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## Skating the Tides Ice Show 2026



Beyond the Sea had us floating along, dreaming of sunshine and smiles.



A joyous performance of Under the Sea entertained the crowd.



Watching a symphony on ice with the Youth Synchro members.



He Mele No Lilo provided a sense of relaxed times and cultural understanding.

By Nancy Jo Moller  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

While the temperature outside was brisk, the atmosphere in the Tundra Oil & Gas Place on Sunday, Feb. 22, reflected tropical adventures in and by the sea. The front table had a silver collection and 50/50 bucket. The excited voices of the competitors vibrated through the corridors. As decorations fluttered in the breeze, anticipation increased. The lights dimmed and the adventure began.

"As you watch this show, leave the shore behind. Every skater is in a different point of their journey but connected by the same shore, water and tides."

The theme of the day was Skating with the Tides and each group displayed their interpretation of ocean pop music in varying levels of precision. The skaters glided the length of the ice executing spins and jumps matching the tempo of the music. As they swayed and danced to the music the shining

faces showed happiness in their accomplishments.

The hard work of preparation and training was enjoyed by a multi-generational crowd. The pride was evident as fans pointed out skaters and snapped photos.

At intermission the winner of the 50/50 draw was announced and the Skate Virden club received \$480 in proceeds. The Zamboni had polished the ice to a shimmering expanse during this break.

As the second half of the program began the kaleidoscope of coloured skating ensembles flashed before the spectators' eyes. Sparkles and sequins showcased the smooth movements of the skaters.

The confidence and determination of the participants is a tribute to the hard work of not only them but their parents and coaches. The spectators were able to enjoy an afternoon of entertainment that was affordable and lighthearted.



**HOME GAME**  
**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27**  
**VS. WINNIPEG**  
**BLUES**  
**PUCK DROPS AT 7:30PM**

*Inside...*



**BOARDGAME FUNDRAISER**  
*P3*



**OIL KINGS ARE WINNING**  
*P13*

PHOTOS BY NANCY JO MOLLER

# Food and fun for everyone at Princess Lodge

## Submitted

BY KRISTA PEDERSON

After a change of dates, and a couple of days of snow, a group of about 50 met at the Princess Lodge on February 20. Virden SAIL cook, Vickie had the building full of mouth-watering aromas. After a delicious meal of ham and scalloped potatoes, plus all of the fixings, the crowd enjoyed the sounds of Ed Brown's cowboy poetry and music. All original work, Ed talked about his life and entertained for an hour.

His website describes some of his life and accomplishments:

### Ed Brown

With a diverse background including rodeo cowboy, pasture rider, trapper, wildlife artist and musician, Ed Brown has corralled a backlog of experiences populated with colourful characters and situations which he mines to bring to life his various narratives. Poems laced with raw humor, irony and comments on the state of just about everything, blend seamlessly with songs that range from poignant reflections on days gone by to uplifting celebrations of modern cowboy life.

An accomplished musician, he is often found functioning as a side man for other performers.

Ed is in the Manitoba Rodeo Cowboy's Association Hall of Fame and is currently serving on the executive of the

Alberta Cowboy Poetry Association. He has produced three CDs of his work, one of which was awarded the Will Rogers Award from the Academy of Western Artists. His songs and poems have been performed by several artists in Canada and the US.

We were blessed with an honest, entertaining time with Ed. Singing and speaking about everything from roping a bear, to the importance of family, to music as the best therapy... Ed kept us listening attentively. And if you ever get the chance to hear him, take the opportunity! Check out his website to get a taste. [edbrowncowboypoet.com](http://edbrowncowboypoet.com)

SAIL continues to offer



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Ed Brown performs at Princess Lodge.

entertainment. Whether you come to one of our special meals, Sing Alongs at St Paul's, or join in with community events, like monthly music jams, or music in the park, you'll enjoy local music and benefit from social activities in so many ways. (Keep an eye out for Elvis in Elkhorn on March 17. Tickets must be purchased in advance.)

## Proudly Supporting Woodworth Fire Department

Tyler Routledge (Tundra) & Woodworth Fire Department



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## LAST SUPPER

THE CHOSEN

Please join us for the showing of The Chosen Season 5 "The Last Supper" at the Derrick Theatre in Virden.

- Episode 4 - Tuesday, February 24
- Episode 5 - Tuesday, March 3
- Episode 6 - Tuesday, March 10
- Episode 7 - Tuesday, March 17
- Episode 8 - Tuesday, March 24

Showtime is 7:30 p.m. Optional discussion follows each episode. Admission is FREE!

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Heartland Auction, Virden, MB

MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup> 12PM-5:30PM  
Taylor Auctions, Melita, MB

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# Virден woman to host Play With Your Food fundraiser

By Anne Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Racquel Halland has lighted upon a unique idea to have fun and fundraise for charity.

She explains, "I am helping to host a fundraiser in March for Carmichael Outreach, which supports those experiencing homelessness and food insecurity."

This will be a full day of boardgames with lunch and tea/coffee provided, scheduled for March 14 at Virден Collegiate Institute.

In a Q & A Halland explains her project.

**VEA: Carmichael Outreach is a registered charity in Regina, why a Regina charity?**

A: Short answer, [Carmichael Outreach] has already partnered for the last number of years with a group that specifically runs board gaming events to raise money for charity and they offered to let us join for a year and learn the ropes.

**What inspired your gaming for charity?**

Myself and three friends, Marcy Rowan, Jennifer Lesnar, and Janice Barrate, get together to play board games throughout the year and one of my favourite games is Wingspan.

A few years ago, I saw on Facebook that a group in Regina - Play With Your Food - was having a Wingspan tournament to raise money for Carmichael Outreach, which is one of my mom's favourite charities. I went to the tournament and had a lot of fun and felt great about supporting a charity at the same time.

**Who is helping you do this?**

I approached my gaming group (and my sister Amy Mohr in Regina) about putting some kind of a charitable event on and we loved the idea, but had no idea how to go about organizing and running something like that - there is a lot of behind-the-scenes work!

I reached out to Play With Your Food and they invited us to team up with them for this year and learn how to do all of these events, what to watch out for, etc. They have team mentors, a handbook, training, one-on-one meetings... so we joined them for this year to make sure we knew what we were doing.

**How does this work?**



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Boardgame 'Wingspan' - all set up and ready to play.

In October I attended the first ever GLOW in Brandon, which is "Gaming Ladies of Westoba." It focuses on bringing more women and non-binary people into board gaming in a relaxed, friendly way. They run an all-day event where there are many different board games going at the same time and you sign up for which one you want to play in each time slot.

We also talked to GLOW because Cheryl, the founder, and her husband Kevin, have created a wonderful website and had a directory of emails for people who were interested in attending another event, rather than us having to start completely from scratch.

The website is already set up to take credit card payments and facilitate an easy registration and scheduling process. They were very generous and supportive as well, especially when we explained that it was for charity.

**Who will the funds help?**

Our goal for this event is \$750.

The funds raised go towards supporting those experiencing homelessness and food insecurity. Carmichael Outreach provides food hampers, diapers, milk to children, and mattresses for people who don't have one. They also offer shower and laundry services... they run a free community fridge which is open 24/7, a public wash-room, a public telephone, free hygiene items, socks, underwear, other day-to-day items, and health supplies.

**What games will be available to play?**

The list includes Obsession, Wingspan, Scythe, Botany, Finspan, Hitster, Tokaido, Agricola, Azul, Art Gallery, "Friends" Trivia, and more!

There is a fair bit of variety-

in Hitster you scan a QR code to hear a clip of music and try to place it on a historical timeline; bonus points if you can name the artist and title.

Botany is set in Victorian times and you travel the globe curating botanical specimens. In Wingspan you collect various bird specimens to create the best bird sanctuary, and in "Friends" Trivia you try to remember what Chandler's job title was!

**How do we sign up?**

You can create an account on the page Glowmb.ca and check everything out without having to pay for a ticket.

**Why is this a women's event?**

It is partially to encourage more women and female-presenting individuals to participate in board gaming as a hobby. All-women events have a much different vibe from mixed ones. They tend to be less competitive and more supportive, especially of those just learning. It's a less intimidating atmosphere.

# DRAKE MAKING HIS MARK IN MJHL ROOKIE CAMPAIGN

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Virден Oil Capitals forward Dysen Drake credits growing up in a family of accomplished athletes as a key factor in his success.

Drake's father, Dallas, had a long National Hockey League career. All three of Dysen Drake's siblings competed in sports at the junior or university level. As a rookie this season, Drake has shown he belongs in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League. The 6-foot-2, 189-pounder has 13 goals and 16 assists for 29 points in 39 games, as of Feb. 22.

"Dysen has had an impressive rookie season so far," Oil Capitals head coach Tyson Ramsey said. "He has great skill and vision and a great shot release. He thinks the game at an elite level and can contribute five-on-five and on our power play. He has fit in really well with our group, and I am really excited about the potential for Dysen in our league in terms of being a top scoring threat. We are lucky to have him here."

In an early January victory over Swan Valley, Drake recorded four assists. He had three helpers against the same squad later that month in another win. Drake scored a hat trick on Feb. 21 against Dauphin. He has also scored two goals in a game twice this season.

His father helped Mar-



PHOTO BY VIRDEN OIL CAPS

Virден Oil Capitals forward Dysen Drake.

quette, Mich.'s Northern Michigan University win the 1991 NCAA Division I men's hockey championship. The elder Drake went on to play in the NHL for the Detroit Red Wings, Winnipeg Jets, Phoenix Coyotes and St. Louis Blues. He started and ended his career in Detroit - where he helped the Red Wings win the 2008 Stanley Cup in his final season.

The elder Drake and his wife, Amy, have four children. Their oldest son, Jackson, played prep school hockey and for the Traverse City North Stars junior team. Their oldest daughter, Delaney, played hockey for the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Daughter Darby competed in diving for the University of Nebraska Omaha.

"Growing up, there was obviously a little pressure there having my dad, sisters and brother all being

great athletes so that always pushed me to be the best and growing up around them and getting to skate with them and watch them helped me become the player I am today," Dysen Drake said. "Without them as role models, I'm not sure I'd be who I am today."

He grew up in Traverse City, Mich. When he was about 14, Drake said, his family began spending winters in Phoenix. He played for various Phoenix Junior Coyotes teams. It was while playing on an 18U team last season that the Oil Capitals scouted him.

Drake has enjoyed his time in Virден. He billets with Diana MacDonald, whom he described as amazing. Of his time with the Oil Capitals, Drake said, "I think the best part about being here is probably the guys. We have a great group of guys who are all super close."

## THE HAMIOTA DISTRICT HEALTH CENTRE FOUNDATION INC. BURSARY FUND

- Invites 4th and 5th year students enrolled in a health-related program to apply for this \$2000.00 bursary. Contact [vwilson@inetlinkwireless.ca](mailto:vwilson@inetlinkwireless.ca) or [bennett2@goinet.ca](mailto:bennett2@goinet.ca)

- Invites Grade 12 students wishing to enroll in a health-related program to apply for this \$1000.00 bursary.

Contact [vwilson@inetlinkwireless.ca](mailto:vwilson@inetlinkwireless.ca) or [bennett2@goinet.ca](mailto:bennett2@goinet.ca)

DEADLINE:  
MARCH 31, 2026



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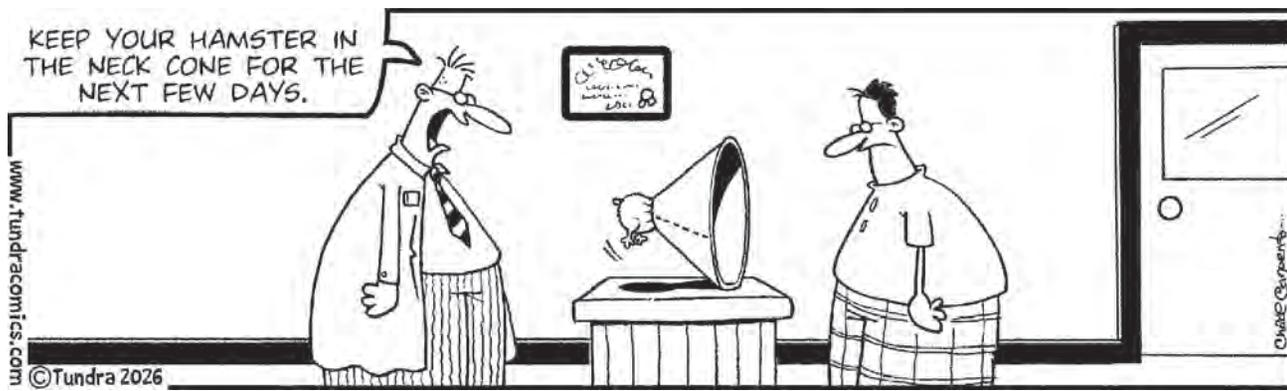
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#7 - 515 4th Avenue  
Burlington Place, Shoal Lake, MB

# Tundra

By Chad Carpenter



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## Here's to friendships

We know that from our very first breath to our very last breath, we need human contact. Deeper than a want, it truly is an essential need.

