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VOICE

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Walking for a cause

Over 200 people came out for the Coldest Night of the Year walk in support of Winkler's Central Station Community Centre Saturday. For the full story, see Pg. 2.

PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

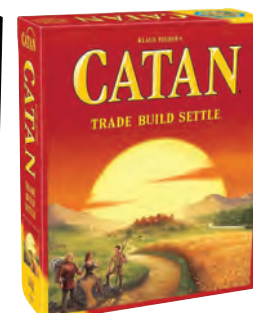
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Central Station walk smashes goal, raises \$83K

By Ashleigh Viveiros

While Mother Nature may have poked fun at the event's name by offering up some truly unseasonably warm weather, Central Station's Coldest Night of the Year walk was another monumental success for the agency Saturday.

About 220 people gathered at the Winkler community centre that evening to take part in 2 km or 5 km walks around town in support of programs that help vulnerable individuals and families in Winkler.

"It's not really the coldest night of the year, but we're thankful for the sunshine we have today," executive director Anita Wiebe told the assembled crowd just before they set out. "You are all part of something much bigger than just a walk here today. We're walking in support of Central Station and the work that they do to



connect with folks that are hurt and hurting, that are hungry, and that are at risk of homelessness."

The organization had set a fundrais-

ing goal of \$50,000. At press time Monday, the online tracker showed the event had raised \$83,241.

In addition to the jaunt around town, participants also got the chance to enjoy bonfires and carnival games before the walk and a free meal back at Central Station afterwards.

"We're super grateful to the community again," Wiebe said Monday, noting they anticipate the event's final total will increase as a few more donations trickle in this week. "It's just been continued support. When we come with a need, the community responds. It's been cool to see."

PHOTOS BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE



Top: Supporters kept busy before the walk playing games like this life-sized Jenga. Above: Members of the Winkler Fire Department manned the bonfires.

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Manitoba's Champion Child looks back on a job well done

Winkler's Pacey Wall helped raise \$34K for Children's Hospital

By Ashleigh Viveiros

It was quite a year for Winkler's Pacey Wall.

The 10-year-old spent the past 12 months serving as Manitoba's Champion Child, helping to raise money for Health Sciences Centre (HSC) Children's Hospital.

"It was a lot of fun. I loved making big speeches in front of large crowds of people," Wall said Monday as his time in the role came to an end.

Wall has spent countless hours receiving treatment for intestinal failure at the Children's Hospital in Winnipeg. He's been in and out of the emergency department and on wards since complications first arose at age three, even spending many holidays

and birthdays in hospital.

But he hasn't let his health challenges dampen his positive spirit

"I choose to look at the good things in life instead of just looking at all the bad things," he said. "That's what helps me in life."

When asked to be the face of the 140,000 children who receive care at HSC Children's Hospital each year, Wall said he jumped at the chance.

"Raising money for your children's hospital, it feels like it helps," he said, thanking staff at HSC for all their care over the years. "I want to make sure all kids get all the care they need to have better futures."

In his time as Champion Child, Wall attended more than 40 awareness and fundraising events to share his story and shine a spotlight on the work and research being done by the hospital.

There were certainly a few highlights through the year, Wall shared.

Continued on page 4



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Winkler's Pacey Wall presented Nichola Wigle, chief operating office of the Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba, with a cheque for \$17,000 Monday, representing half of what the Champion Child campaign raised.

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> **CHAMPION CHILD, FROM PG. 3**

"I loved all of them a lot, but probably the Flyers" was his favourite event, he said, talking about the Winkler junior hockey game he attend-

ed in December. "We raised a good amount of money there."

Wall and his family—dad Benji, mom Kim, and sisters Addison,



A 'Love Your Pet Day' photo shoot

PHOTO BY LORNE STELMACH/VOICE

Winklerite Sally Friesen came along with Mickey, a two-and-a-half-year-old Husky Australian Shepherd cross, last Tuesday as the Pembina Hills Gallery invited dog owners to stop by for pet portraits to mark National Love Your Pet Day. Owners had about 20 minutes and a few locations as well as props to create the perfect photo with photographer Liza Isakov. Proceeds went to support the Pembina Valley Humane Society.

Bailey, and Savannah—also got the chance to go to Walt Disney World in Florida with other Champion Children from across Canada last spring.

"It was fun," Wall said. "The last few days we went on the roller coasters and I really loved that."

Wall's efforts helped to raise \$34,000, split between HSC Children's Hospital and the Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba (CHRIM).

It's a number he's quite pleased about.

"I'm very happy because I got to donate \$17,000 to research and \$17,000 to surgery, and I think that's a good amount of money for that."

The funds will purchase four rigid laparoscopic telescopes for the pediatric surgical department at Children's Hospital. These tools visualize the contents of the abdomen and thoracic cavity to allow for diagnosis and treatment of various conditions.

"Pacey is making a difference by improving the experience for other children who need surgery," said Dr. Richard Keijzer, the hospital's pediatric surgery lead. "Having the right equipment for procedures makes sure our teams can continue providing the best care possible for all kids."

Funds will also go towards emergency care research at CHRIM

through the new theme, Research into the Enhancement of Acute Care for Children's Health (REACH). REACH will build inclusive, strong and sustainable infrastructure to scale existing research, and support a stronger base of researchers that can continue to innovate and improve acute care

"Pacey's family knows firsthand how important acute care is, and we're so thankful he has chosen to help other kids through research," said Terry Klassen, CHIRM CEO and scientific director. "We have all likely experienced acute care for ourselves or a loved one in our lives, and Pacey's gift will create meaningful change for children who need emergency care."

"Pacey inspires me every single day," noted Stefano Grande, president and CEO of the Children's Hospital Foundation of Manitoba. "His bravery in sharing his journey, and his drive to help other kids like him is so meaningful. We're so grateful to Pacey and his family for everything they have done to help give better futures for children in our community."

Wall has some advice for the next Champion Child, who will be announced next month.

"Be positive and don't worry, really, about all the people," he said. "Kind of let yourself just do it."



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Severe nursing shortage at BTHC raising concerns

By Lorne Stelmach

There is increased concern that a significant nursing shortage could have an impact on services at Boundary Trails Health Centre.

Reports last week suggested hospital administrators were eyeing the possibility of consolidating units and closing beds as a result of the staffing levels.

The challenges at Boundary Trails Health Centre are especially in the medical and surgical rehab units, where it was reported there were 43 per cent and 59 per cent vacancy rates, respectively.

"That is a significant vacancy rate. We are seeing vacancy rates in other facilities in the province that are similar to that, however Boundary Trails has a very important role in the joint replacement program in this province," said Manitoba Nurses Union

president Darlene Jackson. "That is very worrying when we're talking about limiting rehab beds in a facility that provides as many joint replacements as they do.

"That has not only impact in Morden and Winkler and in the Southern Health-Santé Sud region, it has a big impact across the entire province because many, many individuals go to Boundary Trails for joint replacement," she continued. "Boundary Trails really serves as a hub, and it's an important facility ... that's going to have far reaching repercussions throughout the entire province."

A town hall was recently held that provided hospital staff with an opportunity to voice their concerns and contribute feedback around recruitment and retention efforts.

One longtime local nurse, who spoke to the *Voice* on the condition of anonymity, suggested things will get

Morden-Winkler mayors fear impact of hospital staffing shortfalls

By Lorne Stelmach

Local leaders were concerned after hearing last week that a significant nursing shortage could have an impact on services at Boundary Trails Health Centre.

Reports that suggest hospital administrators are eyeing consolidating units or closing some beds caught the attention of local mayors Henry Siemens of Winkler and Nancy Penner of Morden.

"It's a hard thing for us to look at in that it's not a funding issue of ours, it's not a jurisdictional responsibility," said Siemens. "We want to make ourselves available to Southern Health or Boundary Trails or the province of Manitoba in whatever way that we can to try to find a way to recruit the staff that they need."

"Doctor retention and lack of nursing staff and support staff at the hospital is a big concern," said Penner. "We look at the expansion that's going on, and yet we don't have the staff to meet the needs there [now]."

Penner said the potential impact on programs and services is a significant concern.

"It would be a province-wide impact because Morden is a hub for orthopedic surgery. If we start closing down

space ... that goes right throughout the entire province.

"Winkler, Morden, and Stanley are contributing significant dollars to help fund that expansion," Penner noted. "Morden as a city puts significant dollars into Menzies Medical Centre to help them with medical staff retention and finding new doctors, so it is a big concern for our community."

Any impact on health care would in turn have an impact on overall growth and development of Morden, she added, as health care is a key part of what might attract people here.

"Health care plays a big role in it," stressed Penner. "When you're looking at the services we have to offer, health care is likely number one."

Siemens noted that local municipal leaders meet on a regular basis, and he suggested this issue would be front and centre on their next agenda.

"It greatly concerns us because we look at this facility, we know how critical it is to all of southern Manitoba," he said. "When we look at medical care, it's critical ... as we look to invest and to how our community is built ... to have that hole there is something that we would love to find a way to be addressed."



VOICE FILE PHOTO

The Boundary Trails Health Centre, which is in the midst of a major expansion project, currently has nursing vacancy rates of 43 per cent and 59 per cent in its medical and surgical rehab units..

worse before they get better.

"Boundary Trails is like the Titanic. It's sinking, and it's sinking fast," she said. "We need more staff. Where and how are we going to get them?"

"I think it was a good step that they had that meeting. There are hard decisions to be made. Hopefully they listened to their nurses because they're going to lose more if they don't."

The nurse spoke of the frustration that comes with so much extra being asked of and expected from staff.

"They're tired of getting mandated [to work overtime], and a lot of the older nurses can't do it anymore," she said.

"You've got a high pool of nurses who are ready to retire or at retirement age already who are sticking around," she said. "You've got a younger population of nurses who are burning out, and we're not mentoring them properly, and they're not getting properly trained.

"It's just too busy to do the job you should be doing or you want to be doing," the nurse continued.

"There's so many vacancies, and there's also no nurses to fill them," she said, adding nurses can look elsewhere for work with better pay, benefits, and work conditions.

