dubinsky and Chornomydz both ranked near the top of the league in save percentage, goals-against average, and wins.

And for the second straight year, the Nighthawks and Flyers were set to meet in the opening round of the Turnbull Cup Playoffs.

Last season's matchup went the way of the Flyers, who captured the series in six games. But it was tight, with five of the six games being decided by a single goal, including a dramatic 3-2 double overtime victory for Winkler in Game 5.

Much like last year, the spotlight

shines brightly on the goaltenders. Dubinsky, recently named the Ed Belfour MJHL Goaltender of the Year, enters the playoffs riding a seven-game winning streak. Across the ice, Ernst has quietly put together an impressive run since rejoining Winkler after the Christmas break.

Both teams boast strong backup options, too. For Niverville Chornomydz led the league with a .942 save percentage and 1.50 goals-against average. He won 17 games, including a remarkable 13-game streak, and allowed two goals or less in 19 of his 20 starts.

Winkler counters with Liam Russell, who finished the season 12-4-0 and won six of his final eight starts.

We've already highlighted Niverville's offensive bona fides, but Winkler brings plenty of firepower of their own.

Gudmundson, the reigning MJHL MVP, finished the season fourth in league scoring with 74 points, including 12 power play goals, and is a threat every time he steps on the ice.

George led the Flyers with 30 goals and totalled 68 points while also racking up 229 penalty minutes, embodying the physical edge that Winkler often brings.

Discipline could play a major role. The Nighthawks spent a league-low 693 minutes in the penalty box this season. By comparison, the Flyers accumulated 1,296 penalty minutes.

That difference becomes even more significant considering Niverville's league-leading power play, which clicked at 27.3 percent.

However, Winkler's penalty kill ranked second in the MJHL at 85.5 percent, setting up a key battle.

On the other side, Winkler's power play finished fifth in the league (24.8 percent) while Niverville's penalty kill ranked third at 84.5 percent.

It is also noteworthy that the Nighthawks scored seven short-handed goals this season, compared to just one from the Flyers.

Niverville won five of the six regular-season meetings between the teams.

However, outside of an 8-2 Nighthawks victory on December 13, the games were extremely tight. The other five matchups were decided by two goals or fewer, with two games requiring overtime.

MARCH 21 WINKLER FLYERS, HOME

The Nighthawks opened their playoff run in emphatic fashion Saturday night, cruising to an 8-2 victory over the Winkler Flyers in front of a sold-out crowd at the CRRC.

The Flyers earned the game's first power play, but it was the Nighthawks who struck first—and they did it shorthanded. Bernier buried

a quick shot off a setup from Scott, who took a big hit to make the pass out front to Bernier and ignite the home crowd.

Before the fans could even sit back down from the excitement, though, Winkler responded. Just 20 seconds elapsed before Ethan Mactavish was able to flip the puck over Dubinsky to even the score.

Scott restored the Nighthawks' lead with his first of three, chipping the puck behind a Flyers defence-man before sliding the puck under Ernst.

Just past the midway point, Owen Wallace tied it once again for the Flyers when his shot from the right point beat Dubinsky, sending the game into the first intermission deadlocked.

The turning point came early in the second period. After controlling much of the opening minutes, the Flyers took back-to-back delay-of-game penalties, giving Niverville a five-on-three advantage.

Vigfusson capitalized, finishing a crisp passing sequence that saw Krestanowich find Wheddon at the side of the crease. Wheddon sent a pass across to Vigfusson, who redirected the puck past Ernst.

Moments later, it looked as though the Flyers would once again tie the game. George appeared to score at the side of the crease, but the official determined that the puck had gone in off George's hand, negating the goal.

From there, it was all Nighthawks.

Edwards carried the puck into the Flyers' zone and delivered a beautiful backhand pass to a trailing Scott. Breaking in alone, Scott showed patience, outwaiting Ernst before tucking the puck past the sprawled goaltender.