We see how infants thrive with loving connections, how parents and caregivers are encouraged to have skin on skin time with the wee ones, even when there are tubes and wires in the picture. And we know too well the longing, need, that our elders and ill have for a hug and a hand to hold.

Not everyone is privileged to have a supportive family; physical distances and emotional distances prevent regular contact. Here's the place where friendships excel. First, we do get to choose our friends, and we do get the opportunity to interact with them — either through the workplace, the gym, or the coffee shops. It is heart warming to watch a group of individuals sharing time and thoughts — connecting.

I swing back to the human contact thought. Safe hugs are becoming more common. With the work I am privileged to do, I give, and receive wonderful hugs. I can feel an energy shift when I am greeted with a hug before a service; I am encouraged and strengthened. And as I gather with families the hugs are also shared energy, me offering my strength, granting them a moment to feel frail and sad, safely. And the Sunday morning hugs! We have worshipped together, prayed and praised together, and now rejoice in friendships and shared values. I am a hugger... a safe hugger.

Preschool and daycare were not a part of my childhood. Cousins were! And they became my playmates and lifelong friends. We share a history of experiences and people. Some school friendships last for a lifetime. I admire and respect that. I have relocated a number of times and have lost touch with old neighbours and classmates. Not for a moment have I forgotten them! We made a hat full of memories; curling bonspiels, track and field days, youth group gatherings and community celebrations. There were ten of us students that moved from grade two to twelve almost together, I know their names though I have not a clue where they are, what they do (I imagine retired!!) or if they are still with us.

As a parent I got to know other parents, some developed into friendships. I entered into community life, and here too, created some friendships. We all get/got so busy with life and living that maintaining a friendship sometimes became too much work.

And now I am old. Friendships are the gold in the golden years! We may not have shared other parts of our lives, but now we have time, and the need, for each other. I am so blessed with friends of many ages and stages. I miss, fiercely, the women who I considered my mentors, and, in turn, I have become a mentor to others. My young friends think young and allow me that freedom. With others we commiserate about our aches and pains, and forgetfulness! Each day I give thanks for the circle of friends that bless me with their time and energy... and their hugs!

## Staying positive in tough times

This week marks the first of our 10 Farmers Advocate issues this year. Our FA editions are published the last Friday of each month from February through November. It appears in all three of our papers, the Neepawa Banner & Press, the Virden Empire-Advance and the Rivers Banner. Seeing as the three papers started in 1896, 1885 and 1908 respectively, I am inclined to ponder about all the changes to farming that have taken place since 1885.

1885 is a long time ago. It's 15 years before my long-deceased grandparents were married. 1885 is 22 years before my dad was born (1907). It's 63 years before I was born.

My dad would have been able to relate to farming in 1885 to some extent, as he grew up on a tiny farm near Christieville, Quebec and farmed there with his father using horses and even hand scythes. When he began farming on his own near Muir, Manitoba in 1933, it was with horses. After serving in WWII, he went farming again at Holland, Manitoba. His first vehicle and machinery at Holland were horse drawn. He did switch from horses to a Case VA tractor in 1946, and had a succession of tractors through to his retirement in the mid-1980s. His first vehicle was a Model T car converted to a truck, I believe, but I have no memory of it. His next car was a 1928 Chevy four door Landau model. I remember that one. How I wish I had that car today, as it was beautiful and sits only in my memory and my family photo album. It was followed by a 1938 Plymouth, a 1951 International Harvester pick up, a 1958 IHC truck and then a variety of cars until his passing in 1987.

I guess all that is somewhat irrelevant, but the transition from horses to tractors and various trucks



and cars is illustrative of how things have changed from 1885 to 1985. The transition was stark, but not as stark as the changes we have seen in the years since 1985.

In the passing 40 years, farming has changed to a point where it's almost unrecognizable and almost out of anyone's price range. The inflation in land prices has made millionaires of some retiring farmers and debt slaves to some of those who have come along behind.

As I write this column, the ever bombastic President Trump has flung out even more tariff threats. I can't think of a time when we were made more aware of international trade relations than we are today. It's interesting to note that tariffs, both inside and outside of Canada have been pushing and pulling agriculture on both the production and supply side for years. In the early years of Confederation, tariffs were widespread. If I have my history straight, it was Canada's first prime minister, John A. Macdonald, who imposed tariffs on US made farm machinery so as to prop up the eastern Canadian manufacturers and force Canadian farmers to buy Canadian machinery rather than cheaper imported farm machinery.

I can't predict what will happen with tariffs and trade wars but I can be assured of a few things.

I have said many times that we

need to look after Faith, Family, Friends and Finances, and in that order.

Our family has faced economic difficulties a few times in our lives. We may face them again and I know that my kids, grandkids and great grands face some struggles.

But this I know, God loves us and it's important to follow his teachings. Love your neighbour as yourself, follow the Ten Commandments. Be aware of the pitfalls that may lie ahead.

I have also said that the sun will come up tomorrow and regardless of how tough things might seem to be unfolding, there will also be many things to be thankful for.

To put it bluntly, if you don't think we live in a land of plenty, then you haven't observed the 40 foot long shelves of potato chips and snack food in most stores or the pallets of pet food.

There is always lots to grumble about, but it doesn't do much good. It's much more productive to get off our butts and do something productive. Any able bodied person who thinks they have things tough, aren't living with the right attitude.

*Disclaimer: The views expressed in this column are the writer's personal views and are not to be taken as being the view of the newspaper staff.*

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# Virден files lawsuit over failed water supply

By Dale Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

At the Feb. 19 Town of Virден council meeting a resolution was passed stating that the Town has legal concerns regarding its water supply infrastructure and public water system. Council authorized the filing of a statement of claim in the Court of King's Bench in Winnipeg.

The Town entered into an agreement with the Manitoba Water Services Board (MWSB) in 2019 for a ground-

water supply investigation. W.L. Gibbons and Associates was retained to conduct the investigation and, in August 2020, issued a report recommending the town draw water from the Leask Aquifer.

In 2025 the aquifer began to run short even under normal pumping conditions. The Town hired a third-party hydrogeological engineer that summer to provide an independent review of the situation.

According to a CTV article published on Feb. 24, the cur-

rent lawsuit claims the review showed that the aquifer did not provide an adequate water supply and should not have been recommended or developed. The Town alleges that the failure of the new wells resulted in the Town's water supply reaching critically low levels, placing the community at imminent risk of running out of water (and) causing a municipal water emergency.

The Town also alleges the MWSB and W.L. Gibbons and Associates were negligent and responsible for deficient

engineering services, investigations, testing and recommendations.

Stephen Wiecek, a senior geological engineer with W.L. Gibbons and Associates, is also named as a co-defendant. The lawsuit claims the representations made by the firm and Wiecek were "in fact untrue, misleading and/or negligently made. The Town relied reasonably on the representations to its detriment and has suffered and continues to suffer loss and damage."

The Town is seeking dam-

ages, including recovery of loan payments and costs associated with a temporary water supply and replacement wells.

According to the lawsuit, the budget for the groundwater investigation was \$350,000, while the transition to the Leask Aquifer was estimated at \$3 million. The town financed half of the costs through loans, with the MWSB covering the remainder.

A press release from the Town of Virден states, "Town has been completing due diligence into the past professional engineering, technical advice, inspections and

reports regarding the two installed pumping wells in two separate locations at the Leask Aquifer.

Council continues to be concerned about the ongoing water quality and water levels, as well as the costs incurred by the Town for infrastructure that, in the opinion of the Town, is no longer being utilized for the purposes (for) which it was installed.

With the assistance of legal and third-party experts, Council for the Town has chosen to commence legal action to protect the interest of the Town of Virден and the residents."

**Town Office: 204-748-2440**

**Virден Landfill: 204-748-6033**

**Tundra Oil & Gas Place: 204-748-2736**



**Animal Control: 204-851-5881**

**Facility Bookings: 204-748-2440**

**Emergency After Hours: 204-851-5540**

## Employment Opportunities

### Summer Employment

- Green Team
- Head Lifeguard
- Assistant Head Lifeguard
- Lifeguard Instructor
- Assistant Lifeguard

For more information about any of the postings above, please visit [www.virden.ca/p/employment-opportunities](http://www.virden.ca/p/employment-opportunities).

Resumes with cover letter can be submitted **until April 1, 2026** to:

Faye Pope – Office Manager, Town of Virден  
Box 310, Virден MB R0M 2C0  
[office.manager@virden.ca](mailto:office.manager@virden.ca)

## Public Notice - Pesticide Program

Public Notice is hereby given that the Town of Virден intends to conduct the following pesticide programs during 2026:

1. To control noxious weeds within the Town limits of the Town of Virден. The projected dates of application will be from April 1, 2026 to October 31, 2026.

The herbicides to be used include one or more of the following:

**Picloram \* Amitrol \* Target \* Transorb \* 2, 4-D Ester**

2. To control noxious weeds at the waste disposal grounds and surrounding area in the R.M. of Wallace, located on SE 24-11-26W. The projected dates of application will be from April 1, 2026 to October 31, 2026.

The herbicides to be used include one or more of the following:

**Picloram \* Round-up \* Target \* Primatrol \* 2, 4-D Ester  
Atrazine \* Amitrol**

3. To control rats at the waste disposal grounds at various times during the coming year using the **rodenticide Bromadiolone**.
4. To control the following insect pests including grasshoppers, mosquitoes, elm bark beetles, canker worms, etc. within the limits of the Town of Virден. The projected dates of application will be from May 1, 2026 to October 31, 2026.

The insecticides to be used include one or more of the following:

**Cygon 480EC \* Vectobac \* Cholorphyrifos**

Objections to the proposed program may be submitted in writing within fifteen (15) days of the publication to:

Manitoba Environment and Climate  
Environmental Approvals Branch  
Box 35, 14 Fultz Blvd. ~ Winnipeg, MB R3Y 0L6  
[pesticideusepermit@gov.mb.ca](mailto:pesticideusepermit@gov.mb.ca)

## Flower & Garden Caretaker

### Employment Opportunity

The Town of Virден is seeking to employ a self-motivated individual to assist in its annual planting and seasonal maintenance of flowerbeds, planters and hanging baskets throughout town.

Preference will be given to individuals who have graduated from or are enrolled in a recognized green space management course. Individuals with similar experience and training are encouraged to apply. Applicants must hold a valid driver's license.

This position will run from May to September, and will remain open until filled.

Please forward resume with cover letter to:

Faye Pope, Office Manager  
Town of Virден  
Box 310  
Virден, MB, R0M 2C0  
Email: [office.manager@virden.ca](mailto:office.manager@virden.ca)

## Upcoming Council Meetings

March 3 and 17

Council Meetings start at 7:00 PM

## Tax Prepayment Discounts

The Town of Virден offers tax prepayment discounts as outlined below to taxpayers wishing to pay an installment or installments on their 2026 property taxes.

Those wishing to prepay may pay an amount or a series of amounts that in total does not exceed the amount of their 2025 property taxes. The discount rate is equivalent to an effective annual interest rate of 3%.

Month of Payment	Discount Rate	Savings on \$1000.00
March	1.75%	\$ 17.50
April	1.50%	\$ 15.00
May	1.25%	\$ 12.50
June	1.00%	\$ 10.00
July	0.75%	\$ 7.50

Tax prepayments made in the months of August, September or October will be accepted at par and can be made via Online Banking, Telephone Banking, E-Transfer, or through our Drop Box located at the main doors of our office at 236 Wellington Street West.

# HELEN DRYSDALE

## OUT OF HELEN'S KITCHEN

Today's recipes come from the 1998 "The Art of Cooking," published by the Viscount Cultural Council. The VCC as it was known as was incorporated in 1976. Its gallery show cased art work from local, regional and national artists as well as hosting touring exhibitions. It also organized classes in visual, dance, music, literary and crafts for people of all ages. When the VCC purchased a permanent location the name changed to Arts Forward. This new and larger space allowed for many more events and classes to take place. All year round it is a hub of activity providing classes from toddlers to seniors. Performances and events organized include, events for National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, concerts, recitals, author readings, Trivia Nights, beer and wine tastings, and our annual Christmas Craft Sale. We are truly fortunate to have such an organization in our community.

