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Award-winning tiny-home designer returns to Arborg roots

By Lana Meier

After nearly three decades away, award-winning interior designer Jennifer (Karatchuk) Proctor has returned to her hometown of Arborg — not just to reconnect with family but to bring home a career built on national-level experience, sustainable design and a growing passion for tiny-home living.

Proctor, a graduate of Yorkville University with a bachelor's degree in interior design, is the founder of JP Designs, an award-winning business she launched in Atlantic Canada during the pandemic. Her specialty in tiny homes, minimalist living and downsizing has earned recognition across the country — and now, she sees strong potential for that work to take root in rural Manitoba.

"It's been 28 years since I moved away from Manitoba," Proctor said. "I spent 23 years in Calgary, built a successful career in oil and gas, and eventually met my husband. But even with professional success, something felt missing. I didn't feel fulfilled."

That turning point came in 2009, when Proctor built a home in Calgary from the ground up. Without formal design training at the time, she immersed herself in every detail — re-

working layouts, collaborating with the builder and designing custom features.

"I realized I had a natural talent and passion for design," she said. "I looked forward to every meeting. That's when it clicked."

In 2017, with encouragement from her husband, Proctor made what she calls a terrifying but life-changing decision: returning to school full time in her 40s to earn her degree in interior design.

"I almost backed out three times," she said with a laugh. "But it was the best decision I've ever made. This is truly what I was meant to do."

Before even graduating, Proctor won her first professional award in 2020 for universal bathroom design — confirmation, she said, that she was on the right path.

After relocating to Nova Scotia, Proctor launched JP Designs in Halifax during the COVID-19 pandemic — something she never expected to do.

"I always thought I'd work for a large architectural firm," she said. "If anyone asked whether I'd start my own business, I always said no. And here we are, five years later."



Jennifer Proctor

Her niche soon emerged organically. While driving along the Bedford Highway in Nova Scotia, Proctor became fascinated by rows of shipping containers and began exploring their potential as residential and commercial spaces. That curiosity evolved into container-based designs and, eventually, tiny homes.

Her work has includ-

Continued on page 3



EXPRESS PHOTOS BY IAN PROCTOR PHOTOGRAPHY

Interior designer Jennifer (Karatchuk) Proctor has returned to her hometown of Arborg, bringing home an award-winning career in sustainable design with a focus on tiny homes and minimalist living.



Evergreen Staff Spotlight

Celebrating the People Who Make Our Schools Work

Meet Kyle Kotelniski – Division Electrician

For the past 11 months, Kyle Kotelniski has been working behind the scenes to keep Evergreen's schools running safely and smoothly. As the division's electrician, his days are never the same — from wiring major projects to helping with cleanup after unexpected damages, Kyle's role touches nearly every corner of the division.

His path into education was shaped by opportunity. "I was drawn to the chance to work in different buildings daily and to learn how the education system operates on all levels," Kyle explains. It didn't take long for him to see the impact of his work.

Kyle's responsibilities extend far beyond electrical tasks. "As an electrician, I still do more than just electrical," he says. "Whether it's moving furniture, helping with a cleanup, or fulfilling requests from teachers and principals, I do what's needed to keep things running smoothly."

One highlight for Kyle was helping transform the Arborg Collegiate library into a foods and nutrition classroom. "It's great to be part of a project, watching it all come together and then seeing the students enjoy learning in the completed space," he says.

What Kyle loves most about Evergreen is the variety. "There's always something different each day — whether it's fixing small items or working on big projects. That change of pace keeps the work interesting."

He also wants the public to know how much collaboration goes into making schools run. "There are a lot of moving parts and constant communication between teachers, principals, and maintenance," Kyle explains. "It takes a team effort to make sure requests are completed with as little disruption as possible."

Thank you, Kyle, for your hard work, adaptability, and for helping create safe, functional learning spaces for Evergreen students.

Submitted by trustee Jillian Yorga



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> TINY HOME, FROM PG. 2

ed container retail shops and crew spaces for the Area506 project in New Brunswick, as well as a large container home and stair tower designed for well-known YouTubers. Her designs and renderings have been featured on Atlantic Canadian television news.

"With my LEED certification, I truly believe small-scale living is the future," she said. "It reduces environmental impact and makes housing more affordable. Large homes are becoming out of reach, and many people don't want them anymore."

Proctor said misconceptions about tiny homes remain common.

"People think they're cramped or lack style," she said. "But with thoughtful layouts, multifunctional furniture and smart storage, they can feel open, beautiful and highly functional. Living small can feel big — if it's designed right."

Her return to Manitoba, she said, has been deeply emotional.

"After years in Halifax and Seabright, we never truly felt at peace," she said. "We missed family and small-town life more than we realized. When we crossed the Manitoba border, it hit me. I cried almost the entire drive to my parents' place."

She and her husband are currently staying with her parents in Arborg, where she has been reconnecting with familiar places like Riverton and



sharing those roots with him.

From a professional standpoint, Proctor sees Manitoba — particularly rural communities — as fertile ground for tiny-home and downsizing projects. Compared to Atlantic Canada, where she found regulations around tiny and container homes restrictive, she says Manitoba is more open and more affordable.

"There are already tiny homes being built here," she said. "With thoughtful design, these homes can support aging-in-place, affordability and sustainability — especially in rural areas."

Designing for rural clients, she added, brings different considerations than urban or coastal markets.

"There's often more land, which opens up possibilities for outdoor living and creative layouts," she said. "But there are also infrastructure considerations — septic systems, wells, off-grid energy. Climate plays a huge role too."

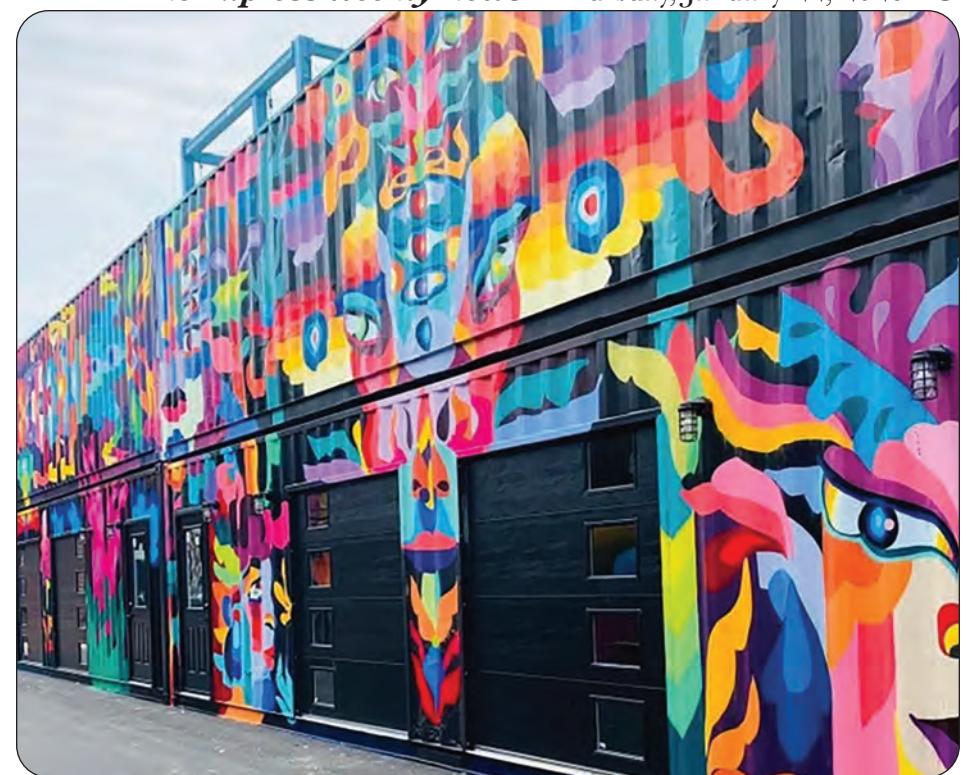
Across all regions, Proctor said her design philosophy remains consistent: creating spaces that foster connection.

"Every layout is intentional," she said. "My goal is to design spaces that don't just look good but enrich how people live and connect."

While she plans to remain in Arborg until February, Proctor said interest in her work has already begun locally.

"I'm already starting to gain a few clients here, which has been really encouraging," she said. "There's still a lot to navigate, but my husband and I will decide whether Winnipeg or Stonewall becomes our permanent home. Growing my own business here is what I truly want to focus on and pursue."

For Manitobans considering downsizing or building a tiny home, Proctor's advice is simple.



"Don't see it as a limitation," she said. "See it as an opportunity. With the right design, you don't have to compromise on comfort or style. Downsizing lets you focus on what really matters — and that kind of free-

dom is powerful."

For more information, contact Jennifer Proctor, interior designer with JP Designs, at my number is 204-290-4275 or visit www.jpdesigns2020.com

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Interlake explorers launch docuseries in search of Canada's Viking roots

By E. Antonio

A new docuseries is taking viewers deep into the Interlake and beyond, following one family's quest to uncover answers about Viking ancestry in Canada — and the journey may change how Canadians see their own history.

Quest for the Lost Vikings, now streaming on Super Channel Quest, explores Icelandic history in Canada through the lens of people, geography and wildlife, revealing stories rarely told.

"It's a point of Canadian history no one has really looked at before," said David Collette, lead explorer with Fara Heim.

Fara Heim — Icelandic for "going home" — is a team of four explorers who began their ambitious journey 18 months ago after receiving approval to produce the series. Following 15 months of filming, the eight-episode docuseries is now airing weekly.

Collette and Johann Straumfjord Sigurdson serve as the senior leads of Fara Heim. Both grew up in the Interlake and have spent decades researching Icelandic heritage in Canada. They are joined by junior explorers Mackenzie Collette and Johann Straumfjord Sigurdson Jr., as the team



Quest for the Lost Vikings is a new docuseries featuring parts of the Interlake as the Fara Heim explorers attempt to uncover stories of Norse heritage.

sets out to uncover pieces of Viking history dating back more than 1,000 years.

For Collette and Sigurdson, the project grew out of years of unanswered questions.

"We know Norse arrived in Canadian territory around 1000 C.E., but there isn't much publicly available information," Collette said. "We wanted to find our own answers."

Their curiosity led them to think differently about familiar waterways.

"In northern Manitoba, through Hudson Bay, you can sail anywhere in the world," Collette said. "We started asking, what if people came the other way? If Vikings sailed from Iceland, what signs would point to life in North America?"



EXPRESS PHOTOS SUBMITTED

Johann Sigurdson (left) and David Collette plotting their route.

That question inspired their expeditions along routes Vikings may have travelled, including Hudson Bay waterways that connect as far south as Minnesota. While the crew has not yet completed a sail from Iceland, they hope one day to journey from Iceland to Greenland and into Hudson Bay — an expedition that could take weeks or even months, depending on where they stop to explore.

Quest for the Lost Vikings takes viewers from Nunavut to the Kensington

Runestone in Minnesota — a journey Collette describes as "a trip across Canada you can do sitting in your own chair."

"We're going places most people will never see," he said.

While many filming locations will feel familiar to Manitobans, the series also explores remote communities accessible only by boat. Along the way, the team uncovers unexpected

Continued on page 5

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> VIKING ROOTS, FROM PG. 4

stories, often through conversations with local residents and oral histories passed down through generations.

"We're trying to peel back the layers of stories that haven't been told," Sigurdson said.

"Our direct ancestors were here 1,000 years ago," he added. "They were explorers and businesspeople who built relationships with Indigenous communities. Now we're trying to understand what they saw, what they experienced, and why they came."

All members of Fara Heim belong to both the Explorers Club and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, bringing professional expertise to their passion for history. Sigurdson



Jo Sigurdson and Johann Sigurdson on the ice with the SHERP amphibious vehicle.



Fara Heim film and production crew.

nities and constituents aren't forgotten at the federal level.

"I will always fight for Manitobans and do everything possible to ensure we can continue to afford our rural way of life," he said.

"Additionally, in Ottawa, I will continue to work with other members of the National Defence committee on Bill C-11, Military Justice System Modernization Act. And, finally, my private member's bill is expected to be back up for debate in March and voted on at second reading."

In the early days of the new year, he also shared some goals for the local area.

"I will continue my support of our local communities

here in Selkirk-Interlake-Eastman, especially those seeking federal funding for infrastructure projects. We must ensure the federal government is investing across Canada

in

"This is a role I never take for granted, and I am proud to have the continued trust of our constituents to serve them in Ottawa," he said.

"Additionally, I was asked by Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre to continue to serve as our shadow minister for National Defence. More recently, in September, I tabled my new Private Member's Bill C-219, The Sergei Magnitsky International Anti-Corruption and Human Rights Act."

Looking back at 2025, Bezan said American and Chinese tariffs have hit hard locally for the steel mill, manufacturing industry and farmers.

"Conservatives stand ready to work with the government to remove these tariffs and restore markets for our farmers and businesses," he said.

Looking ahead in 2026, Bezan is focused on ensuring that rural commu-

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for answers, the first season reveals a wealth of information. If renewed, Fara Heim hopes to produce two or three additional seasons, expanding their search across other regions of North America.

"There's only so much one season can share," Collette said. "We want to keep this journey educational, entertaining and accessible."

The first half of *Quest for the Lost Vikings* is now streaming on Super Channel Quest, with new episodes airing Sundays at 8 p.m.

For more information, visit www.faraheim.com or www.questforthelostvikings.com.



Jo and Johann Sigurdson standing in front of the Kensington Rhinestone in Alexandria, Minn.

MP James Bezan reflects on 2025, looks ahead to 2026

By Jennifer McFee

As a long-standing member of Parliament, James Bezan continues to be grateful for the opportunity to serve the community.

In 2025, Bezan was sworn in for the eighth time as the member of Parliament for Selkirk-Interlake-Eastman.

"This is a role I never take for granted, and I am proud to have the continued trust of our constituents to serve them in Ottawa," he said.

"Additionally, I was asked by Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre to continue to serve as our shadow minister for National Defence. More recently, in September, I tabled my new Private Member's Bill C-219, The Sergei Magnitsky International Anti-Corruption and Human Rights Act."

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"Conservatives stand ready to work with the government to remove these tariffs and restore markets for our farmers and businesses," he said.

Looking ahead in 2026, Bezan is focused on ensuring that rural commu-

nities and constituents aren't forgotten at the federal level.

Exploring by water was essential to the crew, allowing them to experience the land the way Vikings once did. By travelling aboard whaling ships through historic routes like the Nelson River, York Factory and the Red River, they uncovered stories embedded in the landscape itself.

In one episode, the crew reflects on a trip to Port Nelson 15 years ago, sharing photos from a night spent camping on an island — unknowingly near a polar bear.

"That's the kind of adventure we bring viewers along for," Collette said. "Land, people, wildlife — it's all incredible."

While the team is still searching



and especially into rural communities," he said.

"As well, my team is always here to help the good people of Selkirk-Interlake-Eastman in dealing with the federal government."

After a short break for the holidays, Bezan's office in Selkirk reopened on Jan. 5 to serve the local community five days a week, all year long.

"I wish peace, prosperity and good health to all as we head into 2026," he said. "All the best in the new year."

PHOTO SUBMITTED

Selkirk-Interlake-Eastman MP James Bezan attended Sgt. Tommy Prince Day in Petersfield.

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What 2026 holds for Canadian agriculture

By Cam Dahl, Manitoba Pork

How did Canadian agriculture fare in 2025? What trends will continue from 2025 into 2026, and what does that mean for export-dependent farmers?

A year ago, I predicted that 2025 would be filled with global uncertainty that disrupted markets. I was hoping that this forecast would be proven wrong, but unfortunately it was not. Our neighbour to the south is focused on "America First." U.S. policies are moving away from supporting free and open trade. Canadian agriculture faced a short period of tariffs but ultimately was protected by the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA). However, we don't know if this will continue until the end of 2026, as CUSMA is up for review.

This is the most important policy file for the 90 per cent of farmers in Canada who depend on international markets. The agreement will either be extended to 2032, put into a cycle of annual reviews or terminated. The outcome of the review will determine the fiscal sustainability of many farms across Canada, including in Manitoba.

Tariffs are a threat, but they are not the only protectionist measures faced by farmers and food processors. The revival of country-of-origin labelling in the U.S. and individual state legislation that is fragmenting the North American market — such as Proposition 12 in California — are just two other examples of protectionist poli-

cies threatening Canadian agriculture and food exports. And the U.S. is not alone. China has targeted agricultural commodities in retaliation for Canadian tariffs on electric vehicles. The European Union continues to block Canadian agricultural and food exports using non-tariff trade barriers.

Uncertainty in world trade is costly for both Manitoba farmers and processors.

Unfortunately, this uncertainty will remain throughout 2026 and will likely intensify during the review of CUSMA. Securing the North American market, offsetting the cost of trade uncertainty and trade diversification need to be at the top of the policy list for all governments in 2026.