Scott then struck again to complete his hat trick, racing in on a breakaway and firing a blocker-side shot to extend the lead.

The Nighthawks kept the pressure on in the third. Panzer buried a rebound off an Edwards shot. Vigfusson danced around a Flyers defender before ripping a shot under the crossbar. Panzer capitalized on a Flyers turnover in the right circle and beat Ernst blocker-side.

"Since mid-January, we've been waiting for this moment and to start the playoffs," Hirst said. "We know what our identity is, and how we have to play and what we need to do to be successful, which is playing fast and playing with energy—and that's what we did tonight."

The victory gives the Nighthawks a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven series and marks their twelfth consecutive win.

It also sets a new franchise mark for most goals scored in a playoff game in franchise history and represents the team's first-ever win in a playoff opener—not to mention, the first-ever playoff series lead.

Arts & Culture



THE TREWS



THE WASHBOARD UNION

Rock Friday, Country Saturday: Niverville Fair Unveils Headliners

By Brenda Sawatzky

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Get ready to spit-shine those cowboy boots because the Washboard Union is making a comeback at the Niverville Fair, June 12–13.

Also rocking out on the main stage this year are rock legends The Trews.

Niverville Fair committee member Raesha Enns says they're trying something new this year by dedicating Friday night's musical performances to the rock-and-roll genre and Saturday to country music.

"We're looking forward to having a rock night for the first time and feel The Trews are the perfect band to head that off," Enns says. "Our main goal is always to try and appeal to as many of our local attendees as possible, so we're hoping it'll be a hit."

She's excited to welcome Washboard Union back as a headliner this year.

The band performed on the Niverville stage in back-to-back years back in 2016 and 2017, both times as a supporting band.

"They've continued to be a crowd favourite everywhere they go," says Enns. "They're incredible to work with behind the scenes, and we're very much looking forward to having them back in the spotlight they deserve."

When they're not performing, you might just find them at the top of their favourite ride, the Zipper.

Without a doubt, these guys know how to have fun.

Recently returned from an Australian tour, The Washboard Union has played around the world,

including in Spain, France, Ireland, and the United States. They are Juno Award winners and nine-times Canadian Country Music Award winners with four gold records and a platinum record.

They released their latest hit single, "Somebody to Love," in 2025.

The Trews will hit the Niverville stage for the first time this year, but this band is known for its polish. They broke into the music scene with their powerful rhythms and aggressive vocals in 2003.

Over the years, The Trews have

earned 20 top-ten rock radio singles and released multiple gold and platinum albums. They've received East Coast Music Awards, a CIMA Road Gold Award, an Independent Music Award, and a number of Juno nominations.

The Trews have played thousands of shows worldwide, accompanying greats such as The Rolling Stones, KISS, Guns N' Roses, Aerosmith, and Bruce Springsteen.

Their 2025 single, "The Breakdown," reached number one on Canada Rock Radio.

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MORTGAGE SALE ADVERTISEMENT

The land and building known as 17 Wyldeewood Crescent, Niverville, Manitoba as described in Certificate of Title No. 2850294/1 will be sold at auction on Wednesday, the 15th day of April, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. The auction sale will be held by way of video or teleconference. There will be no in-person attendees at the auction.

In order to participate in the auction sale, you must pre-register at least 24 hours prior to the auction by contacting Sonia at 204-957-6437 or by email at sruppel@itglc.ca.

The Vendor is informed that there is situated on the property a single-family detached bi-level of approximately 2,978 square feet with 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen and a double attached garage.

TERMS: Deposit of \$29,000.00 by certified cheque, bank/credit union draft or solicitor's trust cheque to Levene Tadman Golub Law Corporation, or cash (the cash component of the deposit not to exceed \$7,500.00) to be provided within 24 hours of the date and time of auction and the balance in accordance with the conditions to be announced at sale.