### Magically moist chicken

Don Kryschuk

- 2 1/2 -3 1/2 lb. chicken cut up
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 1 1/4 cup bread crumbs

Brush chicken on all sides with mayonnaise. Add Italian seasoning to bread crumbs. Place bread crumbs in a large plastic food bag. Add chicken one piece at a time; shake to coat well. Arrange on rack in broiler pan. Bake at 425 F for about 40 minutes or until golden brown and tender.

### Sweet potato and carrot crisp

Jane McLaren

- 5 large sweet potatoes
- 2 lbs. carrots
- 3/4 cup orange juice
- 2 Tbsp. liquid honey
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 2 tsp. cinnamon
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. salt
- Topping:
- 1 1/2 cups fresh bread crumbs
- 1/2 cup chopped onions
- 1/3 cup melted butter
- 1 Tbsp. chopped parsley

Cook and mash sweet potatoes and carrots. Add the other six ingredients; put into a greased 9X13 inch pan. Combine topping ingredients; sprinkle over potato mixture. Cover with tin foil and bake at 350 F for 20 minutes.

### Orange chocolate chip cookies

Don Clark

- 1 cup margarine
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- grated rind of 1 orange
- 1 orange, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 cups flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 3 cups oatmeal
- 2 cups chocolate chips or smarties

Preheat oven to 350 F. Cream margarine and sugars together in a large mixing bowl. Add eggs and vanilla. Beat until smooth. Add grated orange rind and finely chopped orange to creamed mixture; mix well. Add the dry ingredients to the creamed mixture and mix well. Stir in the chocolate chips. Drop by spoonfuls onto greased cookie sheets; press down with fork. Bake for 10-12 minutes. Makes about 4 dozen cookies.

## WINTER OLYMPICS

By Gerry Nolan  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Winter Olympics have come and gone. What a great group of athletes represented Canada. We are all very proud of their accomplishments. There were the celebrations of victory and the agony of defeat along the way. Some of the events that take place are mind boggling how these athletes perform at the levels they compete.

Congratulations to Travis Sanheim, formerly of Elkhorn, who was just outstanding for the men's hockey team on winning a silver medal in Milano.

Travis made all of Canada proud but for all of the people of Elkhorn and surrounding area even more proud.

Congratulations to all the competitors from all the nations on a job well done. Also to all the officials and volunteers, thank you for your commitment to the games.

One thing I noticed was that after the events were decided and being handed out how all the amateur athletes would congratulate one another, be it a pat on the back, a handshake or giving each other a hug. What a great sign of

sportsmanship?

Two things I did not like were the trash talking that came out in curling and hockey. To me this is not acceptable. The media can stop it, but they do not. I guess they figure this needs to be shown over and over. It takes away from the other athletes who work and train so hard to achieve their goal.

All in all it has been a great two weeks of entertainment but it is time to get back to normal programming, like the stretch for the NHL playoffs and watch the boys of summer, as they have started the grapefruit season!

# Police Report

## Westman RCMP Service Report for Feb. 15 to 21

Submitted  
BY WESTMAN RCMP

During this week, Westman RCMP received a total of 72 calls for service. Some of these calls for service include 28 traffic offences, 3 Assistance to Canadian Agencies/General Public, 5 Assaults, 3 Mischief files, 2 Firearms related files, 3 Wellbeing checks, 2 False Alarms, and 2 Fraud files.

On Feb. 15, during routine traffic patrols in the RM of Sifton, RCMP observed a vehicle travelling at a high rate of speed. Radar confirmed the driving speed of 136 km/hr in a 110 km/hr zone. A traffic stop was conducted, and the driver was issued a Traffic Offence Notice for Speeding, which carries a fine of \$391.

On Feb. 20, RCMP received a report of an impaired driver who had driven into their parked vehicle in the town of Virden. The impaired driver had left the vehicle and walked into a local facility. RCMP attended and located the driver of

the vehicle who showed obvious signs of intoxication and subsequently arrested for impaired operation. The driver of the vehicle was transported to the Virden RCMP detachment where he provided breath samples resulting in 140 mg% and 130 mg%. The driver was arrested for Operation while Impaired, Operation while over 80 mg% and Operation while prohibited. Once the driver was released, he was issued a 90-day license suspension and a notice to appear in Court.

On Feb. 21, during routine patrols in the RM of Sifton, RCMP observed a vehicle travelling on highway 1 when a radar detector was activated. A traffic stop was conducted, a radar detector was in the vehicle, and the driver was issued a Traffic Offence Notice for Drive a vehicle equipped with a radar detection device, which carries a fine of \$298.

On Feb. 21, during routine traffic patrols in the RM of Wallace-Woodworth, RCMP observed a vehicle travelling at a

high rate of speed. Radar confirmed the driving speed of 153 km/hr in a 110 km/hr zone. A traffic stop was conducted; an oral fluid sample of the driver was completed which resulted positive for cannabis consumption. The driver was issued a Traffic Offence Notice for Speeding, which carries a fine of \$613 along with 72-hour drivers license suspension.

To report a complaint or non-emergent incident to RCMP please call 204-748-2135. For general inquiries or administrative requests including criminal record checks please call the administration line at 204-748-2046 Ext. 3. If you are reporting an emergency, please call 911.

If you witness a crime and wish to remain anonymous, please contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477. Crime stoppers is entirely confidential and completely anonymous. The tip line is not traceable, and they do not subscribe to caller ID or call display.

## NOTICE

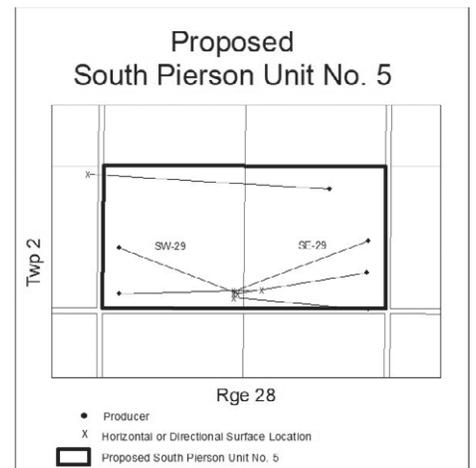
### Under the Oil and Gas Act Pierson Oil Field

Melita Resources Ltd. (MRL 2 Ltd.) has made application under The Oil and Gas Act for approval to form South Pierson Unit No. 5 and within implement a Waterflood Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) Operation, within the Mission Canyon 3 formation. The inset map shows the proposed boundaries.

If no valid objection or intervention is received in writing by Manitoba Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation, Petroleum Branch, at Suite 360 - 1395 Ellice Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 3P2 before **March 20, 2026**, the Minister may approve the application.

Copies of the application can be obtained from:

Brad Caldwell  
MRL 2 Ltd.  
136 Main Street  
Melita, MB R0M 1L0  
(306) 339-7714, bcaldwell@melitaresources.com



The application may be viewed in full at: [manitoba.ca/iem/petroleum/applications/index.html](http://manitoba.ca/iem/petroleum/applications/index.html)



# Tulum, an amazing sight

By Gerry Nolan  
RIVERS BANNER

Our family and friends recently travelled to Cancun Mexico for a week of sunshine and relaxation. The weather was cool in the morning and warm in the afternoon, making it a fun vacation. The service was great and the people were friendly!

One day we all went on an excursion to Tulum, which is situated 130 kilometers south of Cancun. The thirteenth century walled Mayan architectural site at Tulum National Park which overlooks the sea and incorporates the cliff tops Castillo built in watch towers.

The greatest attraction at the Tulum ruins is its location, as it is built facing the rising sun, and is the only Mayan settlement located on the beaches of the Caribbean.

Tulum means "Wall", a reference to its location. The original inhabitants called it Zama, meaning the place of the dawning sun.

Our guide for the day was Niza, who is a Maya. Niza was terrific! His grandfather told him when he was a lad that he would be his educator and would teach him the Mayan way. Niza was very well educated, with great reading and writing skills. He took his time to answer all our questions and shared some amazing history of the ruins. At one point he sat down on the ground and picked up a twig to draw diagrams and pictures in the sand so we could visualize the stories he was describing to us.

I cannot explain the full meaning of what we saw, there was so much detail to this fascinating place. What I will say though



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The thirteenth century walled Mayan architectural site at Tulum National Park.

is if you ever get the opportunity to vacation in Mexico, take the excursion to Tulum, you will feel so blessed by its beauty and charm.

## Miniota turns empty building into community thrift

By Anne Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

In a matter of weeks, a group of community minded people decided Miniota needed a thrift store and they made it happen.

Miniota Thriftique was stocked and ready for shoppers on opening day, last Friday.

A committee of Pat Cole, Heather Lelond, Dorothy Gow, Tracy Lelond-Young and Dawn Wenzel got things going, along with help from Delbert Cole, a Prairie View Municipality councillor who identified a thrift store as a community opportunity. And let's not forget Harry Wenzel's contribution as handy man.

The idea began to percolate when Delbert saw that Birtle thrift generated about \$18,000 last year and the money went to help their community programs. Likewise, Thriftique's net revenue will be put back into the community through Miniota and Area Foundation.

Organizers were happy with their soft opening on Friday and Saturday. Dawn said, "The community is very excited for our opening, with lots more donations and people wishing to volunteer. Very exciting."

The store is open three days per week - Wednesdays and Fridays from 12 Noon to 5:30pm, and on Saturdays from 11am to 3pm.

The Community Development Corporation owns the building. OPAM (Organics Producers of Manitoba) opened in the building over a decade ago and their office is in the rear of the building while the storefront is now Thriftique.

"We've got a few months' rent-free right now," said Pat.

The new venture is a ray of sunshine on the quiet downtown street.

"The main street, (or I call it main street) has really dwindled since I was a kid," said Dawn, daughter of Bill and Eleanor Cousins. She grew up in Miniota and now they, the Wenzels, have retired to Miniota from the East Coast. "There was so many more businesses," Dawn recalls.

The group reminisced about the grocery store (recently owned by Donna and Bob Gardham), a meat market, Bill Barret's shoe store, the hotel (Mike's Café) and Mardell's hair salon that used to populate the street.

A historic Royal Bank building was put to good use as the Community Drop In Centre.

Thriftique has limited space but larger items like furniture can be accommodated in additional sheds where seasonal donations will also be stored.

### Thrifting tours

Apart from community traffic, it remains to be seen



PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON

Dorothy and Tracy at work on opening day in Miniota Thriftique.

who the thrift shop will attract to town. However, shopping tours have become a thing. A mum and daughter from Elkhorn area were just one example of Miniota Thriftique's opening day customers. "They make it a day and they go around to all the places," says Pat. Dorothy had also heard that shoppers from Melita were planning a trip over with stops at other area thrifts along the way.

In fact, southwest Manitoba provides a chain of stores that are ideal for thrifters.

A few years ago, Reston opened Hidden Treasures Community Thrift Store. New to You is located in Virden. McAuley Thrift Store just celebrated 20 years in business last October. In Birtle there's The Value Shoppe, and farther north, Rosburn Thrift Shop. Heading back south, Hamiota has two thrift outlets - The Hamiota R Store and Hamiota Thrift Shop. Oak Lake's Thrift and Thrive opened last year and Melita recently opened Finders Keepers Thrift Store.

Friday was a good day for the new Miniota store. "Our sales are ... about \$120 so far today," said Dawn.

Many thrifts operate on a cash only basis, as does Thriftique. And of course, there's no cash left on the premises when the store closes.

## Fire Chief's Report of 2025: Growth, Transformation, and Romance

By Joel Neumier  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Fire Chief's Annual Report for 2025 is in, recounting the Virden division of Wallace District Fire Department's record in detail. Last year, the Virden Fire Department responded to 96 different incidents. WDFD responds to all sorts of emergencies, but the most common incident of 2025 was motor vehicle collisions, of which there were 26.

47 incidents occurred withing the town of Virden, and 42 incidents took place in the RM of Wallace. The remaining 7 incidents were from the RMs of Pipestone and Sifton.

Of course, emergency responses are far from their only service to the community. Our firefighters volunteered their time at 16 community events raising money for a multitude of different causes. They also attended 57 training sessions over the course of the year, and 5 of their members travelled north in the summer to help combat wildfires near Flin Flon.