Continued on page 7



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PUBLISHER
Lana Meier



MARKETING & PROMOTIONS
Brett Mitchell



EDITOR
Ashleigh Viveiros



REPORTER
Lorne Stelmach



REPORTER
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A place to call “home”

Every person looks for a place to call “home”, physically, emotionally and spiritually. When the day has been long and the stress has been enough, we may say in our heart and out loud: “I am ready to go home.”

Sometimes “home” is elusive. It needs to be a place where we feel safe to be ourself with the things that are familiar to us, and if we have family or companions, we long for a setting where we will feel respected and loved.

Every day we hear of and read about people who have lost their physical home to fire, natural disasters, military conflict, or the current economic realities.

Here in Canada, we can find many stories of people who do not have the comforts that many readers of this newspaper may take for granted. Take a walk in Gastown in Vancouver. A block or two from the cruise ship docks are sidewalks occupied by people who do not have a safe place to call home, for whatever reason. Walk around in Winnipeg and observe the people who are seeking refuge in bus shelters, or in small communities slightly off the beaten path. Ride on

a commuter train in Ontario and look carefully for the tents, tarps and nearby shopping carts that indicate residence by the tracks.

Much closer to your home and mine, have you observed residents living in cars, or couch surfing? A shortage of housing and affordability issues create unexpected situations.

Concern for the homeless is not solely a modern situation. Psalm 72 is a song and prayer for the leadership of Solomon as an earthly king. In verses 12-14 we read “For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.”

Jesus also demonstrated an awareness of the economically challenged and those without a place to call home physically, emotionally and spiritually. He said that when we care for them it is like we were doing so to him.

(See Matthew 25:34-40). One time he stopped to care for a man who was presently homeless, living in a local cemetery. (My wife and I have seen the stashes of some homeless individuals in a cemetery in Ontario.) In Luke 8:26-39 we can read about his compassionate care for this man in need. The man was so grateful that he wanted to travel and learn with Jesus, but Jesus said “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.”

“So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.”

Are we aware of the disadvantaged and homeless where we live? How does that information impact our attitudes, choices and actions?

The Lord knows that every person is precious and needs a place to call home physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Randy Smart has been a pastor in Southern Manitoba since 1979.



By Randy Smart

Letter policy

The *Voice* welcomes letters from readers on local and regional issues and concerns.

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

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

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

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Ashleigh Viveiros Editor
204-332-3456 news@winklermordenvoice.ca

Lorne Stelmach Reporter
204-823-2655 lstelmach@winklermordenvoice.ca

MAILING ADDRESS:

Winkler Morden Voice
Box 39, Stonewall, MB R0C 2Z0

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Letters

> Got something you want to get off your chest? How about an act of kindness to share?

Send your letters to the editor or acts of kindness to news@winklermordenvoice.ca. Please include your name, address, and phone number for confirmation purposes.

SCOTTIES MORDEN 2024

It's now been a few weeks since the 2024 Manitoba Scotties took place in Morden. So many people, in Morden as well as in my travels around the province, have stopped me to let me know how well the event went. And I respond every time the reason was because there were over 200 volunteers who all did a great job!

Back when I agreed to chair the host committee for the event, there were a few things I recognized:

1. After all the challenges we've all faced the past few years, this would be an opportunity to bring the com-

munity together for very positive reasons; and,

2. This would be an opportunity to fundraise for the Curling Club, with the potential to raise dollars for projects or programs which could provide a lasting legacy.

At one of our last executive committee meetings, where we thought we were relatively prepared for the event, we talked about the importance of noticing and addressing the little things.

During the event itself a number of players and coaches expressed appreciation. Being there every day all

day, I saw firsthand the commitment and dedication of all the volunteers. Here's some of the comments:

"The crowds were amazing to play in front of."

"Everything was organized and ran so smoothly."

"We could tell the attention to small details was made to make the players and community feel important, and it rang through."

"Great job."

"All of the volunteers were so friendly."

For me the best compliment came from Kaitlyn Lawes when she was

interviewed by CJOB and said, "I feel like Morden put on the best event we've played in, in a long time." This from a player who has been to dozens of big events in her career.

My own heart is filled with so much pride and appreciation for all those that volunteered for the Scotties Morden 2024. It is the combined commitment of all of you to this community which has already created its own legacy. Fantastic job!

**Ernie Epp,
Host Committee Chair
Scotties Morden 2024**

Reinland man injured in Hwy. 3 crash

By Voice staff

A Reinland man was among those injured in a crash that occurred on Hwy. 3 near Oak Bluff last week.

Emergency crews responded to a location four kilometres south of the community on Feb. 19 at 7 p.m.

Investigators have determined that a pickup truck, being driven by a 32-year-old female from Sanford, was travelling southbound when she collided into the rear of another southbound vehicle, being driven by a 20-year-old male from Reinland.

The vehicle that was struck was then pushed into the northbound lane, where it collided with a northbound vehicle being driven by a 23-year-old male from Winnipeg.

The Reinland man and the four female adult passengers from the northbound vehicle were transported to hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. The 23-year-old male driver of the northbound vehicle was not physically injured.

The 32-year-old female driver of the southbound vehicle that initiated the collisions, upon entering the ditch in her vehicle, fled the scene on foot.

With the assistance of Police Service Dog Phox, the woman was tracked to a nearby field and arrested for impaired driving causing bodily harm.

As she was not dressed for the weather and had been outdoors for over an hour and a half, she was transported to hospital for treatment.

> NURSING SHORTAGE, FROM PG. 5

"Management is trying to somewhat manage the staff and help them out, but there's just not enough people," she continued. "I think the nurses are feeling very defeated, and management's probably feeling defeated too."

There was a lot of focus at the town hall on wages and benefits, but she doesn't see that as really necessarily being at the core of the problem.

"There's so many layers to this that people don't know," she suggested. "There's also that mentality of only fighting for your own department. Everyone needs to come together and realize if we want Boundary Trails to continue, everyone needs to work together."

She said it is going to require some very strategic thinking and some new solutions such as other extra incentives, but again stressed that it needs to be a coordinated, united effort.

"There's ways around it if management was willing. They need to make concessions, and they need to show their staff that they do support them," she said. "And bring some positivity to the team ... in a very bleak position, it's hard to be optimistic."

Jackson noted the Canadian Nurses Association issued a warning 25 years ago about an impending nursing shortage that it estimated would reach a peak in 2025.

"We've progressively been reaching that point ... COVID really accelerated it. We are in 2023 where we would have been in 2025 with this shortage," she said.

She suggested a number of factors are coming into play that are worsening the shortages.

"We're seeing more and more nurses who are leaving facilities or leaving the profession," she said. "We have a lot of nurses who are either at retirement age and still working or on the cusp of retirement. We're also losing many nurses out of our public health care system to the private for-profit agencies ... it has a huge impact on our public health care system."

"We are finding there are many, many nurses who are just saying, 'I cannot maintain this, I cannot maintain the workloads and the hours I am working' ... and are leaving the profession, so it's just the perfect storm."

"Nurses are so frustrated ... they have a life outside that facility, but with the amount of overtime that has been worked ... they have no work-life balance," Jackson said, noting some are going to casual positions as a result.

"It's a shame we are losing nurses ... in order to have a work-life balance ... it's just not a good scenario."

Jackson also agreed the loss of staff may have been exacerbated in this region during the pandemic by the anti-vaccine and anti-public health orders movement and the verbal abuse and harassment directed at many health care staff as a result.

She suggested it's clear what the focus needs to be to address the staffing issues in the immediate short term.

"They need to be doing retention.

They need to retain every possible nurse in the system, and that is going to take collaboration with the government," she said. "They need to keep nurses in those facilities to keep us afloat until we can bolster our ranks with new grads coming out."

She applauds the province for adding training spots, but that is only a longer term solution.

"Just do everything you can now to keep everyone in the system."

When contacted last week for comment, Southern Health-Santé Sud released the following statement that it "would like to voice its appreciation for nursing staff at Boundary Trails Health Centre who continue to work hard to support patient care during challenging circumstances that are largely attributable

to retirements and planned leaves.

"We offer sincere thanks to nurses at Boundary Trails—and physicians, allied health and support staff—for their ongoing dedication to providing care for residents living in or near the community.

"A multi-pronged approach to stabilizing staffing across the region, including this site, has been underway. This approach includes various recruitment initiatives aimed at filling existing vacancies including career fairs and targeting recent and upcoming nursing grads."

"EVERYONE NEEDS TO COME TOGETHER AND REALIZE IF WE WANT BOUNDARY TRAILS TO CONTINUE, EVERYONE NEEDS TO WORK TOGETHER."

“We’ve just sent the biggest project Winkler’s ever done to tender”

Winkler mayor provides multiple project updates in his state of the city address

By Ashleigh Viveiros

After years of planning and delays, Winkler’s wastewater treatment facility project has finally gone to tender.

Mayor Henry Siemens shared the news with business leaders in his state of the city address, delivered last Thursday at the Winkler and District Chamber of Commerce’s annual meeting.

“We’ve just sent the biggest project Winkler has ever done, a budgeted \$50 million wastewater treatment plant, to tender,” Siemens said. “It’s been a long time coming. We thought at times that we’d never get here, and now all we can do is cross our fingers and wait.”

The project was paused two years ago after bids came in significantly higher than originally budgeted.

“Over the last several years, numbers coming in have been scary because they’ve been hugely over budget. No matter what we did, it was way over budget,” Siemens lamented. “We’re optimistic that everything that we’ve done, everything we’ve mitigated, everything we’ve learned over the last two years gets us to a place that this will come in very close to the numbers that we have for it.”

In an interview after the speech, Siemens noted they have a five-week tender process for the project, after which time council and city staff

will review the bids with an eye to hopefully giving the green light to get shovels in the ground as soon as possible this year.

It’s one of three major projects on the city’s radar for 2024.

“Our water treatment plant [expansion] tender closed yesterday,” Siemens said. “Staff are reviewing the numbers right now to see what they exactly look like, but very early indications, [it’s] much closer to what we would expect. We’re in the vicinity of where we need to be.”

The city hopes to select and approve the winning bid at this week’s council meeting. The project has been estimated to cost approximately \$14 million.

Once the numbers for these two necessary infrastructure undertakings are known, attention can then turn to the planned renovations for the Winkler Centennial Arena.