Food and agriculture need to be top of mind at every Canadian negotiating table in 2026. Canadian governments and negotiators need to

be continuously reminded that food and beverage processing is the largest manufacturing sector in Canada, with sales worth about \$175 billion. The sector accounts for more than 20 per cent of total manufacturing sales. Meat products comprise the largest proportion of the food manufacturing sector in both Manitoba and Canada. If agriculture and food are left behind in trade discussions, livelihoods in every region of Manitoba will be significantly impacted.

Manitoba hog farmers continue to be world leaders in disease prevention and management. The entire sector has recognized the need to work together to effectively protect the health of the animals under our care.

Sometimes this means that parts of the value chain take actions that are not in their short-term fiscal interest but deliver long-term benefits to the entire sector. This level of collaboration is not often found in other countries or regions. Manitoba's pork sector should be congratulated for this accomplishment.

Working with the entire value chain to prevent and mitigate disease impacts is a key priority for Manitoba hog farmers in 2026. This includes preventing diseases such as Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome and Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus where possible and limiting their spread when it is not. We are also working with processors, veterinarians, transport companies and Manitoba's Office of the Chief Veterinarian to keep foreign animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease and African swine fever out of Manitoba. Again, collaboration is the key factor in developing effective disease-prevention and response plans.

On the economic front, 2025 was a profitable year across the hog sector. Profitability was driven by strong pork demand around the world, relatively affordable pork prices for consumers — especially when compared with beef — disease pressures in other pork-producing regions and reasonable feed costs. I expect profitable conditions to continue into 2026, at least for the first half of the year. Profitability in the second half of 2026 will depend largely on the world trade situation.

Given current profitability, 2026 should be a year of renewal and growth for Manitoba's hog sector. However, investing in the future is difficult when markets and trade pat-

Continued on page 7

Cam Dahl, General Manager
Manitoba Pork

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Manitoba Disaster Management Conference returns Jan. 28-30

By E. Antonio

When disaster strikes, being prepared can help communities minimize its impact. Since 1992, the Manitoba Disaster Management Conference has provided valuable information sessions, keynote speakers and hands-on workshops. This year's event will take place Jan. 28-30 at the Canad Inns Destination Centre Polo Park in Winnipeg.

"There is such a need for disaster management education," said conference chair Shelley Napier. "Manitoba has strict guidelines in place to keep residents safe, and there is so much to learn through shared practices."

More than 20 speakers from across Canada will be featured, including RM of Lac du Bonnet Reeve Loren Schinkel, who will discuss lessons learned from the 2025 wildfires; Brock Happychuk, who will provide an overview of the national public alerting system in Manitoba; and Tyler Smith, a Humboldt Broncos bus tragedy survivor and mental health advocate.

Manitoba is home to the longest-running and largest disaster management conference in the country — a title Napier carries with pride.

"It's Manitoba — we are an amazing province with a lot of knowledge to share," she said.

The conference is expected to draw more than 400 delegates from across the emergency management sector, including coordinators, government officials, business owners and first responders.

"This conference is perfect for anyone whose life has been touched by emergency disasters," Napier said.

She added she is especially excited to announce that the first group of students from the Manitoba Association of Municipal Emergency Coordinators will graduate as certified emergency coordinators during Wednesday's dinner celebration.

Napier said the conference board



Shelley Napier, Manitoba Disaster Management Conference chair.

continually seeks impactful speakers whose insights reflect the past, present and future of emergency management.

"We look at what has happened in the world, what we can learn and how to ensure every session delivers key takeaways," she said. "There's a topic for everyone, carefully selected based on current events."

The conference opens with Schinkel presenting leadership lessons from the recent wildfires. He will share his experience navigating the crisis and offer tips on preparing for similar events.

"Manitoba wildfires touched every corner of our province," Napier said. "Whether it was an actual fire in your community or helping evacuees, there are lessons for everyone involved."

In addition to keynote presentations and breakout sessions, participants can choose from four half-day, hands-on workshops designed to actively engage attendees with industry experts.

Napier said the sessions offer more than classroom-style learning, providing direct, practical experience to help participants respond effectively if disaster strikes.

Feedback from previous conferences has been "overwhelmingly positive,"



**MANITOBA
DISASTER
MANAGEMENT
CONFERENCE**

PHOTO SUBMITTED

The Manitoba Disaster Management Conference returns Jan. 28-30 at Canad Inns Destination Centre Polo Park in Winnipeg, bringing together emergency management professionals for education, networking and hands-on training.

she said, noting many attendees return year after year.

The all-inclusive \$500 registration fee covers access to all sessions and workshops, meals and coffee breaks, and one ticket each to Wednesday's casual dinner and Thursday's gala and awards banquet. The event also offers networking opportunities with representatives from school divisions, universities, municipalities, hospitals, non-profit organizations and businesses.

"There's such high energy in the room," Napier said. "You can form

partnerships, exchange ideas and expand your outreach. Just attending the conference enhances your ability to connect with others."

She encourages anyone considering registration to attend.

"We host a fun, energetic and rewarding experience for everyone," she said.

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> AGRICULTURE, FROM PG. 6

terns remain uncertain. Financing barns with a 25-year lifespan becomes more costly and challenging amid growing uncertainty. Manitoba's Economic Development Plan recognizes the impact of international uncertainty on the province's investment climate and the need to reduce reliance on trade with the U.S. A priority for 2026 will be developing ways to partner with government and industry to offset some of these financial risks and costs in order to facilitate industry renewal.

In some ways, 2026 will likely look a lot like 2025. We will continue to see significant trade and market uncertainty, with the potential for that uncertainty to increase as the CUSMA review approaches. Positive profitability should continue, based on strong demand, disease pressure in other jurisdictions and manageable feed costs. The question at the end of 2026 will be whether the potential negatives from the political environment outweighed the natural positives of the market.

IERHA CEO upbeat about health-care service improvements, future developments

By Patricia Barrett

Despite respiratory viruses ramping up before Christmas and landing some people in hospital in the Interlake, plus a couple of back-to-back snowstorms thrown in the mix, Marion Ellis, the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority's president and chief executive officer, remained upbeat about the progress the RHA has seen over the course of 2025 and optimistic about the future.

Like most health-care systems across Canada, Manitoba's system has experienced some lean years as a result of governments tinkering with funding, closing facilities and subsequent staffing losses, as well as an aging patient population requiring more care and the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused many health-care workers to burn out and seek better working conditions elsewhere or leave the profession altogether.

But efforts are underway to expand the province's health-care capacity through capital projects and human resources. Recovery takes time but Manitoba — and the Interlake-East-



IERHA

Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority president and chief executive officer Marion Ellis has close to 30 years' experience in nursing leadership and other senior leadership experience, including with the Northern RHA and the former Burntwood RHA.

ern RHA — is on the upswing as far as physician numbers go. The corollary of that should be a decline in emergency room visits and lengthy wait times.

"We're excited about having good, proactive care [delivered] through primary care physicians," said Ellis, who spoke with the *Express* before the Christmas break. "Primary care capacity will help address wait times. When people don't have a primary care clinician, they come to the emergency room for that care."

The retention of physicians is affected by factors such as burnout due to heavy workloads, poor working conditions and retirement, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. Among Canada's 10 provinces, Manitoba is fourth from the bottom with regard to the number of physicians per 100,000 residents. The province currently has 225 physicians, slightly better than Ontario (221), Saskatchewan (218) and P.E.I. (211). B.C. leads the pack with 271 physicians, followed by Nova Scotia (268).

Ellis said the Stonewall area is likely the "envy of Canada" with 10 physicians in various clinics plus one physician in Stony Mountain.

"For this geographical area, we have doctors. And these doctors very much want to focus on a proactive approach to health care, which is primary care. They know if people are screened early for certain chronic diseases or cancers, there can be earlier interventions, treatments and better outcomes for patients. Their commitment is to that," said Ellis. "Some primary care physicians [in the Stonewall area]



Our Services

- Acute Care
- Primary Care
- Mental Health and Addictions
- Public Health Programs
- Home and Community Care
- Long-term Care
- Indigenous Health Initiatives

Our Facilities

- 10 Hospitals
- 23 Primary Care Clinics and Community Health Offices
- 16 Long-term Care Facilities

The Interlake-Eastern RHA has 10 hospitals, 23 primary care clinics and 16 long-term care facilities that serve a population of close to 140,000.

are even looking for patients; there's no waitlist — they're looking for patients."

The uptick in doctors to Manitoba was noted by the physician advocacy organization Doctors Manitoba last fall, as well as by the provincial government in its November throne speech.

"When our government took office, Manitoba faced the worst doctor shortage in the country," states the throne speech. "That gap is now closing with 285 net new doctors added since October 2023, including six doctors from the United States and more in the recruitment process. Last year marked the largest increase of doctors ever."

As for physician availability in Ashern and Eriksdale, Ellis said that region is currently sharing its physicians. They work in clinic and also provide emergency room service to both hospital ERs.

Eriksdale's ER is open only about six days a month, typically on a Thursday, but Ashern's ER is typically open 24-7 all month, with some exceptions.

Six physicians are required to keep IERHA hospital ERs open 24-7. Fewer physicians than that can lead to burnout and retention issues. Doctors who work in their clinics all day and then are tasked to work emergency can feel they have no recovery time or quality of life. That often leads to their leaving for better working conditions.

Despite the physician challenges in that part of the health region, Ellis said a municipal leader expressed ap-

preciation for the improvements underway in Ashern and Eriksdale.

The Ashern hospital had its medicine inpatient unit expanded between January 2023 and May 2025 to add 12 more beds for a total of 26. The second phase of the project entails expanding Ashern's emergency room to add eight more treatment spaces (5,400 square feet). That's expected to be completed this year.

The current provincial government committed to building a new ER at the Eriksdale hospital. Construction is expected to start this winter.

"I think they're feeling really hopeful that they're being listened to," said Ellis.

When asked if there will be a workforce ready to go when Eriksdale's new ER is up and running, Ellis said the health authority is not yet at the staffing side of things as the capital project is just getting underway.

"We're not at that stage yet. We don't talk about staffing until way on in the capital project," she said. "This is a really good thing for Eriksdale. The design of the new emergency room will improve visibility for nursing staff and patients. Sometimes design can inhibit efficiency, and we really feel the design is going to enable patient privacy and efficiency for the workforce."

Although the health region is attracting more doctors, some Interlake hospital emergency rooms (apart from Selkirk's) continue to experience temporary closures.

Community Support Service

AA Arborg
Thursdays - 7:30 pm
Arborg Support Centre
327 Main Street
Contact 204-376-5861

AA Eriksdale
Eriksdale United Church building
#7 Main Street, Eriksdale (side door)
Meetings are Mondays
at 6:30 p.m.

AA Winnipeg Beach
Lady of the Lake RC Church
Corner of Hwy. 9 and Lake Ave.,
Winnipeg Beach
Meetings are Saturdays
between 7 and 8 p.m.
Contact Ann J 204-389-3417

Gimli Group AA
Bldg 18 Municipal Rd
Industrial Park
Fri & Sun Mtgs at 7:30 pm

Al-Anon
Gimli and Winnipeg Beach
Join us at 17B Loni Beach Road, next
to New Horizon building... Gimli at
7:00 pm Wednesday evenings for an
hour of support, strength, guidance
and hope. Contact 204-389-4777.
All ages welcome.

AA Riverton Group
12 Main St. at the
Riverton Senior Centre
Mondays 7:30 p.m.

Continued on page 9

> IERHA, FROM PG. 8

IERHA's ER schedule for Dec. 16-31 showed Ashern's ER open 24-7 on 15 days of the 16-day schedule. Eriksdale's ER was open 24-7 on two out of 16 days. Gimli's ER was open 24-7 on 10 out of 16 days and open five days with 12 hours or fewer. Stonewall's ER was closed 14 out of 16 days with two days offering 12-hour service. The ERs at the Teulon and Arborg hospitals are permanently closed.

The schedule for Jan. 16-31 shows improvement in ER availability in Stonewall, with seven days of temporary closure and the remainder of the schedule showing a mix of days with 24-7 and 12-hour availability.

Stonewall's ER had shifted to more temporary closures after the death of Dr. Zahiri in October.

Ellis said his death was tragic and staff were devastated.

"It was an unexpected shocking [event]. The staff were very upset," she said. "We really relied on him strongly. He's still missed and his commitment is honoured by the region."

The situation should improve with a doctor due to arrive at the Stonewall Medical Clinic and who'll be starting his first ER day on Jan. 3, she said.

"Half of the work will be in clinic and half will be emerg," said Ellis. "We also have an international medical graduate who'll be graduating [from the Canadian curricula] and ready to come to work with us in February."

The availability of the doctors the region does have is expected to improve with the abolishment of sick notes. Doctors can see fewer patients if their time is taken up writing sick notes for patients whose employers require documentation.

Ellis said the provincial government introduced legislation [last year] to end sick notes for short-term absences, and that should add the equivalent of 50 more doctors or 300,000 more patient appointments per year.

To meet the future needs of an aging population, the Interlake-Eastern RHA needs additional personal care home beds.

The population in the IERHA is older than the Manitoba average with 42 per cent aged 50 or older, according the IERHA's annual report.

Ellis said the provincial government has committed to one PCH a year during its current term. It's building new PCHs in Winnipeg and in Lac du Bonnet and Arborg in the Interlake-Eastern region.

Stonewall has been engaged in lobbying the provincial government for a new seniors complex in their community since residents sometimes have to seek placements in facilities out-

side the area, separating them from their families.

Ellis said Stonewall is to be "commended" for its efforts to move its bid forward and for its proactive engagement with other communities along highways 6 and 7.

"They are working with their partner municipalities, proactively planning. They're engaged and listening. They have a vision they're committed to, and I think it's so admirable. I've had a meeting with Wally [Melnyk], their CAO, and Mayor Sandra Smith, and they're committed to ... supporting an aging population. That's to be commended," said Ellis. "We have great municipal leaders and First Nation chiefs in our region, and I feel very blessed to be here. We are working as true partners."

On the nursing front, Ellis said rural training programs such those offered in Arborg — which had "led the way" — in conjunction with Fieldstone Ventures and Assiniboine Community College have been a success in terms of recruiting nurses to the region.

Nurses who graduated from a licensed practical nursing program in Arborg are working in communities including Gimli, Eriksdale and Ashern and in health-care areas such as acute, long-term and home care.

"The LPNs that graduated from the Arborg program have been incredible team players and we appreciate them so much," said Ellis. "Because of the model in Arborg, and how the community stood that up, we were able to work with Fieldstone Ventures and Assiniboine Community College. Now we've stood up a program in Beausejour with that model, and about 20 nurses will be graduating in the summer. Then come January of '27, we're doing another LPN program there to get more nurses for that area and also to support additional beds in the new Lac du Bonnet Personal Care Home."

To help offset the paramedic deficit in the rural health regions, the provincial government announced last year it had increased paramedic training seats.

In addition, the government said it would help recruit emergency medical responders (EMRs) for rural areas through financial aid (a \$5,000 bursary for students) and community training. Arborg will be the site of EMR training this year. By fall, about 50 to 60 EMRs are expected to graduate.

EMRs will be able to help stabilize patients while waiting for an ambulance, said Ellis. Training rural people as EMRs will not only benefit rural communities but may also entice EMRs to further their training and become a paramedic.

"If people know how to help someone who's choking or in distress,

that's very helpful. We can use EMRs to help support the health-care system in our local areas," said Ellis. "If someone does this course and sees the value of it, that's a stepping-stone for going to the next level. It's a way of opening up opportunities and bringing local people into the health-care system."

Ellis emphasized that EMRs are "not replacing" paramedics or taking away jobs from paramedics as their scope of practice is different. EMRs will simply be providing immediate onsite support.

"They only do what they're qualified to do," said Ellis. "It's not like they'd be going outside the scope they'll be given."

In addition to more primary care physicians setting up shop in the health region and major capital investments in Ashern, Eriksdale, Arborg and Lac du Bonnet, Ellis said the provincial government is investing in other areas that will benefit IERHA, and the region is "collectively grateful" for those services.

Those services include expanding the number of transitional care beds for people who can be discharged from the hospital but who need to wait for other health-care services, and expanding allied health services to ensure patients get rehabilitation and mobility services seven days a week, up from five days.

"We've also been really pleased with

our Indigenous investments. We're working with our First Nations and supporting the patients who come to our sites," said Ellis. "We're strengthening those relationships and building trust that aligns with reconciliation. We're very committed to that."

The cost of public health care is always rising regardless of jurisdiction, but Interlake-Eastern hasn't scrimped or cut services. Ellis said the RHA ended its 2024-25 fiscal year with an operations deficit (salaries, equipment, etc.) of \$836,048 and a capital deficit (depreciation of capital) of over \$1.6 million.

"Wouldn't I love it if we had a surplus," said Ellis when told about a misperception that the IERHA was sitting on a wad of cash at the end of its last fiscal year while ERs on both sides of the region continued to temporarily close. "This is a time when physicians are exercising their choices [declining to work in ERs]. If they work in clinic all day and then they're called out night after night to work in the ER — I don't know if I could do that. For some of these doctors, a quality of life is important. I know what it was like for me: I loved being on call when I was younger. But that's hard to sustain year in, year out."

