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# The *Vo*ice *Altona Rhineland • Morris*

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## Olympics on ice

The Altona Skating Club's season-ending ice show featured an Olympic theme last Thursday night. For more photos, see Pg. 11.  
PHOTO BY EDWARD VINCENT ARGENAL/VOICE

news > sports > opinion > community > people > entertainment > events > classifieds > careers > everything you need to know



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## Checking out the new rink

Community members were invited to come explore the Winkler Centennial Arena last Thursday at the recently renovated facility's open house. The Winkler Flyers were involved throughout, kicking things off by skating with local families in the morning, hosting an open practice, and doing a meet and greet to round out the day. There were also facility tours provided by rink staff and complimentary refreshments for all. An official grand opening celebration is expected to take place for the arena in fall.



PHOTOS BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE



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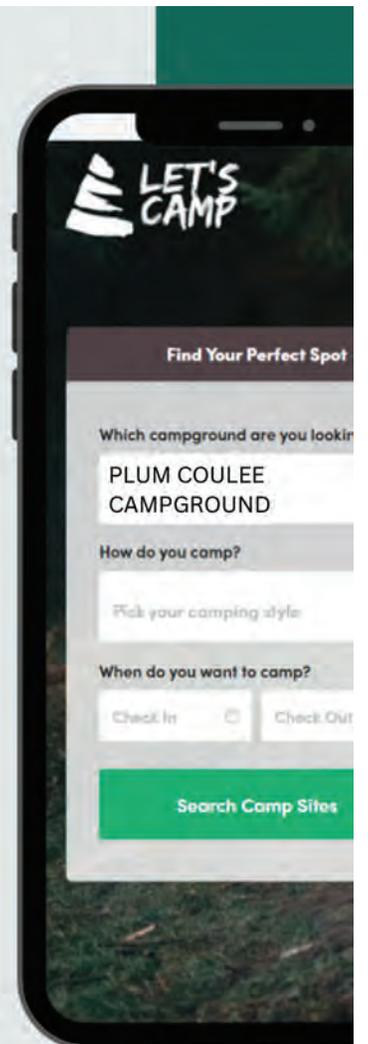
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# Leslie hosts town hall in Winkler re: Bill C-9

By Lorne Stelmach

Portage-Lisgar MP Branden Leslie has joined the chorus of critics condemning what he says is the Liberal government's attempt to push through a controversial change to the criminal code that would remove a long-standing safeguard protecting the good-faith expression of religious beliefs.

The change is being considered as part of Bill C-9, which is legislation that amends various aspects of the Canadian Criminal Code. During committee consideration of the bill, the Liberal government with the support of the Bloc Québécois proposed removing an existing provision in the code that protects individuals from being convicted of hate propaganda offences for expressing an argument or opinion based on a religious text in good faith.

That safeguard has existed in Canadian law for decades, and it does not protect hatred or violence, which are already illegal under the Criminal Code, say critics, including Leslie. Instead, it has ensured individuals cannot be criminally prosecuted simply for reading, quoting, or expressing beliefs drawn from religious texts.

"The bill, as it originally was, I think

did have laudable intentions. We should absolutely try to protect people going to their place of worship," said Leslie. "Hate speech is one element ... that is the problem that we need to be tackling."

He cited how the bill was originally targeted at tightening the language around hate speech and protecting religious institutions. However, through the committee process, the Bloc Québécois proposed an amendment which would remove the safeguard from the code that Leslie says protects people from fear of conviction when expressing an opinion based on sacred texts.

"Given that the Liberals didn't have anybody to help them pass this piece of legislation, they basically made a trade with the Bloc ... okay, we'll get rid of this section, this particular safeguard in the criminal code, if you give us support for the broader bill," Leslie said. "We've seen basically every type of religious organization come out in opposition to this safeguard removal ... diverse groups have come out and said what are you guys doing? Where did this come from?"

Leslie said the proposal has triggered a significant response from his constituents across Portage-Lisgar, including at a town hall meeting held



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MPs Branden Leslie and Andrew Lawton spoke at a public forum on Bill C-9 in Winkler Saturday that drew several hundred people.

Saturday in Winkler.

About 400 people came out to hear from Leslie and fellow Conservative MP Andrew Lawton, who represents the Ontario riding of Elgin-St. Thomas-London South and has been one of the leading voices raising concerns about the proposed changes.

"Over the past few weeks, I have received more correspondence about this issue than almost any other during my time as a Member of Parliament," Leslie said. "People from many different faith communities and people with no religious affiliation at all are concerned about what it

means to remove this protection from the criminal code."

Leslie said those concerns had intensified after the Liberal government introduced a motion in the House of Commons March 5 that would limit debate and force the legislation through Parliament on an accelerated timeline.

The motion will force the justice committee to immediately resume clause-by-clause consideration of the bill and to vote on all remaining amendments without further debate.

Continued on page 5

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# Garden Valley SD passes \$67.3M financial plan

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Garden Valley School Division's board of trustees approved a \$67.3 million financial plan for the 2026-2027 school year at a special meeting Friday.

It's an increase of over \$4M from the year before to meet the growing needs of the projected 4,371 students throughout the division this fall.

The budget planning process began late last year when trustees met with local parents, teachers, and school administrators, explained board chair Leah Klassen

"We asked them what they thought: what do we need? What do we not need?" she said. "The response we heard again and again was: don't cut. Don't cut staff, don't cut programming, try to maintain the status quo as much as we can."

When they began crunching the numbers early in the new year, well before the provincial government had announced any details about what funding GVSD would be receiving, the financial outlook was pretty sobering.

"We did a status quo [draft] budget, so if we were not to add anything and just go based on last year's funding. We were short by \$2.9

million," Klassen shared. "The majority of that is the contractual obligations that we have—[teacher salary] harmonization comes into this next budget year. That's just the reality of what we're working with."

The province has mandated that teachers in all schools across Manitoba be paid the same rates, which for many rural divisions means a significant expenditures increase year over year.

Salaries and benefits in fact make up the largest piece of the financial pie for GVSD—84 per cent of the entire budget for the more than 700 staff employed across the division—coming in at \$56.8M (up from \$53M in the current school year).

That's followed by services at \$5.3M (up from \$5.1M), supplies and material at \$3.5M (up from \$3.3M), and transfers at \$1.5M (down from \$1.8M).

On the revenue side, GVSD receives the bulk of its funding from the Province of Manitoba. Year over year operational funding totals \$34.9M for 2026-2027, an increase of \$821,144 or 2.4 per cent, though that does include several significant pieces of funding earmarked solely for things like nutritional programs, special needs, and salary harmonization.

The budget further calls for revenue of \$19M from municipal taxes (up \$2.3M from the current year) and about \$1.3M from other sources (up \$200,000).

With the directive from the community to, at the least, maintain the current level of teachers and programming, the board had quite a task ahead of it to figure out how they were going to make ends meet this year, Klassen said.

"We had to have that conversation, and it was really a philosophy conversation—do we cut teachers? Eighty-four per cent of our budget is staffing, so if you're going to make cuts that's where they're going to be," she said, noting they also discussed not filling vacant administrative positions and taking another look at whether the time is right to introduce new programming like Big Picture Learning (an alternative form of high school education slated to launch in GVSD this fall).

Ultimately, though, the board decided raising taxes a modest amount was the most responsible move to ensure the level of education in GVSD is where it needs to be.

"We're really doing a status quo budget, with one new position, a behavioral specialist, and that is to hopefully help with the classroom complexities issues that we've been hearing so much about from our staff," Klassen said, noting an increasing number of students are struggling in classroom environments. "There are a lot of different needs that are coming into our classrooms that maybe haven't been there in the past."

Beyond that position and the hiring of additional educational assistants to further support teachers in the classroom, there are no new big-ticket items in this budget—no capital projects, bus purchases, or other costly items.

Continued on page 9

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# Access CU named top employer for 12th year

By Lorne Stelmach

Access Credit Union has been recognized as one of Manitoba's top employers for a 12th year in a row.

The honour was announced by the editors and organizers of Canada's Top 100 Employers last week. Access CU chief executive officer Myrna Wiebe said it is recognition they value but also something they do not take for granted.

"It encourages us as an organization to keep doing better with our employees," she said. "It actually does keep us in check to make sure that we are doing the best for our employees."

Wiebe emphasized that Access strives to be an employer of choice by supporting engaged, highly competent employees who are inspired to achieve their personal best while reflecting their vision, priorities and values. They prioritize the wellness and satisfaction of their employees with benefits like paid training and

continuing education, flexible hours and work locations, matched pension plans, competitive salaries, 100 per cent tuition subsidies, a fully paid health plan and family coverage, and the opportunity to contribute to the community.

The dedication, support and teamwork demonstrated daily by the employees is what supports the success and continued growth of the credit union, said Wiebe.