"We have no full-time members. This is all stuff that our members did in their spare time" said Fire Chief Cory Nixon. "I'm very proud of us for achieving all that we have!"

The department's main fundraising goal for 2025 was to raise \$75,000 for new radios. According to Chief Nixon, "Communication is crucial at any incident, and our old radios were long overdue for an upgrade." Thanks to the generosity of numerous local sponsors and the firefighters' own initiative, \$58,350 was raised. They intend to raise money for the remaining expenses this year.

However, their biggest fundraising success was procured from the provincial government by our municipal office. A 1.5-million-dollar grant was awarded to WDFD to help finance a new fire hall's construction in Virden, doubling the project's budget.

Virden's firefighters also made great strides in 2025 that can't be measured in nickels and dimes. Last summer, their long-awaited pump truck, labelled "Engine 1", was brought into service, replacing the old pumper and greatly bolstering the department's ability to douse the fiercest of fires. Its predecessor has been repurposed as a rescue vehicle for Elkhorn's fire department.

What's especially remarkable is 2025's recruitment record. Station #1 gained 13 members last year and retained 10 in the long term. "This is unheard of!" said Chief Nixon. "This is by far the most recruits I've seen in such a short period since I joined in 2000!"

These new recruits bring the Virden station's membership up to 27. They aim to ideally have 30 or more active members. Of those firefighters, 4 got engaged to their partners in 2025, making it an exceptionally romantic year for WDFD.

2025 was overall an undoubtedly great year for the fire department, and they have every intention of carrying that momentum forward into 2026. The department's goals for this year include getting every member in new and updated turnout gear, including enough new radios for every member. Furthermore, level 1 firefighting training is set to begin for the new members right away. Level 1 training is required for volunteer firefighters to engage with hazardous incidents, including interior structure fires and vehicle collisions.

Major projects are set to begin in the coming months. Namely, the Virden department will begin the long processes of replacing their tanker truck and constructing the new Virden Fire Hall, which will be built in phases on the same lot that the current station occupies.

On WDFD's upcoming operations, Chief Nixon had this to say: "These are huge undertakings that definitely won't be easy, but our guys have shown that they're up to the challenge, so I'm nothing but excited for what's to come!"

## FRATTINGER SIGNS TO PLAY TWO SPORTS AT DCB



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Avery Frattinger signs to play volleyball and hockey at Dakota College at Bottineau.

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Kirkella's Avery Frattinger is excited to be a two-sport post-secondary student-athlete.

The daughter of Terri and Trever Frattinger has committed to play hockey and volleyball at Dakota College at Bottineau. The North Dakota school's volleyball team competes in the National Junior College Athletic Association Division II ranks, while the women's hockey squad is in the American Collegiate Hockey Association's Division II.

"I'm looking forward to the challenge and growth in a more competitive environment alongside other athletes that push themselves and make me want to improve my own game as well," Frattinger said. "I'm also hoping to develop new skills for a faster, more intense pace of game. Continuing my hockey and volleyball journey feels like the next big step in building connections in a meaningful way and improving myself, not only as an athlete but as a teammate."

Over the years, Frattinger has played a variety of sports. She appreciates her parents' support of her various pursuits.

"I have tried almost every sport and activity I could find throughout my life and that is all thanks to my parents," Frattinger said. "They both work so hard and still find time to show up for me in every way possible. They are my entire support system, my biggest cheerleaders, the best listeners, and the reason I'm where I am today. My parents have shown me that I am supported in anything I choose to pursue, but my success can only be determined by my own work ethic. I really got lucky when it comes to them and I am so grateful for that every day."

She chose DCB for a variety of reasons. The junior college is about two hours from Elkhorn. It had a record enrollment of 1,242 students, including 621 full-time equivalents, in the fall of 2025.

"The ultimate factor for me was definitely just seeing the whole package," Frattinger said. "I went for a tour and was offered to sign for both hockey and volleyball. On top of the chance to begin my psychology degree, it was really just a once in a lifetime opportunity. The smaller campus made it feel a little less scary to move away and my parents will get to watch me play sports for a couple more years close to home."

She currently plays defence for the U18 Birtle Bruiskies hockey team. This season Frattinger was fifth on the team in scoring with 11 points in 19 games. She was tied for the Bruiskies-lead in goals with nine.

"Avery is a fun kid," Bruiskies head coach Aaron Ashcroft said. "She is very charismatic, and passionate on and off the ice. She typically plays defence, but can step up and easily fill a forward role, whenever needed. Her speed, agility, and determination has been a huge asset to her team."

Frattinger's favourite part of playing defence is "definitely how versatile I can be there." She said, "I'm comfortable playing defence and protecting my goalies has always been a huge part of hockey for me. On the offensive side, I still like to rush the puck when the opportunity arises so I still feel as though I have a large ability to play both sides of the ice, which is important to my game."

While Frattinger plans to take to the court at DCB, she was unable to play volleyball this past fall due to not having enough players to form a team. She did not play club volleyball this winter due to the season overlapping with hockey. Frattinger opted to coach the Elkhorn School Grade 7/8 girls team "to stay involved because I just couldn't give up the sport. It was a great group of girls and they always helped me see volleyball from a fresh perspective as their coach." She is looking forward to playing volleyball again.

"I love the energy that volleyball brings with how much of a battle every single point takes," Frattinger said. "It's a tough thing to describe because there's not just one specific thing that I enjoy, it's the entire atmosphere of the game that just draws me to it. Volleyball is almost as much mental as physical to me, which can make it a hard team sport. However, the challenges of trusting not only your teammates but yourself as well is what makes it special when everything comes together."

Tyler Wood, who was one of her volleyball coaches in Elkhorn, said, "Avery is a very dedicated athlete; she leads by example on the court by her determination and hard work. Avery has a good and very consistent serve and is a good passer out of the back row. She has shown the ability to be able to play multiple positions on the court when needed."

## SPORTS NOTES: GARCIA HELPS PILOTS TO MCAC TITLE

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Virden's Fiona Garcia helped the Providence University College women's basketball team capture the Manitoba Colleges Athletic Conference championship.

The daughter of Floreen and Marvin Garcia scored 15 points, going a perfect 10-for-10 from the free-throw line, as the Pilots defeated Canadian Mennonite University 69-58 earlier this month. The skilled guard also collected six rebounds, six assists and six steals for her Otterburne-based team in that contest. After winning the MCAC crown, the Pilots went on to earn the Northern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference title. They beat North Dakota's Trinity Bible College 80-72.

The Pilots were a perfect 8-0 in the MCAC regular season. Garcia was named to the All-Conference Team.

### VCI Girls Curling

The Virden Collegiate Institute girls curling team set a goal for itself for the season: to win Zone 9 and compete at the provincials. Mission accomplished. The rink of skip Maddie Warkentin, third Leah Mytopher, second Mikaela Pio, and lead Abby Pearn won the zone title in Wawanesa in late January.

"Their success in the event in Wawanesa came through great communication about ice conditions and weight on their shots," coach Janelle Grieve said. "Maddie made some clutch shots in the Zone 9 final."

At the provincial event, Virden found itself playing Swan Valley, which went on to win it all, and Westwood, which placed third. Grieve said, "Our girls struggled to execute their shots, but regrouped well for their final game, earning the win and placing third in their pool."

The provincial event wrapped up the high school curling careers of Pearn and Warkentin. Of the rink's skip, Grieve said, "Maddie committed to improving her strategy calls as a skip. She definitely had the drive to achieve the team goals this season."

Regarding Pearn, Grieve said, "Abby focused on developing her skills to become a better curler in the lead position. Abby showed great improvement in her curling delivery with accuracy and weight control. She is an effective sweeper and a great team player."

### Sask Winter Games

Four athletes who train with Skate Virden

competed in the Saskatchewan Winter Games, which ran Feb. 15-21, in Meadow Lake. Rocanville's Emma Errington was fourth in the STAR 8 Free Skate Female division. Vaida Maas of Wapella was sixth in the same division. Gracy Russell from Moosomin placed eighth. Kenossee Lake's Faly Brown finished 13th in STAR 6 Free Skate Female.

### TOC U13 Brown

At the prestigious Tournament of Champions in Brandon, the U13 Brown Virden Junior Oil Capitals made it to the Santa Lucia Pizza U13 A semifinals. The team defeated the Minot Wolves 5-2 and the Yorkton Terriers 3-1. It then beat the Brandon Wheat Kings Black 8-3 in the quarterfinals. In the semifinals, the local team fell 6-1 to the Estevan Bruins, who went on to win the championship.

"Early in the tournament, we were not starting games well, maybe a bit to do with nerves," Virden coach Lonnie Brown said. "As the tournament progressed, we were playing more complete games from start to finish. Throughout the tournament, we had players step up and have strong games and make timely contributions. I was proud of the kids for how well they played throughout the tournament. We progressively played better as we made our way through the tournament. Unfortunately, we got behind early in the semifinal game and couldn't claw our way back."

### TOC Cougars

Competing in the Tournament of Champions was a highlight of the season for the new U13 Southwest Cougar team, manager Dwayne Bugg said. The regional team included Grady Hay and Jax Braybrook of Virden, and Asher Gray and Jace Guthrie from Reston.

"Our first season as an organization has been a wonderful experience, and we are very proud to represent our region at the highest level of AA hockey," Bugg said.

At the TOC, in the Fowler Hyundai U13 AA division, the Cougars beat a Regina team 8-2 and lost to Minot 6-5 in what Bugg called "a thrilling affair." Then on the B side, the Southwest squad lost 6-3 to Saskatoon and 4-3 to Moose Jaw in overtime.

"We really enjoyed our experience at the TOC in Brandon. It was a great opportunity for our team to play against different competition and see how we match up against teams outside of our league," said Bugg, who also noted, "The kids had a lot of fun and it was a great opportunity for them to bond as a team."



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# Farmers' Advocate



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## What is traceability and why is it important to the beef industry?

By **Matthew Atkinson**

PAST PRESIDENT, AND DISTRICT 8 DIRECTOR  
MANITOBA BEEF PRODUCERS

*Editor's Note: This column was originally published in the February 2026 edition of the Manitoba Beef Producers newspaper Cattle Country, and has been reprinted with permission.*

In recent weeks, there has been lots of discussion, especially on social media about potential Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) changes to Canada's livestock traceability system. Unfortunately, some incorrect information is circulating that said these changes took effect January 1, which is not the case. And there is some misinformation about what the proposed changes could mean for beef producers in their day-to-day operations. I am focusing this month's column on why traceability is important to our sector, what is being proposed – but not yet enacted or being enforced, and where the matter stands today.

It is also important to note that Manitoba Beef Producers, along with other industry stakeholders such as the Canadian Cattle Association (CCA) had called for a pause on the implementation of proposed changes until such time as beef industry questions and concerns are addressed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. The CFIA issued a statement on Jan. 10 where it said that it "will pause any

publication of the regulations until the proposed changes are more widely understood and concerns are heard and taken into consideration."

Livestock traceability systems have three main objectives: to reduce the impacts of animal diseases by assisting with disease investigations, to provide accurate and up-to-date livestock identity and movement information, and, to better protect public health and animal health.

The three pillars of traceability are premises identification (PIDs), animal identification (CCIA tags), and animal movement through the recording of move-in data on cattle. An example of how traceability is being used is in the investigations into bovine tuberculosis cases in beef cattle in Saskatchewan and a dairy herd in Manitoba.

Effective traceability is important for enhancing disease preparedness efforts and helping to minimize the number of affected producers if a disease arises. Traceability systems have also been used to share information about floods and fires in provinces where livestock may have been at risk due to these types of disasters.