Ellis said she'll be able to share additional positive developments with regard to gains in staffing, family-centred services and other key health areas later this spring.



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Gimli mayor Kevin Chudd suspended with pay for 7 days after formal complaint

All councillors to take code of conduct training

By Patricia Barrett

Gimli mayor Kevin Chudd has been suspended for seven days without loss of pay after a formal complaint was made last year regarding his conduct. Council passed a resolution imposing sanctions on him.

The RM of Gimli issued a public notice on its website on Jan. 16, informing the public that a formal complaint had been received on March 23, 2025, and that the municipality retained the services of independent investigator Andrea MacNevin to review the case.

MacNevin is a lawyer, investigator and mediator based in Halifax, N.S., according to her LinkedIn profile.

"The investigation has now concluded, and several allegations were found to be founded [sic]," states the Jan. 16 notice. "On Jan. 12, 2026, council passed a resolution imposing sanctions in accordance with Manitoba's Council Members' Code of Conduct Regulation. These sanctions have been accepted, and municipal operations continue without interruption."

Chudd's seven-day suspension runs from Jan. 16 to Jan. 22. He will be suspended from "all mayoral duties without loss of compensation, as permitted by Section 10.2(I) of the Code of Conduct."

The mayor will also have to apologize to the complainant. That apology will be "facilitated" by the RM's chief administrative officer.

The notice doesn't provide details about the

Chudd's several transgressions or identify the complainant.

The municipality is taking "concrete steps to strengthen governance, reinforce respectful conduct, and enhance public confidence in our decision-making processes," states the notice.

Under the sanctions imposed, all council members - Chudd, Thora Palson, Kurt Reichert, Andy Damm and Richard Petrowski - are required to take "mandatory training" covering respectful workplace practices, conflict resolution, and clear roles, responsibilities and decision-making processes.

The *Express* asked the RM, the mayor and councillors what the total investigation cost, why Chudd wasn't docked pay, why the investigation report can't be shared with the public, and how each councillor voted on the resolution to suspend the mayor.

Chief administrative officer DJ Sigmundson told the *Express* Jan. 16 that the RM is unable to share those details due to legislative requirements.

"The RM recognizes the high level of public interest in this matter," he said by email. "However, Manitoba's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) require municipalities to protect the confidentiality of personnel-related investigations, personal information, and records containing legal advice. As a result, the full investigation report and related cost details cannot be released publicly."

Sigmundson added that "only a summary of the findings [i.e., the report] was provided to council for decision-making."

As to how each council member voted on the suspension of Chudd, Sigmundson said that's confidential as it's a personnel and conduct matter.

"Council votes connected to confidential personnel and conduct matters are recorded in accordance with municipal procedure; however, FIPPA prohibits the



FILE PHOTO BY PATRICIA BARRETT

Kevin Chudd is shown in 2022 at a municipal election debate. Now Gimli mayor, Chudd was suspended last week with pay after a formal complaint was made against his conduct in 2025 and a subsequent investigation determined there were several transgressions.

disclosure of how individual members voted when doing so would reveal personal information protected under section 17," said Sigmundson. "The publicly shareable portion is the final outcome—specifically, that Council's resolution was carried."

He added that the RM is committed to transparency while respecting all legal requirements governing privacy, personnel and Code of Conduct processes.

"Our focus continues to be ensuring accountability, maintaining the integrity of municipal governance, and supporting the community we serve," said Sigmundson.

Deputy mayor and councillor Kurt Reichert assumes mayoral duties during Chudd's suspension.

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Winter storm forces closures, cancellations

By Lana Meier

A powerful winter storm brought travel to a standstill across much of Manitoba over the weekend, with widespread impacts felt in the Interlake region.

Large sections of the Trans-Canada Highway were closed due to blowing snow and near-zero visibility, while several other provincial highways in and around the Interlake were also shut down or reported hazardous conditions. Manitoba RCMP urged motorists to avoid travel unless absolutely necessary, warning that deteriorating weather made highways unsafe.

The storm had significant local impacts, including the cancellation of hockey games, flight delays and closures across multiple school divisions. Schools were closed Monday in the Lakeshore, Lord Selkirk, Red River Valley, Evergreen, Interlake, Sunrise and Prairie Rose school divi-

sions, including Prairie Rose's Hutterian colony schools.

Childcare services were also affected locally, with all Starting Blocks daycare centres in Stonewall closed, along with Stonewall Children's Centre, Teulon Day Care, the Teulon Day Care school-age program and the Balmoral Childcare Centre.

RCMP reminded motorists that travelling on a closed highway is both illegal and dangerous, not only for drivers but also for emergency crews who may be called to respond to collisions or vehicles stuck in snow. During Friday's storm, Portage la Prairie police issued 25 tickets to motorists who ignored highway closures. The offence carries a minimum fine of \$298 and two demerit points.

Motorists are encouraged to check road conditions before travelling by calling 511 or visiting Manitoba 511 online.

U.S. ambassador to Iceland appointee jokes Iceland will be America's 52nd state, sparking anger

By Patricia Barrett

In addition to Canada, Iceland is in the running to become a U.S. state after a diplomat appointed by U.S. president Donald Trump said Iceland will be America's 52nd.

William Long, a former Republican congressman from Missouri and Donald Trump's pick for ambassador of Iceland, said he was only joking last week and did apologize during a media interview for saying Iceland will be America's 52nd state and he'll be the country's governor.

Reaction in Iceland was swift: people launched a petition urging Iceland's foreign minister to reject Long as ambassador.

People of Icelandic descent in the Interlake did not find the quip funny given the context of U.S. political and military aggression and territorial ambitions.

Gimli residents Sherry Benson-Podolchuk and David Podolchuk said they feel it's their duty to speak out publicly against this form of "bullying" and about issues affecting their community, country and threats to the territorial integrity of other nations.

Long calling Iceland the 52nd state and his becoming governor of the NATO-member country shows the American administration's 'arrogance,' and at a time when Trump's ramped up his threats to annex Greenland, striking fear into Greenlanders who say they don't want to be American, as well as NATO and the European Union.

While Iceland is a sovereign NATO member, Greenland is a self-governing territory within Denmark and does not have independent statehood.

"The 52nd state comment is a reflection of Trump's regime. He appoints people who have no experience in diplomacy," said Podolchuk. "They say things we've never heard diplomats ever say before in the past."

The comment also represents an American administration using "intimidation hoping people back down," which is the hallmark of a bully.

Benson-Podolchuk says the crass behaviour is like a disease that's being left untreated and starting to spread.

"This is like a cancer. It starts with one cancerous cell and if no one does anything to kill it, it spreads. And the U.S. administration is surrounded by these cancerous cells that really don't care about anyone except themselves," she said. "A bully is a bully. They only understand one thing: pushback."

As an Icelander on her dad's side, Benson-Podolchuk said she'd be happy to fight "on the beaches" of Iceland

and Greenland should Americans actually invade. And she's proud of the way Icelanders called on their government to reject the appointment of Long as ambassador.

"When Trump first called Canada his 51st state, our visceral reaction was, 'No way.' So every time someone says, 'I like what you got, and I'm coming in to take you over,' you have stand up for your country," she said. "Iceland's government has every right to kick out someone who's disrespecting their country."

Cutting through Trump's rhetoric without minimizing his threats to annex sovereign nations and territories, Podolchuk said there's no evidence Greenland is being threatened by Russia or China as Trump claims.

"There hasn't been a Chinese warship near the shores of Greenland in over a decade. And anyone living in the Arctic knows where the Russians tend to go. There's no security threat to Greenland right now from any other country [apart from America]," said Podolchuk. "Have you heard the term Occam's Razor? It means the simplest explanation is the most likely one. The simplest one in this case is that Trump wants to be the first president in 110 years to add land mass to the U.S. Plus, the American government has an enormous debt and trouble with bond-rating agencies, and Trump probably figures that stealing someone else's critical minerals [i.e., Greenland's] will help pay down the debt."

During the Cold War, Russia was perceived as a threat to Greenland and NATO troops were stationed on the island, he said.

"With the American midterm election coming up and the state of its economy, Greenland is a distraction that Trump created," said Podolchuk. "Seventy-five per cent of people polled in the U.S. recently said they don't want any part of Greenland."

The couple said there are "ramifications" resulting from Trump and his administration's behaviour as Canadians and other allies begin to push back.

Casualties have come in the form of a loss of trust in America, the U.S.'s tourism industry taking a hit, Trump making China "great again" as Canada and China shake hands on an electric-vehicle deal, the E.U. and India negotiating, Kentucky's bourbon industry slumping, a \$4,000-\$5,000 increase in the cost of vehicles in America, Americans' energy bills soaring, high interest rates, Congress members bailing as they may not get re-elected this year, tariffs being "an enormous failure," Republicans openly criticizing Trump, and the American people



INSTAGRAM PHOTOS

Images and video memes popped up on social media in response to U.S. president Donald Trump's repeated claims that America needs Greenland for security and that he won't rule out military force to annex the Arctic island, which is part of the Kingdom of Denmark. The memes may be amusing, but Greenland, NATO and the E.U. aren't laughing. Icelanders asked their government last week to reject Trump's appointee to the U.S. ambassador to Iceland post after the former congressman said Iceland will be America's 52nd state.

being injured or killed by Trump's "gang of brownshirts-jackboots guys" running amok through the streets.

"To me, the only thing Trump's missing is a toga and a lyre," said Podolchuk with reference to Roman emperor Nero, who was accused of starting a fire that burned an area of Rome he wanted for a new palace. "The American economy has flatlined. Inflation is creeping up."

The couple's best advice to deal with the uncertainty and fear Trump creates through his "clickbait" behaviour is to focus on the follow-through rather than the bluster, and be mindful that a 24-hour news cycle and multiple media sources can amplify a story.

People also shouldn't worry about NATO collapsing, as some European leaders have suggested, should America annex Greenland — a Danish territory covered under NATO through Denmark's membership.

"Those end-of-NATO comments mean the United States would no longer be a trusted ally in NATO," said Podolchuk.

NATO-member countries started shoring up their own military defences last year when they realized Trump was "unreliable," Benson-Podolchuk added. "But NATO allies will defend their member countries. If NATO has to let America go [from the alliance], then they're going to do that."

Gimli resident Bill Buckels, who is part of a large Icelandic family, said Trump's vision of a "unified America right through Greenland" is claptrap. And Long's 52nd state comment about Iceland is thuggish behaviour.

"We're all terribly concerned here. My heart goes out to Iceland. They're living in the shadow of Trump and Putin. Greenland and Iceland are small northern countries with cohesive communities," said Buckels. "To have a bully from one of the world's warmongering countries threaten you is upsetting."

Americans' willingness to "get out and vote against Trump" during the midterms, and Canadians' opposing right-wing MAGA elements in Canada that are trying to polarize us and create tension can help restore order, he said.

"What we're seeing in America is fascism unleashed. It's unbelievable. The right-wing element is like a virus infecting the brains of the free world," said Buckels. "And the most imminent threat is the alien within; I'm not sure Canadians understand the threat that's here with us in our communities. People are being apathetic about right-wingers who follow Trump. You can't be apathetic about them. And we can't welcome the Americans in with open arms because they'll consume us."

Interlake-Gimli MLA Derek Johnson is of Icelandic descent and represents a large Icelandic community across the Interlake. He shared a statement with the *Express* saying Iceland is an independent country with a history of democratic traditions, and Long's joke about it becoming the 52nd state runs counter to the principle of national sovereignty that Canada and the international community respects.

Continued on page 13

Grahamdale highlights long-term planning and collaboration in 2025 review

By E. Antonio

The RM of Grahamdale is reflecting on its accomplishments throughout 2025.

Assistant chief administrative officer Devan McCoubrey said the municipality is most proud of its shift toward long-term planning and stronger regional collaboration.

"Council and administration began working more closely with neighbouring municipalities and exploring a more strategic approach to how services are offered," she said.

The municipality completed a community-driven strategic planning process with the support of Community Futures West Interlake, identifying nine priority projects to pursue over the coming years.

The municipal economic development officer is still in the process of composing detailed plans of action for the identified projects, once made, they will have a clearer understanding of which projects to move forward with first. More information on the projects will be released in the coming months.

Council also celebrated progress made on aggregate exploration work, which McCoubrey said is "a huge step toward supporting future infrastructure needs in the municipality."

Two major challenges stood out during the year: the increasing impacts of climate change and ongoing budget pressures.

Climate change brought increased drought conditions and heightened

wildfire risks.

"Both place significant pressure on emergency services and, of course, our local agriculture industry," McCoubrey said.

She noted council addressed these challenges by focusing on preparedness, advocacy and lobbying on behalf of local producers.

They ensured their emergency plan was up to date, including meetings legislated requirements for emergency management and ensuring appropriate staff and volunteers were trained. The RM also benefits from strong relationships formed with their emergency management consultant, Shelley Napier, and the provincial emergency management representative.

"In addition, our fire chiefs and administration are continually assessing equipment, vehicles and the level of service provided by our fire departments, to ensure they are well positioned to respond to wildfire risk and other emergency situations," McCoubrey added.

Inflation and rising costs also had an impact, prompting council to look for more efficient and sustainable ways of operating while exploring new approaches to managing costs without reducing services.

McCoubrey described the RM's financial position as "strong" heading into the end of the year, citing several grants received and the strategic use of reserves to fund major purchases.

The largest purchase budgeted for was a new pumper truck for the Moosehorn Fire Department.

"This investment significantly strengthens local fire protection and emergency response capacity and will benefit the municipality for decades to come," McCoubrey said.

She added council remains very mindful of preserving the RM's financial position, noting that maintaining reserve accounts is critical to managing risk and ensuring long-term success.

"There is always a balance — moving forward with projects and infrastructure upgrades while protecting our financial health," she said.

Other projects council had hoped to advance this year included the Faulkner and Pinemuta waste disposal sites and the Steep Rock drainage project. While there was clear direction and momentum, McCoubrey explained the processes took longer than expected due to provincial and regulatory requirements.

Overall, McCoubrey said 2025 reaffirmed why the RM of Grahamdale is a great place to work, describing her role as her "dream job." She said collaborating with council, brainstorming ideas for success and connecting with the community all remind her why she is passionate about her career.

"My colleagues and I spend a lot of time thinking about how we can improve processes, operate more ef-

ficiently and create more sustainable systems," she added. "Knowing this work helps shape the future of the community I live in is very rewarding, and it's exciting to see so many great ideas taking shape."

Community feedback also reflects positively on the municipality, with residents expressing that they feel supported when reaching out for help. McCoubrey emphasized that all feedback is valued and appreciated by council — whether it highlights what residents love or areas they would like to see improved.

In February, council will begin discussions on the 2026 budget and determine which projects to prioritize. McCoubrey expects a focus on several key infrastructure initiatives, including drainage work in Steep Rock Subdivisions 1 and 2, the cottage lot subdivision along Lafarge Road and Lakeshore Road, and continued upgrades to the Faulkner and Pinemuta waste disposal sites. Council is also expected to explore additional fire protection measures in Steep Rock.

The Moosehorn Fire Hall expansion has already been approved and is necessary to accommodate the new pumper truck, which is scheduled to arrive in March 2027.

"2025 was a year spent building the foundation for long-term success," McCoubrey said. "And 2026 will be a year focused on action."

Access Credit Union commits \$250,000 to Manitoba schools

By Lana Meier

Access Credit Union is investing \$250,000 in Manitoba schools through its 2026 Focused Funding Grant, an initiative aimed this year at strengthening recreation and wellness programs for students.

Now in its second year, the Focused Funding Grant will provide \$25,000 each to 10 K-12 public schools across the province. The funding is intended to enhance programs, activities and spaces that contribute to student well-being, with an emphasis on creating safe, supportive environments where students and communities can connect and thrive.

Access Credit Union said recreation and wellness were selected as the 2026 focus after seeing a strong and growing number of grant applications in these areas in recent years,

particularly those centred on student wellness spaces and recreation needs.

The credit union noted that many schools continue to rely on aging or limited equipment and facilities, while others face space constraints — especially in Manitoba, where weather can limit outdoor activity and gathering areas. Targeted funding, they said, can help introduce new recreation options, increase participation, enhance movement during school breaks and improve accessibility.

Rural and lower-income schools may face additional challenges due to fewer available recreation resources, making school-based investment especially important. Access said the grant is intended to help strengthen spaces that serve not only students but also the wider community.

"Investments in school recreation

and wellness extend well beyond the school walls," the credit union said, noting that gyms, playgrounds and outdoor spaces are often shared with families and community groups. Enhancing these areas helps build stronger connections between schools, families and local organizations while promoting inclusive access.

"We saw tremendous interest from across Manitoba last year and we're proud to once again offer a program that speaks to the specific needs in our communities," said Curt Letkeman, board chair of Access Credit Union. "By focusing on recreation and wellness, we can truly make an impactful difference, remove barriers and create lasting opportunities for children to grow and develop."

The grant is open to all K-12 public schools in Manitoba. Applications

may be submitted by parent advisory committees, school administrators, teachers or school divisions. Projects must be pre-approved by the applicable school division and supported by a letter from the school principal or vice-principal.