"We're proud of our employees' dedication to providing exceptional service to our members and clients and how well they represent Access both inside and outside the workplace," she said. "For myself, it gives me such pride. It just reflects a long term commitment that our employees have and that the organization has to our employees."

"It reinforces that as we invest in our employees, it just strengthens our entire organization. It confirms and affirms the positive impact that we



**SUPPLIED PHOTOS**

Access Credit Union has been named one of Manitoba's top employers by the editors of Canada's Top 100 Employers. Right: CEO Myrna Wiebe says the honour is an encouragement for the organization.



want to have, that we intend to have and that we intentionally encourage our staff to have in the communities that we serve," Wiebe added.

"Going through the process of the application, it brings to light some of the things that we can do better ... even though we have fantastic loyalty and dedication now, anything that we can do to encourage that, increase that and enhance that for our employees, that's what we want to do ... it keeps it forefront in our minds ... we

need to continue to do better things to keep moving forward."

In addition to the top employer honour, Access was also selected as one of Canada's best employers for recent grads as featured in The Career Directory 2026.

# Prairie Connect 2026—come see what the region has to offer

By Ashleigh Viveiros

March is the perfect time to start planning out your "stay-cations" for the summer, and Central Manitoba Tourism (CMT) has just the thing to help you figure out where to go.

The agency hosts the first annual Prairie Connect event at the Access Event Centre in Morden on Saturday, March 28.

From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. that day, mu-

nicipalities, businesses, and community organizations from across CMT's service network will have exhibits set up to highlight all there is to see and do in our area.

"We have over 20 signed up, and there's still some registrations coming in," CMT general manager June Letkeman shared last week.

"I really want people to come and enjoy the day and see what we all have in our area, because we have so many hidden gems that people don't know about," she said of the myriad of museums, galleries, festivals, and recreational offerings that span the region. "I want them to see what we all have in our catchment area ... come plan out

your summer."

It's very much a come and go type of event, though the Beerjammers will be taking the stage at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. There will also be food available around midday. Admission is free.

"Come and have a look to see what we all have to promote in our area," Letkeman urged.

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Public Notice is hereby given that the Province of Manitoba intends to conduct the following Pesticide Control Programs during 2026 within the province right of way.

1. To control invasive plants and noxious weeds on Manitoba Provincial right of way.
2. The herbicides include: Dicamba, 2,4-D amine, 2,4-D Choline, 2,4-D Ester, 2,4-D, Mecoprop-p, Dichloroprop-p, Aminopyralid, Metsulfuronmethyl, Diflufenzopyr, Fluroxypyr, Imazapyr, Triclopyr, Picloram, Aminocyclopyrachlor, Chlorsulfuron, Saflufenacil, Iron (as FeHEDTA), Glyphosate, Clopyralid, Bromacil, Acetic Acid, LI 700, Non Ionic Surfactant, Flumioxazin, Diuron, Indaziflam, Florpyrauxifen, mineral oil, Methyl Ester & Ethyl Ester.
3. The proposed dates of application for this program will be from April 15, 2026 to October 31, 2026.

The public may send written submissions or objections within 15 days of the publication of the notice to the department below.

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**> TOWN HALL, FROM PG. 3**

It directs the committee to continue meeting until the bill has been disposed of and requires the bill to be reported back to the House within two sitting days. The motion also limits debate in the House of Commons to one sitting day at report stage and one sitting day at third reading before forcing votes on the legislation.

Leslie said the move represents an extraordinary attempt to push a controversial change through Parliament while avoiding proper scrutiny.

"The Liberals are trying to remove a long-standing safeguard protecting religious expression from the criminal code, and at the same time they are trying to rush the bill through Parliament and shut down debate," he said.

Leslie had hoped the government would reconsider, but not only did they stick to it but they also limited debate and "basically just crushed all opposition voices at committee and in parliament and pushed this bill through," he said.

Leslie concluded by describing it as a solution in search of a problem, and he is concerned that they went in an entirely different direction with the bill.

"They've offered no explanations. This safeguard has been tested in the courts ... they couldn't point to a single case where this prevented a prosecution, that this prevented something happening within the legal system."



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## Barking up the wrong tree

I apologize for the ridiculous headline, but I could not resist.

Woodpeckers are currently working on demolishing a large ash tree in the middle of our front yard.

Sigh. This cannot be a good sign. I have made calls.

I noticed the vandalism when I went out to stock our Little Free Library. I happened to glance over to the tree and saw a great pile of bark around the base, as if small wood smiths had been hatcheting away at the poor thing.

I suspect the worst ... infestation. Ugh. I have contacted the city and we shall see.

If this is a case of unwanted occupants who refuse to evict, the tree will likely have to come down. You never know, though I tend to be a pessimist when it comes to such things. The tree in question is on the north side of the property and thus it provides no shade for us. Still, I like looking at it and the varying bird or squirrel residents and I am not fond of having to kill a thing regardless of what that thing is.

Speaking of trees, did you know the City of Morden (where I live) has an ISA-certified arborist on staff? They do. This is a great example of the city proactively investing in a part of what makes Morden unique—the extensive tree canopy.

What, you ask, is an ISA-certified arborist and why do I care? Good question.



**By Peter Cantelon**

ISA stands for International Society of Arboriculture. It's a widely recognized organization that offers certification to specialists in all things related to tree care.

The City of Morden in fact has two ISA-certified arborists, one being deputy city manager Shawn Dias and the other being urban forestry manager Jeff Guenter. Dias also has an advanced ISA certification called TRAQ (tree risk assessment qualification) which allows him to assess the likelihood of tree failure, associated risks, and recommended mitigation. TRAQ certified individuals can also create written reports for municipalities and insurance companies.

That's a lot of tree expertise in little old Morden and it should make residents feel hopeful for the future of the city's tree canopy. It is rare for a city of Morden's size to have such expertise, typically reserved for much larger municipalities like Winnipeg.

But back to the tree in question. Should it come down, conversations

will have to be had. Senior management at Cantelon Inc. will have to convene to a special meeting to discuss options and alternatives for the impending bare spot on the lawn.

There are many options for a spot in the middle of a front yard in Morden: a festive May Pole for example; small 30-foot-tall replica of Sauron's tower of Barad-dûr (complete with glowing orange eye); a fine shrubbery; a merry-go-round ... the mind reels with options.

Personally, I like the idea of replacing the current tree with a Scotch (Scots) Pine. Meanwhile, as I write these words, I imagine the current tree indignantly calling out ala Monty Python: "I'm not dead yet!"

But I imagine it is "nearly" dead and so perhaps we will have to help it along. Who knows. It really depends on what the experts say. Let us hope I am simply being overly negative and the tree will remain for years to come.

Knock on wood (just not too hard).

**"THERE'S A LOT OF TREE EXPERTISE IN LITTLE OLD MORDEN, AND IT SHOULD MAKE RESIDENTS FEEL HOPEFUL FOR THE FUTURE OF THE CITY'S TREE CANOPY."**

### Letter policy

The *Voice* welcomes letters from readers on local matters.

Please keep your letters short (excessively long letters are less likely to be published), on-topic, and respectful.

The *Voice* reserves the right to edit, condense, or reject any submission.

Please include your full name, address, and phone number for verification purposes. Your name and city will be published with your letter. We do not print anonymous letters.

Send your letters to us by e-mail at [news@winklermordenvoice.ca](mailto:news@winklermordenvoice.ca).

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# Sound bath sessions coming up at WAC, 500 Stephen

By Lorne Stelmach

Area residents will have an opportunity to experience a sample of a new therapeutic service being offered by a Manitou-based business.

Brandon Gascho opened a practice in Manitou called In Depth Resolution, which specializes in therapeutic coaching and conflict resolution as well as offering community sound baths.

Gascho is excited to be providing these services locally, and he is looking forward to giving people a taste by way of a pair of free sound bath experiences taking place at Winkler Arts and Culture March 27 and 500 Stephen Community Centre in Morden April 7. Both events begin at 7:30 p.m.

“My hope is that people who might not otherwise have the opportunity will get the chance to enjoy an evening of deep relaxation, free from distractions and reconnect with themselves,” said Gascho.

“Very little is required of participants. People can bring a yoga mat, blanket or pillow to lie down with and simply enjoy an hour of peace with themselves,” he said. “There will be time afterwards to talk more about the experience or anything else that comes up as a result.”

Gascho lost his sister to brain cancer, and this loss, among others, initiated a process of grieving and disconnection for him that lasted years. It led him to the social development studies program at the University of Waterloo followed by a graduate degree in peace and conflict studies.

“It was through a workshop learning to facilitate circle practice and another on conflict coaching that gave me clarity on the values and approach of how I would want to start my own practice,” Gascho said.

His journey then led him to learn about sound bath treatment.

A sound bath is a meditative experience where participants lie down and are immersed in resonant sounds and vibrations. It is designed to promote deep relaxation, reduce stress and restore mental balance.