“We still hope that we’ll be able to send that project out this year as well, but we needed cost certainty around these two first,” the mayor said, noting afterwards that, assuming the first two projects come in as budgeted, the renovations meant to update the aging arena could get underway shortly after the Winkler Flyers’ hockey season is complete this spring.

While these projects are top of mind at the city right now, they are by no means the only things going on in Winkler these days, Siemens noted.

Based on the results of last year’s transit feasibility study, the community is moving forward on plans to offer a subsidized ride program later this year.

“This is an affordable, dip-your-toe-in-the-water first step on the transit continuum,” Siemens said. “We will offer a unique way for people to get from place to place in Winkler at a cost that everyone can afford.”

“We’ll learn there where our greatest transit needs are so that we can use that data to move on to the next step when it’s time to do so.”

Siemens also highlighted a few of the city’s community partnerships, including working with the Winkler Community Foundation on a new Vital Signs survey to provide a detailed snapshot of Winkler’s demographics and needs, and its ongoing support of the work of Central Station and Central Community Homes.

“These types of community partnerships are critical to Winkler’s future,” he said. “We know that in a rapidly growing community like Winkler, not everyone always benefits equally from that growth. These organizations take a leadership role in finding out who’s missing out, connecting other service providers, and helping ensure that the people who might be looking to progress are supported.”

The need for more affordable housing remains constant, the mayor said, sharing that an application to the province for funding for a project to address those needs has been submitted and they’re hoping for approval any day now.

On the tax front, Siemens reflected that many communities across the country are seeing massive increases to keep up with basic civic needs.

He pointed to Brandon, which re-

In his state of the city address last week, Winkler Mayor Henry Siemens announced the community’s \$50 million wastewater treatment plant project has finally gone to tender.

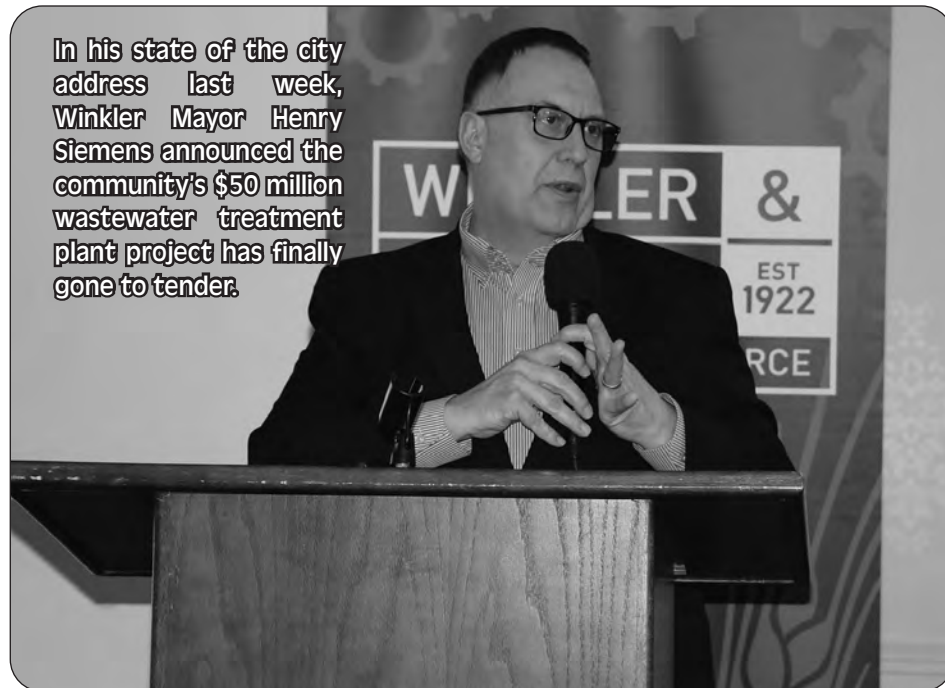


PHOTO BY ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS/VOICE

cently received a report outlining the need for a 13 per cent increase a year for the next four years or a nine per cent increase annually for the next decade simply to keep the city operating.

Part of the problem, Siemens noted, has been frozen or decreased financial support from the upper levels of government.

“Most cities and towns have determined that they would like a greater level of service in their community than what’s offered, so they’ve topped it up, similar to how we’ve funded the capital expansion of the Boundary Trails Health Centre and the Winkler and District Health Care Board’s purchase of [the Winkler clinic] building.

“We can’t keep going to local taxpayers for these services, services that should be funded by Manitoba and Canada,” Siemens stressed. “Municipalities receive about ten cents of every tax dollar, but we’re responsible for 60 per cent of all public infrastructure. That math doesn’t work. It’s a system ripe for collapse.”

“All of us need to rethink how the more senior orders of government fund municipalities and how they share the additional taxes that are generated in a growing economy,” he said, noting they’ve had some fruitful discussions with the new NDP provincial government and there is room for optimism that municipalities will again see constant, inflation-adjusted financial support once again moving forward.

Winkler currently is in better shape than other communities that are struggling for funds, in part, Siemens said, thanks to the long-term planning of past councils coupled with the fact that much of our infrastructure is

relatively new.

“Winkler’s population has doubled in the last 25 years,” he pointed out. “That means half the stuff we have is almost new. In large-scale infrastructure, 25 years isn’t even a teenager yet. That gives us more time to save, to fund major repairs or replacements.”

“For the past five years, with the exception of the 2021 COVID year, we’ve set budgets through this lens of long-term sustainability, meaning we’ve significantly increased our reserve contributions,” Siemens said.

They’ve done this while also focusing on other sources of potential revenue, he said, and cutting unnecessary costs while still offering the level of service the community requires.

Winkler’s detailed asset management plans shows the community has approximately \$500 million worth of physical assets, which comes with about \$380 million in renewal costs in the decades to come.

“As we continue to dig deeper and deeper into the details of what we have, its age, and anticipated replacement date, we’re finding that we have a deficit of about five per cent in our ability to fund it,” Siemens said, stressing again the importance of growing the reserve fund to ensure future generations aren’t hit with a massive tax increase to pay for it all. “We’re working with our staff to gradually increase our savings to help us get there.”

To that end, Siemens announced Winklerites can expect a tax increase in the upcoming budget.

“Council sees a need to set tax rates slightly above the rate of inflation for the next few years. This year, that looks like a five per cent increase,” he

Continued on page 9

“WE THOUGHT AT TIMES THAT WE’D NEVER GET HERE ...”

Winkler chamber reports on a busy year of growth

By Ashleigh Viveiros

At its annual general meeting last week, the Winkler and District Chamber of Commerce reported on what president Hank Froese says was a busy and rewarding year.

"One highlight that stands out to me was our manufacturing wage survey," he says, explaining the results provided valuable insights into the compensation trends and practices across the region.

"That was something new to the chamber and it was something that was really appreciated by the manufacturing sector that participated," Froese says. "I think there's some traction there to maybe do it for some other sectors as well."

Membership retention and growth was another high point for the agency, finally returning to pre-pandemic numbers.

Now the goal is to get those members connecting with each other at more chamber-hosted events, Froese says.

"We're going to work on some

events with a different format to make it more conducive to networking," he says.

One of the events that brings the business community together every year is the chamber's P.W. Enns Business Awards Gala, which Froese notes "was a great success, generating much positive feedback."

They're looking at how they can continue to reach the high bar past galas have set while also reining in costs.

"Trying to still put on a first-class event and bring value with great speakers, but perhaps with less costs and more interest," Froese says, noting the chamber is already accepting nominations for the 2024 awards. "We certainly want to have people nominate and recognize the great businesses we have in many different sectors in the community."

Looking ahead, the chamber's board of directors has a new strategic plan it will be tackling over the next few years.

"Our three items that we're going to be working on is improving mem-



Winkler chamber president Hank Froese says the organization is looking at how it can provide more value and better representation to its members.

> STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS, FROM PG. 8

said. "We take very seriously the responsibility of managing the money that we ask of you through taxes. It is never an easy decision to ask you for more, but we firmly believe that to be good stewards of all that Winkler is and can be, now is the time to make that difficult ask of you."

Taxpayers will have the chance to see and weigh-in on the full financial plan at the March 26 council meeting.

Siemens also announced that community members can voice their concerns about what's going on in Winkler with a new monthly feature happening at City Hall called

Ask the Mayor.

Starting March 5, the community is invited to stop by council chambers the first Tuesday of every month from 4-6 p.m. to chat with city council members and senior city staffers.

Siemens said they hope this will encourage people to come have their say in a less formal environment.

"Nothing is off limits. If you have something to say, we want to hear it," he said. "There's no agenda, there's no time [limits]. It's just an opportunity to talk. If you have something to ask, come by and ask it."

bership value for all our members, whether real or perceived value," Froese explains.

"Number two is to diversify relationships and representation for our various business sectors. Winkler has so many different sectors in areas of business. We want to just truly represent each one of those as best we can and support them."

Thirdly, the chamber is focusing on

its operational sustainability, ensuring fiscal responsibility and exploring the various revenue streams available to it, including a long-term funding arrangement with the City of Winkler.

"We have been in discussions with the city officials and have presented our case for a stable and adequate funding move that reflects the value and impact of our chamber," Froese says.

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Prairie Singers take the stage March 9 in Winkler

By Ashleigh Viveiros

The community is invited to the Prairie Singers' annual spring concert next weekend.

The adult community choir takes the stage at the Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Winkler (750 15th St.) on Saturday, March 9.

The theme is "Song of the Universal," says Rick Heppner Mueller, who conducts the choir alongside Jason Vanwynsberghe. It's a piece by Norwegian composer Ola Gjeilo featuring lyrics from a Walt Whitman poem.

"It's beautiful music. Absolutely breathtaking," Heppner Mueller says. "It speaks to the universal experience of all of us. That there's goodness within all of us. The concert is about that there is much that we share in common, and we want to highlight that and show that we're more alike than different."

In addition to Gjeilo's piece, the show will include a variety of other songs on the theme, including pieces sung in Latin and Ojibway, a Croatian folk song, a Canadian East coast folk song, and several classical pieces, including Handel's "Messiah."

Joining the singers as special guests are the Post Road Strings group and pianist Loren Hiebert.

"It's a pretty neat experience to do half a concert having orchestral accompaniment," Heppner Mueller notes. "You don't get that every day."