The Property is sold subject to a RESERVE BID of \$ 355,153.81 plus such other additional and incidental costs which may be incurred by the Lender from the 9th day of March, 2026 to the date of auction and which costs will be announced prior to the commencement of the Sale.

Property Taxes are paid to December 31, 2024.

Purchaser to be responsible for payment of any outstanding water accounts owing by the Mortgagor.

Property is subject to Caveats 4278150/1, 4278151/1, 4643431/1.

The auction sale will be conducted pursuant to an Order for Sale issued by the District Registrar. Certain parties may be prohibited from purchasing the property, including but not limited to, parties who by virtue of their employment or relationship to a person involved in the sale process would have special knowledge of the circumstances pertaining to the sale. For more information and a list of prohibited purchasers please visit: www.teranetmanitoba.ca

Further information and copies of Conditions of Sale may be obtained from:

LEVENE TADMAN GOLUB LAW CORPORATION
Barristers & Solicitors
700 - 330 St. Mary Avenue
Winnipeg, MB. R3C 3Z5
Attention: Mara Koven-Lapointe/Sonia
File No. 128627
Phone No. 204-957-6437

PUBLIC NOTICE Antenna System Consultation

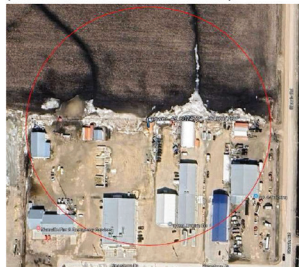


AVIS PUBLIC Système d'antenne

TOWER STRUCTURE: As part of the public consultation process required by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), Voyageur Internet is inviting the public to comment on a tower facility consisting of a 130-foot tall structure and ancillary radio equipment situated on private land in the Town of Niverville. We attest the design and installation respects good engineering practices including structure adequacy and federal Safety Code 6 standards and workers are certified rescue climbers.

STRUCTURE DE LA TOUR : Dans le cadre du processus de consultation publique exigé par Innovation, Sciences et Développement économique Canada (ISDE), Voyageur Internet invite le public à formuler des commentaires concernant une installation de tour comprenant une structure de 130 pieds de hauteur et de l'équipement radio auxiliaire, située sur un terrain privé dans la ville de Niverville.

LOCATION: Lot 2, Depot #159-2026 (Subdivision 4340-26-9239)



Nous attestons que la conception et l'installation respectent les bonnes pratiques d'ingénierie, y compris l'adéquation structurelle et les normes fédérales du Code de sécurité 6, et que les travailleurs sont des grimpeurs de sauvetage certifiés.

EMPLACEMENT : Lot 2, Depot no 159-2026 (Subdivision 4340-26-9239)

COORDONNÉES NAD83:

Latitude 49.607472 Longitude 97.027767

Toute personne peut soumettre des commentaires avant la fin de la journée ouvrable du 27 Avril 2026 concernant ce projet, ou faire des demandes de renseignements auprès de: Marty Gold,

Agent des relations publiques, Par courrier: Voyageur Internet, 323 Edwin Street, Winnipeg, MB, R3B 0Y7

Courriel: martygoldlive@gmail.com

Télécopieur: 204-233-5555 ext.1

NAD83 COORDINATES:

Latitude 49.607472 Longitude 97.027767

Any person may comment by the close of business day on April 27, 2026 with respect to this matter, or make inquiries to Marty Gold, Public Relations Officer, by mail: Voyageur Internet, 323 Edwin Street, Winnipeg, MB, R3B 0Y7
Email: martygoldlive@gmail.com
Phone: 204-233-5555 opt.1



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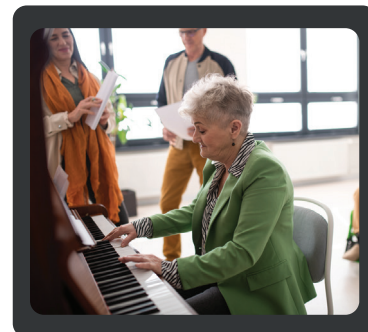
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