“Sound bath healing is a practice that was introduced to me when I first moved to Manitoba,” Gascho shared. “During my first session, I experienced a strong emotional release followed by a deep rest that I hadn’t felt in months.

“When the opportunity to become a certified practitioner presented itself, I felt strongly that this was a tool I wanted to offer.”

Other services Gascho provides includes mediation, conflict resolution for organizations, and therapeutic coaching for couples and individuals.

“The common goal uniting these approaches is to support people navigating emotional strain, inner tension, personal conflict and life transitions by offering a calm, judgment-free space to slow down and reflect,” said Gascho. “Through thoughtful conversation, clients gain greater self-awareness and emotional clarity so they can move forward in ways that feel aligned with who they are.

“I hope to offer moments of mindful presence and reflection, as I believe there is significant power in feeling seen and heard, something that is difficult to replicate in our fast-paced, often distracted lives.”



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Brandon Gascho is leading a pair of sound bath sessions in Winkler and Morden.

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# Your FARM



## Thoughts and numbers on climate change

By Lorne Stelmach

A detailed presentation last week at the monthly meeting of the Pembina Climate Action Network (PCAN) painted a picture of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change in Manitoba.

Entitled *Thoughts and Numbers on Climate Change - Through a Manitoba Lens*, professional agrologist Daryl Domitruk touched on not only a wide range of data but also what is and isn't being done well.

Domitruk, who is also a research director of the Manitoba Pulse and Soybean Growers and has served on a provincially-appointed committee

to advise the government on climate change policy and greenhouse gas reduction targets, suggested it all needs to start with greater understanding and awareness.

"Before we do anything to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, we have to understand our local environment better," said Domitruk, who applauded the work of organizations like PCAN to help advocate for and educate about climate change and its impact, particularly in the Morden-Winkler area.

Domitruk suggested there are a few key things for people to consider.

"There's a lot of things that people think about where they live; some



PHOTO BY LORNE STELMACH/VOICE

Agrologist Daryl Domitruk was the guest speaker at this month's Pembina Climate Action Network meeting.

of them are true, some of them are myths, and sometimes we have to see through all of that to really understand where we live," he said. "It's so that we know what we can do in any kind of an issue like climate change, which may be different than what people that let's say live in a big city or even live in another part of the country or any other part of the continent or even another part of the world.

"So it starts with greater understanding," said Domitruk, who went on to touch specifically on Manitoba's record on greenhouse gases and climate change.

"What are the sources in Manitoba of greenhouse gases? Those are different from what they are in other places ... and what steps has Manitoba taken so far, and how successful have we been?"

He noted that people might think Canada is doing fairly well in terms of overall being ranked 10th in terms of emissions, but it paints a different picture when you take a look at it in a different way.

"If you look at the per person emissions ... we're at least number three on a per person basis, and that's primarily because we live a pretty good lifestyle," Domitruk said. "Each one of us is emitting quite a bit, but when you add it all up, it doesn't amount to as much.

"The important thing is that Manitoba, within Canada or within the

world, is a relatively low emitter, especially amongst the developed countries as a western advanced economy," he continued. "It's primarily because roughly 98 per cent of our electricity comes from hydro electricity ... we have a very green electricity source, so that means our total emissions are actually on the low side.

"On the other hand, that makes it hard because we don't have as switch we can just throw to reduce emissions; we have to look around and take little bits of emissions from a thousand different places that aren't related to our electricity grid."

So the fact that we may be doing better than other places doesn't take the pressure off.

"It comes down to personal responsibility. We need to look at our individual emissions and what we can do, and again, that needs to be in the context of where we live," Domitruk said. "There's no point in copying someone who lives in a completely different environment. We need to learn what works in our environment and act on an individual basis, and hopefully that creates some kind of collective action as well.

"I also hope to actually bring forward the notion that we're all focussed on trying to slow climate change and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. We really ought to be spending more time on adapting be-



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# Your FARM



## > DOMITRUK, FROM PG. 8

cause the emissions are increasing, and there are changes afoot. There are changes happening now, and some of them we need to more proactively respond to by adapting.

"It's not that it's too late to mitigate, but we have to adapt."

Another key takeaway from his presentation was that we need to recognize that we live in what has been a grassland region.

"This was grassland and not too long ago. So that means that the model for sustainability going forward is in that grassland, and there's precious little of it left," Domitruk noted.

"So we really, each one of us, needs to recognize that, you know, things like trees are nice, but they're maybe not the solution to climate change as they are sort of played out to be," he said. "For us, we need to look at our grassland ... what's there that can

help us sequester more carbon ... we have it in how a lot of cattle producers manage their pastures and how they manage their herds."

Domitruk also pointed out we all need to rethink how we regard things like home heating and transportation.

"Transportation is a big one for Manitoba," he suggested. "There are electric vehicles, sure, but there's also other options in respect to things like public transit. There are other things we can advocate for that can make a difference in our emissions for transportation.

"And then there's just the kind of regular lifestyle changes in concert with new technologies, recognizing who's doing a good job out there and encouraging them, whether it's people building energy efficient homes.

"It's also paying attention ... I think we take for granted our hydro electricity. It's clean, it's green, but it's limited, and we can't just buy a whole

bunch of electric vehicles and expect the electrical grid to supply it all. We need to look at other alternatives."

Domitruk also concluded that we should seriously consider nuclear

power as an energy option.

"It has been off the table for a while, but I think it's time to look at those kinds of options again."

## • A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM DOMITRUK'S PRESENTATION

On provincial government initiatives and priorities:

- Government leadership toward net zero including a new climate change committee of cabinet and making changes to climate legislation.

- Collaborating with Indigenous nations on renewable energy and net zero initiatives.

- Creating jobs in the low carbon economy.

- Enabling actions across all sectors to support Manitoba's net zero economic transition.

- Co-develop wildfire prevention and preparation.

- Develop a net zero innovation and labour market plan.

- Climate change education for Manitobans.

He also highlighted a few key areas such as potential nature-based solutions:

- Restore, conserve and enhance natural eco-systems.

- Plant one million trees each year.

- Modernize land use planning for net zero.

- Protect waterways from impacts

of climate change.

- Recognize Manitoba's sensitive marine eco-system.

Domitruk also touched on other areas ranging from funding programs for emissions reductions and developing low carbon mining techniques to incentivizing waste diversion.

Finally, he offered a number of thoughts on some key areas and ideas for taking action:

- Improved wildfire response systems, given their increasing frequency.

- More hot days will require more interior and exterior cooling.

- Extreme water events require capacity upgrades to infrastructure.

- Some municipalities in grassland ecosystems must secure water supplies.

- Come face to face with our energy sources—generation infrastructure is no longer "just up north."

- Replace the top down approach of policy and some advocacy groups with informed education and advocacy from organizations like PCAN.

## > GVSD BUDGET, FROM PG. 4

"We just can't do it this year," Klassen said, noting the maintenance budget, which was increased in the current school year's budget, will see to ongoing needs on that front. The 2026-2027 financial plan also has a surplus of about \$660,000 to be put into reserve for any emergency needs that might pop up.

When it comes to the mill rate, GVSD is increasing it to 13.39 from the current 12.18, a jump of 9.88 per cent.

What that translates into is that for a home currently valued \$393,050, school taxes will increase from \$2,154 to \$2,367 annually. But after the provincial school tax rebate, the homeowner would pay \$768 in net school taxes—an increase of about \$113 from the year before.

Meanwhile, a business valued at \$552,500 will be paying nearly \$433 more annually in school taxes, after rebates, while farmland valued at \$2.28M will see an annual net increase of about \$359.

"We're doing what we can on our end to be modest and conservative in our spending," Klassen said, noting she hopes taxpayers are aware that the board most certainly grappled with the decision to raise taxes. "We do not want to have to put any more burden on our taxpayers than what we absolutely have to ... but there are

cost pressures that are beyond our control.

"With an increase on a residential home of about \$113 per year, \$9 per month, we hope that taxpayers will recognize the benefit in us trying to keep class sizes smaller, trying to have additional supports that our children need to be able to excel in school."

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# get informed

## Altona Senior Centre marks 52 years of community connection

By Holly Thorne-Wiebe

The Altona Senior Centre marked an important milestone this year as members gathered for the organization's 52nd annual meeting on Feb. 26—a reminder of the centre's long-standing role as a place where local residents can connect and support one another.

Board chair Bill Penner said the meeting was largely an opportunity to reflect on the past year and look ahead at how the centre can continue serving the community.

"Our financial statement looks positive," he shared. "We had about \$13,000 in income last year, and we don't have any major expenses."

Recent improvements to the building have helped keep the facility in good shape. The centre replaced its roof and parking lot the previous year, while the past year focused on more maintenance and smaller upgrades, including the purchase of a freezer and refrigerator. The board is also in the process of freshening up the interior of the building with professional cleaning, repairs to wall damage, and a new coat of paint.

"It'll brighten it up a little bit," Penner said.