The Prairie Singers have been operating since the '90s, providing adult choralists from across the region with a place to raise their voices together in song. The group rehearses regularly from January to March and then wraps up the season with a public show.

"It provides a high-level singing experience for singers in the area," says



SUPPLIED PHOTO

The Prairie Singers includes 40 auditioned vocalists from across the region.

Heppner Mueller, noting this year's group features about 40 singers, all of whom auditioned for their spot.

Last year's concert sold out, so this time around they're doing two performances at 2:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.

"It will be a very engaging show that will take people on a musical journey exploring all the things that it means

to be human," Heppner Mueller says. "I think it will really capture people's imagination."

Admission is \$15 for adults and \$5 for students. Kids under five get in for free.

You can learn more about the Prairie Singers online at prairiesingers.ca.

Province begins ice-jam mitigation measures

By Voice staff

In one of the earliest signs that

spring is on its way, the Manitoba government begun ice-jam mitigation measures on the Red River last week.



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The government on Feb. 20 announced it was starting its annual ice cutting program on the Red from Selkirk to Netley Marsh to reduce the potential impacts of ice-jam related flooding. The work is expected to be completed on March 15.

The ice-jam mitigation program, which consists of cutting and breaking river ice, was launched in 2006 to reduce the risk of flooding caused by ice jams on the lower Red River and other rivers. Ice jams occur when floating ice blocks downstream move-

ment, causing water to back up and possibly overflow riverbanks.

Remote-controlled ice-cutting units and three Amphibex icebreakers are used each year to cut and break approximately 28 kilometres of ice on the river for an approximate width of 100 metres.

Ice-cutting and breaking operations are frequently undertaken on the Icelandic River at Riverton and at the outlet of the Portage Diversion. Currently, ice-cutting operations are not expected to be required at Riverton

or the Portage Diversion, but the province continues to monitor these areas.

Notices will be posted in areas where the ice-cutting machines are operating.

River users are advised to stay off the ice where notices are posted or where evidence of recent ice cutting is apparent. Ice fishers are also reminded to remove huts or other materials in the areas where the ice-mitigation program is taking place.

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Guenther stepping down as WSD trustee

By Lorne Stelmach

Western School Division will be looking to fill a seat on its board of trustees with the departure of David Guenther.

Guenther recently tendered his resignation from the school board as a result of his wife having an employment opportunity in Tennessee.

"This is coming about a year or two years before we had planned to move away," he noted. "We decided it was time for a family adventure."

It will almost be unusual to not have a member of the Guenther family at the board table, as his father Kurt served as a trustee for 23 years.

"My father set that example before me ... and I always liked that he was involved in the community," said Guenther, who was first elected in 2018.

He was also drawn to serving on the school board for another personal reason.

"Going through the education system myself, I needed a few supports to help me be successful, and so this was kind of my way to repay that debt," he said. "I wanted to make sure other kids had those same supports."

Guenther has some mixed feelings about leaving his role behind mid-term.

"I had hoped to have a little bit more closure with finishing up my second term as a school trustee and seeing the new school complete. I felt there were still some things kind of undone, but the opportunity came," he said. "I'm so proud of the opportunity that Morden gave me and that they gave me their confidence to be their voice at the board table."

Aside from having Morden's new K-8 school become a reality, Guenther also cited another highlight as being how the community came together to oppose the provincial Bill 64 to reform the education system.

"The community told the govern-

ment we are happy to have the local decision making body here in our local community for our schools and not having those decisions made somewhere else," he said. "The community really stepped up."

He as well especially appreciated being involved in the board planning sessions.

"We set the four or five priorities that the school division is really going to focus on, and that trickles right down to the staff and the students knowing what those priorities are," Guenther said. "That's where my voice was well heard and I was able to bring ideas to the table."

Guenther sees the division as being in a great place right now to keep moving forward.

"We have a fantastic senior administration in place. We also have a really strong board right now with four members who are really dedicated to being there and seeing good decisions are made."



FILE PHOTO

David Guenther has tendered his resignation from the Western School Division board of trustees.

Plans for a by-election to fill the vacant board seat are not yet in place.

"Hopefully somebody in the community wants to step up and be a trustee," Guenther said. "I want anyone reading this to think about themselves in that kind of role."

Check out the Voice online at www.winklermordenvoice.ca or altonavoice.ca

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PVLIP celebrates region's growing diversity

By Lori Penner

The Pembina Valley Local Immigration Partnership (PVLIP) showcased the region's increasing diversity at its annual Connecting Cultures & Communities event last week.

This was the first time Altona hosted the celebration, which took place Feb. 22 at The Community Exchange.

The full house of attendees was treated to a vibrant musical performance by musical group Alter Limitz, which is made up of newcomers who have benefitted from local immigration services.

Guests also enjoyed a Filipino buffet supper prepared by Potpourri of Flavours followed by presentations by members of the PVLIP team.

"Really, this celebration is about looking at the wonderful work that is happening in the communities and the people that live here, and celebrating the cultures that we get to enjoy," program coordinator Elaine Burton Saindon told the crowd.

She shared the organization's highlights from the past year, emphasizing the success of diversity workshops centered around the recently developed Connecting Cultures & Communities Guide and Toolkit.

"These workshops—totaling almost 70 with nearly 700 participants—exceeded expectations, reflecting the community's eagerness to engage in cross-cultural dialogue."

In 2023, PVLIP established a permanent office in Altona at The Community Exchange, with part-time staff now available there three days a week.

Burton Saindon highlighted the office's role in connecting people to resources, understanding their stories,

and exploring potential volunteer opportunities.

"When we get all those voices together, we can implement change," she explained.

She also shared some of the history of the organization and described the work that they do.

"We're a non-profit. We don't get a lot of visibility. A lot of our work is behind the scenes. Across Canada, we have approximately 87 programs like ours. We're established to work with communities, to help them prepare for an increase of newcomers through immigration or develop solutions to address the impact of immigration.

The main objective of a local immigration partnership is to strive to engage a wide variety of stakeholders in a focused planned session to create goals that will strengthen welcoming communities for newcomers, which will promote their success in Canada."

PVLIP has a variety of community services that collaborate in this process.

"One of the main ones is Regional Connections Immigration Services. They are our host organization, so we work with them, and that partnership is very strong."

Burton Saindon noted that when it comes to immigration, there's a growing attraction to rural communities throughout Canada, and the Pembina Valley is one of them.

"One of the values that this region is known for is its ability for communities and businesses to respond to the needs of others. To be willing to find a way to host, help and accommodate people, whether it's in a crisis, or whether it's by assisting new residents from around the world."



PHOTOS BY LORI PENNER/VOICE

The Community Exchange in Altona was packed Feb. 22 with supporters and teams involved in the PVLIP program.

Burton Saindon said the numbers reflect the need for an organization like theirs. Over the past 25 years, the population of the Pembina Valley has grown. According to census data from 2021, that increase has been almost 32 per cent. During those years, the Pembina Valley Canadian-born population increased by 19 per cent, while the foreign-born population increased by 149 per cent.

"We now have 147 countries calling the Pembina Valley home, representing 64 mother tongues that are not English or French," Burton Saindon noted.

According to the Permanent Resident Landing numbers, in 2022 and 2023 combined, 3,435 permanent residents have moved into the region.

"The language diversity in our region is quite high," shared Burton Saindon. "One-third of our residents do not speak English or French as

their first language. The national average of non-English or French speaking immigrants in any community or town is approximately 13 per cent. In the Pembina Valley, it's 33 per cent."

The role of PVLIP, Burton Saindon explained, is not to provide direct service to newcomers, or to solve immigration related issues by themselves.

"Our role is to bring a variety of voices together and through that collective community response, create solutions to 'do welcome better.' Our goal is to create welcoming communities, ensuring our new residents feel at home and have a sense of belonging in their settlement journey. So, when we bring all these voices together, we end up coming up with a tool or resource."

Last week's celebration also marked the unveiling of PVLIP's new set of five-year priorities. One of those priorities includes the formation of action teams, incorporating PVLIP members as well as local people, striving for ways to help their communities become even more welcoming.

"We will be creating more intentional awareness of this over the next year," said Burton Saindon. "Our goal is to see at least one action team in every community we work with in the Pembina Valley."

The teams will meet four times a year while also interacting with community members to gain exposure, or raise awareness of goals in their town.

"They'll be giving feedback and facilitating their own ideas," Burton Saindon said. "We have some broad, attainable goals, but they can also make it specific for what they feel would work the best. It's super exciting."



Left: PVLIP coordinator Elaine Burton Saindon reflects on the success of the program over the past year. Above: Alter Limitz performed a variety of hits for the audience.

Are you brave enough to take the plunge?

By Lorne Stelmach

The icy waters of Lake Minnewasta again beckon for those who are brave enough to take a leap in support of a good cause.

People will once again be “freezing in’ for a reason” as the Polar Plunge fundraiser returns in support of the Law Enforcement Torch Run and Special Olympics Manitoba.

Set for Saturday, March 16 starting at 2 p.m., the plunge will again be done in conjunction with the Morden fire department’s pond hockey tournament at the lake.

“Again the plan is in the water, similar to last year,” said Sgt. Scott Edwards of the Morden Police Service. “Hopefully the weather co-operates and we still have ice in mid-March. Either way, we’ll plan to do an event that day, whether it’s down on the ice or utilizing our mobile tank.”

The first year for the Morden plunge in 2015 was probably the biggest, with about 50 people registered. The last few years have seen around 30 people take part.

The event, now in its eighth year, has

raised around \$150,000 for Special O.

“We’re hoping for 50 plungers. We had that in our first year,” said Edwards. “We’re hoping to get back to that number. I think last year we had around 25.

“It’s an aggressive goal ... but we think the word keeps spreading, and the cause is something you can’t beat for raising money and awareness for Special Olympics.”

The plan is to have the plunge site somewhere near where the dock is usually located at the lake, but it will be dependent on the conditions.

Edwards thinks doing it at the lake is an extra appeal.

“It was new for us. We actually had a few people who signed up that day as they were at the event and decided, ‘Why not?’” he noted. “I think there should be a good crowd again this year with the pond hockey tournament.”

Access Credit Union is on board as the main sponsor for all four Manitoba plunges in Morden, Portage, Clear Lake, and Winnipeg.

It has become an important source

of support as a fundraiser, said Edwards.