**Continued on Farmers' Advocate third page**

## The dawn of a new farm season

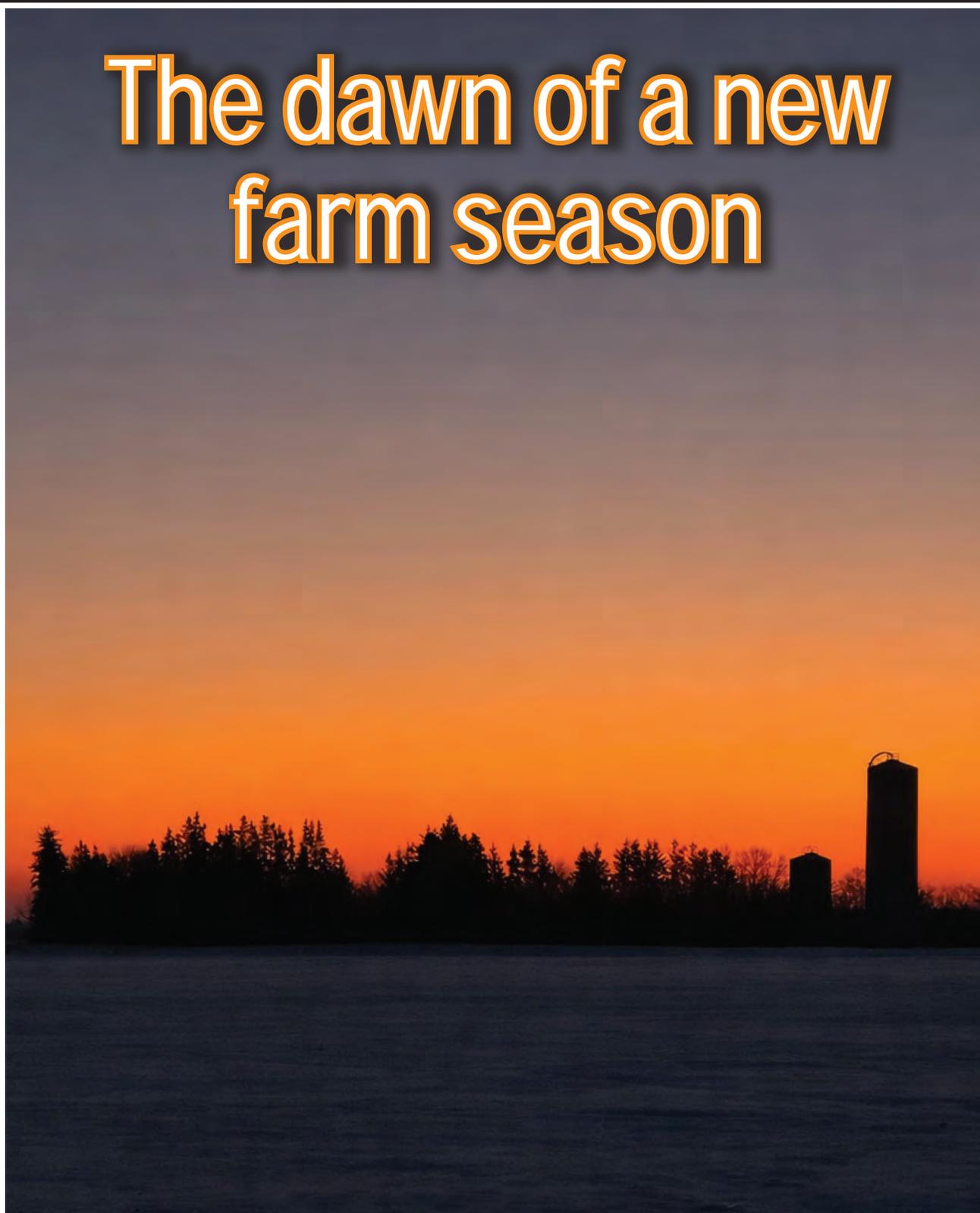


PHOTO BY ROB WADELLE

This beautiful sunrise, seen along Highway #16 between Neepawa and Minnedosa promises a new day.

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# Letter: Closing Ag research stations may hamper Ag industry

*Editor's note: This letter is directed for Heath MacDonald, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. This letter was also shared with the Farmers' Advocate to be shared with the readership:*

Dear Minister MacDonald, I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the government's unilateral decision to close three Agricultural Research Facilities and four Research Farms across Canada.

Agriculture and food production play a foundational role in Canada's economy and, more importantly, in the health and well-being of Canadians. Citizens who pay taxes rightly expect access to safe, wholesome, high-quality food. As the founder and editor of a farm magazine, Charles Walters, once said: "The function of a producer is not just to grow bins and bushels; it is to grow quality food that produces minds capable of thought and reason." When one considers the current physical and mental health challenges facing our society, it is evident that significantly more—not less—research is required. Research and industry together play a critical role in meeting that objective.

Equally important is the human element. A substantial amount of specialized human capital is at stake. The scientists, technicians, and support staff working at these facilities represent decades of accumulated expertise. Decisions of this magnitude demand careful evaluation of both the people and the long-term consequences of eliminating this capacity.

Innovation is not merely important—it is the life-line of any industry and country. Research should be viewed much like the purchase of capital equipment: through the lens of return on investment. A trusted expert in this field has advised me that investments in agricultural research historically generate returns of 20–30 to 1, even after accounting for the time value of money.

Each research facility should be evaluated on its

individual merits, based on the projects underway, by a qualified committee of "big-picture" thinkers with a long-term mandate. It is difficult to believe that such an evaluation was completed prior to the closure decision. However, it is not too late. I strongly encourage your department to involve industry and citizens over the next year in a transparent evaluation process, culminating in a public report that clearly identifies:

The value of current research programs Projects that could be paused Work that may be outdated and suitable for termination

Our soils, water, livestock, and food safety systems are Canada's most basic and irreplaceable resources. These must be preserved at all costs—for future generations and for the international customers who rely on Canadian exports. Everything begins with the soil, supported by responsible water and livestock management.

I am also concerned about the fate of long-term joint ventures currently underway between government, industry, and individuals. If projects are terminated mid-stream, any resources contributed by third parties must be repaid. Moreover, independent, third-party research is essential in agriculture—as in any industry—to verify results and maintain public trust. Without it, Canadians are shortchanged, innovation is stifled, and research risks becoming dominated solely by large corporations whose first responsibility is to shareholders.

I recognize the difficult balance required in public decision-making between ideology, necessity, acceptability, and affordability. However, the first step must be the creation of a qualified, independent committee to examine each facility—its projects, people, infrastructure, and future potential—and report back with findings, potential savings, and recommendations for modernization where appropriate and available to all segments of society.

To underscore the importance of this issue,

consider the following:

In 2024, Agriculture and the agri-food system generated \$149.2 billion in economic activity—seven per cent of Canada's GDP—with primary agriculture contributing \$31.7 billion. Every dollar of sales at the primary end creates 4.70 dollars of economic activity in the agri-food system.

Agriculture and Food Processing represent Canada's largest manufacturing employer, supporting 2.3 million jobs (1 in nine Canadian jobs).

Agriculture and Seafood exports exceed \$100 billion annually.

Future : With the right investment, industry reports suggest agriculture has the potential to outperform the auto and aerospace sectors combined.

These facts clearly demonstrate that primary-level research in soil, water, and livestock is essential to producing competitively priced, high-quality raw products—allowing the entire food system to thrive for Canadians and export markets alike.

All Canadians are facing uncertain and challenging times, particularly given global instability and our unpredictable relationship with our southern neighbour. We

have weathered difficult periods before, and we will again. That is precisely why I am urging you to pause, listen, and

examine all options before permanently dismantling research facilities that safeguard Canada's soils, water, livestock, food

safety, and long-term economic resilience.

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# Beef industry traceability rules need more study

*Continued from  
Farmers' Advocate  
front page*

More than 40 percent of Canada's beef cattle production is exported annually, so maintaining market access is key. Livestock traceability systems support Canada's disease status reporting to international bodies and export markets, which is important for maintaining trading opportunities and supporting economic sustainability in our industry. The faster a disease investigation can be done and information shared with trade partners, the better.

The federal traceability requirements currently in effect for cattle were introduced in 2000. The proposed amendments to Part XV of the Health of Animals Act—Traceability Regulations have been under discussion between the CFIA and members of the beef value chain for several years. This has included ongoing input from provincial cattle associations like MBP and various national associations. In 2016, nineteen industry organizations endorsed the Cattle Implementation Plan, the sector's preferred approach to traceability system adjustments. The beef industry has continually provided feedback as the proposed changes have been moving through the government's regulatory change

process, such as the gazetting process. This will continue.

So what types of changes have been proposed, but not taken effect? Key changes for producers include:

- A requirement to get or keep current a premises identification (PID) number from the provincial government.
- A requirement to include your PID number when you are purchasing approved indicators (tags) and when you are reporting information related to identification of cattle and their movement, and
- Reporting the arrival of cattle (i.e. move-in reporting) within seven days.

It is important to note that under the proposed traceability system updates that movement reporting into the Canadian Livestock Tracking System (CLTS) is not required for animal movements within the same farm. As proposed, you won't be expected to report calves within hours of birth. Calves may be tagged and recorded before leaving the farm, just like now. You will only have to report new animals coming onto your operation (move-in).

There is a proposed exception though for cattle going to/from rodeos/fairs/exhibitions, to community pastures (which is done as a group, not individual tag numbers), and to veterinary clinics, where both their

departure from your operation and their return will need to be reported into the CLTS. We recognize there are some questions about these requirements and it is important there is industry alignment on these types of concerns.

As proposed under new regulations, if you sell your calves through an auction market, the auction will report those calves moving in as a group. The purchaser of those calves will then report individual tag numbers when they move onto that operation.

As for the existing regulations and for which no changes are being proposed, cattle must still be tagged before leaving the site of origin. You also need to report tag retirement when animals are slaughtered, exported or die.

The CFIA has a webinar that gives a good overview of what the proposed changes mean. I strongly encourage you to check it out. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5w3ALso7g0&t=6s>

MBP's website also has more information about what's being proposed. Go to: [https://mbbeef.ca/our-news/understanding-proposed-updates-to-live-stock-traceabil-](https://mbbeef.ca/our-news/understanding-proposed-updates-to-live-stock-traceabil-ity-regulations)

ity-regulations

Follow along on MBP's social media for updates as well. Get a premises identification via Manitoba Agriculture at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/food-safety/traceability/premises-identification.html>

Begin reporting move-in events to the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA). See <https://www.canadaid.ca/>. Get familiar with the Canadian Livestock Tracking System (CLTS) or the CLTSMOBO app which allows for online reporting. The CLTS is managed by the CCIA and it is not a government database. Some of you may opt to use apps and programs which can integrate reporting with the CLTS. The information you report is confidential, protected and only accessed if a disease traceback is needed.

As of now, publication of the final traceability amendments in Canada Gazette II is not expected any earlier than this spring. As noted, the CFIA has paused this process for an undetermined length of time to get more input. MBP and other industry stakeholders will continue to provide that to them based on

feedback from our members. If there is another public comment period, I also strongly urge you to make your questions and concerns known to the CFIA. There is supposed to be a one-year window between publication of regulatory changes and when they would come into effect. The beef industry has requested a robust education and awareness process to give all time to prepare. As well, MBP has also advocated with the CFIA for a period of soft enforcement while producers get familiarized with any changes made.

Whatever traceability system changes are enacted must be practical for producers, not add more regulatory burden and should provide clear value for the sector, such as assisting with timely disease investigations and ensuring confidence among our trading partners. Having a well functioning traceability system is very important for the Canadian beef industry for the reasons I've explained in this column. If you have questions or concerns, please continue to reach out to us, and explore the resources I've identified here to learn more.



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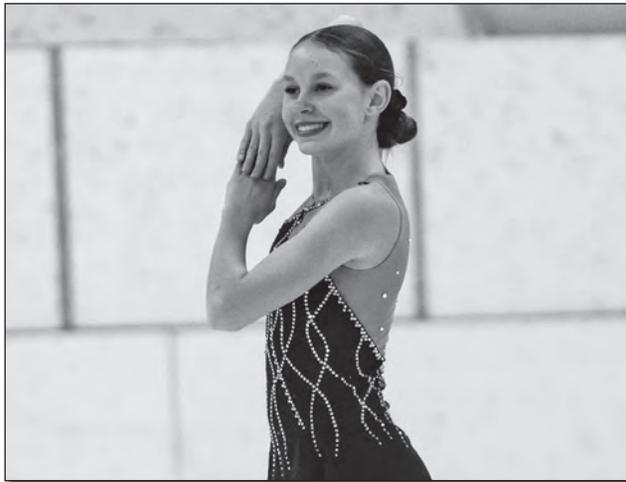
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# SMALL-TOWN TALENT, BIG STAGE: LOCAL SKATERS BOUND FOR WINTER GAMES



Evie McAdam.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



Mia du Plessis.

PHOTO BY INTUITION STUDIOS



Kaylee Malcolm.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

**By Robin Wark**  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Three local skaters will compete against the province's best at the Manitoba Winter Games.