While the centre hosts a variety of rentals throughout the year, one event in particular has become a local favourite: the monthly waffle breakfast.

Held on the second Thursday of every month, the breakfast regularly draws upwards of 100 people. Volunteers begin preparing early in the morning, with several waffle irons running at once in the kitchen. For \$10, guests receive a waffle topped with white sauce, fruit, and ice cream.

It's a simple tradition that has become a key part of the centre's operations.

"The waffle breakfasts bring us about a third of our revenue every year," Penner noted.

The event is run by a dedicated team of volunteers, many of whom have been helping for years.

"We have a wonderful group of ladies that does the breakfast," Penner said. "Without them, our centre would look a lot sadder financially."

Beyond the breakfasts, the facility also hosts weekly card games and is rented for meetings, community gatherings, and family events.

"We have Tuesday nights where people get together to play cards," Penner said. "Rentals are actually our major income."

Over the decades, the centre has also hosted additional activities, including a seniors choir and monthly birthday celebrations.

Some of these programs slowed or stopped during the pandemic



SUPPLIED PHOTO

The Altona Senior Centre has been providing older adults with a place to gather and connect for over 50 years.

and have not yet been restarted.

The board hopes to see more activities return in the future, but like many community organizations, the centre faces challenges when it comes to volunteer capacity.

"One of the downsides we find is getting volunteers," Penner said. "We still have one opening on the board that we haven't been able to fill."

Many current volunteers have spent decades contributing to community organizations and are beginning to step back from leadership roles.

"One of the guys said to me, 'I'm in my late 70s and I'm boarded out,'" Penner said. "And that's a fair statement. A lot of people have given many years to boards and community groups."

Despite the challenges, Penner says the centre remains an important part of Altona's community life. In addition to regular events, the building provides an accessible space for smaller gatherings that might not fit larger venues.

"There is still a need for a facility like ours," he said. "It's not expensive

to rent, and it provides a place for people to gather."

Looking ahead, Penner hopes more residents will consider getting involved, whether by volunteering, attending events, or helping bring new ideas forward.

"We would love to have more activities," he said. "But it takes people to make those things happen."

For now, the focus remains on maintaining the centre's welcoming atmosphere and continuing the traditions that have kept it alive for more than five decades.

"I think it's about keeping it alive," Penner said. "And hopefully the community will continue to support it."

## Guenter acclaimed to run as PC candidate in next election

By Voice staff

Josh Guenter will be running for re-election when Manitobans next go to the polls.

The Progressive Conservative Party announced several acclamations of its candidates across the province last week, including the two-term MLA for Borderland.

The party noted that Guenter has been a staunch advocate for the Pembina Valley region since 2019, when he was elected as the youngest-ever Conservative MLA at the age of 25. He has most recently led the charge for Manitobans' right to protect themselves and their families in their own homes.

The 44th Manitoba general election will be held no later than October 5, 2027.

### Notice of Environment Act Proposal

Manitoba Environment and Climate Change invites public comment on the following proposal:

#### **CENTRA GAS MANITOBA INC. – ALTONA TO WINKLER GAS TRANSMISSION PIPELINE – FILE: 6262.00**

Centra Gas Manitoba Inc. proposes to build a 31-kilometre-long and 8-inch-diameter natural gas transmission pipeline that will originate north of Altona and end in Winkler. The proposed route passes through portions of the Municipality of Rhineland, the Rural Municipality of Stanley, and the City of Winkler. If approved, construction is anticipated to begin in the summer of 2027 and take up to a year to complete. The pipeline will become a component of the natural gas system in the area which includes the recently licensed Dominion City to Altona gas pipeline development.

This proposal can be viewed at [www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries](http://www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries)

Anyone affected by the proposal who wishes to provide feedback should submit their comments using the online form at [www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries](http://www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries) by April 20, 2026.

Information submitted in response to this proposal will be available to the proponent and placed on the public registry per Section 17 of The Environment Act.

Environmental Approvals Branch  
Manitoba Environment and Climate Change  
Box 35, 14 Fultz Boulevard  
Winnipeg MB R3Y 0L6  
Toll-Free: 1-800-282-8069

Website: [www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries](http://www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries)



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IN MORRIS MB

# Altona skaters perform an Olympic-themed showcase



Penny Wahl, solo.



PHOTOS BY EDWARD VINCENT ARSENAL/VOICE

The Altona Skating Club held its annual showcase on March 12. This year's theme was "Olympics Ice Show: Brave is Unbeatable" and it featured skaters of all ages showing off what they've learned this season.



Laura Braun, solo.



Chyler Cadieux, solo.

# Borderland SD passes \$45M budget for 2026-27

By Lorne Stelmach

Border Land School Division has adopted a budget for the 2026-27 school year that boosts school taxes by a relatively minor amount in order to support the educational needs in the region.

The financial plan includes a mill rate increase of 8.6 per cent from 11.6 to 12.6, but the board also made the decision to dip into the division's accumulated surplus fund in order to lessen the impact on taxpayers.

"We're deficit budgeting because we carried a surplus over our provincial cap amount," explained board chairperson Steven Wiebe. "That allowed us to keep our mill rate increase to a reasonable amount. We're relying on the excess surplus from last year."

"I think it shows that we're still running a fairly tight ship as far as our budget numbers go. We're not being outlandish in any of our cost categories."

The new budget estimates total revenues of \$45,733,556 and expenses of \$45,293,057. To bring down its accumulated surplus fund according to provincial guidelines, the division is dipping into that fund to transfer \$1,040,499 to its capital fund.

The budget includes provincial government revenue of \$30,873,529 with net municipal support coming to about \$12,721,857, with other revenue sources including federal support making up the difference.

As far as the impact on taxes, the homeowner affordability tax credit that has replaced the education property tax credit is increasing from a maximum \$1,500 to \$1,600, and property assessments only increased in 2026 by one per cent, as it was not a reassessment year.

It means the impact per \$300,000 of assessment per year breaks down as follows:

- Farm (portioned assessment rate 26 per cent): increase of \$78.
- Residential (portioned assessment rate 45 per cent): increase of \$35.
- Commercial (portioned assessment rate 65 per cent): increase of \$195.

Wiebe noted the division last year benefitted from a sizeable property assessment increase.

"There's always this temptation when you get a massive property assessment increase," he said. "What was tempting was if we start with the same mill rate, last year we would have had quite an increase in the amount of money we

## Notice of Environment Act Proposal

Manitoba Environment and Climate Change invites public comment on the following proposal:

### BLUMENGART COLONY FARMS LTD. – BUFFALO CREEK IRRIGATION PROJECT – FILE: 6054.10

Blumengart Colony Farms Ltd. proposes to expand their existing irrigation project located within the Municipality of Rhineland. The expansion includes withdrawing approximately 600 cubic decametres of spring runoff from the Buffalo Creek at NW 19-02-01 WPM and storing up to 900 cubic decametres of water in reservoirs located at NW-19-02-01 WPM and SE 28-02-03 WPM. If approved, construction would take approximately two to four years.

This proposal can be viewed at [www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries](http://www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries)

Anyone affected by the proposal who wishes to provide feedback should submit their comments using the online form at [www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries](http://www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries) by April 20, 2026.

Information submitted in response to this proposal will be available to the proponent and placed on the public registry per Section 17 of The Environment Act.

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Continued on page 20

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For our rural entrepreneurs, a sale is never just a transaction; it's the engine of the local economy. When you buy garden seeds from the local hardware store, tires from the corner garage, or a coffee from the café, your money doesn't disappear into a distant corporate headquarters. Instead, it stays here, circulating through our schools, hockey rinks, and community halls.

"Every time a neighbor walks through my door, it's a vote of confidence in our town's future," says one local shop owner. "That support allows us to sponsor ball teams and provide first jobs for the students down the road."

Statistics show that for every \$100 spent locally, roughly \$68 stays in the community, compared to less than \$45 at big-box retailers. In rural Manitoba, that difference is the lifeline that prevents "Main Street" from becoming a memory. These businesses are owned by the people who sit next to you in the pews and cheer alongside you at the rink.

In return for this loyalty, our business community is doubling down on service. From staying open late for a producer pre-

paring for seeding to sourcing specific parts for a backyard project, the "local advantage" is built on relationships an algorithm can't replicate. Our merchants understand that spring is a race against the clock; they ensure you have what you need without the long drive to the city.

Choosing local is vital during this seasonal shift. Your decision to shop around the corner provides the stability these businesses need to weather the year. It ensures that when you need expert advice or a quick fix during the spring rush, your neighbors are there to help.

As we look toward the planting season, "Shop Local" remains an act of rural pride. By choosing the shop around the corner, you aren't just buying a product—you are investing in the neighbor who owns it. To the customers who continue to choose local: our businesses thank you. You are the reason our towns remain vibrant and ready for the season ahead.