“It’s become our staple here,” he said. “The plunge has kind of become our main event for the Law Enforcement Torch Run in Manitoba.”

Participants can register as an individual or join or create a team and begin collecting donations.

If interested, you can sign up and find more information at plungemanitoba.com.



VOICE FILE PHOTO

This year’s Polar Plunge in support of Special Olympics takes place at Lake Minnewasta in Morden March 16.

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Stand With Ukraine rally marks second anniversary of war with Russia

By Lorne Stelmach

Members of the Pembina Valley Ukrainian community gathered in Morden Saturday afternoon to mark the second anniversary of the start of the war in their homeland.

Stand with Ukraine rally organizer Yevgeniya Tatarenko noted that as difficult as the last two years have been, the Russian aggression goes back even further.

"It's a reminder that it has been not just two years but it's 10 years of war aggression in Ukraine ... so we came here with the flags and the portraits of our friends who died," she said. "We came here to remind the world that war is not over and Ukraine deserves and needs our support. Each of us, we can make a difference for Ukraine."

Tatarenko noted how much they appreciate the support shown by the Government of Canada and that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was in Ukraine for the anniversary last week.

"The situation is even worse than at



PHOTO BY LORNE STELMACH/VOICE

People gathered at the Morden Civic Centre Saturday for a Stand With Ukraine rally. Organizer Yevgeniya Tatarenko says they wanted to remind people the war with Russia continues. It has now entered its third year.

the beginning of the war, so Ukraine needs more support," she stressed. "What we hear is it's worsening and we don't know what to expect ... we hope that Ukraine will win, but we have a lot of concerns ... we shouldn't

lose hope."

Tatarenko also noted the opening of a special photography exhibit which was unveiled last weekend at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. There are plans being

made to have the 21 pieces tour to a number of communities in southern Manitoba in the months ahead, including Morden.

Pembina Valley Water Co-op reports on "whirlwind" year

By Lori Penner

The Pembina Valley Water Cooperative Inc. (PVWC) is looking back on what their new CEO calls a "whirlwind" year.

Dale Toews came on board just four months ago in the midst of significant capital expansion projects and organizational change, with more capital work on the horizon.

Describing PVWC staff members as talented and committed, Toews said, "Meeting each member municipal council recently provided the opportunity to hear the memberships concerns and dialogue on some of our challenges. I also have and will continue to be in regular communication with the member CAO's to help keep the information and ideas flowing both directions as we continue with our growth."

Toews said the message he's been hearing loud and clear from their membership is that they appreciate what PVWC is doing and are eager to work together to ensure they have a healthy, capable, and sustainable water utility that can meet the growing needs of their communities.

"This means we must continue to expand our capacity. While that is no small task, that is exactly what we are focused on doing."

Board co-chair Don Wiebe agreed that 2023 came with big challenges,

including a search for a new CEO, facing the reality of not having enough potable water capacity in the system for future growth, and a viable financial plan to address that concern.

"Having said that, we are very pleased with the replacement we found in our CEO position, and we are confident that we have the team in place to find a viable financial plan to move us forward."

Noting that the new reservoir, lime room, and breezeway at the Letellier plant are at or near completion, and the lowering of the intake at the Red River is planned for next winter, Wiebe said PVWC will continue to plan for a much-needed upgrade at the Letellier plant to increase their treatment capacity.

"We also continue working on securing alternative raw water sources to safeguard against the possibility of a prolonged drought."

Director of engineering Matt Jones said last year was hectic for the engineering group at PVWC, but with much progress.

"The ongoing \$16 million Reservoir Project at the Letellier Water Treatment Plant (WTP) is nearing completion. This project includes a four million-liter reservoir (and new distribution pumps), and a new breezeway, with new chemical storage and systems for the existing plant. The new intake and wet well contract

have been awarded, and an HRIA is being completed on the land prior to work commencing. The HRIA should be completed this summer with intake work to occur in Winter 2024."

PVWC has begun some feasibility level design on the new membrane treatment plant updating cost estimates and reviewing processes equipment. Once final funding is secured, the engineering phase of this project should begin in late 2024.

Several smaller initiatives were also completed in 2023, supporting the existing operations. These included a booster pump in the Carman Reservoir (to increase system resilience), a harmonic filter at Stephenfield WTP (to increase electrical system reliability) and upgraded pumps at the St. Claude Booster Station to support higher demands in the distribution system. A third Micro-filter Feed Pump was also installed in the Morris WTP to support higher flows in peak seasons.

"We have also revamped our long-term capital plan with updated costs and projects, as part of the on-going PUB submission," Jones added.

"We have also been reviewing and evaluating water modelling software to further advance the abilities of our department. Finally, as we are working with operations to design and purchase a membrane pilot skid this will help us to research new technol-

ogies and optimize our existing processes."

For the last few years, PVWC has been battling raw water quality at the Morris and Stephenfield plants, and their ability to treat it with membrane technology.

"Last year saw the raw quality start to degrade earlier in the year with a dry spring and the early heat, at our Morris plant specifically," said operations manager Kirt Henry.

"The summer rains helped to stabilize it some, but by August, we found ourselves once again unable to meet turbidity guidelines and were forced to issue a boil water advisory on the Morris WTP."

The decision was made by the team to take a drastic step based on previous study work and available funding to design, build and put in a service a copper feed system for the Morris WTP raw water pond.

"We started design and had the initial copper dose in the pond by Sept. 1, and saw greatly improved water quality within days. I believe we would have had other turbidity events throughout the autumn but it's hard to say for sure," Henry said.

"We all feel the copper addition was a huge success and look forward to implementing it again this spring for a full season. The belief is we should

Bangladeshi community gathers for welcoming potluck

By Lorne Stelmach

A growing cultural community in the Pembina Valley came together Saturday to help welcome newcomers and build a greater fellowship.

A Bangladeshi potluck Saturday afternoon at Winkler Arts and Culture was the beginning of what organizers hope will be more ongoing events and activities in the area.

"We will have more events like this ... we are planning to do some more things," said Abdur Rashid, citing such examples as group picnics.

Rashid has been in Morden since 2016. He was inspired to move here as a result of a friend who had previously come to Canada and to this region and had good things to say about it.

"It's such a welcoming community ... and we're a small community of people but we're becoming friends with everyone," said Rashid.

There obviously would have been some culture shock, considering the family came from Dhaka, which ranks as one of the largest cities in the

world, but Rashid says he very much welcomes life here.

"It's peaceful," he said. "I left my country for a more satisfying life, and I'm satisfied here."

In the years since he and his family arrived in the Pembina Valley, there has been a growing community of other Bangladeshi newcomers to the area.

"When I arrived here, there were only two families here in Morden. Now we are 21 families," shared Rashid, who noted there are two families living in Altona, two in Carman, and two in Winkler. Most of the rest call Morden home, having come through the community's immigration program. Some families have also relocated here from other cities in Canada, Rashid noted.

Rashid said it is good to have more people here now to make connections with, and they appreciate that the area is becoming so diverse.

"People have been sharing everything that's good about Morden and people are inspiring others to live in



PHOTOS BY LORNE STELMACH/VOICE

Members of the Pembina Valley Bangladeshi community met in Winkler last weekend for a potluck to welcome newcomers to the area.

this area," he said. "People are here from all over the world and we are making friends from many, many countries, not just Bangladeshi ... I have friends from many places, so it is nice."

The potluck was a nice way for some of the most recent arrivals to get settled and feel welcome.

"Many of them we just know by name only, so we have to meet together, get to know each other together ... two families came here just last month, so we want to welcome them," Rashid said.

"Many of our people are volunteering in this community, so we are encouraging more of our people to volunteer here," he added. "We have to come together to add value to this community ... we hope it will keep growing here."



> PVWC, FROM PG. 14

see a decrease in a lot of our other chemicals, but only time will tell."

Henry has done a lot of work at the Morris WTP, where they have made many improvements. Looking ahead, he'll be spending more time at the Stephenfield plant, where they'll be running a chemical evaluation and researching the best, most cost-effective options.

"It will be incredibly challenging as the raw water quality is extremely poor and with very limited pretreatment abilities, we have our work cut out for us and will have to get creative."

The **Voice**

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Donna Cox reinstated to RM of Thompson council

By Ty Dilello

A Court of King's Bench judge has reinstated RM of Thompson councillor Donna Cox after the council she sits on tried to remove her for missing three meetings held while she was working at her full-time job with the provincial government.

"This matter is anything but an example of collective responsibility, consensus governing and leadership of elected officials," King's Bench Justice Chris Martin wrote in his ruling. "Council did not extend simple courtesies so that every councillor chosen by voters could rightfully fulfil their mandate. Collectively on this issue, all members of council and committee fell well short of facilitating good governance as common sense and collegiality would demand."

Last year, the RM of Thompson and Local Urban District (LUD) of Miami applied under the Municipal Act to disqualify first-time councillor Donna Cox and declare her position vacant after she missed three consecutive committee meetings.

Due to her work commitments, Cox was unable to attend three back-to-back meetings held at 9:30 a.m. Her employer did not grant her unpaid leave to participate in these meetings.

Cox was first elected Ward 2 councillor in October of 2022 after previously serving as a school trustee. Ward 2 includes the town of Miami, and with her becoming elected, Cox automatically became a member of the LUD of Miami Committee and was appointed to five other committees.

Following Cox being elected, the RM council implemented a bylaw amending the start times of their regular meetings. The changes involved shifting from a rotation of 9:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. start times to solely beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Cox was the only one of six RM councillors to vote against the change and subsequently told the council that if the change went ahead, she would be able to attend only one council meeting a month because her employer would not approve additional time off.

Reeve Brian Callum testified in court that changing the meeting times simply worked best for the majority of council members.

"I find that when making the changes, council and committee knew Ms. Cox would be adversely impacted, if not precluded from fully attending and participating, and made the changes for 'convenience reasons,'" Martin said. "Council members were unwilling to continue with one monthly 5 p.m. meeting, despite council having done so during the prior four-year period."

Cox missed three consecutive committee meetings between Jan. 18 and March 15, 2023, cause for disqualification under the Municipal Act.

Last May, the RM of Thompson became aware that under the Municipal Act, only a Court of King's Bench justice could make a determination that a councillor be disqualified. Upon hearing that, the RM took the matter to court.