Virден's Mia du Plessis and Evie McAdam along with Elkhorn's Kaylee Malcolm have all earned spots on Team West for the prestigious event. It will be held March 1-7 in Thompson. More than 1,000 athletes, coaches and managers will take part in 12 different sports.

Du Plessis, McAdam, and Malcolm all train with Skate Virден. Elkhorn's Sara Chant is a manager for Team West in figure skating. Skate Virден members Nate Greenbank, Luke Greenbank and Ainslee McGregor will also compete for Team West at the Games. The Greenbanks hail from the Wawota area. McGregor is from Waskada. Nate Greenbank recently competed at the Skate Canada Trophy in Dartmouth, N.S. It was his second year competing in the national event.

Regarding the upcoming Winter Games, Malcolm said, "I'm looking forward to the experience and to compete against and be teammates with the best skaters in Manitoba. I'm also looking forward to spending time with my team and friends in the village and all the memories that I will make along the way."

The daughter of Steven and Stephanie Malcolm, who represents the Elkhorn Figure Skating Club, will compete in the pre-novice mixed event.

Coach Patty Hole noted that Malcolm moved up a group this year. The coach said "She did amazing. She had a great qualifying."

Du Plessis, the daughter of Jaco and Annemie, also shone in qualifying. When asked what allowed her to be successful, du Plessis said, "I practiced more than 10 hours a week on ice and did extra off-ice exercise to improve myself."

Hole said that du Plessis is a strong jumper. The coach said, "She has been on a steady incline now for the past few years." At the Manitoba Win-

ter Games, she will compete in the Star 6 freeskate and Star 7 short program.

A major goal for McAdam this season was to earn a spot on Team West. Having accomplished that, the daughter of Wendy and Jonathan McAdam said, "It means all the effort that I've put into skating and practices are working." She will compete in Star 6 free skate and 7 short programs.

Of McAdam, Hole said, "She is a strong, determined, and hardworking girl. She has just really worked hard and earned a spot to go to Games, so I'm really proud of her."

Other area athletes and coaches who have been announced as participating at the Manitoba Winter Games include: archery - Baylee Cameron, Virден; curling - Paxton Bickerton, Elkhorn; gymnastics - Ashlynn Cousins, Miniota; hockey (female) - Payton Flannery, Pipestone; Kinsley Robertson, Virден; Langley Gerard, Oak Lake; Andie Williamson, Reston; Anita Vachon (coach), Oak Lake; hockey (male) - Cohen Canart, McAuley; and Grady Hay, Virден. Former Virден resident Emma Ramsey, now of Brandon, is a coach of one of Team West's women's hockey teams.

## OIL KINGS TAKE 2-0 SERIES LEAD OVER JETS

**By Robin Wark**  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Virден Oil Kings showed perseverance in taking a 2-0 lead over the Rivers Jets in their Tiger Hills Hockey League quarterfinals series.

In each of the first two senior hockey contests in the best-of-five series, the Jets took early leads. The Oil Kings battled back to win game one 6-3 and the second one 6-2.

"We always seem to have hard fought games with Rivers," Virден forward Elisha Bambridge said. "With our team, we know we can always come back in a game and keep battling to wear down the other team. This year, we have a very deep team and if we play like we can we can hopefully make a deep playoff push."

Game three was played on Feb. 24 in Rivers after the Empire-Advance deadline. If needed, Virден would host game four on Feb. 25. Game five would be on Feb. 28 in Rivers. The Jets hold home ice advantage as they finished fourth in the THHL regular season, just a spot ahead of the Oil Kings.

### Game One

#### Oil Kings 6, Jets 3

On Feb. 20, the host Jets led 1-0 after the first period and made it a 2-0 lead 2:15 into the second frame. The Oil Kings scored three straight to lead 3-2 at the second intermission. Colby Asseltine scored the first one, and then Bambridge found the back of the net twice. His last goal came on the power play.

The Jets did not go away and tied things



PHOTO BY DALE DAVISON

Brad Bowles (9) scores for the Virден Oil Kings in game two of their series with the Rivers Jets

up just 39 seconds into the third period on a goal by former Virден Oil Capitals junior player Layton Veitch. Fifty-nine seconds later, Oil Kings defenceman Nolan Wallace lit the lamp on the power play for the game winner. In the final two minutes of the game, Shawn Bowles and Shane Price scored empty-net goals.

Bambridge and Brad Bowles each had three points. Oil Kings goalie Riley Wallace made 16 saves. The Jets' Riley Lamb had 35 saves.

### Game Two

#### Oil Kings 6, Jets 2

Rivers took a 1-0 lead in the first period in Virден on Feb. 21. Shawn Bowles knotted the game up at 1-1 on a shorthanded goal for the Oil Kings.

In the second period, the Jets scored on the power play to lead 2-1. Virден responded with five straight goals to grab the victory. Dillin Stonehouse and Bambridge scored in the second period. In the third, Brad Bowles had two goals and Bambridge one.

Brad Bowles led the way with five points. Bambridge finished with four points, while Shawn Bowles had three. Riley Wallace turned away 17 shots. Lamb had 30 saves.

## REF MEMORIES



This week I would like to share about someone who influenced me even though I never refereed with him. I was sad to hear that Larry Nickol from Killarney passed away recently. Larry played the game but his first love was baseball. He played in championship games but also umpired in those championship games as well.

One day as I was about to continue to umpire baseball games, I was invited to go to an umpires' school. There were a few of us that went, as we would be umpiring the Manitoba Senior Baseball League, including working games in the Provincial playoffs. We spent time going over the rule book and the interpretation of those rules and how they applied to the game of baseball.

Larry was running the clinic and he said one sentence that stuck with me all through hockey and baseball seasons. He asked a question. "What is fair?" I had never heard that said before. It really resonated

with me! It was a statement for the ages with me. Thank you Larry for being a great mentor. It shifted my thought process in umpiring baseball games as well as refereeing.

In hockey we see it all the time, the punches in the face after a whistle that are ignored, yet if someone retaliates, they get called. Why in the world is the first punch not called? Why is retaliation always called? That is not fair and an official can make this biased decision, based on that way of officiating.

The fighting instigator penalty always made no sense to me. The instigator gets a 2-minute penalty and, more often than not, it is not called correctly. What was the initial penalty that would be called, that would be the instigator penalty. Nowhere is a scenario. I slash, crosscheck, punch or any other minor penalty and go after you and drop the gloves and we engage in a fight. Who is the instigator? Well, in my opinion the player who started the whole thing with a slash, punch etc would be the instigator and should be penalized accordingly.

Back to Larry. I worked some Provincial league finals and Manitoba senior baseball finals. Working with Larry was always fun. He was never in a rush to make the call unless it was a bang, bang play at first.

One night in Brandon the Cloverleafs were playing the

Riverside Canucks. Larry was the first base umpire, I was calling second and third base. Well, we had a bang, bang play at first and Larry was taking his own sweet time about making the call. Was the runner safe or out? After which seemed like an eternity, Larry called the runner out, which in my opinion was the correct call.

At the end of the inning, I walked over to Larry and said, great call Larry, that was a banger. He smiled and nodded his head and said thank you. I said, I do have a question for you, why the delay in the call. Did you go for coffee or something? Did you forget what you were going to call, or were you distracted in some way?

Larry said, I was just trying to keep the crowd in suspense, keep them on the edge of their seats. Now run along back to your base and do your job! Larry was grinning from ear to ear. We had a lot of laughs in the clubhouse after the game. He said I just wanted to replay the call in my mind, it was that close a play, which it was.

The world is not a better place without him, but his memory stays with me. Larry, it was my pleasure working with you, and thank you for teaching me. It has always stuck with me, what you said at that umpires school so long ago, back in the 1990's. Rest in Peace big guy, it was a lot of fun working with you!

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# SPORTS

## OIL CAPS EARN THREE POINTS IN WEEKEND SPLIT

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Virden Oil Capitals earned three points in the standings last week.

The Manitoba Junior Hockey League team fell 6-5 to the Dauphin Kings in a shootout. That earned it a point. The Oil Capitals beat the Neepawa Titans 4-2 to collect two more points. With those three points, the Virden team entered this week with 68 points. This topped the MJHL's MGEU West Division - 10 more than second-place Dauphin's 58.

The Oil Capitals' Feb. 18 contest against the Blues in Winnipeg was postponed due to bad weather. The local team was to visit the Swan Valley Stampeders on Feb. 24 after the Empire-Advance deadline. The Oil Capitals host the Blues on Feb. 27 and play in Selkirk on Feb. 28.

### Kings 6, Oil Caps 5 SO

The Kings' Ethan Stewart was the lone shooter out of six to score in the shootout and lifted the hosts to a 6-5 win. The Oil Capitals' Colten Worthington had scored with just over two minutes remaining in regulation to force overtime.

"We were pretty inconsistent in Dauphin," Virden head coach Tyson Ramsey said. "When we stuck to our game plan, we were very good but too many times in the game we got away from what makes us hard to play against and we allowed them to climb back in the game. We were able to get a point out of it, but that's not the way we need to play."

Virden's Dysen Drake was named the first star with a hat trick. After Dauphin led 1-0 in the first period, Drake and Bryan Laing scored to give Virden a 2-1 lead. The Kings tied things up at 2-2 before the first intermission. Drake scored twice to start the second period to give Virden a 4-2 lead. The Kings came back with three goals to lead 5-4 after two periods of play.

Braxton Burden started in net for Virden. He made 26 saves on 31 shots. Micky Gross played in the third period, overtime and the shootout. He had 11 saves in game action.

Hunter Bauer made 30 saves for Dauphin. Scoring for the Kings in regulation were Dylan Miko, Ash Mitchelmore, Ty Pratte, Joshua Schmidt, and Aiden Murray.

### Oil Caps 4, Titans 2

After a scoreless first period on Feb. 22 in Neepawa, the Oil Capitals dominated the second frame. Oliver Schroeder, Drake, and captain Ty Plaisier all scored for Virden to put the visitors up 3-0. The Titans outscored the Oil Caps 2-1 in the third period, but Virden left the Lily Capital of the World with the win.

"In Neepawa, we were very good from start to finish," Ramsey said. "As good of a 60-minute effort since we beat Niverville 1-0 (on Feb. 7). We were tight defensively, managed the puck well, attacked the net with a purpose, were good on special teams and got great goaltending. A very good effort to build on."

Lucas Laramee scored Virden's third-period marker. Gross stopped 26 shots.

Talen Lewis and Logan Paquette scored for Neepawa. Titans goalie Zach Burleigh made 31 saves.

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# New RCMP Area Commander coming to Virden

By Dale Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

At the Jan. 19 Town of Virden council meeting RCMP Sergeant Amy Doan introduced Staff Sergeant Scott McAuley as the new Area Commander for Westman RCMP. The position has been vacant for some time, and council expressed appreciation for having someone experienced—particularly someone with Manitoba experience—stepping into the role.

McAuley is currently serving as Area Commander in Pembina Valley and is originally from McAuley. His experience includes two years with the Calgary Police Service and with the RCMP in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. He anticipates being in this new role for at least a couple of years.

Coun. Marc Savy asked about the status of two RCMP members—one suspended and one on administrative duties. McAuley explained that the matter is currently outside local control and subject to an ongoing investigation. The Virden detachment is awaiting results that will be shared when the investigation is completed.

Coun. Bruce Dunning raised a question at a previous meeting about the number of mental health-related calls handled by RCMP. Sgt. Doan responded that there were 56 mental health calls in 2025. The detachment normally responds to at least five calls per month. Enhancements to the CAD (Computer-Aided Dispatch) system will ensure more accurate tracking and reporting going forward. This will allow Criminal Operations to bring concrete data to discussions around workload and resources for mental health calls.

## Water treatment & land purchase

Currently, the municipality maintains separate internet accounts for water infrastructure sites including the well, the pump house and the water treatment plant.

Under a new arrangement involving RFNOW the municipality would consolidate services into one main account with two internet connections, allowing all facilities to communicate with each other. Coun. Lynette Grumpelt raised concerns about fiber outages and the critical na-

ture of water infrastructure connectivity. CAO Stewart confirmed the Town is examining backup solutions, as redundancy is essential. After discussion, the motion to approve the agreement was carried.

CAO Rhonda Stewart said, "We will be hiring ATAP (Advanced Technology Applications) to provide operational support and training to our water treatment plant operators to ensure that the plant is operating at optimal efficiency and treatment capabilities."

Council passed a motion to engage ATAP at a cost of \$12,750 as well as the services of an engineer for one day at \$2,400.