Grant applications open Feb. 16 and close March 31. Successful schools will be notified in the fall, followed by a public announcement.

Access Credit Union said the Focused Funding Grant will rotate its area of focus from year to year, guided by ongoing conversations with community organizations and local leaders. Those insights help ensure the program remains relevant, responsive and impactful while allowing support to be shared across as many Manitoba communities as possible.

Riverton enhancing heritage, accessibility and community connection

\$10,000 MASC grant for the Municipality of Bifrost-Riverton and four community organizations

By Patricia Barrett

Riverton is embarking on a project to enhance its valuable heritage assets after receiving a substantial grant from the Manitoba Association of Senior Communities (MASC), which oversees Age Friendly Manitoba.

MASC/Age Friendly awarded \$10,000 to the Municipality of Bifrost-Riverton, which has teamed up with four local organizations on a project called Heritage in Action.

The grant money will be used to enhance accessibility, safety and community connection in Riverton.

"The grant from Age Friendly Manitoba recognizes the significance of the Heritage in Action Stories, Safety, and Community Connections project, validates the collaborative spirit of our community and partner organizations and will help us turn shared vision into action," said Ruth Ann Furgala, who works with the Riverton Transportation Heritage Centre. "We sincerely appreciate the collaborative support."

The Municipality of Bifrost-Riverton's assistant chief administrative officer Deanna Fridfinnson prepared a detailed overview of the project, costs and partner responsibilities.

She said the municipality is working with the Riverton Transportation Heritage Centre, Djorfung Ladies Aid, Riverton Parks and Recreation, and the Riverton Elks Lodge #530.

"Heritage in Action embodies the spirit of an age-friendly community — one that values its history, empowers its seniors, and connects generations through shared purpose. With strong partnerships, measurable outcomes, and sustainable improvements, this project will create a safer, more welcoming, and more connected Riverton for everyone," wrote Fridfinnson in her overview.

The Heritage in Action project came about after conversations among seniors' groups, municipal leaders, volunteers and heritage advocates, all of whom wanted to preserve Riverton's "rich history while ensuring community spaces remain safe, accessible and welcoming for all ages."

The municipality's role in the project is to provide in-kind administrative support to oversee leadership



PHOTO BY CORRINE EINARSON OF NEISTI PHOTOGRAPHY.

The Riverton Transportation Heritage Centre will be the "central hub" for the town's Heritage in Action project, which received a \$10,000 grant from the Manitoba Association of Senior Communities (MASC)/Age Friendly.

and coordination of the project, plus facility maintenance.

The Riverton Transportation Heritage Centre's role is to act as the project's central hub, and its volunteers will host programs and events, manage artifact displays and maintain the upgraded facilities for ongoing community use.

The Djorfung Ladies Aid, a volunteer organization that's turning 125 years old this year, will be constructing a new information kiosk and supporting heritage storytelling and community gatherings.

Riverton Parks and Recreation's role is to "bridge the gap" between youth and seniors and engage younger residents in volunteer roles, event support and mentorship activities.

The Riverton Elks, a volunteer and funding support organization, will be providing logistical support, resources for events and volunteers.

"Together, these partners ensure the project's long-term success," wrote Fridfinnson. "The Municipality will maintain infrastructure improvements, while the RTHC, Djorfung Ladies Aid, Parks and Recreation, and Elks will sustain programming and community engagement beyond the grant period."

The project will enhance community accessibility and cultural preservation, community engagement, volunteer mobilization and sustainability.

"The Heritage in Action project enhances accessibility, safety, and intergenerational connection within the Riverton Transportation Heritage Centre (RTHC) and surrounding community spaces," wrote Fridfinnson. "It celebrates local history while strengthening community well-being through inclusive infrastructure improvements, volunteer training, and heritage-based storytelling activities."

The project includes building an



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DEANNA FRIDFINNISON, MUNICIPALITY OF BIFROST-RIVERTON

Don Fletcher (centre left, holding cheque) from MASC/Age Friendly Manitoba presented representatives from the Municipality of Bifrost-Riverton, the Riverton Transportation Heritage Centre, the Riverton Elks, Djorfung Ladies Aid and Riverton Parks and Recreation with a cheque for \$10,000.

interlocking brick patio and kiosk, shaded seating area, level pathways and handrails for people with mobility challenges. The kiosk will have QR codes to link to local historical events, oral storytelling, community gatherings and photographs.

An interior security gate and interior security windows were installed at the transportation centre, and the municipality installed an interior and exterior camera security-monitoring system to protect artifacts and exhibits.

The Riverton Elks purchased a Canadian Pacific railway bench, which was part of Gimli's railway station, and story boards.

The total project cost has been pegged at \$21,307.

The Manitoba Association of Senior Communities is the steward of Age Friendly Manitoba. MASC provides services to Manitoba's aging population.

Municipalities can apply for a Community Collaboration Grant for up to \$10,000 to support a project that brings together a sponsoring municipality and three or more community organizations.

MASC is funded by the provincial



Municipality of Bifrost-Riverton deputy reeve Chad Johnson (right) received the \$10,000 cheque from Don Fletcher from MASC/Age Friendly Manitoba.

government through the department of health, seniors and active living, and by the Winnipeg Foundation.

Eligibility for the grant is based on an applicant meeting two or more age friendly domains.

Riverton will be officially opening the Reggie Leach Museum Room in the Riverton Transportation Heritage Centre on July 4, 2026, and the Djorfung Ladies Aid will be celebrating 125 years of community service.

> AMERICA'S 52ND STATE, FROM PG.11

"This ... resonates deeply in Interlake-Gimli. Our region is known as New Iceland, and we are home to the largest Icelandic population outside of Iceland itself," said Johnson. "People here take Iceland's independence and history very personally. Iceland fought hard for its sovereignty and that ... matters not just in Reykjavik but to Icelandic-Canadians in Gimli and across the Interlake."

Johnson added that he's taking Long at his word that it was a joke and appreciates his apology. But given the current sensitivities around Greenland and Arctic security — and rheto-

ric about annexation — the remark was made in "poor taste."

The *Express* asked Gimli Mayor Kevin Chudd for comment on Long's 52nd state joke. Chudd had gone to Iceland last year to sign a sister agreement with the town of Akureyri.

RM spokesperson Christine Payne said the municipality "does not comment on international diplomatic matters or the internal appointment processes of foreign governments."

The *Express* also reached out Vilhjalmur Wiium, the Consul General of Iceland in Winnipeg for comment.

Interlake-Gimli MLA Derek Johnson calls for provincial solidarity after Ontario premier threatens to pull Crown Royal

By Patricia Barrett

Interlake-Gimli MLA Derek Johnson is concerned the Crown Royal whisky war brewing in Ontario could negatively affect Canadian unity and is calling for Ontario and Manitoba to work together on a compromise solution.

In response to U.S. president Donald Trump's tariff and trade war, and an August announcement made by alcoholic drinks-maker Diageo about moving its Amherstburg, Ont., bottling plant to America, Ontario Premier Doug Ford promised last fall to remove Crown Royal whisky from the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO), Canada's largest alcohol retailer, and added that Diageo is jeopardizing \$740 million worth of business with the LCBO.

Ford reiterated his promise last week, saying "100 per cent I am" and that he "can't wait" when asked if he was still intending to remove Crown Royal when the Amherstburg plant closes at the end of February and about 200 Ontarians lose their jobs.

"You better stock up there, buddy," Ford told a reporter.

Crown Royal is made in Gimli at the Diageo distillery.

Johnson says he can appreciate the pain Ontarians will feel when they lose their jobs at the bottling plant next month and "understands where Doug Ford is coming from," but he says removing Crown Royal from LCBO shelves will create interprovincial trade barriers at a time when Canadian provinces and territories should be forming a united front in the face of economic threats from America.

"It will have a ripple effect. It won't shut down Diageo [in Gimli] by any means. But the Ontario government is the largest purchaser of liquor in Canada, and it has buying power. Ford's keeping one product off the shelf that's actually made in Canada seems a little ridiculous," said Johnson. "We as the [Manitoba] Progressive Conservative party hope that Doug Ford will get together with other leaders across the country ... and they could, collectively, discuss taking Diageo products that aren't made in Canada off the shelf because the last thing we want right now are interprovincial trade wars. I think our goal should be to break down trade barriers within our country and, quite frankly, put Canada first."

Johnson said he had suggested a few weeks ago that Diageo products made

in other regions around the world such as Asia-Pacific and in countries such as the U.S., Scotland, China, Ireland and Mexico could be taken off liquor shelves rather than Crown Royal, which supports Interlake jobs. And Manitoba PC leader Obby Khan had written to Ford a few weeks after the Ontario premier promised (in early January) that he'd follow through

on removing Crown Royal, but the PCs had not received a response, as of Jan. 14 when Johnson spoke with the *Express*.

Johnson said Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew reiterated his suggestion after touring the Crown Royal distillery in Gimli last

week.

Diageo decided to close the Ontario bottling plant to improve efficiency, its North American supply chain and to ensure the company is best positioned for long-term sustainable growth, according to a Aug. 28, 2025, news release. Its distillation plant in Gimli will not be affected.

"Crown Royal will continue to be mashed, distilled and aged in Canada, just as it has been since 1939," states the release. "Diageo will maintain its significant footprint across Canada, including at our Canadian headquarters and warehouse operations in the Greater Toronto Area and other bottling and distillation facilities in Gimli, Manitoba, and Valleyfield, Quebec."

Diageo has over 200 brands and sales in about 180 countries, according to its website. In addition to Crown Royal, brands made by the company include Tanqueray, Captain Morgan, Smirnoff, Johnnie Walker and Guinness.

The company's 2025 annual report says the "macroeconomic and geopolitical environment continues to be challenging for the total beverage alcohol industry [and that] over the past two years, consumer wallets and confidence have been under sustained pressure." Compared to 2024, Diageo reported lower profits and earnings per share.

The Ontario premier said earlier this month that Diageo's promise to keep its other operations in Canada going was a "bunch of BS."

"It's all going to Alabama. Mark my words, it's going to Alabama," Ford was quoted as saying.

Although it's reassuring the London-based company has so far said it's not upping sticks in Gimli, Johnson said there'd be a lot at stake should that

"YOU BETTER STOCK UP THERE, BUDDY."



EXPRESS FILE PHOTO BY PATRICIA BARRETT

The Diageo distillery north of Gimli. The plant makes Crown Royal whisky.



EXPRESS PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREW SMITH

Interlake-Gimli MLA Derek Johnson (right) toured the Diageo distillery about three years ago.

change and Diageo decided to close the distillery on the northern outskirts of town.

Not only is Crown Royal a part of "Gimli and the Interlake's identity," but it also supports the economy in town and beyond.

"[The distillery] provides jobs in the Gimli community. We have families earning a paycheque. Plant employees spend their money in the community and that creates other jobs," said Johnson. "The ripple effect [of the plant closing] would go a lot further than the jobs at the distillery. It would also affect boilermakers that come to work there once a year [for maintenance], electricians and Interlake farmers who produce the rye that goes into making the best whisky in the world."

The plant ships whisky by rail, which supports that industry and also supports the trucking industry,

which delivers rye and other supplies, he added.

"We can't be cutting off our nose to spite our face. We need to work on this as unified front, putting Canada first so that we protect Canadian jobs and attract investment in Canada — and Manitoba as well," said Johnson. "And we need to support our workers who are still working in this country and not jeopardize their livelihoods through interprovincial boycotts."

Also reassuring, he said, is Diageo's plan to invest \$19 million into the Gimli distillery to replace its natural gas boilers with electric systems in order to operate on 100 per cent renewable electricity. Manitoba Hydro is providing a new 20-kilometre transmission line from a hydro station near Fraserwood.

The project is anticipated to start in 2027.

People First of Interlake to host first meeting in Teulon on Jan. 28

By E. Antonio

People First of Manitoba is a self-advocacy group for individuals with intellectual disabilities, and Selkirk resident Jessica Croy is thrilled to launch the inaugural People First of Manitoba-Interlake Chapter.

Croy will lead monthly meetings hosted in Teulon, Stonewall, Selkirk and Gimli. Inspired after Selkirk's People First of Manitoba chapter disbanded during the COVID-19 pandemic, she and other members share one goal: to be the best advocates they can be for themselves and other people with intellectual disabilities.

The first meeting will take place Wednesday, Jan. 28 at the Teulon Rockwood Community Centre at 6 p.m. Future meetings will be held on the third Wednesday of every month, rotating among the four communities. Exact locations will be posted to the People First of Manitoba Facebook page closer to each session, or interested participants can contact the Interlake chapter's advisor, Shannon, at 204-482-5435 for more information.

People First of Canada was founded in 1973 by a group of individuals seeking to leave institutions and advocate for their own rights. Provincial chapters have since emerged across the country, promoting inclusivity and accessibility.

"We do this so the ministers and the public know we have voices," said Croy. "We want to help people learn how to be self-advocates and make sure they know their rights."

Croy explained that since the pandemic, Interlake residents interested in getting involved with People First of Manitoba often had to travel to Winnipeg — something that is not always easy. She has been involved with the organization since 2013 and said it has been a life-changing experience. Now, as leader of the Interlake chapter and treasurer for People First of Manitoba, she hopes to use her voice to inspire others.

"I like to do things that help teach people about their rights," she said. "It's rewarding watching other people learn to stand up for themselves."



Jessica Croy, leader of People First of Interlake and People First of Manitoba treasurer, speaks at a People First of Manitoba event.

Membership is open to all individuals with intellectual disabilities, and Croy's goal is to see meetings grow with strong participation.

"We are led by and here for all people with intellectual disabilities," she added. Meetings are expected to last one hour and will focus on advocacy in a variety of ways, particularly exploring how to create a more accessible and inclusive community. Snacks and beverages will be provided, and participants need only bring themselves.

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"The more voices we have, the more voices will be heard," said Croy. "Don't be shy — come out and give it a try."

Those seeking more information can contact the Interlake chapter advisor, Shannon, at 204-482-5435.



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Ukrainian dancers celebrate Malanka in Fisher Branch



EXPRESS PHOTOS BY SARA URUSKI PHOTOGRAPHY
Dancers from the Fisher Branch's Chaika Ukrainian Dance Club perform at a Malanka celebration earlier this month, celebrating the Ukrainian New Year through traditional music and dance.



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Selkirk set to host high-stakes 2026 Bunge Championship

By Kieran Reimer

Manitoba's top curlers will converge on Selkirk next month, with a berth at the 2026 Montana's Brier on the line at the Bunge Championship.

From Feb. 3-8, the Selkirk Recreation Complex will host the Manitoba Men's Provincial Curling Championship, formerly known as the Viterra Championship, marking the city's first time hosting the event since 2022.

The 24-team field will compete for the provincial title and the right to represent Manitoba at the national championship, setting the stage for a high-stakes week of competition.

"We are proud and honoured to host this event every opportunity that we

can," said tournament committee co-chair Scott Szydilk.

Reid Carruthers' rink will enter the championship as the defending title-holders after defeating Team Braden Calvert in the final at the 2025 event in Portage la Prairie.

Teams from across Manitoba will take to the ice in Selkirk, representing every region of the province. The North will be represented by Burntwood skip Butch Mouck. West 1 entries include Dauphin, skipped by Greg Todoruk, and Gladstone, led by Jeff Stewart, while West 2 will feature Virden skip Jace Freeman and Brandon's Cale Dunbar. South 1 will be represented by two Portage teams,

skipped by Ryan Hyde and Brett Moxham, along with Holland skip Jeremy Sundell, while South 2 sends Steinbach under the leadership of Stefan Gudmundson. The East region will be represented by Gimli skip Derrick Anderson.

Winnipeg entries include Deer Lodge's Sean Grassie, Charleswood skip Cory Anderson, Fort Rouge's Andrew Wickman and Pembina skip Daniel Birchard.

Additional qualifiers include AMCC's Brett Walter and Morden skip Marcus Titchkosky through berth bonspiels, Carberry's Kelly Marnoch from the Brandon Men's Bonspiel, defending champion Reid

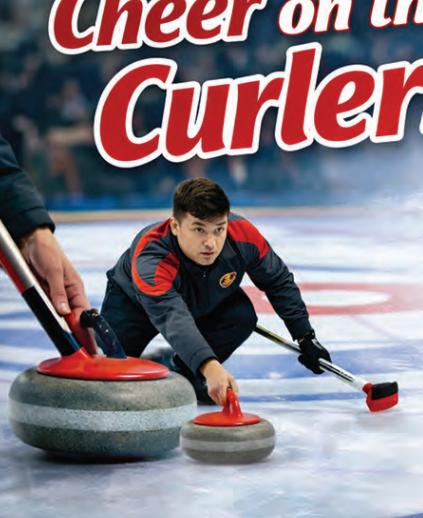
Carruthers of Granite, CTRS qualifier Jordon McDonald of AMCC, and Manitoba Curling Tour qualifiers Braden Calvert (Heather), Tanner Lott (Fort Rouge) and Steve Irwin (Brandon).