Justice Martin rejected the RM's claim that meeting times were changed to accommodate council members. While several council members had full-time jobs, they worked for themselves in businesses they owned.

"The degree of flexibility they have, being their own boss, is in no way equivalent to the lack of flexibility Ms. Cox had," Martin said. "It was disingenuous to offer this excuse."

Voters in the area elected Cox as their representative, and she should have been provided the help she needed to carry out her duties as a councillor, the judge noted.

"Any council or committee has the responsibility to all voters to work with elected representatives to assist them in fulfilling their obligations to the voters and the municipality," Martin said. "A municipality cannot, in a situation such as this, in effect, obstruct a councillor and disenfranchise voters by taking actions it knows, or should reasonably know, will preclude the elected representative from fulfilling their function."

"Generally, communication, collaboration and compromise are hallmarks of good governance; here, the municipality failed miserably."

Ultimately, the judge ruled that Cox be reinstated as Ward 2 councillor in the RM of Thompson immediately.

The RM of Thompson is also on the hook for lawyer fees on both sides.

Cox was pleased with the ruling and looks forward to returning to her seat on the council.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A Court of King's Bench judge reinstated RM of Thompson councillor Donna Cox after the council she sits on attempted to remove her for missing three meetings held while she was at her full-time job.

"I have every intention of fulfilling my duties as a councillor," she said. "I'm looking forward to getting caught up on everything that I've missed."

RM of Thompson Reeve Brian Callum is not as enthusiastic with the court's ruling.

"We have the recent decision from the Court of King's Bench," he said. "Council for the Municipality acted in accordance with the provisions of The Municipal Act, as well as our duties and obligations to our ratepayers when a councillor has failed to attend meetings and missed three consecutive meetings. We are considering our appeal options."

First phase of new Morden cemetery is complete

By Lorne Stelmach

The City of Morden recently announced the opening of the new Lakeside Cemetery south of Lake Minnewasta.

The first phase of its construction has been completed with the development of access roads, pathways, and parking areas.

The eight acres overall has the capacity for over 2,000 plots, with the first phase having space for 240 full burial plots and 72 ash interment plots.

Future phases are already in the works, including an entrance sign, a green burial site, ash scattering grounds, columbarium, tree, shrub and flower planting and meandering pathways.

"We were ready to go with it ... and we have a lot of the options," said

Mayor Nancy Penner, who noted a new cemetery had become an urgent need for the community. "We were just running out of space at Hillside [Cemetery]. We were down to just a small number of spaces left there."

Penner also responded to concerns posted on social media in recent weeks about the close proximity of the new cemetery to the lake.

"We had all of the necessary geo-technical work done," she stressed, noting it assessed everything from soil type to drainage and setback from the lake. "There were no concerns ... all of the environmental factors were taken into account."

The city estimates Lakeside Cemetery will meet the needs of the community for the next 30 years.

It offers a range of options, including traditional burial, ash burial, ash



columbaria, ash scattering, and green burial as well as memorial trees and benches.

"Creating a peaceful and inviting final resting place for our community has been a top priority," said parks and urban forestry director Shawn

Dias. "Lakeside Cemetery not only provides a beautiful setting for remembrance but also ensures sufficient plots for future generations.

Plots are available for purchase at the Morden Civic Centre.

sports & recreation

Bombers advance to next round of SEMHL playoffs

Bombers now face Mercs in semi-finals, while Royals square off against Aces

By Ashleigh Viveiros

The Morden Bombers knocked the Portage Islanders out of the SEMHL playoffs last week.

After losing game one 5-2 on Valentine's Day, the Bombers swept the rest of the best-of-five series with wins of 2-1 Feb. 16 and 3-2 Feb. 18.

The Islanders needed a win last Thursday to keep the series going, but they didn't get it. Instead, Morden, playing in front of a hometown crowd, crushed Portage's hopes 6-0.

Mike Rey contributed two of those goals while Michael Hlady, Andrew Clark, Keane Boucher, and Evan Weurch added singles.

Reed Peters made 49 saves in net for the Bombers in the shutout. His teammates fired 36 the other way.

Also advancing to the next round are the Winkler Royals (who bounced the Red River Wild earlier this month), the Warren Mercs (they ousted the



PHOTO BY LORNE STELMACH/VOICE

Reed Peters stopped all 49 shots for the shutout Thursday evening as the Morden Bombers blanked the Portage Islanders 6-0. Mike Rey had two goals for the Bombers, who took the best-of-five quarterfinal three games to one.

Notre Dame Hawks), and the Ste. Anne Aces (who needed four games to defeat the Ile des Chenes Northstars).

The Bombers face the Mercs in game one of the semi-finals in Warren Wednesday. They host game two Saturday.

Winkler is squaring off against the Aces. Game one is in Ste. Anne Wednesday with game two in Winkler Saturday.

Winkler Flyers best Wpg. Freeze, Selkirk Steelers

By Ashleigh Viveiros

The Winkler Flyers added two more to the win column in MJHL action last week.

The Winnipeg Freeze came to town Friday night and battled the Flyers into overtime for a decision.

Jakob Jones scored Winkler's lone regulation goal near the end of the first, and it took the Freeze until midway through the third to match it.

Isaiah Peters scored the game-winner nearly three minutes into overtime, giving the game to Winkler 2-1.

Liam Ernst made 23 saves in net for the Flyers as the team outshot the Freeze 46-24.

Winkler hosted the Selkirk Steelers two nights later.

The visitors held a 3-0 lead after 20 minutes, but Winkler began chipping away at it in the middle frame with

goals from Mike Svenson and Zach Nicolas.

The Flyers were the only ones to do any scoring in the third as well, courtesy of Dalton Andrew (with two) and Jones, giving them the game 5-3.

Selkirk narrowly outshot Winkler

32-31. Malachi Klassen made 29 saves in net for the home team.

Winkler is 37-8-2-3 for the season so far, good for 79 points and second place in the MGEU East Division. They trail the Steinbach Pistons in first place by six points with a game

in hand and are ahead of the Portage Terriers in third place by nine points.

This week the Flyers host the Virden Oil Capital Friday night. Puck drops at 7 p.m.

Westman knock Hawks out in three

By Lorne Stelmach

The female U18 Pembina Valley Hawks gave Westman a good battle, but the Hawks in the end fell in three straight to the Wildcats last week.

Second-place Westman swept the best-of-five semi-final over the seventh-place Hawks with victories of 5-3 Wednesday, 4-3 Friday, and 5-2 Sunday.

In game one, the Wildcats overcame two deficits to defeat the Hawks, who led 2-1 after one and then went ahead 3-2 early in the third but then gave up three unanswered goals.

Casey O'Brien had a pair of goals for Pembina Valley, with Abigail Brigg also scoring. Kasia Rakowski made 35 saves in net for the Hawks, who were outshot 39-21.

It was a similar story in game two

with the Hawks again holding 2-1 and 3-2 leads before falling in double overtime.

Scoring for the Hawks was Brigg (with two) and Jessica Anderson. Rakowski did her best to keep them in the game by making 48 saves off 53 shots. Her teammates fired 33 the other way.

Continued on page 18

McDonald, Hayward captures U21 provincial curling title

By Ty Dilello

Carman's Shaela Hayward, Keira Krahn, India Young and Rylie Cox captured the Manitoba U21 Junior Curling Championship after a 9-6 victory over Heather Curling Club's Zoey Terrick in Sunday evening's championship final at the Carman Golf and Country Club.

Playing as the home team in Carman, Hayward was the best team all week long, as they were undefeated throughout the event with a record of 5-0. In the championship final, Hayward jumped out to a 4-0 lead on Terrick and never looked back.

The pivotal point in the game would come in the ninth end when the score was 7-6 as Hayward made a runback double to set up a score of two, which put the game out of reach at 9-6.

A consolation for the Terrick team is that they also earned a berth to the Nationals for finishing second in the province.

"We still had our confidence from our national win, and we just rolled with it all week," said Young. "Our season has been a dream, and this is so special to all of us. We are so excited to represent Manitoba again at the national level."

Team Hayward enjoyed the local crowds at the Provincials and was very happy that so many family and friends were able to come out and watch them compete.

"Playing at home was unreal as the crowd was so amazing all week," said Young. "They were always out on the ice and supportive of us every single shot."

Team Hayward is a group that has a lot of experience together as Hayward, Krahn, and Cox have curled

together since Grade 5, while Young joined the group three years later.

They've won the past two provincial high school curling titles for Carman Collegiate, the Manitoba U18 title and captured gold at the Canadian U18 curling championships in Ottawa earlier this month.

Altona's Dayna Wahl (Piper Stoesz, Gillian Hildebrand, Lauren Weselak) had a less than stellar week as they exited the Provincials with a record of 1-3.

On the boys side, Assiniboine Memorial's Jordon McDonald, Dallas Burgess, Elias Huminicki and Cam Olafson won his third straight Provincial Junior Championship with a 7-5 win in the final over Virden's Jace Freeman.

McDonald, who features Winnipeg Beach's Elias Huminicki at second, went 5-1 in the event and was the dominant team on the week. Just like on the women's side, Freeman will also be heading to Nationals as the second-place finisher.

Zach Norris, Ethan Brandt, Blake Good and Carter Malmquist of the Morris Curling Club finished in third place. Good, who hails from Stonewall, and his squad lost a 10-4 semi-final to McDonald on Sunday afternoon. They had a record of 4-3 on the weekend.

Morden's Nash Sugden, Lane Fehr, Tanner Treichel and Ryan Thiessen also competed at the event but was the first team eliminated with a 0-3 record.

Hayward, Terrick, McDonald and Freeman will now go on to represent Manitoba at the 2024 Canadian U21 Curling Championships from March 24-31 in Fort McMurray, Alberta.



PHOTOS BY LANA MEIER/VOICE

Team Norris, Zach Norris, Ethan Brandt, Blake Good and Carter Malmquist, representing the Morris Curling Club lost 10-4 in the semi-finals against Team McDonald who will be representing Manitoba at the 2024 Canadian U21 Curling Championships from March 24-31 in Fort McMurray, Alberta.

Male Hawks finish season in seventh, face Cougars in playoffs

By Lorne Stelmach

The male U18 Pembina Valley Hawks closed out the regular season on a winning note, and they now set their sights on a tough quarter-final opponent.