Council approved the purchase of the lot next to the water treatment plant. Stewart said the Town is buying it, "in case we require it for future expansion of the water treatment plant. This is good planning on behalf of Council to ensure we have the required land for future expansion. If the Town chooses to not repair the water tower, the Town may be required to expand the reservoir at the plant to ensure adequate quantity of water for the community at all times."

## Pump Repair Clarification

Coun. Travis Penner questioned an expenditure described in the spending accounts as pump repair. Penner asked whether this charge related to the recent well repair for Well No. 2 in the valley. CAO Rhonda Stewart clarified that the expense related to sewer infrastructure, specifically lift station pumps, rather than the well system. Stewart noted that a lift station pump had recently failed, and the municipality also contracts annual maintenance on all lift stations.

## Storefront Improvement Grant

Council discussed the Storefront Improvement Grant program, noting that in previous years \$25,000 had been allocated annually. The Town intends to review and potentially rewrite eligibility criteria. They'll assess whether the funding level is still appropriate and determine whether the program is achieving its intended objectives. With a new Economic Development Manager in place, administration will work toward refining the program for relaunch next year.

## VCI scholarship

Council confirmed continuation of its annual \$2,000 scholarship awarded to a graduate of Virden Collegiate Institute who demonstrates volunteer involvement in school or community and exemplifies strong citizenship qualities.

## Virden Music & Arts Festival

Council approved providing \$500 in sponsorship to the Virden Music & Arts Festival the same as the contribution made last year.

## Arts Mosaic caboose

Council discussed a request from Arts Mosaic regarding caboose fundraising efforts. The discussion centered on the paintings previously acquired and sold, with proceeds designated for the caboose restoration project.

Council clarified that tax-deductible receipts cannot be issued for purchases of paintings, as buyers are receiving something of value in return. Only straight cash donations qualify for tax receipts.

## Community Edge

The Economic Developers Association of Manitoba (EDAM) provides a community economic development program designed to educate development officers, elected officials, community leaders, CAO's to better understand community economic development in Manitoba. Mayor Tina Williams and Coun. Tara Maxwell have completed several modules of this training and strongly recommend the sessions, emphasizing how helpful they are in understanding complex topics such as tax mill rates and municipal finance. A motion is passed authorizing interested council members to attend.

## Election training

Coun. Marc Savy met with AMM (Association of Manitoba Municipalities) to discuss training for all staff involved in elections. AMM projects that 55 to 65 percent of council members across Manitoba municipalities could change in the October elections.

## CAO Report

CAO Stewart reported that this would be her final Council meeting in her current role. She plans to schedule meetings with municipal stakeholders to formally introduce the new CAO Neil Smith and review partnerships and relationships within the community.

# Province expands hospital security as union calls effort "bare minimum"

By Anne Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Currently Virden Medical Centre is one of the locations within Prairie Mountain Health (PMH) region with a security officer. Safety has been an ongoing issue according to health care workers unions.

There's a court filing against Manitoba Government pressing the issue. Meanwhile, safety measures for front line workers have been announced by the province, but there's nothing new for Virden, Hamiota or other nearby facilities.

In their Feb. 19 press release the Manitoba Government announced the roll-out of the SAFE mobile app. It's now available at St. Boniface Hospital, Health Sciences Centre Winnipeg and Brandon Regional Health Centre. Many patients from around the province, including Westman find themselves in these major Manitoba hospitals where safety measures are being increased. The SAFE app provides staff with real-time safety alerts, a direct connection to security services, emergency notifications and personal safety tools within a single mobile platform to improve communication and situational awareness.

Manitoba is currently the only health system in Canada using an integrated mobile safety alert platform of this kind to support front-line staff safety.

Manitoba's safety announcement came 10 days after the Feb. 9 action by Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals. MAHCP filed with the Court of King's Bench, taking the government to court to enforce Manitoba's Workplace Safety and Health Act on the province's largest healthcare employer, Shared Health.

While the province says they're making one of the largest investments in institutional safety officers (ISOs), in answer to an inquiry regarding security measures in Virden, and other nearby locations, Steve Geletchuk, Prairie Mountain Health Manager of Security Services indicated that Virden Medical Centre already has a security officer. "PMH has 18 front-line ISOs. We have trained 20 ISO positions total. This includes replacement staff and a supervisor."

These locations are: Bran-

don Regional Health Centre, Brandon 7th Street Health Access Centre, Brandon Minor Injury and Illness Clinic, Dauphin Regional Health Centre, Russell Health Centre, Swan Valley Health Centre, Virden Medical Centre.

Geletchuk indicated PMH is continuing to work with the province on safety measures and that there's some flexibility within safety officer staffing. He said, "Officers provide services to all PMH sites within these respective communities including Personal Care Homes and community programs. Security guards can also be dispatched or temporarily reassigned, to sites in other communities across the region to provide security support as required."

Institutional Safety Officers (ISOs) are licensed Peace Officers under the authority of Manitoba Justice and the Police Services Act. In health-care environments, ISOs have additional training in crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques, search and investigation, powers of arrest and detention.

The last place you'd expect to find violence is the local hospital or clinic. However, health care is among the most dangerous of workplace sectors says Jason Linklater president of MAHCP. (In western Manitoba, MAHCP represents paramedics, laboratory and diagnostic imaging professionals employed by Shared Health).

It was over a decade ago when a nurse and a clerk in Hamiota hospital were attacked by a knife-wielding patient. The nurse was injured, the clerk managed to lock herself in a bathroom but was traumatized. There was no safety officer in the building and there isn't one assigned there now.

Linklater acknowledged the government's safety announcement. "The announcement does contain some positive things that we are happy to see." But he said, "Government's actions to date represent the bare minimum that should have been done long ago to protect the people who deliver care."

He said Manitoba Workplace Health and Safety should be doing more. He summarized the case that MAHCP has filed: "Manitoba has laws that are supposed to keep health care workers safe and the province's largest employer which is Shared Health

has broken those laws..."

He said that having exhausted other avenues, they're turning to the courts.

"The only reason government and employers have lifted a finger to improve safety for frontline healthcare workers is because the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals (MAHCP) and other healthcare unions have forced them into action."

Linklater said violence is not just an urban issue. Rural healthcare faces it too. He points to paramedicine in Prairie Mountain Health struggling with a 40 per cent vacancy rate. Paramedics often respond to dangerous calls.

Virden RCMP responds to about five mental health calls per month. Along with mental health, addictions can play a part in violent incidents that plague healthcare workers.

"Obviously there's, you know, different types of incidents that happen..." says Linklater.

Medical professionals in every capacity have had to deal with such issues "from the beginning of time." He adds, "A large part of it is people in crisis, and people's reaction to...being somewhere [on] the worst day in their life."

Injury to health workers goes beyond reactive violence. In any setting—hospitals, diagnostics, personal care facilities or paramedicine, staff shortages make those on duty more vulnerable to stress, accidents and injury.

## Government's role

"The government's job is to ensure that the people that work for them are doing what they're supposed to do to protect their employees and so government's role is twofold, it's oversight and funding," says Linklater.

People from all walks of life end up on medicine's doorstep. "What's ramped up in society is different today, the challenges that people face in hospitals are more severe and the crisis that people go through is more severe."

Linklater said, "There needs to be a human resources plan implemented by the government to ensure that short staffing is addressed."

He advocates for a health and safety committee to be in place for paramedics, something that under Shared Health, they've not had. That committee would be responsible for investigating injurious incidents.

# SPORTS

## ELKHORN CHEERS SANHEIM TO SILVER AT MILANO CORTINA WINTER OLYMPICS



Elkhorn school shows their support.

PHOTOS BY ELKHORN SCHOOL

**By Robin Wark**  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Early last Sunday morning, more than 50 people gathered at the Elkhorn District Community Centre to cheer on hometown product Travis Sanheim in the men's hockey gold medal game at the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics.

Jack Hughes' goal 1:41 into overtime meant a 2-1 win for Team USA and the silver medals for Team Canada. Throughout his Olympic journey, the son of Kent and Shelly Sanheim and his family felt strong support from his hometown. Shelly shared an EDCC Facebook post about the watch party and wrote, in part:

"Thank you to our little community, family and friends rooting for Travis and Team Canada! It might not be the colour we were hoping for, but we are soooo damn proud of this team."

EDCC president Devrin Stonehouse said about 35 adults and 20 children came out to the watch party. He said:

"When we first decided to do the party, we weren't really sure how many people would attend with it being so early in the morning. The thing that surprised us the most was the amount of children that got out of bed in the morning to come and watch, some even traveling 20-30 minutes with four kids. I thought that was awesome, and watching the kids go out onto the ice to skate between periods then come upstairs to watch again with their Team Canada colours on."

The watch party was just one way Elkhorn showed support for Sanheim, who is a standout defenceman for the

National Hockey League's Philadelphia Flyers. For example, at the Elkhorn School, bulletin boards were decorated to highlight Sanheim and Team Canada. The school held a Team Canada spirit day.

"Everyone you talked to in the community were obviously watching the games and excited to watch Travis play," Stonehouse said. "Driving around town, there were flags/jerseys hung up in businesses and homes. To think that he grew up playing in Elkhorn and being able to watch him play throughout the tournament and in a gold medal game is incredible. Everyone couldn't be more proud of him and the way he played throughout the tournament and that he will be coming home with an Olympic silver medal."

In Italy, Sanheim was cheered on by a supporting team that included his parents, wife, siblings, in-laws, close friends, and the partners of many of the aforementioned. They got to see up close as Sanheim "skated like he comfortably belonged with the world's very best," the PhillyVoice's Nick Tricome wrote in a Feb. 23 article.

Similar to when he helped Canada win gold at the 2025 4 Nations Face-Off, Sanheim's role grew as the tournament went on. He was a healthy scratch for Team Canada's first game, but then got into the lineup. In the semifinals, Sanheim had the primary assist on Shea Theodore's game-tying goal in what turned out to be a 3-2 Canadian win over Finland. In the gold medal tilt, Sanheim recorded 15:28 of ice time and three shots.



### PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice is hereby given that the R.M. of Wallace-Woodworth's Weed Department intends to conduct the following pesticide control programs within the R.M. of Wallace-Woodworth. The projected dates of application will be from May 15, 2026 to November 15, 2026.

- To control noxious weeds on the right-of-ways within the R.M. of Wallace-Woodworth which will include: 2,4-D Amine, 2,4-D Ester, Triclopyr, Picloram, Dicamba, Glyphosate, Indazifam, Aminopyralid, Diflufenzopyr, Metsulfuron-methyl, Aminocyclopyrachlor, Fiesta, Pro-Surf II, Ag-Surf II and Gateway
- To control noxious weeds and provide vegetation management on public lands within the R.M. of Wallace-Woodworth which will include: 2,4-D Amine, 2,4-D Ester, Dicamba, Glyphosate, Indazifam, Aminopyralid, Diflufenzopyr, Metsulfuron-methyl, Aminocyclopyrachlor, Fiesta, Pro-Surf II, Ag-Surf II and Gateway
- To provide vegetation management on industrial sites in and around the R.M. of Wallace-Woodworth which will include: 2,4-D Amine, 2,4-D Ester, Dicamba, Glyphosate, Indazifam, Aminopyralid, Diflufenzopyr, Metsulfuron-methyl, Aminocyclopyrachlor, Fiesta, Pro-Surf II, Ag-Surf II and Gateway
- To control the following pests including grasshoppers, elm bark beetles, forest tent caterpillars, cankerworms, and mosquitoes which will include: Bacillus thuringiensis, Chlorpyrifos, and Deltamethrin

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

Required Contact Information:

Manitoba Environment and Climate Change  
Environmental Approvals Branch  
Box 35, 14 Fultz Boulevard  
Winnipeg, MB R3Y 0L6  
pesticideusepermit@gov.mb.ca

Note: Previous submissions or objections must be resubmitted each year.

#### No Spray Program

Property owners who would like to register their property as part of the No Spray Program may contact the R.M. Virden office at 204-748-1239 to get an application form.

#### Report Noxious Weed Sightings

Help us identify noxious weeds. Ratepayers are encouraged to report noxious weed sightings by phoning the R.M. Virden office at 204-748-1239.

www.wallace-woodworth.com | 204-748-1239 | info@wallace-woodworth.com

### Southwest Weed District PUBLIC NOTICE PESTICIDE USE PERMIT

Public notice is hereby given that the Southwest Weed District intends to conduct the following pesticide programs during 2026.