Selkirk last hosted the championship in 2022 at the Selkirk Curling Club due to pandemic restrictions, when Team Mike McEwan claimed the provincial crown.

With teams, officials and fans expected from across Manitoba, organizers say the event will provide a boost for local hotels, restaurants and businesses.

Continued on next page

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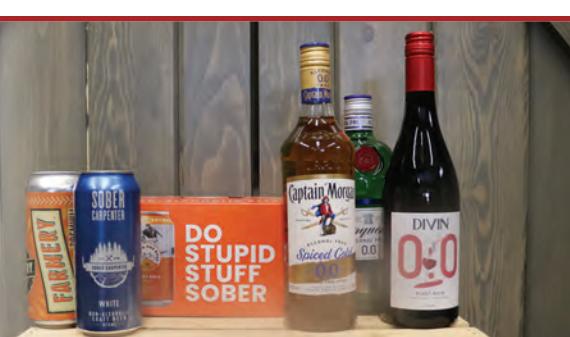




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DONT' MISS OUT ON THIS GREAT CURLING EVENT

Continued from previous page

Szydilk said about 170 volunteers have already signed up to support the championship.

In the weeks leading up to the event, the recreation complex will be transformed from the home of the Manitoba Junior Hockey League's Selkirk Steelers into a five-sheet curling ven-

ue.

"It brings people to Selkirk, so local businesses benefit, and the City of Selkirk gains exposure through news coverage and streaming," said Szydilk. "It benefits the entire community and the Tri-S area."

Tickets are available at the door or in advance through the CurlManitoba website. Options include event pass-

es, day passes and single-draw tickets, with children 12 and under admitted free.

Tickets can be purchased at <https://selkirk.curling.io/en/programs>.

Those interested in sponsoring the event can contact [michelle.t.tokar@gmail.com](mailto: michelle.t.tokar@gmail.com)

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Winnipeg Beach Community Centre hosts chili dinner and dance Jan. 24

By E. Antonio

The Winnipeg Beach Community Centre is inviting residents to beat the winter blues at its first-ever Winter Warm Up Chili Dinner and Dance on Jan. 24.

For \$30 per person, attendees can enjoy a hearty bowl of handmade chili prepared by local staff using fresh, locally sourced ingredients. The meal also includes garlic bread, salad and a drink of choice, either alcoholic or non-alcoholic. Additional beverages will be available for purchase throughout the evening. Doors open at 5:30 p.m., dinner is served at 6 p.m. and dancing begins at 7 p.m..

Winnipeg Beach recreation assistant Steffanie Blair says she is excited to bring the new event to the community.

"[It's about] bringing people within our community and surrounding communities together," said Blair. "To me, chili is a comfort meal and the perfect way to warm up during

our cold Manitoba winters."

The dinner and dance is open to people of all ages, with proceeds supporting future programming at the Winnipeg Beach Community Centre. Staff hope to sell 75 tickets and make the evening a memorable celebration for everyone.

"Our main goal is to provide an enjoyable night out for all those in attendance and to get our communities excited about current and future local events," Blair added. "Community support is essential so we can continue offering new programs and events for everyone."

Entertainment for the evening includes live music by Double Bourbon Duo, as well as a door prize raffle, with every ticketholder automatically entered.

To purchase tickets, call 204-389-5126 or email programs@winnipegbeach.ca. Payment options include e-transfer, cash or cheque. No physical tickets will be issued; names will be



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

The Double Bourbon Duo will provide live music and keep the dance floor moving at the Winnipeg Beach Community Centre's Winter Warm Up Chili Dinner and Dance on Jan. 24.

added to a guest list once payment is received.

"Strengthening social bonds and bringing neighbours together is important," said Blair. "Winter can feel

lonely for some, and sharing food, music and dance can truly warm the soul. Get ready to put on your dancing shoes!"

Gimli RCMP make arrests in home invasion

By Lana Meier

Gimli RCMP have arrested two women in connection with a violent home invasion north of Gimli earlier this month.

Police were called at 8:40 a.m. on Jan. 10 after a male reported a home invasion at his residence, located approximately three kilometres north of Gimli. Officers learned the incident had occurred about three hours earlier.

RCMP said the 50-year-old homeowner was in Winnipeg when he noticed unusual activity on his surveillance cameras. When he returned home, he found his 51-year-old wife on the floor, tied up with extension cords.

An investigation determined that two female suspects, who had been staying in a guest house on the property and were known to the homeowners, broke into the main residence early that morning. Police allege the suspects assaulted the female resident, threatened her with a knife, tied her up and robbed the home.

After the robbery, the suspects fled the scene in a vehicle stolen from the property. The vehicle was later located abandoned in the Gimli Industrial Park that afternoon.

On Jan. 14, Shaylynne Crackle, 27, turned herself in at the Gimli RCMP detachment and was arrested. Later that day, officers located and arrested Rachel Disbrowe, 47, at a residence in

Gimli.

Both accused remain in custody and face multiple charges, including breaking and entering, robbery,

forcible confinement, assault with a weapon and theft of a motor vehicle.

Gimli RCMP said the investigation is ongoing.

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Manitoba bug expert tracks rising insect threats to crops

By E. Antonio

Bugs are no strangers to Manitoba — especially for farmers and agronomists who deal with them every growing season. Helping those producers understand which insects pose a risk and which are beneficial is the job of John Gavloski, provincial entomologist with Manitoba Agriculture, based in Carman.

"A huge part of my job is educating farmers and agronomists about insects," Gavloski said. "I spend a lot of time fielding questions, collecting insect data and producing relevant information about insects that may harm or benefit crops."

While Gavloski always knew he wanted to work with animals, his interest in entomology took off during university after enrolling in an entomology class taught by what he described as a "very enthusiastic instructor." One course quickly turned into two, which eventually led to a summer job in the field — and a career that has now spanned nearly three decades.

This week, Gavloski is sharing his expertise at Ag Days in Brandon, where he is delivering two presentations focused on insect concerns in Manitoba crops.

The first presentation addressed insects commonly found in canola



Cabbage seedpod weevils are a growing concern for canola fields. Pictured is a cabbage seedpod weevil found in a canola crop near Carman.

crops. A major focus was the cabbage seedpod weevil, an insect that had not previously raised alarm in the province.

"I have been tracking the cabbage seedpod weevil since its arrival in Manitoba in 2017, and the levels were never reaching problem status," he said. "But last year, the population completely exploded. Now it's my job to inform farmers how to scout for it, how many is too many and what steps they can take to control it."

He also emphasized the diversity of weevils. Worldwide, there are more than eight times as many species of



EXPRESS PHOTOS SUBMITTED

John Gavloski, provincial entomologist with Manitoba Agriculture, poses with a New Guinea spiny stick insect. Gavloski is attending Ag Days in Brandon this week, where he is presenting on insect concerns in Manitoba crops.

weevils as there are birds, with some weevils being beneficial to agriculture.

His second presentation highlighted several insects that were abundant across a variety of crops in Manitoba in 2025. Gavloski discussed three dif-

ferent weevils, how to correctly identify them and effective strategies for managing them. Flea beetles in canola, grasshoppers and beetles that feed on stored grain were also covered.

The session concluded with a "Crop Talk," allowing attendees to ask questions, similar to the weekly Crop Talks he serves as a panellist on during the summer.

"I want to make sure farmers and agronomists are getting the information they need," Gavloski said. "I try to address most of the questions they have. I want what's best for them, and Crop Talks help with that process."

During the growing season, Gavloski also distributes weekly insect survey results through the Manitoba Crop Pest Updates newsletter. Anyone interested in subscribing can email crops@gov.mb.ca with the subject line "Subscribe to Insect Report."

Despite his focus on pests, Gavloski emphasized that not all insects are harmful. Many play important roles in agriculture, including pollination, decomposition and natural pest control.

"To put it simply, if you don't have

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Continued on page 23

World premiere *Tad & Birdy* opens at Manitoba Theatre for Young People

By Lana Meier

A new world premiere is set to take flight this winter at Manitoba Theatre for Young People, as *Tad & Birdy* takes to the mainstage from Jan. 30 to Feb. 7 before touring schools across Manitoba through the spring.

Written by Anika Dowsett, the production follows the unlikely friendship between Tad, a bird-voiced tree frog tadpole new to the world, and Birdy, a lovebird who believes they already know everything — except how to be happy. Set inside a messy bedroom, the story explores friendship, change and the courage it takes to look beyond self-imposed limits.

"Birdy, I'm with you. Whatever happens in the big blue world, we can face it together," Dowsett writes in the play.

Recommended for ages five and up, the 55-minute production blends humour and heart while speaking directly to the experiences of young audiences navigating a world that can feel overwhelming and unfamiliar.

Dowsett grew up in Gimli, and says the Interlake community left a lasting imprint on her as an artist.

"Gimli is in my bones," she said. "It's a quirky small town with a fascinating cultural sector that really changed how I view art."

She credits experiences such as the Gimli International Film Festival and the Nuna/Now cultural exchange for expanding her creative worldview at a young age, along with the inspiration drawn from Lake Winnipeg's vast shoreline.

"I think about the expansiveness of Lake Winnipeg often when I'm faced with a blank page," she said.

Dowsett moved to Winnipeg the day



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

Playwright Anika Dowsett, who grew up in Gimli, is the writer of *Tad & Birdy*, a world-premiere production opening Jan. 30 at Manitoba Theatre for Young People before touring Manitoba schools this spring.

after graduating high school, where access to theatre training, creative mentors and a broader arts community helped solidify playwriting as a career path. Her connection to MTYP runs deep — from taking classes as a teenager to later working as a box office attendant, instructor's assistant and director.

"For a long time I have thought of MTYP as my second home," she said. "Having *Tad & Birdy* premiere there, in the place that shaped so much of my life, is overwhelming."

From workshop to world premiere

The idea for *Tad & Birdy* began as a writing exercise during MTYP's Sandbox program, where Dowsett was challenged to create a children's show inspired by a randomly selected song — in her case, one about tadpoles.

"I immediately saw this little tadpole in a jar asking a bird about life," she said.

Years of development followed, supported by MTYP and Young People's Theatre Toronto's Leaps and Bounds program. Dramaturg Pablo Felices-Luna helped shape the final work, encouraging Dowsett to widen the story's lens beyond the bedroom walls.

"Creating a play is a community effort," she said. "MTYP has been the community behind this one."

Writing for young audiences

Dowsett says honesty is at the heart of writing for children.

"Youth are the smartest audiences," she said. "They will see right through anything that doesn't feel real."

She also views the process as a conversation with her younger self, asking what a five- or six-year-old Anika needed to hear and how she wanted to be treated.

That same philosophy carries into the provincial tour, which will see *Tad & Birdy* performed in schools from Feb. 9 to May 1, including in Gimli.

"Access to the arts is a vital part of education," she said. "I feel honoured that my play gets to meet youth across Manitoba exactly where they are."

Performance details

Tad & Birdy runs on the MTYP mainstage with performances on:

- Friday, Jan. 30 at 7 p.m.
- Saturday, Jan. 31 at 1 p.m.
- Sunday, Feb. 1 at 1 p.m. (relaxed performance)
- Sunday, Feb. 1 at 4 p.m.
- Saturday, Feb. 7 at 1 p.m. (ASL performance)
- Saturday, Feb. 7 at 4 p.m. (audio-described performance)

Tickets are available online or by calling the MTYP box office at 204-942-8898.

As her first professional production, Dowsett says *Tad & Birdy* represents both a milestone and a beginning.

"The world is so big and so blue and so full," she said. "We'll see where we go from here."

> BUG EXPERT, FROM PG. 22

the good guys, the bad guys will quickly take over," he said. "The constant battle is ensuring populations don't get out of hand. It's about knowing how to manage insects, and that's where I can help."

According to Gavloski, farmers and agronomists are generally appreciative of his work, often sharing positive feedback about receiving early warnings on emerging insect issues and having opportunities to ask questions.

When it comes to crop vulnerability in Manitoba, Gavloski identified sunflowers and canola as being particularly susceptible to insect damage. Several insects feed exclusively on sunflowers, and some can be quite

damaging to sunflowers grown for seed consumption.

Canola faces its own challenges, especially from flea beetles. When early crop growth is delayed, flea beetles can feed heavily on seedlings, creating what Gavloski described as a "real problem" for producers.

More information on insects and agriculture — including past seasonal reports and insect identification guides — can be found at www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/crops/insects/.

Gavloski noted pest populations can fluctuate dramatically from year to year, depending on factors such as weather conditions and the presence of natural enemies like predators, diseases and parasitoids.

Over his career, he has seen a noticeable increase in the number of pest species in Manitoba, adding

to the number that must be monitored. Some introduced insects arrive through natural movement, but many are human-assisted. For insects of concern on crops and trees, many arrive in the province through vehicle transportation or the movement of firewood — something that is strongly discouraged nationwide.

"Bugs are awfully good hitchhikers," he said. "Always be conscious if you are transporting plants or soil into the province, and make sure the insects we don't have — and don't want — stay out."

Looking ahead, Gavloski expects to add more invasive species to his watch list over the next few years and is already monitoring several insects that have yet to arrive in Manitoba.

While insect populations are changing, the technology used to track them

in provincial surveys has remained relatively stable. Although newer, more automated traps and synthetic lures are available that can capture a wider range of insects, Gavloski still finds simpler, traditional trapping methods cheaper, easier to deploy and at times more accurate than complex mechanical systems.

For backyard gardeners, Gavloski offered one key piece of advice: use insecticides only as a last resort. When practical, physically removing insects is often easier and cheaper, and overuse of chemicals can lead to resistance.

"All you need is a few individuals with genetics that allow them to survive the insecticide," he explained. "Those survivors reproduce, spread their traits, and eventually the chemicals no longer work."

Gimli council marks progress over 2025 and plans for community comfort in future

By Patricia Barrett

Gimli council made strides in several areas over the course of 2025 and said its looking forward new initiatives that will ensure the comfort of the community.

The municipality's community engagement manager and spokesperson Christine Payne said council — Mayor Kevin Chudd, Deputy Mayor and Coun. Kurt Reichert and councillors Andy Damm, Richard Petrowski and Thora Palson — started off 2025 with "responsible planning" and the aligning of its vision with community priorities. Council invested in infrastructure and recreation, and embarked on modernization initiatives while maintaining fiscal discipline.

Council's 2025 financial plan, which delivered a balanced budget of \$30.6 million, gave ratepayers information on how council is investing in the three areas.

On the capital projects front in 2025, council improved water infrastructure with water main upgrades on Fifth and Sixth avenues; retrofitted the Evergreen Library branch with LED lighting; paved Fifth Avenue between Centre Street and Lady of the Lake; purchased equipment, utility and recreation vehicles and a road sweeper; created development standards for streets and sidewalks; demolished the old water building at the Industrial Park; completed airport resurfacing; replaced the outdoor pool's pump; designed the fitness centre; repaired street surfaces; and purchased land.

"This summer, the Gimli Recreation Centre completed essential roof repairs thanks to funding from the [provincial government's] Arts, Culture and Sport in Communities Program," said Payne. "These upgrades will prevent future leaks, improve energy efficiency and extend the life of the facility — a significant step toward addressing aging infrastructure and ensuring our community spaces remain vibrant for years to come."

Council's focus on modernization included the creation of a parking bylaw (No. 25-0004) that introduced rules for safety and accessibility, seasonal restrictions and towing authority for violations; the addition of a human resource officer to strengthen workforce management and compliance; fibre-optic upgrades and enhanced security for municipal buildings; and expanded payment options for ratepayers such as online credit card payments, e-transfers and pre-authorized sign-ups. Council also improved the efficiency of the Arnes Landfill site.

"We modernized waste management with a no-cash policy and new

tipping fees for bulky items and Freon appliances — implemented to improve efficiency, sustainability and cost recovery," said Payne.

On the recreation front, council celebrated the ground-breaking ceremony of the Gimli Youth Hub, an initiative started by a grassroots community group. Community members, including youth and local organizations such as Hailey's Way, envisaged a need for a youth centre in Gimli and began raising money to build it. The Gimli Youth Centre Capital Fundraising Committee was then created with the support of council. The committee has raised \$50,000 of a \$350,000 fundraising goal, according to the Gimliyouthhub.ca website.

"One of the most exciting milestones was breaking ground on the Gimli Youth Hub," said Payne. "After years of planning and fundraising, the construction process began this fall, with completion expected in spring 2026. This space will offer programs, drop-in opportunities and partnerships designed to empower youth and strengthen community ties."

Council also "advanced" a recreation campus master plan that's supported by a \$1-million grant and launched a trails master plan, which is a blueprint for connecting neighbourhoods, parks and waterfront areas.

"These projects reflect our commitment to wellness, inclusion and long-term planning," said Payne.

On the environmental front, the protection of Lake Winnipeg "remained a top priority" with council opposing the Crystal Spring Hutterite colony's proposal to build a wastewater lagoon in the RM of Armstrong where it owns land. The site is on the border of the RM of Gimli and Willow Creek, which flows east into Gimli's Siglavik subdivision and the wetlands fringing Lake Winnipeg. Council had contacted the provincial government, advocating for stronger wastewater licensing and environmental safeguards.