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# Prairie Singers take the stage Saturday

By Ashleigh Viveiros

The Prairie Singers wrap up another season of singing with two concerts in Winkler this weekend.

The choir, made up of 42 vocalists from across southern Manitoba, take the stage at the Emmanuel Mennonite Church (750 15th St.) at 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 21. Tickets are available from choir members in advance or at the door for \$15 per adult and \$5 per student. Kids under five get in for free.

"I think this is now going on our third year of doing two concerts on the same day," shared conductor Rick Heppner-Mueller. "It's been well received."

This year's show theme is *This Finely*

*Woven Earth*, which Heppner-Mueller explains highlights how connected we all are in this life.

"We ourselves are interconnected, and it just kind of explores that theme of life and all the things that make up life," he said. "And also the sense of community, the sense of how do we go about our lives knowing we're so tightly woven together?"

"So we're focusing on acts of kindness and looking at the beauty in the world. Through music we explore all those different themes."

The song list is about as varied as it can be, ranging from a 500-year-old song in Latin to pieces in Tagalog and Russian to a few selections by Paul Simon and Bob Dylan.

"The feedback we get from our sing-



SUPPLIED PHOTO

The Prairie Singers close out their season in Winkler this Saturday with two shows.

ers is that they like that variety," Heppner-Mueller said.

The Prairie Singers are an auditioned community choir for adults looking for another venue in which to grow and share their love of choral music.

"We do audition our singers just to make sure that they can handle the level of repertoire that we sing," noted Heppner-Mueller. "We try to pick music that challenges the group, because that's what they're looking for."

Their season of rehearsals begin each year in January and end with a spring concert.

"We rehearse basically once a week, every Tuesday," Heppner-Mueller explained. "It's sort of a compressed season, which allows the singers to be able to commit to a shorter timeline. It works well for us."

You can learn more about the choir online at [prairiesingers.ca](http://prairiesingers.ca) or check out this weekend's concerts.

# Three illegal migrants arrested thanks to citizen reports

By Voice staff

Citizen reports helped border enforcement officers find and arrest three people believed to be involved with illegally entering into Canada from the United States last week.

On March 10, at approximately 8 a.m., officers from the RCMP Federal Policing Northwest Region's Integrated Border Enforcement Team (IBET) in Manitoba responded to a citizen report of two possible migrants traveling on foot along Hwy. 201 near Neuenberg.

The officers patrolled the area, located the migrants at the hospital, and confirmed they had crossed into Manitoba from the U.S.

Following treatment for minor cold-related in-

juries, the two were arrested without incident and transferred to the custody of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).

While at the hospital, at approximately 9:40 a.m., IBET was advised of another possible migrant who had attended a Rosengart business seeking transportation to Winnipeg.

IBET headed to the scene and, with support from the RCMP's Black Hawk helicopter, which was already conducting aerial patrols in the area, officers located the migrant hiding in an unlocked parked vehicle. They were arrested and transferred to the custody of CBSA without incident.

At around noon that same day, RCMP dispatchers received a report of a suspicious indi-

vidual loitering outside a school in the Rhineland area.

As per school protocols, the principal initiated a "hold and secure" to ensure students and faculty were safely secured within the building until police arrival.

Upon arrival, the individual was arrested for human smuggling, taken into custody, and later released without charges.

The matter remains under investigation.

"This investigation demonstrates how critical it is for law enforcement and the public to work together when responding to incidents," said Superintendent Sheldon Hollingworth, federal operations officer for Manitoba with the RCMP Federal Policing Northwest Region.

"We thank the members of the public who took the time to report suspicious behavior, as those reports allowed the RCMP to quickly coordinate resources and respond in a timely and effective manner."

## Noelle Francis performs

The latest Home Routes concert coming through the area this month featured the folk music of Noelle Francis.

Francis performed an acoustic concert at The Gardens on Tenth in Altona March 9 (above). Next up is the Juno-nominated folk duo Burnstick performing at The Gardens April 14 and at Winkler Arts and Culture April 25. For the full tour schedule, head to [homeroutes.ca/concerts](http://homeroutes.ca/concerts).



PHOTO BY EDWARD VINCENT ARCENAL/VOICE

The Voice

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# sports & recreation

## Winkler Flyers end regular season in fourth place

By Ashleigh Viveiros

The Winkler Flyers split their final two games of the regular season, but those results had little impact on their fourth-place finish in the MGEU East Division standings.

It's right where the MJHL team has been for weeks, trailing the top three teams by a wide margin with a record of 34-20-2-2 and 72 points.

The Niverville Nighthawks clinched first place with 103 points followed by the Steinbach Pistons in second with 96 and the Portage Terriers in third with 79.

Rounding out the bottom of the standings was the Selkirk Steelers (43 points), the Winnipeg Blues (40), and the Winnipeg Monarchs (24).

In the league standings overall, Winkler's record has it in fifth place behind the Nighthawks, the Steinbach Pistons, Virden Oil Capitals, and Portage and ahead of the Dauphin Kings, Waywayseecappo Wolverines, and the Neepawa Titans.

Those eight teams now move on to round one of the Turnbull Cup playoffs, where Winkler is slated to square off against Niverville. Game one is in Niverville Saturday followed by

game two in Winkler Monday, March 23.

The Nighthawks will be a tough nut for Winkler to crack. In the eight times the two teams squared off this season, Winkler only won once, 7-5, though most of the other games were only won by Niverville by one or two goals.

### ENDING ON A HIGH NOTE

The Flyers last week faced off against the Winnipeg Blizzard and the Selkirk Steelers to close out the regular season.

Tuesday night's game in Winnipeg saw the home team win it 6-5. Winkler held period leads of 3-1 (goals courtesy of Connor Vandal, Graeme Pickering, and Liam Carlone) and 5-3 (Charlie Weaver and Caden McMahon) before the wheels fell off the cart. Winnipeg scored three in the finale frame's first 10 minutes to come from behind and win.

Liam Russell took the loss in net for the Flyers, making 27 saves as Winkler outshot Winnipeg 47-33.

The Flyers ended things on a much higher note a few nights later in Selkirk, downing the Steelers 6-2.



PHOTO BY BRETT MITCHELL/VOICE

Connor Vandal battles for the puck last Friday in Selkirk when his team defeated the Selkirk Steelers 6-2.

The shots battle was a close one—30-27 in Winkler's favour—but it was the Flyers' shooters who found their mark, most notably in the second period.

They were up 1-0 thanks to a goal 12 seconds into the first courtesy of Kade Stringer.

McMahon, Charles Bernier, Carlone,

William Lyons, and Jack Swaenepoel then drowned out Selkirk's lone goal in the second.

The home team managed just one more, late in the third—nowhere near enough to close the gap.

Russell was between the posts again this game for Winkler. He made 25 saves.

## Altona to host 2027 Manitoba Bunge mens curling championship

By Lorne Stelmach

Altona has hosted nearly the whole range of provincial curling championships over the years, but now they are looking forward to striking the one remaining big one off their to-do list.

Curl Manitoba has announced the 2027 Manitoba Bunge mens curling championship will be played at the Sunflower Gardens Arena in Altona's Millennium Exhibition Centre Jan. 26-31, 2027.

Altona was touted as not only the home of a vibrant curling club but also of a major Bunge oilseed processing facility. The event also co-incides with a couple major milestones in the community.

"We are pleased to be bringing the men's championship to Altona in 2027 as part of the Altona Curling Club's 100th anniversary celebrations," said Curl Manitoba executive director Craig Baker. "I think it is also signifi-

cant that we are going to be Altona in the 25th year of Bunge's presence in the community.

"Since 2000, Altona has hosted every Curl Manitoba championship except for the men's and master men's categories," Baker said. "The energy and imagination of the Altona curling volunteers and the support of the entire community have always provided us with successful and memorable events."

The Altona host committee will be co-chaired by Quinn Hildebrand and Keith Stoesz, who have advocated for an Altona-hosted championship for about the past three years.

"Curling started in this community in a one sheet curling rink in 1927. It is important to celebrate that heritage on the 100th anniversary," said Stoesz. "What better way could there be to kick off our centennial year in curling than by hosting the best men's

curling teams in the province in the Bunge championship?"

Stoesz said Altona has a good track record of hosting major curling events, ranging from the Scotties Tournament of Hearts and senior ladies and men bonspiels to mixed as well as junior and U18 events.

"It's a big deal for the community. It's a big deal for the region," he said. "We have hosted pretty much all of the events that Curl Manitoba puts on, and this was the big one that we were hoping to get next."

"I think it's going to be a great event for the community. I think our community really likes to show off the facilities we have here in Altona," Stoesz said. "I think our facility is a great size for this event. I think having the social hall connected to the complex is a real benefit."

In the next month or two, they will put together the various committee

chairs, and Stoesz expects come summer or fall they will be putting out the call for volunteers.