The Hawks wrapped things up this past weekend with a pair of 5-1 wins against the Kenora Thistles in Morden.

Acoyen Fehr had two goals while Ryder Wolfe chipped in with three assists Saturday as the Hawks led 3-1 and 4-1 at the intermissions. Shots on

goal were 52-27 for the Hawks, and goalie Bryson Yaschyshyn got the win with 26 saves.

Fehr then had another big game Sunday with another pair of goals and four points. Sam Delaquis, Brett Lesage and Liam Goertzen also scored for the Hawks, while Ryler Gates made 26 saves as Pembina Val-

> HAWKS, FROM PG. 17

The Hawks kept it close again in game three and only trailed 3-2 after 40 minutes, but Westman put it away

ley won the shots battle 45-27.

The Hawks finished in seventh place at 20-16-4-4 for 48 points, so it matches them up with the second-place Southwest Cougars, who were 27-13-2-2 for 58 points.

The best-of-five series kicks off Friday in Souris followed by game two Sunday in Morden and game three

in the third with a powerplay goal and an empty netter.

Brigg and Emma Durand scored for

back in Souris next Tuesday. If the series is extended, game four will be March 7 in Morden and game five March 9 in Souris.

The four regular season games between the Hawks and Cougars were close, but Pembina Valley lost them all, including one in overtime.

Pembina Valley. Rakowski made 36 saves.

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EMPLOYMENT

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Full position description can be found online at <https://wp.me/P9y002-HM>
Please submit your resume and cover letter to:
Megan Thiessen, Pool Supervisor
MorrisPool@townofmorris.ca
Application Deadline: March 11th @ 5pm

We thank all applicants for their interest, however, only those selected for interviews will be contacted

CAREERS



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A job description for this position can be found online on the Bunge website: <https://obs.bunge.com/>. enter "Altona" in the field "Search by Location". Click on "Maintenance Mechanic/Millwright" to read the description. Applications should be made online with an attached resume.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING UNDER THE PLANNING ACT

The City of Winkler, under the authority of The Planning Act, will hold a hearing at which time and place the council of the City of Winkler will receive representation from the applicants and any other persons who wish to make representations in respect of the Rezoning Application No. RZ2024-001 and By-law No. 2314-24, being an amendment to Winkler Zoning By-law 2271-21. as amended, of the City of Winkler.

The general intent of the above By-Law No. 2314-24, is to zone the land legally described as:

Lot 3, Plan 66348 MLTO in the SE 9-3-4 WPM
as shown outlined in a heavy solid line on the map attached hereto as Schedule "A", and forming part of this by-law, be rezoned

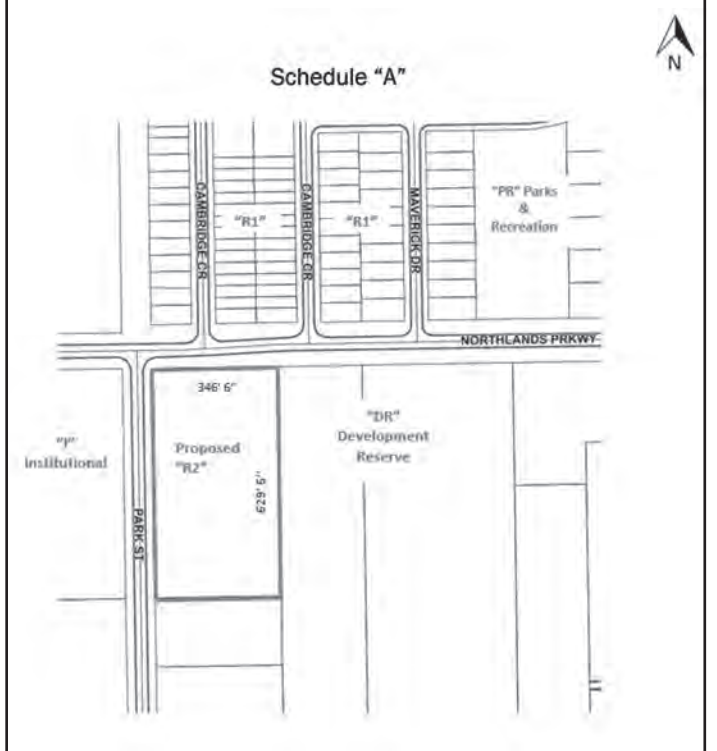
FROM: "DR" DEVELOPMENT RESERVE
TO: "R2" RESIDENTIAL MEDIUM DENSITY

A copy of the above By-Law No. 2314-24 and supporting material may be inspected by any persons between the hours of 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday to Thursday and 9:00 AM and 4:30 PM, Friday, in the City Office. DATED at Winkler, in Manitoba, this 9th day of February 2024.

Designated Officer, City of Winkler

Date of Hearing: March 12, 2024
Time of Hearing: 6:30 p.m.
Location: Winkler Council Chambers,
185 Main Street, Winkler, Manitoba

DATED at Winkler, in Manitoba, this 9th day of February 2024.
Designated Officer, City of Winkler



PUBLIC NOTICE



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING Municipality of Rhineland 2024 Financial Plan Hearing Wednesday, March 20, 2024 10:00 am Council Chambers of the Municipality of Rhineland

In accordance with subsection 162(2) of The Municipal Act, Council will present the 2024 financial plan for the Municipality of Rhineland at 10:00am Wednesday, March 20, 2024 in the Council Chambers of the Municipality of Rhineland office.

The presentation will include the 2024 operating budget, the 2024 capital budget, and a five-year capital expenditure program. The presentation will be followed by a forum for questions and comments from the public. The purpose of the hearing is to allow any interested persons to make a representation, ask questions, or register an objection.

Copies of the proposed financial plan will be available after March 11, 2024 upon request at the Municipality of Rhineland office, located at 109 3rd Avenue NE, Altona during regular business hours. Questions and remarks may be directed by letter or email at info@rhinelandmb.ca.

Michael Rempel, CMMA
Chief Administrative Officer
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Applicants may request reasonable accommodation related to the materials or activities used throughout the selection process.

When applying to this position, please indicate the advertisement number and position title in the subject line and/or body of your email. Your cover letter, resumé and/or application must clearly indicate how you meet the qualifications.

Please be advised that job competitions may be grieved and appealed. Should a selection grievance be filed, information from the competition file will be provided to the grievor's representative or the grievor, if unrepresented. Personal information irrelevant to the grievance and other information protected under legislation will be redacted.

We thank all who apply and advise that only those selected for further consideration will be contacted.

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Tender information can be obtained by emailing Vickie.Addison@accesscu.ca.

Tenders may be delivered, mailed or emailed to:

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Winkler, MB R6W 4B4
Email: Vickie.Addison@accesscu.ca



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EMPLOYMENT

Pembina Hills Art Council is hiring for an Art Gallery Director- Full time.

Job Description: The Art Gallery Director is responsible for the overall management of the Pembina Hills Arts Council operations and programs. This position includes office and program administration, gallery exhibit planning and preparation, grant writing/fund raising and social media/marketing. This is a full time position of 40 hours per week with flexible scheduling required.

Responsibilities include: Board relations, administration, finance, budget management, grant writing, fundraising and marketing, employee supervision and gift shop management.

Position Requirements: Knowledge and experience in administration, excellent interpersonal and communication skills, proficiency with computers, previous experience with grant writing and fundraising would be an asset, post-secondary education; knowledge and experience working in arts and culture and not-for-profit sector. Community involvement.

Interested applicants should apply with resume and a minimum of two references via email to pembinahills.a.c@gmail.com

Application review will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled.

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PUBLIC NOTICE



R.M. OF STANLEY PUBLIC NOTICE REGARDING THE 2024 FINANCIAL PLAN

Public Notice is hereby given pursuant to Sub-section 162(2) of The Municipal Act that the Council of the R.M. of Stanley intends to present its Financial Plan for the fiscal year 2024 at a Public Hearing in the Council Chambers of the Municipality on Thursday, March 7, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. Council will hear any person who wishes to make a representation, ask questions, or register an objection to the Financial Plan, as provided. Copies of the 2024 Financial Plan will be available for review prior to the Hearing at the Municipal Office at 1-23111 PTH 14W in the Rural Municipality of Stanley.

FARMLAND TENDER

FARM LAND FOR SALE BY TENDER RM OF MACDONALD

Completed tender and a \$10,000.00 deposit per parcel are invited to be received up to 4:00 PM on March 25th, 2024, for the land described below, at:

PKF Lawyers - 71 Main St. S, Box 1240, Carman, MB R0G 0J0
Attn: Mona Brown/Jessica Waddingham Ph: 204-745-2028
mbrown@pkflawyers.com jwaddingham@pkflawyers.com

LAND FOR SALE:

Any or all of the following:

1. THE SW ¼ 18-7-1 EPM (168.48 ACRES)
2. THE SW ¼ 18-7-1 WPM (165 ACRES)
3. THE SE ¼ 18-7-1 WPM (160 ACRES)
4. THE NW ¼ 18-7-1 EPM (168.24 ACRES)
5. THE N ½ OF SECTION 12-7-2 WPM (320 ACRES)
6. THE NE ¼ OF SECTION 13-7-2 WPM (127.57 ACRES)
7. THE NW ¼ OF SECTION 13-7-2 WPM (128.71 ACRES)
8. THE SE ¼ OF SECTION 13-7-2 WPM (160 ACRES)

Total Acres: 1398.00

Conditions of Tender:

1. Financing must be pre-approved.
2. Tender to be submitted on the form prepared by PKF Lawyers. **To obtain tender form or more info contact Jessica Waddingham or Mona Brown at 204-745-2028.**
3. Tender must be accompanied by a certified cheque, payable to PKF Lawyers (in trust), in the amount of \$10,000.00 per parcel. Deposit of tenders not accepted will be returned to the Tenderers.
4. Highest tender or any tender will not necessarily be accepted.
5. Possession and the due date of the balance of tender price shall be April 22, 2024. Please note that possession is subject to a lease on all the lands which will expire December 31, 2024, for lease terms please contact PKF Lawyers.
6. The maker of any tender relies entirely upon his/her personal inspection and knowledge of the land, independent of the representations made by the Vendor or the Solicitor and Agent of the Vendor. The land will be sold "as is" and the Tenderer is solely responsible to determine the value and quality of the land.