Council is moving ahead in 2026 on the decommissioning of Gimli's old wastewater lagoon on the border of the South Beach neighbourhood by turning it into a 144-acre constructed wetland. Sludge has been removed from the lagoon and spread on agricultural fields in the RM.

Payne said the conversion of the lagoon is a "forward-thinking initiative that will serve as a living classroom for learners of all ages." The wetland will have a trail system, interpretive elements and will foster understanding of wetland ecosystems and riparian zones and their "critical role" in protecting Lake Winnipeg.



RM OF GIMLI

From left: Coun. Richard Petrowski, Deputy Mayor and Coun. Kurt Reichert, Mayor Kevin Chudd, Coun. Thora Palson and Coun. Andy Damm.

"The Gimli Wetland initiative emphasizes education and community engagement, inspiring future generations to embrace climate solutions and ecological restoration. Its phased approach — beginning with wetland development and leading toward an interpretive centre — reflects a thoughtful, scalable vision," said Payne. "Environmentally, the site lies within the Willow Creek Watershed, a key contributor to Lake Winnipeg, which has suffered from wetland loss and degradation. Repurposing this land demonstrates how communities can support biodiversity, mitigate climate impacts and promote sustainable land use practices while honouring the cultural significance of Treaty One territory and the heritage of Indigenous and Icelandic communities."

To improve tourist engagement, council launched the Gimli Beach Guide on its website.

"This digital resource provides real-time information on beach amenities, accessibility, safety tips and local attractions, all in one place," said Payne. "It complements our efforts to promote Gimli as a destination where visitors can explore culture, recreation and waterfront experiences with confidence and convenience."

Council also had its eye on beautification efforts in town last year. Gimli earned "4 Blooms" and a special mention for Viking Park at the Manitoba Communities in Bloom Awards, which was "a testament to our commitment to beautification, heritage and sustainability," said Payne.

Council entered into a sister-city partnership with Akureyri, Iceland, last October. Mayor Chudd attended a ceremony in Iceland to help strengthen partnerships. Last year marked the 150th anniversary of Icelandic settlement in Manitoba.

"These international connections celebrate our shared heritage and open doors for collaboration that reaches far beyond our shores. Gimli's story is not only local: it is global, rooted in tradition and extending across oceans," said Payne.

Council strengthened public safety through investments in the Gimli Fire Department by advancing a 10-year fleet-replacement strategy and prioritizing the purchase of a new \$2.7-million platform truck and pumper "to meet the needs of a growing community with multi-storey buildings," said Payne. "These investments ensure Gimli Fire and Rescue can protect lives and property for decades to come."

A highlight of 2025 was the fire department taking part in an emergency crash exercise in September at Gimli Airport to test emergency response plans. 17 Wing Winnipeg and 435 Transport Search and Rescue Squadron provided a C130 Hercules aircraft for the exercise, which tested coordination, resource deployment and response under pressure.

The RM also expanded Connect Gimli, its emergency alert and community notification system, which provides real-time alerts for fire bans,

Continued on page 25

Public hearing set for Geysir Hall heritage designation

By Lana Meier

Residents will have an opportunity next month to share their views on the future of a well-known Interlake landmark, as council for the Municipality of Bifrost-Riverton moves forward with a public hearing on the proposed designation of Geysir Hall as a municipal heritage site.

The hearing is scheduled for Feb. 12 at 9 a.m. in council chambers at the municipal office at 329 River Rd. in Arborg. Council will hear representations under The Heritage Resources Act (Manitoba) before deciding whether to formally designate the property.

The site under consideration is Geysir Hall, located at 16006 River Rd. in Geysir, owned by Geysir Cooperative Community Club Inc. and situated on approximately 2.12 acres.

According to Corrine Einarsson, president of the Geysir Cooperative Community Club, the proposal reflects both the historical importance of the hall and growing interest in protecting places that represent the region's pioneer and settlement history.

"The hall has always been more than just a building," Einarsson said. "It represents generations of people coming together to build something for the community, and there's a strong desire to see that history respected and preserved."

Einarsson explained that the municipal heritage designation process begins with council giving notice of its intent to designate a property. A public hearing is then held to allow residents, stakeholders and the property owner to ask questions, express support or raise concerns. Council considers that input before making a final decision.

The initiative, she said, emerged through discussions involving both council and municipal administration, supported by historical documentation and community interest, rather than from a single request by the property owner.

Geysir Hall has been identified as having architectural and historical significance as a representative example of a mid-20th-century rural community hall. Established as a gathering place by the 1940s, it hosted dances, musical evenings and social events documented in local archives. Its form, scale and construction reflect early rural building practices and community-driven development typical of the era.

The hall also has deep cultural ties to Icelandic settlement in the Interlake region. Einarsson said it served as a focal point for Icelandic cultural, social and cooperative activities, helping early settlers maintain their traditions and sense of identity.

"For generations, this hall has been a place where people came together for meetings, celebrations and volunteer-led events," she said. "It's where community connections were built and maintained."

If designated, Geysir Hall would receive long-term protection for its identified heritage features. Einarsson noted that the designation would not change ownership or restrict day-to-day use of the building. Routine maintenance and regular activities would continue, while major alterations affecting heritage elements would require municipal approval.

"The goal isn't to freeze the building in time," she said. "Renovations and improvements that support safety, accessibility and continued use are still possible, as long as they respect the



EXPRESS PHOTO BY CORRINE EINARSSON

Geysir Hall, located at 16006 River Rd. in the community of Geysir, is the subject of a proposed municipal heritage designation. Council for the Municipality of Bifrost-Riverton will hold a public hearing on Feb. 12 to gather community input before deciding whether to formally designate the historic hall as a municipal heritage site.

heritage character of the hall."

She acknowledged that heritage designation can raise concerns about future flexibility, costs and property rights, but said the process is designed to address those concerns through clear communication and collaboration.

"Council is looking for balance," Einarsson said. "It's about recognizing the public value of heritage while respecting private ownership and allowing the building to continue serving the community."

Anyone wishing to object to the proposed designation must submit a written objection to the chief administrative officer within 30 days of the notice, including their name, address and reasons for objection, as required under Section 26(3) of The Heritage Resources Act.

Background information related to the proposed designation can be re-

viewed at the municipal office. Residents seeking further information can contact Deanna Fridfinnson, assistant chief administrative officer for the Municipality of Bifrost-Riverton.

Following the public hearing, council will deliberate and decide whether to proceed with the designation, either at the same meeting or at a subsequent council meeting, depending on the level of discussion required. The final decision will be made by resolution and communicated publicly.

Einarsson said she hopes the process highlights the value of volunteer-built community spaces and the role they continue to play in shaping local identity.

"These halls were built by people giving their time, labour and resources," she said. "Recognizing that history sends an important message about who we are and where we come from."

> PROGRESS, FROM PG. 24

road closures, water advisories and community news. The system currently has 5,113 registrants.

To ensure momentum in 2026, Payne said work continues on key priorities such as computer hardware and security upgrades with fibre optic installation, a work-order management module, recreation centre upgrades and roof repairs, and the recreation plaza site plan.

Council will also beautify an intersection and advance the trails plan.

"We look to improve safety and reduce congestion while

beautifying the intersection of Centre and [Fourth]. The story doesn't end here: Next year, we plan to complete the Youth Hub, launch the recreation needs assessments and advance the Trails

Master Plan," said Payne. "Paid parking options, waterfront development and continued modernization will keep Gimli moving forward — always with the goal of making our community hap-

py, safe and comfortable."

A question about what challenges council faced in 2025 went unanswered.

To see more photos of your favourite Interlake Athletes

GO TO

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get inspired

MEAL IDEAS



Recipe courtesy of Rob Riggle on behalf of Avocados From Mexico

Good Luck Guac

4 Avocados From Mexico, halved, pitted and peeled
 1 tablespoon lime juice
 1 tablespoon onion, minced
 3 tablespoons pomegranate seeds
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1 pinch edible gold leaf flakes
 In large bowl, mash avocados until chunky-smooth.
 Fold in lime juice, onion, pomegranate seeds and salt until well combined.
 Garnish with edible gold leaf flakes.



Prep time: 15 minutes
 Cook time: 26 minutes
 Servings: 10
 1 1/2 pounds shell pasta
 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
 2 teaspoons minced garlic
 1 tablespoon fresh chopped sage
 4 ounces cream cheese, cubed
 2 cans (15 ounces each) Green Giant 100% Pure Pumpkin
 2 cups whole milk
 2 1/2 cups freshly grated sharp cheddar cheese
 2 1/2 cups freshly grated gruyere

Pumpkin Mac n' Cheese

cheese
 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
 1 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon cracked black pepper
 Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain pasta when al dente, about 8 minutes.
 In large skillet or Dutch oven over medium heat, heat butter. Add garlic and sage; saute 1-2 minutes, until garlic is lightly browned. Add cream cheese and pumpkin. Heat until cream cheese is melted and stir to combine.
 Gradually stir in milk, cheddar and gruyere. Stir in Dijon mustard, salt and pepper. Heat until cheese is melted and sauce is creamy, about 3 minutes.
 Fold in cooked pasta.



Prep time: 5 minutes
 Cook time: 10 minutes
 Servings: 2
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
 1 small red bell pepper, finely chopped
 salt, to taste
 pepper, to taste
 2 cups cooked sweet potatoes
 1 can (15 ounces) Bush's Black Beans, drained
 1 teaspoon chili powder

Sweet Potato Breakfast Bowl

2 fried eggs
 1 avocado, sliced
 cotija cheese, crumbled
 lime wedges, for serving
 In large skillet over medium heat, heat olive oil. Add onions and bell pepper; cook, stirring occasionally, until peppers are softened, 5-7 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.
 Add sweet potatoes, black beans and chili powder; stir to combine. Cook until potatoes and beans are warmed through, 4-5 minutes.
 Divide bean mixture between two bowls. Top each bowl with fried egg, avocado slices and crumbled cotija cheese. Serve with lime wedges.

Expert patient here to help!



Susie Schwartz

By Susie Schwartz

This week, I am going to give you a self-advocacy gift — which is always my goal, but this one is extra special. The tip below is an excerpt from the second edition of my book, *Help the Doctor Help You*. And the tip?

Share with your doctor what matters to you most.

Not all priorities are the same between patients. Tell your doctor yours. If your priority is to get a good night's sleep rather than override moderate pain you can cope with during the day — especially if you have a demanding job that takes a lot of brain power — your doctor can focus on your sleep. This might make the difference in a medication choice.

Maybe you have young children and just can't handle the side effects of a new medication you were trying for anxiety. It slows you down, and you need the energy to wipe snotty noses and make school lunches after long days at work. Sharing this helps your doctor find a better medication fit, even if the new option is slightly less effective for anxiety. Knowing this, they may also suggest other

types of treatment, such as counseling, to help you manage.

Maybe you are nearing the end of life and your priority is quality of life rather than quantity. Again, honesty is key. Your doctor can help make a plan focused on symptom management rather than longevity.

I've struggled with multiple pain issues for years. Thanks to those pesky problems, I don't sleep well. Some nights I lie awake, tossing and turning in agony — and keeping Don awake as well.

Together with my doctor, we decided that since I can't tolerate pain medication without extreme side effects, they would prescribe a sleeping pill. This medication is typically used short-term, but because my pain worsens as I become more exhausted, they made an exception, even though there may be long-term consequences. I am comfortable with that because my quality of life is very important to me. (I'll add that I try to use it sparingly to minimize those long-term consequences.)

I believe my doctor allows this exception because they trust me to know my body, to not abuse medication, and because they want to see me thrive — thanks to the reciprocal care and respect we hold for each other.

So, if you want plenty of ideas and stories to help you or a loved one advocate for your health, *Help the Doctor Help You: 41 Secrets and Tips for Self-Advocacy to Get the Best from Your Appointments* is out now on Amazon.

Less health stress — yes?

A published author and musician, Susie currently lives in the UK. Find her on Instagram @authorsusieschwartz and at www.lesstress.com.



Pumpkin Chili

Prep time: 10 minutes
 Cook time: 23 minutes
 Servings: 4
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 1 green bell pepper, chopped
 1 yellow onion, chopped
 1 pound ground turkey
 1 tablespoon chili powder
 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
 2 teaspoons cumin
 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

1 cup chicken broth
 1 can (15 ounces) diced tomatoes
 1 can (15 ounces) Green Giant 100% Pure Pumpkin

1 can (15 ounces) red kidney beans, drained and rinsed

In Dutch oven over medium heat, heat oil. Add bell pepper and onion. Sauté 5 minutes.

Add ground turkey and separate with spatula. Cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in chili powder, paprika, cumin and garlic powder.

Add broth, tomatoes and pumpkin. Bring to boil and reduce heat to low. Simmer 10 minutes. Add kidney beans and simmer 3 minutes.

Ladle into bowls and serve hot.

sports & recreation

INSIDE > OUTSIDE > UPSIDE DOWN

Einarson headlines Team Canada field at 2026 Scotties

By Lana Meier

Four-time Scotties champion Kerri Einarson will lead Team Canada into the 2026 Scotties Tournament of Hearts after round-robin pools and the full schedule were finalized for the national women's curling championship in Mississauga, Ont.

The 18-team event runs Jan. 23 to Feb. 1 at the Paramount Fine Foods Centre, with opening draw set for Friday, Jan. 23 at 7 p.m. ET. Einarson's Gimli, rink assumes the Team Canada berth after 2025 champions Rachel Homan and her Ottawa-based team turned their focus to representing Canada at the Winter Olympics in Italy. Einarson finished runner-up at last year's Scotties in Thunder Bay.

Teams will be split into two pools and play a complete eight-game round robin. The top three teams in each pool advance to the playoffs, with no tiebreaker games. Head-to-

head results will determine ties, followed by Last-Shot Draw rankings if required.

Under the playoff format, first place in one pool faces second place from the other on Jan. 30, with winners advancing directly to the Page 1-2 game. The championship concludes Sunday, Feb. 1, with the winner earning the right to represent Canada at the 2026 BKT World Women's Curling Championship in Calgary.

Einarson's Team Canada rink is seeded first in Pool A, which also includes Manitoba's Kaitlyn Lawes-led entry and provincial champions from British Columbia, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, among others. Pool B features top CTRS qualifiers Kayla Skrlik of Calgary and Christina Black of Halifax, along with Manitoba champion Beth Peterson and seven additional provincial and territorial



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Four-time Scotties champion Kerri Einarson will skip Team Canada at the 2026 Scotties Tournament of Hearts in Mississauga, Ont., after her Gimli rink earned the national berth. The 18-team championship runs Jan. 23 to Feb. 1 at the Paramount Fine Foods Centre, with Einarson seeded first in Pool A.

teams.

More than 20 players will make their Scotties debut in Mississauga, adding

a mix of emerging talent to a field anchored by Einarson and several familiar championship contenders.

Winnipeg Falcons to be honoured at Jets-Canadiens' Feb. 4 game

By Patricia Barrett

A self-described diehard supporter of the Winnipeg Jets successfully got the historic Winnipeg Falcons hockey team front and centre at an upcoming Jets game.

Rod Palson, who grew up in the Hnausa and Riverton areas, asked True North Sports & Entertainment company whether it would be willing to honour the Falcons, a historic team that won gold at the 1920 Olympics.

"Since January of this year, with the help of fellow Icelander/hockey guru, George Sigurdson, I have been in discussion with True North and the Jets about honouring our historically beloved Winnipeg Falcons ... in con-

junction with the 150th anniversary of New Iceland," wrote Palson in a document shared with the *Express*.

Based in Winnipeg, the Winnipeg Falcons were a men's hockey team founded in the early 20th century. They team was made up of mostly Icelandic-Canadians. The team won the 1920 Allan Cup as part of the Manitoba Hockey League with Brandon and Selkirk, and was then chosen to represent the Canadian men's national ice hockey team at the 1920 Olympics. They brought home the gold medal for Canada.

The tribute to the Falcons will take place on Wednesday, Feb. 4 when the



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

The Winnipeg Falcons, made up mostly of Icelandic-Canadians, won gold at the 1920 Summer Olympics.

Jets host the Montreal Canadiens at the Canada Life Centre.

Ice Dawgs seeking back-to-back wins on Friday

By Kieran Reimer

The Arborg Ice Dawgs had the weekend off after weather cancelled their scheduled Sunday afternoon trip to Selkirk.

With the extra rest, Arborg will return to action Friday night at home against the North Winnipeg Satel-

lites, looking to secure a second straight victory.

The Ice Dawgs defeated the Satellites in their most recent outing on Jan. 6 at Billy Mosienko Arena, when Noah Smolinski recorded a hat trick in a 4-3 win.

Arborg enters the matchup sixth

in the Capital Region Junior Hockey League standings with a 3-15-0-2-1 record.

The Ice Dawgs will then hit the road Saturday night to face the Lunder Falcons.