Braden Calvert's Heather team featuring Corey Chambers, Kyle Kurz, Brendan Bilawka, and Rob Gordon, as 2026 champions, are the first team identified to compete in the Altona event. Twenty-three other teams will qualify over the next season in their attempt to become Team Manitoba at the 2027 Canadian championship Montana's brier.

"We're pleased to continue our longstanding support of this premier event, which is always an excellent showcase of competitive curling in Manitoba," said Kyle Jeworski, head of Bunge in Canada. "Bunge has a significant presence in Altona through our oilseed processing facility, and we're excited that Curl Manitoba has selected its curling club to host the Bunge championship in 2027."

## Altona, Morden host during final weekend of youth hockey provincials

By Voice staff

The final weekend of Hockey Manitoba provincial youth hockey championships took place across the province last weekend, including right here in Altona and Morden.

Altona welcomed teams for the U15A and U15B championships, and the hosting Maroons in U15A finished the weekend with a 1-2-1 record and third in the round robin. In the end, the Notre Dame Hawks beat the Southwest Stars 4-2 in the final game.

In the co-ed U13A championship, Carman went unbeaten at 4-0-0 and wrapped it with a 9-5 victory over Swan Valley.

There was also a co-ed U13AA championship in Morden where the Morden team finished fifth at 1-2-1.



PHOTO BY EDWARD VINCENT ARCANAL SIOBHAN MAAS/VOICE

Altona hosted the Girls U15A and U15B provincials last weekend. The U15A event featured the Altona Maroons, who in this game above narrowly fell to the Rock Lake Rebels 3-2. The home team ultimately went 1-2-1 for the weekend.

Notre Dame went 3-0-1 and wrapped it up with a 3-2 win over Steinbach.

And in the co-ed U13B championship, Pilot Mound ended up fifth at

1-1-1. The title was eventually captured by Flin Flon.

Finally, in the co-ed U13D championship, the host Morden team fin-

ished last at 0-3, while Notre Dame was just above them at 0-2-1. Cross Lake went unbeaten in four games to finish atop the heap.

# Royals open SEMHL final with shutout victory

By Annaliese Meier

The Winkler Royals opened the South Eastern Manitoba Hockey League final in impressive fashion on Sunday night, defeating the Ile des Chenes Northstars 3-0 to take a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven championship series.

Matthew Thiessen was outstanding in goal for Winkler, turning aside all

38 shots he faced to record the shutout. At the other end, Northstars netminder Matthew Radomsky made 35 saves but took the loss.

Winkler struck early and never trailed. Braden Hildebrand opened the scoring just 2:28 into the first period, finishing a play set up by Aaron Lewadniuk and Mike Heppner. The goal held up as the game-winner.

The Royals extended their lead midway through the second period when assistant captain TJ Matuszewski scored on the power play at 12:30. Justin Augert and Lewadniuk drew the assists on the goal, with Lewadniuk picking up his second helper of the night.

Lucas Ens added insurance in the third period, scoring at 6:46 off passes from Brett Bergman and Jordan Wall to seal the 3-0 victory.

Winkler went 1-for-4 on the power play, while the Northstars were unable to convert on five opportunities.

Lewadniuk led the Royals offensively with two assists, while Hildebrand, Matuszewski and Ens each scored once.

The series now shifts to Ile des Chenes for Game 2 on Wednesday, March 18 at 8 p.m. Game 3 returns to Winkler on Friday, March 20 at 7:30 p.m., before the teams head back to Ile des Chenes for Game 4 on Saturday, March 21 at 8 p.m. If necessary, Game 5 will be played March 25 in Winkler, Game 6 on March 27 in Ile des Chenes and Game 7 on March 29 in Winkler.

## Thunder win Zone 4 banner



ZONE4HOCKEY.COM

The Morden Thunder are the Zone 4 champs after blanking the Morris Mavericks 3-0 in game three March 9. The best-of-three series was tied at a game each when Thunder netminder Kali Hildebrand made 24 saves to help his team bring home the banner. Scoring for Morden that night was Carter Dyck, Connor Olson, and Kiru Griffen. It's Morden's fourth league championship in a row. Over the weekend, the Thunder competed at the Provincial AAAA Boys Hockey Championship, where they were 0-2 in the round robin with losses to Sturgeon Heights (2-4) and Oak Park (1-5).

## Pembina Valley Run Club expanding routes and building community

By Annaliese Meier

A grassroots running initiative in southern Manitoba is picking up momentum as it prepares for a new season.

The Pembina Valley Run Club, a free, volunteer-run group that began last year, is expanding its reach in 2026 with additional meeting locations, more running opportunities and a broader regional focus.

The club was launched by organizers Linnea and Erik Buchsmann after they noticed the growing popularity of community run clubs while living in Winnipeg.

"Run clubs created a sense of accountability, encouraged outdoor



fitness and helped people connect with others in their community," the Buchsmanns said. "When we moved

Continued on page 16

# Team Sugden is off to U20 nationals next week

By Lorne Stelmach

A young curling team based in Morden will have another crack at a national title in the week ahead.

The Manitoba number two team competing at the U20 national curling championship in Sudbury March 28 to April 4 will be the team skipped by Nash Sugden and featuring third Tyler Fehr, second Tanner Treichel, lead Ryan Thiessen, and coach Lorne Hamblin.

Also representing Manitoba in the men's event is Team Boutet from the Heather Curling Club, while Carman-based Team Hayward is there on the women's side..

Team Sugden has been together for five years now. This will be their fourth time competing on the national stage.

They were at the U20 championship last year, and they hope to crack what is now the top six who advance to the playoffs as opposed to what was formerly the top ten.

"It's a very big deal, and it's amazing that we get to go again, and we're hoping to put up some better numbers than last year and see how well we can represent Manitoba," Sugden said. "This year, we're hoping to at least qualify for the playoffs and then see what we can do from there."



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Team Sugden—Nash Sugden, Tyler Fehr, Tanner Treichel, Ryan Thiessen, and coach Lorne Hamblin—are headed to Sudbury next week to compete in the U20 national curling championships.

Sugden thinks the fact that the team has stuck together in itself makes a big difference.

"With curling teams, there can be a lot of switching around," he said. "We're also all friends off the ice, so

that helps a lot with the chemistry of the team, so it works out pretty well when you stick together.

"It's like we're very much a team; we're not individual players out there," Sugden added, noting they all

grew up with curling. "Everyone one of us curled in juniors in Morden and Winkler ... I think I started curling at six ... it's been quite a while."

There is also a lot of time put into it, he noted.

"I think a lot of it is the willingness to put in the time and sacrifice the time from other things. Instead of going out at night, we're at the curling club or doing mental stuff with the coaches and stuff like that," he said. "The more time on the ice, the better you get."

"I think most of us are pretty committed at this time," Sugden said, noting their preparation goes all year long with not only practice and training but with the help of a number of people including a mental coach as well as nutritionist and a strength coach. "They all help us to improve throughout the year."

"And this level of competition just allows you to learn so much more and get so much better," said Sugden.

Speaking last Friday in advance of a fundraising event held in support of the team at the Morden Motor Inn, Sugden stressed they appreciate that they have lots of community support behind them.

"The community around us has been so good to us throughout the five years that we have curled."

## > RUN CLUB, FROM PG. 15

to the Pembina Valley area, we hoped to meet others who shared the same enjoyment of running."

With few organized opportunities



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Members of the Pembina Valley Run Club head out on a group run during the club's inaugural season. The volunteer-run club is expanding across the region in 2026 with additional routes and meet-ups.

locally, they decided to create their own.

"In the end, we decided to go ahead and create the kind of running community we felt was missing here," they said.

During its inaugural season, the group operated as the Morden Run Club, meeting primarily at Morden Park on Saturday mornings. Participants would run a loop ranging from three to eight kilometres.

Attendance varied week to week, with some runs attracting as many as 20 people. Participants included runners of various ages, families with children and even the occasional dog.

Organizers say that variety and the relaxed atmosphere are part of what makes the club special.

"It's truly a mix of everyone," the Buchsmanns said. "Some very accomplished runners come out, but we also have people celebrating their first three kilometres, along with walkers and run-walk participants."

Encouraged by growing interest, the group has rebranded as the Pembina

Valley Run Club and plans to expand beyond Morden this season.

New runs are planned in Winkler, along with trail routes near Minnewasta Lake and other areas throughout the Pembina Valley. Organizers also hope to incorporate track runs and additional route options to provide more variety.

The club previously met about twice a month on Saturday mornings, but the upcoming season will introduce additional opportunities to run together, including Tuesday and Thursday evening meet-ups.

Each gathering begins with a brief welcome and overview of the route before participants set out with others who match their preferred pace.

"After the run, people usually stay for a bit to stretch, chat and get to know one another," the Buchsmanns said. "We often bring some post-run refreshments to share as well."

Most routes are planned around five kilometres, though participants are encouraged to adjust distances to suit their comfort level.

The club intentionally operates without membership fees or formal structure in order to remain accessible to everyone.