1. To control noxious weeds on rights-of-way within the Municipalities of Sifton, Souris-Glenwood and Whitehead and within the Municipality of Grassland from mile 126W to mile 150W including all villages, towns and municipal properties within. The projected dates of application will be from May 1, 2026 to October 31, 2026. The herbicides that may be used include;

- 2,4-D Amine 600
- Oracle (dicamba)
- Hasten (methyl & ethyl oleate)
- Esplanade SC (indaziflam)
- Milestone (aminopyralid)
- Tordon 22K (picloram)
- Overdrive (dicamba,diflufenzopyr)
- Par 3 (2,4-D, dicamba, mecoprop)
- Navius Flex (aminocyclopyrachlor, metsulfuron-methyl)
- Octtain XL (fluroxypyr & 24-D)
- Garlon XRT (triclopyr)
- RT540 (glyphosate)
- LI 700 adjuvant

2. To control snow molds, fusarium, dollar spot, anthracnose, leaf spot on golf courses within weed district boundary. The projected dates of application will be from May 1 2026 to October 31, 2026. The fungicides that may be used include;

- Daconil 2787 Fungicide (chlorothanil)
- Medallion Fungicide (fluazinam)
- Liberate Adjuvant
- Secure Fungicide (chlorothalonil)
- Instrata II Fungicide (chlorothalonil)

3. To control the following insect pests including mosquitoes, grasshoppers, elm bark beetles and cankerworms, emerald ash boarer. The projected dates of application for these programs will be from April 1, 2026 to October 31, 2026. The insecticides that may be used include;

- Sevin XLR (carbaryl)
- Ripcord 400EC (cypermethrin)
- Vectobac (Bti)
- DeltaGard (deltamethrin)
- Treeazin Systemic Insecticide (azadirachtin)
- Decis 5EC (deltamethrin)
- Eco Bran Bait (carbaryl)
- IMA-JET (imidacloprid)

4. To control rodent pests including rats and mice. The projected dates of application for these programs will be April 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026. The rodenticides that may be used include;

- Contrac All-Weather Blox (bromadiolone)
- Final All-Weather Blox (brodifacoum)
- First Strike (difethialone)
- Temprid SC (imidaclopyrid, beta-cyfluthrin)

Anyone may send written submissions or objections to specific programs within 15 days of the publication of this notice to the department below;

MB Environment and Climate  
Environmental Approvals Branch  
Box 35, 14 Fultz BVLD  
Winnipeg, MB  
OR  
email - pesticideusepermit@gov.mb.ca

# CLASSIFIEDS

## In Memory

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
*Audrey Collier*  
FEBRUARY 28, 2018

*Although the world keeps turning  
And the sun comes up each day,  
Life has never been the same  
Since you were called away.*

*You were a special person  
So gentle, good and kind  
And have left the sweetest memories  
And thoughts of you behind.*

*We only wish there was a way  
That we could see you a few more hours  
To thank you for the joy you brought  
Into this life of ours.*

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## Public Hearing





### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

#### DEVELOPMENT PLAN – DENNIS COUNTY PLANNING DISTRICT

Under authority of *The Planning Act*, the Planning District Board will hold a public hearing at the time and location listed below to hear from and receive representations from any persons who wish to make them in respect to the following:

**BY-LAW NO. 24, TO ADOPT A DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE DENNIS COUNTY PLANNING DISTRICT (INCLUDING THE RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF PIPESTONE, RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF SIFTON, AND MUNICIPALITY OF GRASSLAND)**

**DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION:**  
Wednesday, March 18th, 2026 at 7:30pm  
Municipality of Grassland  
Council Chambers  
209 Airdrie Street, Hartney, MB

**FOR INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**  
David Houston  
Development Officer / Building Inspector  
Dennis County Planning District  
[dcpd@rmofsifton.com](mailto:dcpd@rmofsifton.com)  
204-855-2423

**A copy of the proposed materials may be arranged for review through the contact above.**

## Help Wanted



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**WASTE TRANSFER SITE – PART-TIME POSITION**

The RM of Sifton is seeking a motivated individual for a part-time position at Deleau as a Waste Transfer Site Attendant.

For more information please contact the RM of Sifton Office at 204-855-2423, email [info@rmofsifton.com](mailto:info@rmofsifton.com), or visit the website.



**FORT LA BOSSE SCHOOL DIVISION**

**SENIOR ELECTION OFFICIAL**

The Fort La Bosse School Division is accepting applications for the position of Senior Election Official (SEO). The next school board election is scheduled for October 2026.

The SEO is appointed by the Board of Trustees and is responsible for the general direction and supervision of the school board election process in accordance with The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Act. Responsibilities include managing election logistics and ensuring the integrity of the electoral process. For more information please visit our website [flbsd.mb.ca](http://flbsd.mb.ca)

Written applications from interested individuals will be accepted until March 15th, 2026 addressed to:

Secretary-Treasurer  
Fort La Bosse School Division  
PO Box 1420  
Virde, MB ROM 2C0  
Email: [kreid@flbsd.mb.ca](mailto:kreid@flbsd.mb.ca)  
Phone: 204-748-2692

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**Miniota Golf Club**  
"Applications"  
PO Box 291  
Miniota, MB ROM 1M0  
or [norjst@gmail.com](mailto:norjst@gmail.com)

**For more information contact:**  
Noreen at 204 748-5567



## Manitoba Community Newspaper Association Province Wide Classifieds

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# Louis Riel Day celebrated in St. Lazare

By Ed James  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

All over Manitoba Louis Riel Day was celebrated with hockey tournaments, card and bingo games, musical events and Metis style meals to remember the legacy and history of Louis Riel. The events honour the Red River Metis culture, traditions and history. Feb. 16 has been celebrated in Manitoba since 2008 and with each passing year the day's events and programs become bigger as people, especially the young, learn about the legacy that Riel left.

In 1992 he was recognized as founder of the province of Manitoba and in 2023 he was, with the help of The Manitoba Metis Federation and the Manitoba Government, given the title of Manitoba's first premier.

Over the years public opinion has changed from Riel being the leader of The Red River Resistance and a traitor in 1885. For his involvement he was tried and hung at the RCMP Depot in Regina. He was executed despite a huge public outcry for his release. Now in 2026 he is seen by many Canadians as a freedom fighter for the rights of Metis people.

For many years the community of St. Lazare has celebrated Louis Riel Day with events like the evening music show that features a variety of local and area musicians with an equally wide program of music.

Waiting for our media crew at the Metis Center Hall is Terry Haney head of the local Metis and one of the long-time organizers of Riel Day events. After greeting us in French he invites us to an early supper with the village priest. We have a warm bowl of boulette (bullet) soup a thick hearty soup made with root vegetables and buffalo meat, however with no buffalo meat on hand some pork meat was used. To go with the boulette soup was freshly made bannock; one of my favourite food discoveries while teaching in a northern Manitoba community years ago.

By 7pm the hall was filled while some musicians tuned up in the back room. The MC for the evening Eugene Simard is a crowd favourite because of his musical skills and great groaner jokes. Terry Haney welcomed everyone, thanking them for their continuing support for Riel events.

The first song of the evening was the "Louis Riel song" sung by Louis Simard, telling the story and history of Riel's struggles for the Metis in the Red River area. Other songs that evening were a mix of fun and sadness, French and English, with many having a sing along aspect and lots of toe tapping.

A regular performer the past few years has been Isaiah Simard who has worked for 10 years with Lynne Tremblay. Isaiah sang "Yellow Bird" for his grandmother's birthday who was in the audience that evening. Another well known local talent even beyond St. Lazare was singer Julianna Moore who just recently placed in the top 10 of Canada's Got Talent. She performed "Silver Wings" perfectly. The Simard brothers, Eugene and Bernard, did Don Williams' classic "Some Broken Hearts" to the crowd's approval, while brother and sister Louis Simard and Lynn Tremblay did a humorous duet, "I'm Gonna Wear the Pants!" Come-from-away performer Rose Gueret did a song called "Beating On My Lonely Drum".



Martin and Micayla Totte performed at the St. Lazare Louis Riel Day celebration.

PHOTOS BY ED JAMES

During the evening Martin and Micayla Totte performed and provided backup music for other performers. As always Paul Deschambault provided much of the guitar music.

The final performance of the evening was by Mario Tanguay backed up by five local musicians singing the traditional 18th century drinking song, "Et Si Moi" that had the whole audience responding to his musical questions. It's a theme song used in Winnipeg at The Festival de Voyageur.

Terry Haney said afterwards, "It was a great weekend full of family events while tonight's music show demonstrated the many talented and self-taught we have in the area. We were very happy with the turnout tonight. The events we hold are for all the people in the community and surrounding area to show our community spirit and recognize the Metis heritage around them."

"We are grateful for the leadership of David Chartrand, president of the Manitoba Metis Association, and his concerns for the Red River Metis members."

Haney added that after 20 years of being head of the St. Lazare Metis group he plans to step down and work in the background turning the leadership over to VP Rene Dupont.

Congratulations to the community of St. Lazare and its people for remembering and celebrating an important part of western Canada's history. Knowing our history well can lead to a better future.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### Pesticide Application Programs

Virden Wellview Golf Club intends to conduct the following pesticide control programs from May 1 to October 31, 2026. The public may, within 15 days after this notice is published, submit written comments to the department or register a written objection to the use of pesticide next to their property. All applications are part of a comprehensive IPM strategy, and depending on pest threshold levels may or may not include:

1. Weed control in turf areas within the property. Projected dates of application are May 1 to October 31. Herbicides may include: Glyphosate, Dicamba, 2, 4-D, Mecoprop-P.
2. Fungus control in turf areas within the property. Projected dates of application are May 1 to October 31. Fungicides used may include: Chlorothalonil, Propiconazole, Fludioxonil, Azoxystrobin.

Any public concerns with the above may be addressed by sending a written submission within fifteen days of this publication to:

Manitoba Environment and Climate Change  
Environmental Approvals Branch  
Box 35, 14 Fultz Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3Y 0L6  
pesticideusepermit@gov.mb.ca



### "SHOULD YOU MAX OUT YOUR TFSA OR RSP FIRST?"

When it comes to saving for the future, Canadians often face one big question: Should I contribute to my Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA) or my Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) first? Both accounts offer powerful benefits, but the right choice depends on your income, tax situation, and retirement goals. Let's break it down with simple examples—and some practical strategies.

#### Income Level Matters

**Example 1: Lower Income (Under \$50,000)** If you're earning a modest income, your tax rate is relatively low. RRSP contributions won't give you a huge tax break now, but withdrawals later could still be taxed at similar rates. In this case, TFSA is often the better first choice—you avoid future taxes and keep flexibility.

**Example 2: Middle Income (\$50,000–\$90,000)** Here, RRSP contributions start to shine. Suppose you earn \$70,000 and contribute \$10,000 to your RRSP. You could save roughly \$3,000 in taxes today. If you expect to retire on a lower income, RRSP withdrawals will be taxed at a lower rate, making this a smart move. Still, balancing contributions between RRSP and TFSA can give you both tax savings and flexibility.

**Example 3: High Income (\$100,000+)** If you're in a high tax bracket, RRSP contributions are extremely valuable. A \$20,000 RRSP contribution could save you \$8,000 or more in taxes now. Later, when you withdraw at a lower rate, you'll come out ahead. TFSA is still useful for extra savings, but RRSP should likely come first.

#### Strategy Tips for Smart Saving

1. **Use RRSP Refunds** -Wisely If you contribute to your RRSP and get a tax refund, don't spend it—invest it! Many Canadians use their refund to top up their TFSA, creating a powerful one-two punch for retirement savings.
2. **Think About Timing** -If you expect your income to rise significantly in the future, you might prioritize TFSA now and save RRSP room for later when the tax deduction is more valuable.
3. **Plan for Flexibility** RRSP-withdrawals are taxable and can affect government benefits like OAS or GIS. TFSA withdrawals are tax-free and don't impact benefits, ideal for early retirement or big purchases.
4. **Avoid Over-Contributing** -Both accounts have strict limits. TFSA over-contributions are penalized at 1% per month, and RRSP over-contributions beyond \$2,000 allowance also incur penalties. Track your room carefully.
5. **Mix and Match** -You don't have to choose one exclusively. Many Canadians split contributions—RRSP for tax savings now, TFSA for tax-free growth and flexibility later.

There's no one-size-fits-all answer but making informed choices today can save you thousands tomorrow. Review your income, retirement plans, and flexibility needs—then decide which account to max out first. Better yet, talk to a financial advisor to tailor a strategy that works for you.

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