UPCOMING GAMES:

Friday, Jan. 23 vs North Winnipeg Satellites, 8 p.m. at Arborg & District Arena

Saturday, Jan. 24 at Lunder Falcons, 7 p.m. at Lunder Arena

sports & recreation

INSIDE > OUTSIDE > UPSIDE DOWN

Selkirk boxing prodigy earns Team Canada training camp invite

By Kieran Reimer

Boxing's next big thing may very well be coming out of Selkirk.

That is at least what Maulers Boxing coach Devin Tomko believes when it comes to 17-year-old boxing prodigy Damir Kudusov.

Originally from Ukraine, Kudusov is just two years into his boxing career in Canada after previously training in Muay Thai. Since moving to the country, he has travelled extensively for boxing matches and competitions, gaining experience against high-level opponents across Canada.

Tomko said Kudusov's English has also improved dramatically — from knowing almost none when he first arrived to now speaking it better than his coach.

"When he came to me and I had seen his dedication, his work ethic and his skills — he had a lot of natural ability — I figured I had to help this kid," said Tomko. "He was kind of the backbone of it all and pushed me to really get the ring in there, to get a

gym going and really help him fight. Now it's snowballed into a high-level gym with him as one of the fighters, and we've got other fighters on the come-up.

"It's been an interesting ride, especially considering me and him couldn't even communicate at first — we were talking through Google Translate for the first little bit."

Kudusov was recently invited to the Team Canada U23 training camp, scheduled for Jan. 23, where he will train alongside some of the country's top amateur boxers.

At the camp, he will take part in sparring sessions, fight demonstrations and Team Canada's strength and conditioning program.

Tomko said he is just as excited as his athlete to see Kudusov receive national-level recognition.

"I love seeing him get better. This whole relationship started because I recognized that this kid had heart and determination, so I'm just willing to help him out," he said. "Getting to see



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

Maulers Boxing's Damir Kudusov will attend Team Canada U23 Training Camp in January. The 17-year-old is a two-time bronze medalist at U18 Nationals.

Team McDonald captures Golden Wrench



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

Team McDonald, featuring Winnipeg Beach curler Elias Huminicki, captured the Ed Werenich Golden Wrench Classic title with an 8-3 victory over Team Kleiter in the final. The event was held Jan. 15-18 in Arizona and hosted by the Coyotes Curling Club, with Team McDonald securing the championship and the event's signature Golden Wrench trophy. The team will now turn its attention to the Manitoba Men's Provincials, scheduled for Feb. 4-8 in Selkirk. Pictured left to right: Cam Olafson, Elias Huminicki, Jacques Gauthier and Jordon McDonald.

him achieve his goals and slowly pick away at them has been fun.

"For me, the main picture is the pro career — that's where my expertise would flourish — but I just let him enjoy the journey and take it step by step. When he does get to the pro career, it'll be that much easier to get him started."

Although Kudusov will be one of the youngest fighters at the camp, he has repeatedly shown the ability to compete well beyond his years.

He often seeks out bouts against older opponents and regularly trains with fighters in their 30s, largely because there are few competitors his own age competing at the same level.

In 2026, Kudusov will enter his final year of U18 eligibility, creating a welcome dilemma: move up an age group or remain at U18 for one more

season, where he would likely be among the division's top contenders.

For now, the plan is to stay at U18 for a final year, giving him a chance at redemption at nationals after finishing third in back-to-back seasons.

"I'm not going to say we're the favourite to win nationals this year, but everybody we had tough fights with has aged out of the group," said Tomko. "Damir's always been the youngest in the bracket. Now he's the older, bigger guy, and he's got a really good opportunity to win it."

The Boxing Canada 2026 Junior, Youth and U23 National Championships are scheduled for March 18-22 at the Genesis Centre in Calgary.

It promises to be an exciting few months ahead for the young Selkirk standout.

sports & recreation

INSIDE > OUTSIDE > UPSIDE DOWN

Lightning split four-game stretch with pair of wins

By Annaliese Meier

The Interlake Lightning wrapped up a demanding four-game stretch last week with two wins and two losses, showing continued progress as they navigate the Manitoba U18 AAA Hockey League schedule.

The week opened with a tough matchup on Jan. 14, as the Lightning dropped a 4-2 decision to the Winnipeg Thrashers at Seven Oaks Community Centre. Interlake got goals from Corwyn Bear and Mathias Sibleau, but Winnipeg pulled away with

three unanswered goals, including an empty-netter, to secure the win.

Interlake bounced back on Jan. 16 with a hard-fought 4-3 shootout victory over the Parkland Rangers in Dauphin. Ben den Teuling opened the scoring, while Brody Huver and Logan Jacobson added second-period goals to build a two-goal lead. After Parkland rallied to force overtime, Ryder Kirk and Corwyn Bear converted in the shootout, and goaltender Grayson McDonald turned aside two of three attempts to seal the win.

Momentum carried into Jan. 17, when the Lightning earned a 4-1 victory over the Southwest Cougars at the Souris/Glenwood Memorial Complex. After an early Cougars goal, Interlake responded with tallies from Bear, Kirk and Reid Toporoski to take control. Thoren Corbett added an empty-net goal late, while Seth Schaeffer stopped 25 of 26 shots in the win.

The weekend concluded with a rematch against Southwest on Jan. 18, where the Cougars earned a 4-1 vic-

tory to split the back-to-back. Kyler Zulyniak scored the lone goal for Interlake early in the third period, but Southwest responded quickly and added an empty-netter to close out the game.

The four-game stretch highlighted the Lightning's growing ability to compete in tight contests, including a shootout win and a strong defensive effort in Saturday's victory. With points earned in two of four games, Interlake continues to build momentum as the regular season progresses.

U18 Lightning experiencing a turning of the tide with recent success

By Kieran Reimer

It hasn't always been smooth sailing for the U18 AAA Interlake Lightning boys team this year.

Coming off a seventh-place finish last season, the Lightning didn't capture their first win until nine games into the current campaign.

With only five returning players and the rest new to the U18 Lightning, growing pains, injuries and the heightened level of competition took their toll early on.

The past few weeks, however, have been a much different story, as the Lightning have started turning the tide with a healthy lineup for the first time this season.

They had won six of their last seven contests entering last Saturday, improving to 9-2-2-1 on the season.

The sudden turnaround has moved the Lightning into 11th place in the 13-team Manitoba U18 AAA Hockey

League, as the team is now seeing its work pay off on the scoreboard.

"I've seen guys get those opportunities due to injuries or guys being away or sick, and you kind of get thrust into that spotlight and it's uncomfortable, and maybe you don't succeed right in the moment, but it helps you for this kind of stretch that we're in," said head coach Brett Wur on Friday morning.

"I don't think it was on everybody's bingo card, the kind of record we have, and we keep stressing to the guys, 'you're not out of it — you're not out of it until you're mathematically out,'" he added. "Every day we just keep coming with a purpose, that we're coming to get better. There are some guys that understand it, and we keep seeing some things progressing in a nice way."

Wur is in his first season as the U18

Lightning head coach, taking over from 2024-25 bench boss Aaron Kaatz.

A local to the Interlake, Wur has coached locally with the Stonewall Jets and is also an instructor with Jets Hockey Development in Winnipeg. He has also played at the college and university levels, which has helped him relate to his players and the challenges they may face.

One challenge he has been helping them work through is developing a 200-foot game — in other words, having success in all three zones of the ice, whether with or without the puck.

For players new to the league, it is often one of the biggest adjustments at the U18 level, having previously dominated offensively as star players on their former teams.

"We can't just worry about one end of the ice the entire time — we've got to be strong away from the puck,"

said Wur. "That's probably one of the biggest learning curves with some of the younger guys and guys new to the league.

"You can't just be chasing the puck or staring at it. We have to be able to work hard at taking away options and being above the puck, and I think that was the challenge early on — understanding that next level, that next level of speed that most of the guys aren't used to yet."

Wur added that he has been enjoying his time with the club.

Though the Lightning remain 18 points back of the eighth and final playoff spot, their recent play has shown they are intent on making things interesting down the stretch.

They still have 16 games remaining, with their regular season wrapping up Feb. 22 in Steinbach.

Falcons give up late lead to top-ranked Comets

By Kieran Reimer

There was just one Capital Region Junior Hockey League game played over the weekend, with the fifth-ranked Lundar Falcons hosting the first-place Beausejour Comets on Saturday night.

Locked in a 3-3 tie late in regulation, Beausejour's Jaedys Dancyt scored the game-winning goal to lift the Comets to a 4-3 victory.

The loss dropped Lundar to 4-13-

0-3-2 on the season and extended its losing streak to four games, while Beausejour improved to 17-4-0-0-0, maintaining an eight-point lead atop the league standings.

The Falcons appeared poised for an upset after building a 3-0 lead by the midway point of the third period. Dylan Care opened the scoring in the first period, with Gavin Miller and Braeden Lukas adding power-play goals in the second and third.

Beausejour began its comeback at 9:59 of the third period when Dancyt scored on the power play. Vaughn Senebald followed with a shorthanded goal at 6:15 before Merrick Hucul tied the game with a power-play marker at 5:23.

Dancyt then netted his second of the night at 1:01 remaining in regulation to complete the comeback and secure the win for the Comets.

Lundar will look to rebound this

weekend when it hosts the Arborg Ice Dawgs on Saturday night. Sunday's scheduled game against the St. Malo Warriors was postponed due to weather.

UPCOMING GAMES:

- Saturday, Jan. 24 vs Arborg Ice Dawgs, 7 p.m. at Lundar Arena
- Sunday, Jan. 25 at St. Malo Warriors, 2 p.m. at Rosenort Arena

Lightning earn point, fall twice on road in MFHL action

By Lana Meier

The Interlake Lightning earned a single point during a two-game Manitoba Female Hockey League U18 AAA road stretch last week, dropping a 3-2 shootout decision to the Pembina Valley Hawks before falling 4-1 to the Winnipeg Avros.

Interlake opened the week Wednesday, Jan. 14, with a hard-fought shootout loss to Pembina Valley at the Access Event Centre in Morden.

The Lightning struck twice in the opening period to take a 2-1 lead. Neve Halpenny opened the scoring at 2:20, converting a setup from Manon Trenholm and Lily MacGregor. Rielle Forfar added Interlake's second goal at 4:00, assisted by Blake Darragh.

Pembina Valley answered later in the period when Casey O'Brien scored at 15:49, assisted by Delaney Darby and Sinead Convery.

The game remained scoreless through the second period before O'Brien struck again at 3:11 of the third to tie the contest 2-2. Payton Manness and Bree Pearce drew assists on the equalizer.

Neither team scored during the five-minute overtime, sending the game to

a shootout. Pembina Valley received shootout goals from Manness and Claire Boyd to secure the extra point.

Joslyn Tetlock made 39 saves through regulation and overtime for Interlake, while Madison Froese stopped 24 shots for the Hawks. Pembina Valley outshot Interlake 42-26.

The Lightning continued their road trip Sunday, Jan. 18, with a 4-1 loss to Winnipeg at Seven Oaks Arena.

Winnipeg opened the scoring at 7:06 of the first period when Addilyn Nohlgren scored, assisted by Lexington Green and Leah Claussen.

The Avros extended their lead early in the second period, with Kennedy Simpson scoring the eventual game-winner at 4:19, assisted by Nohlgren and Claire Fraser.

Interlake responded at 2:21 of the second period when Halpenny scored her second goal of the week, finishing a play set up by MacGregor and Brianna Malmstrom to cut the deficit to 2-1.

Winnipeg pulled away in the third period with two goals 17 seconds apart. Lexington Green scored at 10:33, assisted by Simpson and Brooke Froese, before Simpson added



EXPRESS PHOTOS BY RICK HIEBERT

Interlake Lightning netminder Joslyn Tetlock drops to make the save on a tipped shot in front by Pembina Valley Hawks forward Bree Pearce during Manitoba Female Hockey League U18 AAA action against Pembina Valley on Jan. 14 at the Access Event Centre in Morden.

her second of the game at 10:50 with Fraser recording the lone assist.

Tetlock turned aside 33 shots in the loss, while Winnipeg netminder Anya Kauenhowen made 26 saves. The Avros held a 37-27 edge in shots on goal.

The Lightning are scheduled to return to action Tuesday, Jan. 27, when they face Winnipeg again at Seven Oaks Arena.



Lightning's Emma Boonstra and Hawks forward Bree Pearce battle for the puck.



Lightning's Teagan Bragg protects the puck from Hawks defender Ariel Rondeau.

Lundar drops single game in Price Division play

By Annaliese Meier

The Lundar Kodiaks sit 11th in the Winnipeg High School Hockey League Price Division with a 2-12 record following a single game last week.

Lundar dropped a 9-1 decision

on the road to the Edward Schreyer Barons on Thursday, Jan. 15. After a scoreless first period, Edward Schreyer took control with five goals in the final 12 minutes of the second period, including two on the power play.

The Barons added four more goals

in the third period, three of them on the man advantage. Lundar's lone goal came late in regulation when Sigge Bjornson scored on the power play with 32 seconds remaining, assisted by Carter Reykdal and Austin Hickman.

The Kodiaks return to action Tuesday, Jan. 20, travelling to face Lorette at 3:15 p.m., before hosting Murdoch MacKay on Wednesday, Jan. 21 at 4:30 p.m.

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The land and building known as 165 Gimli Road, Village of Dunnottar, Manitoba as described in Certificate of Title No. 1902509/1 will be sold at auction on Wednesday, the 25th day of February, 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 struppel@tgclc.ca.

The Vendor is informed that there is situated on the property a lake front residence of approximately 1,374 square feet with 3 bedrooms, 1 bathroom, living room, dining room, kitchen, gravel driveway and 4ft crawl space insulated piled on concrete grade beam.

TERMS: Deposit of \$20,000.00 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 \$241,921.52 plus such other additional and incidental costs which may be incurred by the Lender from the 13th day of January, 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, 2025.

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

Property is subject to Nil..

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
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Attention: Mara Koven-Lapointe/Sonia
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The land and building known as 118 Main Street, Riverton, Manitoba as described in Certificate of Title No. 1562819/1 will be sold at auction on Wednesday, the 18th day of February, 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@lglc.ca.

The Vendor is informed that there is situated on the property a single family detached 1.5 story residence of approximately 1,116 square feet with a full basement. There is a single detached garage on the property. The Vendor does not have any further information on the property since it has not been listed on MLS.

TERMS: Deposit of \$10,000.00 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 \$132,714.14 plus such other additional and incidental costs which may be incurred by the Lender from the 8th day of January, 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, 2025.

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

Property is subject to Nil.

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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

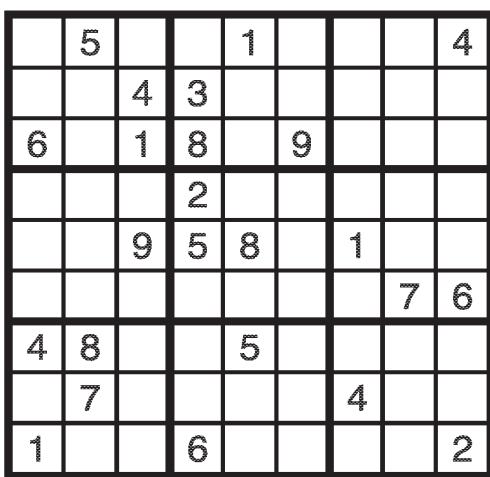
File No. 128499

Phone No. 204-957-6437

take a break

> GAMES

SUDOKU



Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Level: Intermediate

Sudoku Answer

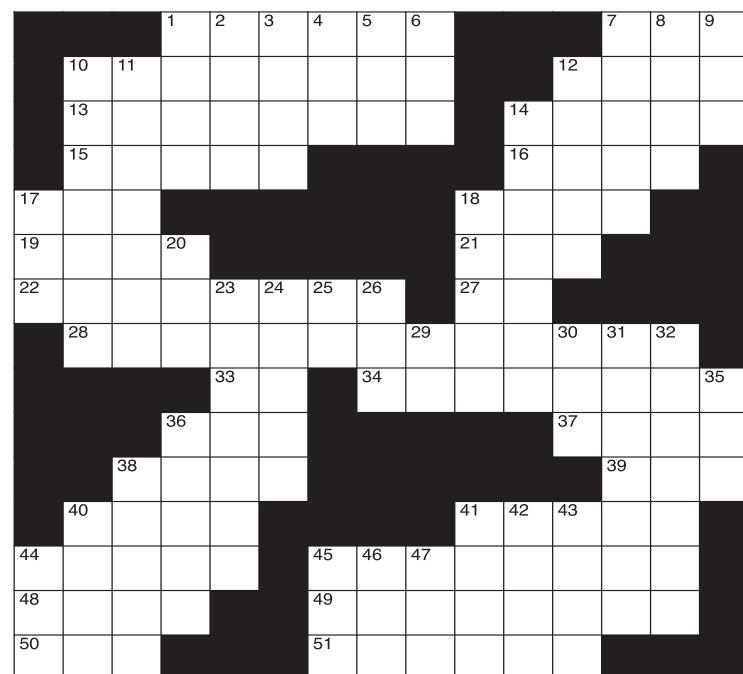
Crossword Answer

CLUES ACROSS

1. Mechanical lever
7. Rocky peak
10. Leave a country
12. Discount
13. D.C. ballplayer
14. Partner to "ooched"
15. Engine sound
16. Japanese ornamental box
17. Fido is one
18. Amounts of time
19. DiFranco and Phylo are two
21. Yearly tonnage (abbr.)
22. Make secret plans
27. "Tiny Bubbles" singer
28. "His Airness"
33. Morning
34. Perfected
36. Winger guitarist Beach
37. Abba __, Israeli politician
38. Self-immolation by fire ritual
39. A way to save money
40. Pulpit
41. Make ecstatically happy
44. Once more
45. Works on
48. Nocturnal S. American rodent
49. State again
50. Expression of disappointment
51. Type of door