"Running is one of the most accessible forms of fitness, and we wanted to keep the club in that same spirit," the Buchsmanns said. "Our goal has always been to grow community and encourage people to get active."

Looking ahead, the group hopes to continue building a supportive running community across the region.

"Our main goal is to grow participation and continue building the local running community," the Buchsmanns said. "The more people who come out, the more fun and supportive the atmosphere becomes."

The club's first run of the season is expected to take place in mid-April.

Residents interested in joining or learning more can follow the Pembina Valley Run Club on Instagram (@PembinaValleyRunClub) or Facebook.

# Magics host first competition in new home

By Lorne Stelmach

The Magics gymnastic club has been settling into its new location in its own space in the Winkler industrial park, recently holding its first competition there.

The competition is one they host annually for their competitive team. This year's event saw them welcome about 110 athletes from such centres as Winnipeg, Steinbach, Portage, Selkirk and Neepawa, with 50 competitors coming from the local club.

There were a number of age categories from about age six and up with the usual array of apparatus and events.

"They did really well," registrar Tracy Bueckert said of the Magic members. "There were definitely lots of medals and ribbons handed out to our club."

The Magics left Morden late last year after decades in the community, operating out of the Access Event Centre community hall. They're now enjoying having their own dedicated location at 890 Adora Ave. in Winkler.

"It's a huge step forward for us as it gives our athletes more time to train, and it just gives the chance for more kids in general to try gymnastics," said Bueckert. "We are able to offer more classes and more days now, and we were also able to purchase a spring

floor, which was a huge thing because you need to be in a permanent facility in order to be able to do that."

Bueckert said things overall have gone well since making the move.

"It's been going good. We've been in there for about two and a half months ... and it seems like



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The Magics gymnastics club welcomed gymnasts from across Manitoba for a competition in their new Winkler location earlier this month.

people are happy with it," she said. "It's nice ... you don't have to have a team to take down and set up every week. We have access to it all the time, so that's really nice."

Bueckert noted having the full-time dedicated space likely will have an impact in helping local gymnasts really advance their training and skills.

"That is a huge thing for us," she said. "We're now able to host our competitions any weekend we want."

"We're able to offer more programs than we used to," she added. "We're offering spring classes now from April to June. We are offering quite a few rec and competitive camps in

summer. Registration is open for all."

She noted they also have something planned for spring break.

"We're offering some rec classes that are just an open gym. You don't have to be a member. It's just open to the community, and it's just \$5 a participant. You just have to sign up ahead of time. It's just to get more kids to come try it."

Bueckert said that they are grateful for the support they have received, ranging from their landlord Henry Friesen to the City of Winkler bringing in bleachers for the competition as well as the community along with all their coaches and volunteers.



# Redhawks claim consolation title at JV provincials

By Annaliese Meier

The Rosenort Redhawks finished on a high note at the Provincial A/AA JV Boys Basketball Championship, capturing the consolation title at the tournament hosted by Carman Collegiate from March 12-14.

Rosenort opened the provincial tournament in the quarterfinal round against the Souris Sabres on March 12. In one of the closest games of the opening day, the Sabres edged the Redhawks 63-61, sending Rosenort to the consolation side of the bracket.

The Redhawks bounced back the following day with a strong effort in the consolation semifinal, defeating the Immanuel Christian Falcons 70-62 to keep their tournament run alive.

That set up a matchup with the Arbrog Athletics in the consolation final on March 14. The teams traded baskets

throughout the game before Rosenort pulled out a narrow 57-55 victory to secure the consolation championship.

Several Redhawks were recognized for their performances during the provincial weekend. Matthew Manning was named a tournament all-star and also earned player of the game honours in Rosenort's opening matchup against Souris. Bryce Ginter was selected player of the game in the Redhawks' victory over Immanuel Christian, while Hayden Siemens earned the honour in the consolation final against Arbrog.

Eight teams from across Manitoba competed in the three-day Provincial A/AA JV Boys Basketball Championship, including Carman, Warren, Souris, Frontier, Rosenort, Arbrog, St-Joachim and Immanuel Christian, with games played at Carman Collegiate.



PHOTOS BY LANA MEIER

Left: Bryce Ginter of the Rosenort Redhawks was named player of the game following his team's 70-62 win over the Falcons in the A/AA JV Boys provincials consolation semifinal. Right: Fellow Redhawk Hayden Siemens earned the same honour in the team's 57-55 victory over the Athletics in the consolation final.

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### OBITUARY



**Carol Ens**  
September 6, 1944 - March 5, 2026

Carol Ens (nee Fosker) passed away suddenly on March 5, 2026, at the age of 81.

She leaves to mourn, her beloved husband of 64 years, Cornelius Ens; son Michael (Jeanette) and family, daughter Erika (Kerry) and family, son Tony (Janet) and family, son Bill and family, son Neil (Corinne).

Carol treasured every moment spent with family and will be greatly missed by them, and by all who had the good fortune to have known her.

The family is grateful to longtime neighbours, Anne and Mel Lantz and Tom and Yvette Baron, who called the ambulance, stayed with Cornie, and provided comfort and support. Thank you to the paramedics who worked so hard to help Carol. Thank you,

as well, to those who sent food, flowers, and condolences. Our family appreciates all of you.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Carol's name to Siloam Mission (mail cheque to 300 Princess Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 1M3).

She was laid to rest at the Lakeside Cemetery in Morden prior to the memorial service at the Wiebe Funeral Chapel in Morden on Saturday, March 14, 2026.

Wiebe Funeral Homes, Morden  
in care of arrangements  
wiebefuneralhomes.com



### PUBLIC NOTICE



## PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that the Rural Municipality of Stanley's 2024 Audited Consolidated Financial Statements are available for review in the office of the Rural Municipality of Stanley and may be viewed by any persons during regular business hours.

Luc Lahaie, CAO  
Chief Administrative Officer  
R.M. of Stanley

### 90TH BIRTHDAY

**Happy 90th Birthday to our MOM**

**MARY HEPPNER**  
ALL family, friends & everyone who wants to Bless her is invited to help her celebrate

**March 22nd, 2026**

**At the Altona Pioneer Center 227-10th Ave. NW**

**2:30 to 7:00 PM**

**Let your presence be her Gift**

### PUBLIC NOTICE



## R.M. OF STANLEY PUBLIC NOTICE REGARDING THE 2026 FINANCIAL PLAN

Public Notice is hereby given pursuant to Subsection 162(2) of The Municipal Act that the Council of the R.M. of Stanley intends to present its Financial Plan for the fiscal year 2026 at a Public Hearing in the Council Chambers of the Municipality on Thursday, April 9, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. Council will hear any person who wishes to make a representation, ask questions, or register an objection to the Financial Plan, as provided. Copies of the 2026 Financial Plan will be available for review prior to the Hearing at the Municipal Office at 1-23111 PTH 14W in the Rural Municipality of Stanley.

### PUBLIC NOTICE



## BUDGET 2026-2027 PRESENTATION

PRSD is hosting its public Budget 2026-2027 Presentation at the Prairie Rose School Division Office, 45 Main Street South,

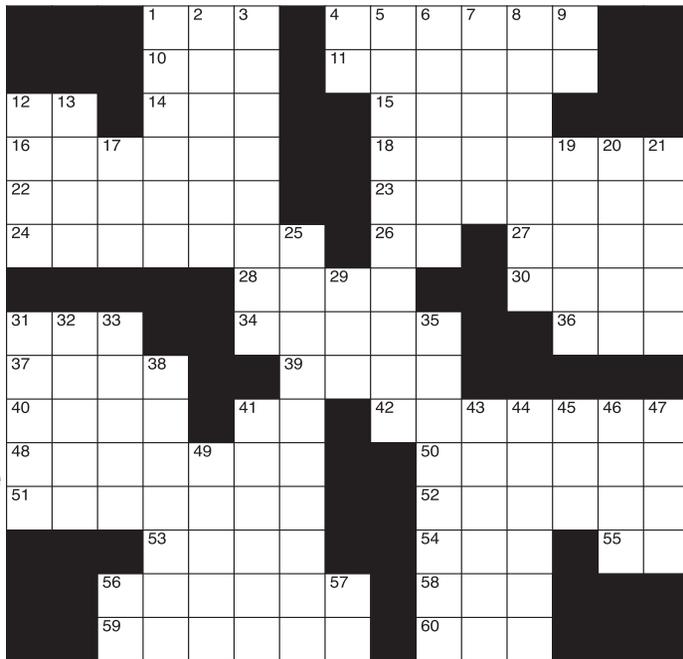


Carman, MB, on Monday, March 23, 2026, at 6:00 PM. The presentation will be recorded and posted on our website ([g.prsdmb.ca/board/financebudget](http://g.prsdmb.ca/board/financebudget)) following the live event, and a feedback form will be available until Friday, April 3, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.