CLUES DOWN

1. Yugoslavian communist leader
2. Exchange rate
3. High school dance
4. Peter's last name
5. When you anticipate arriving
6. Israeli city __ Aviv



7. Goat-like mammals

8. Margarine

9. End-of-the-spectrum color

10. Make poisonous

11. Popular beverage

12. Actress Lathan

14. Where planes land and depart

17. Political fundraising entity

18. The distinctive spirit of a people or an era

20. Buffer used in microbiology

23. Light, open carriage

24. Metrical feet

25. Email subject line feature

26. A street with lots of nightmares

29. Rapper Rule

30. River in Scotland

31. One who settles a dispute

32. Most chummy

35. We all have our own

36. Arab tribe

38. Slap

40. Ottoman military commanders

41. Scottish or Irish Gaelic language

42. Emit coherent radiation

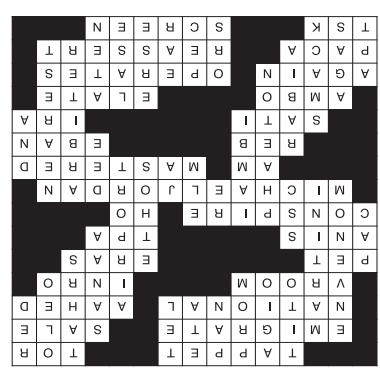
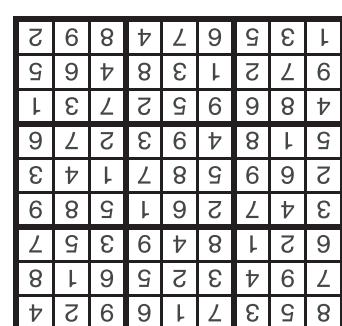
43. Sun or solar disk (Egyptian mythology)

44. Inclined to

45. Olfactory reference syndrome

46. Chest muscle (slang)

47. Body part



Sudoku Answer

Crossword Answer

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**Rural Municipality of Gimli**

P.O. Box 1246, 62-Second Avenue

Gimli, Manitoba R0C 1B0

Tel: (204) 642-6650 | Website: www.gimli.ca | Email: gimli@rmgimli.com**Notice of PUBLIC HEARING****Rural Municipality of Gimli**Topic: Authorization of Expenditure Under Section 169(5) of The Municipal Act
Date: Friday, January 30, 2026
Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Gimli Council Chambers – 62 2nd Avenue, Gimli, Manitoba

WHEREAS Section 169(5) of The Municipal Act permits Council to authorize an expenditure not included in the adopted financial plan by transfer from accumulated surplus and/or general reserve fund, subject to compliance with Sections 169(6) and 169(7); and WHEREAS Section 169(6) requires that Council give public notice and hold a public hearing in respect of a proposed expenditure under subsection (5); and WHEREAS the RM of Gimli does not have a specific purpose reserve applicable to this expenditure, and therefore the exemption under Section 169(7) does not apply;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council will consider authorizing the expenditure under Section 169(5) at a public hearing scheduled for January 30, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. during a special meeting of Council.

Residents are invited to attend.

To review the FAQ, visit www.gimli.ca or contact the RM office at (204) 642-6650 and speak to the Chief Administrative Officer.**Rural Municipality of GRAHAMDALE**www.Grahamdale.ca

23 Government Road, P. O. Box 160, Moosehorn, Manitoba, R0C 2E0

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**Public Works Manager**

The R.M. of Grahamdale is accepting applications for a full-time permanent Public Works Manager.

Under the general direction of the Chief Administrative Officer, the Public Works Manager is responsible for the planning and management of activities and operations in areas of Public Works, Transportation, Drainage, and Landfill operations. Coordinates the resources, including: personnel, contractors and equipment, to ensure the efficient maintenance of the Municipality's infrastructure including: streets, sidewalks, roads, trees, buildings, other public property, lagoons, and waste disposal sites. Work to be performed under minimal supervision with considerable independent judgement and action required in matters which are within the framework of established procedure.

Applicants must possess a valid Manitoba Class 3 Driver's License or be willing to obtain one before the end of the three-month probationary period. Applicants must be familiar with Microsoft Office and have sufficient administrative office experience.

Please apply in writing to:
Public Works Manager Position **Or by email to:**
R.M. of Grahamdale rm606@grahamdale.ca
PO Box 160
23 Government Road
Moosehorn, MB R0C 2E0

Must give full particulars as to education, experience, and salary expectations and must include two references.

Interested applicants are invited to submit an application by 12 Noon, Wednesday, January 28, 2026.

We thank all applicants for their interest, but only those considered for interviews will be contacted.

See Us for Everything you need to promote your business

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Classifieds Announcements**EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY****Sawmill/Planermill**

**Must be reliable and follow directions well.
Must be a team player.**

Spruce Wood Loggers is looking for an energetic person who is physically able, punctual, promotable, trainable and can work alone or as a team. Must be at least 18 years of age have a class 5 drivers license and dependable transportation.

We are located approx. 18 miles north of Arborg.

Email resume to: swl@sprucewoodloggers.ca
or call 204-378-2997 References required.



**Under the authority of the
Municipality of Bifrost-Riverton**
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

On the date and at the time and location shown below, a PUBLIC HEARING will be held to receive representations from any persons who wish to make them in respect to the following matter:

NOTICE OF INTENT TO DESIGNATE A MUNICIPAL HERITAGE SITE

The Council of the Municipality of Bifrost-Riverton gives notice that it intends to designate the following site as a **Municipal Heritage Site** under The Heritage Resources Act (Manitoba).

HEARING LOCATION: Municipality of Bifrost-Riverton
Council Chambers

329 River Road, Arborg, MB
February 12, 2025
9:00 am

Property to be Designated:

OWNER/APP: Geysir Cooperative Community Club Inc.
AFFECTED 16006 River Road (1-36988 on 2.12 acres)
AREA: Geysir, MB
Roll No. 74900

REASON FOR PROPOSED DESIGNATION:

The property has been identified as having significant heritage value due to its:

Architectural Importance:

Geysir Hall is representative of mid-20th-century rural community halls in Manitoba and was an established gathering place by the 1940s, hosting dances, musical evenings, and social events documented in local archival sources.

Cultural and Historic Significance:

The Hall is identified as a central social hub where music, square dancing, and community gatherings supported cultural continuity in the Geysir district, and is closely connected to the Icelandic and pioneer settlement history of the Interlake region dating back to the late 19th century.

Community Importance:

The Hall reflects a strong tradition of community-led governance and volunteerism, with residents contributing time, labour, and fundraising to build, maintain, and sustain this important community facility.

Effect of Designation:

Designation as a Municipal Heritage Site ensures the long-term protection and preservation of this heritage resource. Any alteration, demolition, or development affecting the heritage elements of the site will require municipal approval in accordance with The Heritage Resources Act.

Inspection of Background Information:

A description of the heritage value and relevant documents may be inspected at:

FOR INFORMATION Deanna Fridfinnson,
ACAO/Municipality of Bifrost Riverton
329 River Road, Box 70 Arborg, MB R0C 2R0
CONTACT: Ph: 204-376-2391 Email: aaco@bifriv.ca

Objections or Comments:

Any person wishing to object to the proposed designation must file a written objection with the Chief Administrative Officer within 30 days of this notice. Objections must include the name, address, and reasons for objection as required under Section 26(3) of The Heritage Resources Act.

IN MEMORIAM

Kathy Timchishen

January 13, 1955 – January 24, 2025

One year without you, Kathy,
Yet you walk beside us every day.
Your love still guides us,
Your strength still surrounds us.
Loved beyond words, missed beyond
measure,
You will live on in our memories, our stories
and our hearts -
Today and always.

-Love Ted, Carey, Chad, Michael,
Tayson and Landon

IN MEMORIAM**Lyle Dubchak**

February 12, 1970 - January 21, 2025

A day to remember
Sad to recall
No longer in our lives to share
But in our hearts you are always there.
-Lovingly remembered and sadly missed
by Mom and family

IN MEMORIAM

In Loving Memory of

Michael Yuzwa

June 11, 1969 - December 31, 2024

They say memories are golden,
Well maybe that is true,
We never wanted memories,
We only wanted you.
If love alone could have saved you,
You never would have died.
In life we loved you dearly,
In death we love you still;
In our hearts you hold a place
No one could ever fill.

If tears could build a stairway
And heartache make a lane,
We'd walk the path to heaven
And bring you back again.
The past year has been the hardest,
We pray God will keep you safe.

-Forever remembered, loved and missed,
Mother Mary,
siblings Iris (Joe), Kathie (Morris),
Brenda and Chris,
nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins

Classifieds Announcements

OBITUARY



Elene Helga Oakley
May 12, 1929 – January 9, 2026

We are deeply saddened to announce the peaceful passing of our beloved mother, mother-in-law, Amma and Langamma, Elene Helga Oakley, at the Hunter Memorial Hospital in Teulon, surrounded by family on January 9, 2026, at the age of 96.

Memorial arrangements pending, longer obituary to follow.
Memorial tributes may be left at www.neilbardalfuneralhome.com



204-949-2200
Gimli 204-642-7124
neilbardalinc.com

OBITUARY

Irene Vivian Goodman
July 17, 1935 – January 9, 2026

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Irene "Vivian" Goodman on Friday, January 9th, 2026, at the age of 90.

She is survived by her loving children Ronnie (Rosemary), Kenny (Leslie), Jennifer (Chris), Heather (Grant), David (Holly) and 15 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

As per Mom's wishes, there will be a graveside gathering with immediate family only and no formal service.



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OBITUARY

William Edward Bracegirdle
June 20, 1939 – January 15, 2026

After a brief battle with cancer, Bill passed away peacefully at the age of 86.

Predeceased by his wife Pat, Bill leaves to mourn his children Bob (Suzanne), Barry (Cindy), and Missy (Jim) Dunn. He leaves his grandchildren Steven Dunn, Krista (Stu) Fast, Jason (Sarah) Dunn, April Bracegirdle, and Bearon Bracegirdle as well as two great-grandsons, Owen and Oscar Fast.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to The Flag of Humanity or CancerCare Manitoba.

As per his wishes, which the family is respectfully honouring, there will be no service.

The family would like to extend their heartfelt thanks to the staff of the Selkirk Regional Hospital for all the care provided to Dad during his time in the hospital.



204-949-2200
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neilbardalinc.com

OBITUARY

Alvin Hersel Denhard
October 11, 1941 – January 16, 2026

With profound sadness and heavy hearts, we the family of Alvin Denhard, announce his passing on Friday, January 16, 2026 at the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg, MB. He fought so hard, but God had other plans for him.

Alvin was born in the farmhouse at the Denhard homestead at 10-26-8w on October 11, 1941 in the Silver Bay District. He continued to live, farm and fish in the area until he and Sandie moved to Ashern in 2020.

Alvin leaves to grieve his devoted wife of 40 years Sandie; son Ryan (Jennifer); grandchildren Mckenzie, Cordyn, Kyra and Keltny and their mom Shannon.

He is also survived by his brother Theodore (Helen), nieces, nephews, cousins, and wonderful friends all of whom he loved dearly to visit, tease and torment.

He was predeceased by his parents Theodore and Jane (nee Bonwick), brother Orville, sisters Marion Dzendzara and Viola Kiesman, and one niece Chris Denhard.

At this time the family would like to thank everyone who was part of Alvin's care, the doctors, nurses and every other hospital staff who helped him, as well as everyone who took time out of their day to visit.

He will be sorely missed by all who knew and loved him. He was a very kind and caring man.

A Memorial Service in Alvin's honour will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, January 30, 2026 in the Ashern Legion Hall with Dawn Tober officiating. Interment will be held in the Ashern United Church Community Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Alvin's memory to the Lakeshore Hospital Guild, PO Box 1, Ashern, MB R0C 0E0.

Arrangements by:
ARNASON FUNERAL HOME
Ashern - Lundar
1.204.768.2072
1.866.323.3593

OBITUARY

Kristine Joy Gislason

November 18, 1928 – January 17, 2026

It is with great sadness we announce the passing of our beautiful mother, Amma, great Amma, great great Amma, Kristine on January 17, 2026 at her daughter and son-in-law's home in Hecla, with her loved ones by her side.

Mom was predeceased by her loving husband Vilberg in 1987; her daughter Patricia; parents Matthildur and William; sisters Peggy, Wilma, Antonia, Thorstina, Maria, Alda; brothers Allan, Donny, Olafur and son-in-law Lorne, whom she cared for deeply.

Mom is survived by her children Kathy (William), Lawrence (Leona), Marianne, Allan (Maureen), Bernice (Wayne), 14 grandchildren, 31 great-grandchildren, 11 great-great-grandchildren, sister and best friend Norma Fridfinsson, numerous nieces and nephews.

Mom was born in Riverton, Manitoba where she lived and raised her family. She worked hard all her life, commercial fishing for 37 years, mink farming, trapping and working with Resources in the summer.

Her beliefs, kindness and hard work ethics will never be forgotten.

Gathering at Amma and Afi's for summer holidays were always the highlight of her summers and her grandchildren. The stories they heard about her life growing up, and believe me she had many, will be cherished forever with beautiful memories. Her face and hard working hands told many stories of the beautiful hardworking woman she was.

Mom loved having everyone around to celebrate the holidays, a special occasion, or just sitting around and chatting. Things will never be the same without you here to participate although your spirit will certainly guide us.

We have lost the true Matriarch of our family. The skies have truly gained a special angel. Till we meet again sweetheart.

góða nótt

elska þig að eilífu mamma

Good night.

We will love you forever mother

In keeping with Mom's wishes, cremation has taken place and a private service will take place at a later date.

Thank you to everyone for all your kind words during this time.

We would like to thank Dana, the nurses and the health care aides that went above and beyond at Gimli Hospital for the care Mom received. Special thanks to Lindsay and Dr. Graham at Palliative Care.

Your care and compassion was greatly appreciated.

Tributes: www.gilbartfuneralhome.com

Gilbart Funeral Home, Gimli in care of arrangements.

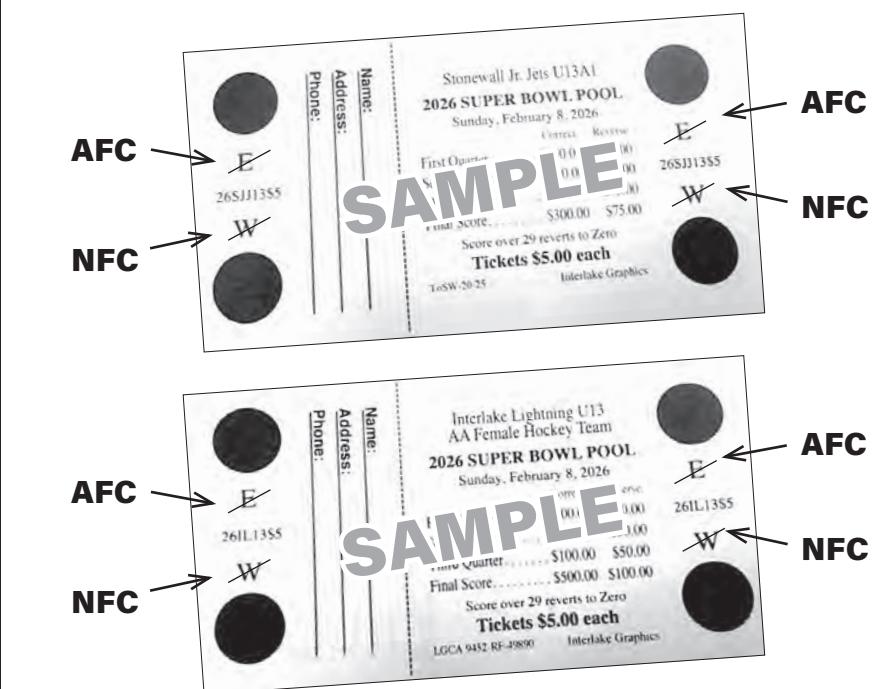


Super Bowl Raffle Clarification

The Stonewall Jr. Jets U13A1 and Interlake Lightning U13AA Female Hockey would like to clarify scoring listed on Super Bowl raffle tickets sold in support of the teams.

Raffle tickets were printed with **East** and **West** scores.

- The **East score** corresponds to the **AFC score**.
- The **West score** corresponds to the **NFC score**.



We appreciate everyone's support and wish all ticket holders the best of luck. Thank you for supporting local minor hockey.



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