Constituents may attend in person or online. To register, please complete the [Budget 2026-2027 Presentation Registration](http://Budget 2026-2027 Presentation Registration) form using the QR code above or the link here ([tinyurl.com/26-27prsdbrdgt](http://tinyurl.com/26-27prsdbrdgt)). Registration is required for the live event. If you need support registering or have questions, call the office at 204-745-2003 or send emails to [prsd@g.prsdmb.ca](mailto:prsd@g.prsdmb.ca).

### CLUES ACROSS

1. Inclined to do
4. Sketches
10. Book of Chronicles (abbr.)
11. Atomic #58
12. Dorm official
14. Small Eurasian deer
15. Southern constellation
16. Workers' groups
18. Former
22. Excellent
23. Romance language related to Spanish
24. Reference
26. Equally
27. Dirty towels
28. A cargo (abbr.)
30. Ammunition
31. You get one in summer
34. Slang for trucks with trailers
36. Swiss river
37. Exchange rate
39. British School
40. College teacher
41. Foreign Service
42. Horse gear
48. Cost to fly
50. A salt or ester of boric acid
51. Mocking
52. One who bird-watches
53. Concluding passage
54. A major division of geological time
55. Sodium
56. A way to produce
58. Soak
59. Laughed loudly and harshly
60. Affirmative



### CLUES DOWN

1. Moth species phalonia \_\_\_
2. Quantum of energy
3. Break the law
4. Location of White House
5. Official cancellation of a decision
6. Where rockers work
7. Cut of beef: \_\_\_ mignon
8. Nocturnal burrowing reptile
9. Atomic #62
12. Genus of evergreen shrubs
13. Flowering plant of the legume family
17. Inches per minute (abbr.)
19. Tropical fruit
20. Hot fluid beneath the earth's crust
21. James \_\_\_, painter
25. Popular dessert
29. Payment (abbr.)
31. Cuisine style
32. Genus of true flies
33. City in western France
35. Arrogance
38. One holding a position of command
41. Weekday
43. An evening party
44. Print errors
45. Not good
46. Egyptian Sun god
47. East German town
49. Olfactory property
56. Atomic #37
57. "Pollock" actor Harris

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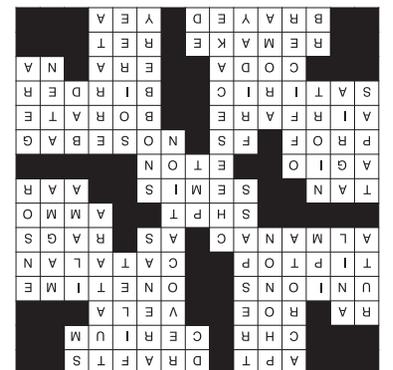
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The Grand Design Reflection 28BH is a popular, family-friendly fifth wheel with a rear private bunkhouse, featuring 2 slide-outs and sleeping capacity for up to 8-10 people. This unit was purchased brand new, and is still like brand new as we only camped once since the purchase in 2024. Camper would require pickup near Oak Bank. Asking \$70,000.

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<https://aem-dev.granddesignrv.com/fifth-wheels/reflection/28bh> - visit this link for further specifications and features



Crossword Answer

# ARED launches developer's info package

By Ashleigh Viveiros

Altona Rhineland Economic Development (ARED) has added a power-

ful new tool to its arsenal.

The agency has completed work on the first Altona Rhineland Region Developer's Package, making it avail-

able immediately from its website (ared-rpga.com) and with hard copies on the way.

The package is meant to be a comprehensive resource designed to showcase the region's strengths and attract new investment and development opportunities, says economic development officer Stephanie Peters.

"The idea for a developer's package actually came from our last strategic planning session," she shared. "When we meet with businesses looking to invest in the community we have all this information on hand, but it's wasn't in such an attractive, compact package.

"We thought that it would be ben-

eficial to put all this information into one easy-to-read and easy-to-access package."

The document highlights the key advantages of the RPGA region, including economic indicators, demographics, labour market insights, major industries, and available land and business spaces.

"This package is an important tool in helping us tell the story of the Altona Rhineland region," Peters said.

Printed copies will be distributed to commercial realtors, municipal offices, and partnering economic development organizations and used at conferences and investment-related events to further promote the region.

**Investing in the Altona & Rhineland Region**

The Altona & Rhineland Region (Rhineland, Plum Coulee, Gretna, Altona) region is located in south Manitoba where natural resources are plentiful, our workforce offers employees who are instilled with strong work ethics.

The region has great strength in its diverse agricultural sector and growing manufacturing industries. Manufacturers driven by a mission to be a proactive business are shaping the future through innovation and productivity and entrepreneurial spirit. The region's strategic alliances to unlock the collective potential gateway for domestic shipment of specialty goods and drive sustainable international export.

The RPGA region is supported by Altona Rhineland Economic Development Inc., a dedicated team of professionals driven by a mission to be a proactive business and foster strong connections and partnerships. They foster strong connections and partnerships to unlock the collective potential gateway for domestic shipment of specialty goods and drive sustainable economic development.

**Quick Facts: RPGA Region**  
Key Economic Indicators

Population <b>10,401</b>	Businesses <b>1,289</b>
Land Area <b>967.83 km<sup>2</sup></b>	Available Labour Force <b>7,245</b>
Occupied Jobs <b>4,685</b>	Post-secondary graduates <b>2,385</b>
Building Permits \$ <b>47.6 Million</b>	Taxes Commercial Mill Rate Altona: <b>36.923</b> Rhineland: <b>27.361</b>

Start your investment planning today! Contact Altona Rhineland Economic Development Inc. Email: ed@ared-rpga.com Web: ared-rpga.com

SUPPLIED PHOTO

A couple of pages from Altona Rhineland Economic Development's new developer's package, which provides a wealth of information about the area.

## Friesens helps students mark I Love to Read Month



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Throughout February, 1,000 youth across the region got a copy of *Owl*, written by Kara Griffin and illustrated by K. Shawn Larson, courtesy of Friesens Corporation. The Altona business donated the books in honour of I Love to Read Month and also had its employees stop by Gr. 2 classrooms to read the book for the kids. The picture book tells the story of a young boy, his grandfather, and an owl calling out to them in the night. "As the 2026 I Love to Read Month book, *Owl* encouraged participation, curiosity, and imagination—values that reflect why Friesens remains committed to promoting reading," company reps say. "Books connect generations, build empathy, and open doors to learning, and Friesens is honoured to help put meaningful stories into the hands of readers across Canada."

### > BORDER LAND BUDGET, FROM PG. 11

would have received from local taxation, but what we actually did last year as a division was we dropped our mill rate," he noted.

"This year because we saw a year over year increase in operating expenses by about 7.3 per cent, we had no choice but to do a slight increase in the mill rate ... to catch up with those expenses and then maintain a sort of status quo budget."

He noted that a large part of their financial challenge was that increased operating support from the province overall came in at under two per cent—a level which does not keep up with rising costs.

"The public announcements sound really promising," said Wiebe. "For a division like Border Land, what it actually boiled down to was a net increase in provincial funding of about \$200,000. It's not negligible ... but it's different when you're talking about a \$42 million budget."

He also noted that the move to provincial bargaining for teaching staff that led to the harmonization of salaries province-wide has had a financial impact for school divisions.

"That's actually a substantial cost for rural divisions," he said. "We were hoping the province would have stepped in to help with those salary costs for that harmonization. In our case, we only got about 30 per cent of that increase ... the remainder has to come from our budget.

"We have to dig into our coffers and look at local taxation as a way to cover those kinds of expenses."

The division considered a number of priorities as far as their budget for the school year ahead, including the following:

- Teaching staff salary move to the provincial harmonized grid which is

an increase of 2.85 per cent.

- Support staff salary increase of 2.5 per cent.

- 22 per cent of teaching staff are budgeted to be 'on the grid' and receiving a four per cent increase for the additional year of service.

- \$590,000 of operating funds and \$330,000 of capital reserve funds for the Roseau Valley School boiler project

- Deficit budgeting of \$600,000 to use up surplus in excess of the 4 per cent allowable amount.

- Bus reserve allocation when cost is more than \$200,000 per bus.

There are also a number of other capital expenses, including \$12,000 for flooring, \$57,000 for cabinetry, \$94,000 storage sheds, a \$38,000 retaining wall and \$50,000 for equipment including four auto scrubber floor machines.

Wiebe suggested the division had done well considering they were not in a position to pursue any more grandiose plans and priorities.

"We're not sitting in a board room dreaming about all of the wonderful projects we would like to do," he said, recalling the years under the previous Conservative government where they were restricted in terms of increases in local taxation, but even though they now have some leeway as far as local taxation, they still need to be mindful.

"We want to be careful and respectful of the taxpayers. We have to be cognizant of maintaining the status quo and not suddenly opening the doors and spending freely. Those days are over," he said. "Would we like to dream about new programming and extra staffing? Yes, we would, but we don't have that luxury."