CITIZEN REPRESENTATIVES NEEDED



Boundary Trails Health Centre
FOUNDATION

CITIZEN REPRESENTATIVES NEEDED

The Boundary Trails Health Foundation Board is looking to fill membership openings for 2 (two) Citizen Representatives for the City of Morden.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE POSITION INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- Be a resident of the City of Morden
- Attend monthly meetings, every fourth Monday at 5:30 PM either at Boundary Trails Health Centre or virtually.
- Should be very comfortable and confident with approaching and connecting with businesses and individuals for support via attendance, participation and/or sponsorships.
- The candidate should have a heartfelt passion for enhancing the healthcare of our region.

For further questions regarding this exciting opportunity, please contact Shannon Samatte-Folkett, Executive Director for the BTHC Foundation, at 204-331-8808 or by email at office@bthcfoundation.ca.

How to apply: Please provide a short letter describing your interest in serving on the Boundary Trails Health Centre Foundation and why you feel you would be a good representative on the board. Letter of interest could be sent by e-mail to Morden City Manager, Nicole Reidle at nreidle@mymorden.ca or dropped off at the **City of Morden Civic Centre: 100 – 195 Stephen Street, Morden, Manitoba, R6M 1V3.**

Applications are due by March 8, 2024.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

MORDEN COMMUNITY HANDI-VAN CLUB 300 LGA Winners 2023

March 31/23		
213	Darryl Wooley	\$150.00
9	Dawn Rigaux	\$150.00
13	Elaine Ivey	\$500.00
April 28/23		
151	Tio Bellisario	\$150.00
219	Carolyn Schellenberg	\$150.00
286	Dr. Carol Holmes	\$500.00
May 26/23		
66	Marlene Nelson	\$150.00
278	Don & Kathy Ginter	\$150.00
18	Linda & Ray Kirk	\$500.00
June 30/23		
78	Larry or Val Dyck	\$150.00
178	Cathy Sandercock	\$150.00
168	Kathy Menzies	\$500.00
July 28/23		
247	Leona Meeks	\$150.00
51	Dave Destoop	\$150.00
39	Ruth Friesen	\$500.00
August 25/23		
37	Doug Lone	\$150.00
93	Elite Crushing	\$150.00
16	PKF Lawyers	\$500.00
September 29/23		
57	Megan Goertzen	\$150.00
243	Della Duncan	\$150.00
6	Neil Woods	\$500.00
October 27/23		
90	Harry Dahl	\$150.00
58	Reg Braun	\$150.00
6	Neil Woods	\$500.00
November 24/23		
26	Henry or Dell Friesen	\$150.00
45	Sandra Wiebe	\$150.00
258	Gail Maxwell	\$500.00
December 29/23		
107	Curtis Stambuski	\$150.00
44	Morris Olafson	\$150.00
168	Kathy Menzies	\$500.00
January 26/24		
14	Morden Green Leaves	\$150.00
263	Vaughn Mayert	\$150.00
19	Kevin Freund	\$500.00
February 23/24		
255	Rhonda Plett	\$150.00
118	Valley Concrete	\$150.00
220	Earl Laugenschlager	\$500.00

Thank you for supporting the Morden Community Handi-van through the purchase of a Raffle Ticket. Tickets are on sale now. Please continue your support by purchasing a Raffle Ticket.

BIRTHDAY



Happy Birthday Mom!

90 Years ago this week,
God sent His very Best!
A beautiful girl so kind and sweet,
the Froeses & Rempels Blessed.
She grew to be a Wife & Mom,
a Grandma & a Friend.
Lovingly she gives her all,
to share, to bake, to tend & mend.
Mom, we Thank you for your Love,
your sacrifice & giving,
Your example of true faith in God,
your energy in living.
All our Love - Your Children
& Grandchildren

Sara - Blessings, Thanks & Love
to you on your 90th!
A special Sister, a wonderful Friend,
Known for generosity & hospitality.
God Grant you Grace,
Health & much Joy!

-Your Siblings & In-Laws

OBITUARY

**Ann Krushel (nee Wiebe)
1926 - 2024**



On Tuesday, February 20, 2024 at Tabor Home, Ann Krushel, aged 97 of Morden, MB passed away.

Ann ("without an 'e') was born in the Burwalde district, on October 3, 1926 the eldest of eight children in the Aron and Nettie Wiebe family. She attended two rural schools, Clegg and Debonair. Numerous moves to farms in Southeastern Manitoba culminated in a dream come true for Aron when he was able to own his own farm a few miles North of Morden. Participation in the life of the Morden Church of God was very important to Aron and his family. Faith and friendships were nourished year-round as families gathered for worship and bible instruction. Transportation to and from church was compliments of horse and buggy in the warmer

months, and horse and sleigh - heated by hot rocks under a blanket - in the wintertime. Being the oldest child, Ann learned and excelled at the art of homemaking. Nettie preferred farm work with Aron and was happy to entrust domestic duties to Ann. Sunday afternoons were frequently devoted to visiting, an activity in which a young man named Arnold Krushel was quite willing to engage, even if it meant pedaling a bicycle on dirt roads or traversing snowbanks on skis in the winter. His destination? The Aron Wiebe farm to court the eldest daughter. Ann married Arnold on November 3, 1946, a day they described as being cold, damp, and dreary. But Arnold was quick to add, "It's been sunny and warm ever since." After a few years of couple-hood, three sons were - Dale, Terry, and Brian. Life on 17-3-5SW was made idyllic in many ways as Ann took great pride in her home, yard, greenhouse, a large garden and fruit tree orchard, and hundreds of annuals and perennials. Picnics in the bush shared with family and friends were a highlight for Ann. Ever the gracious hostess, Ann had room in her heart and at her table for countless guests. Her hospitality was enjoyed by schoolteachers, pastors, missionaries, LKS business associates, newcomers to church, motorcyclists, authors, musicians, and aviation enthusiasts - to name a few! She could make a meal for 10 out of two peas and a potato. Early to rise, Ann kept a list of chores on the chalkboard by the phone that seemed to self-generate. However, when noon lunch was cleaned up, she retired daily to her bedroom for rest, bible reading, and prayer. Nothing was too great or too small to discuss with the Lord. A debilitating depression plagued Ann for the better part of a year in the early - born 70's. It was her faith in a compassionate heavenly Father and the truths of scripture that sustained her. A wall of family photos that stretched the length of the hallway served Ann in two ways - keeping family as first priority, and as a daily reminder to pray for each one. Ann and Arnold traveled extensively, for business and for pleasure. Destinations included the three Canadian coasts (West, East, and Arctic), many American cities, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, her favourite destination was home. Recent moves from a sprawling yard to a small condo to a room at Tabor Home were difficult, made even more challenging by declining health and distance from family. We give thanks that her 'final move' has brought her safely home.

Memorial service was held at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 27, 2024 at Wiebe Funeral Chapel, Morden with ash interment prior at Hillside Cemetery.

Wiebe Funeral Chapel, Morden
In care of arrangements
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The *Winkler* *Morden*
Voice

sports & recreation

Altona Curling Club hosts Family Funspiel

By Lori Penner

The Altona Curling Club (ACC) is looking back on another successful Free Family Funspiel. The fun-filled event was held Feb. 24 to celebrate Curling Day in Canada.

"Once again, it was an excellent day," shared ACC committee member Quinn Hildebrand. "We had 16 families from all different age brackets. It was just a great, easy-going day, with lots of people enjoying the games."

The Funspiel ran all day long and

gave participating teams the chance to play several four-end games each.

Sandy and Courtney Hutchison and their daughters Kenzie and Hailey had a great time at the rink. Sandy is very involved in the ACC, and one of their girls is in the Junior Curling Club, as well.

"A day like this is a lot of fun, for the kids and for some of the families who are involved in curling, and for those who are not, but took a chance to play together as a family," Courtney said.

"This is a great bonspiel where you don't have to be an expert or a pro. It's just for fun."

It was a three-generational game for the Sawatzky clan. Cassandra Sawatzky was there with her husband Sheridan and their sons Flynn and Felix, along with Sheridan's father Tim.

"It's been a really great day," she said. "It's awesome to see different generations curling together. Everyone is enjoying themselves. No one got hurt. It was just easy and free."

Neither Cassandra or Tim had curled since high



PHOTOS BY LORI PENNER/VOICE

Sixteen families came out to curl at the Altona Curling Club's free Family Funspiel last weekend to celebrate Curling Day in Canada.

school, so it was a fun and forgiving way to return to the sport.

"It's kind of nice to give it a shot again for some friendly competition," Tim said.

The Sawatzky's eldest son Flynn is involved in the curling program, and Cassandra says she would encourage other parents to consider it as an activity option for their children.

"Having a child in curling is a nice activity for winter. Summer is always packed with things you can do, you're always busy. But winter not so much. There are so many benefits. Getting out and getting active, making friends, learning something new. It's affordable. Learning to be a team member. Lots of good things about curling. And they can take it as far as they want to."

The Altona Curling Club also hosted a Junior Bonspiel the following day. Hildebrand says the building was

packed with parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, eager to watch the young curlers in action.

"I have never seen the building so packed. We were thrilled to have five other towns represented along with our Altona group—Morris, Miami, Morden, Steinbach, and St. Anne—so it was great to see so many curlers from out of town," says Hildebrand. "We hadn't hosted a junior bonspiel since 2019, and that would have been mostly local. It was a good, competitive day, with lots of great shot making and very close games."

Another bonus was the \$400 that was raised during the Funspiel, as well as during the Junior Bonspiel the following day for the Terry Peters Legacy Fund.

"Thank you to out of town as well as our local Altona Junior teams for participating," Hildebrand says.



Twisters split two-game week in MMJHL action

By Ty Dilello

The Pembina Valley Twisters earned another victory this week to stay on pace for second place in the MMJHL standings with a record of 26-11-3.

On Feb. 23, the Twisters were 4-2 victors on the road against the Stonewall Jets. Lucas Jolicouer led the charge for Pembina Valley with a pair of goals, while the other team's goals

were scored by Derek Wiebe and Merck Degraeve. Logan Enns stopped 37 shots in goal for the win.

A few nights later on Feb. 25, the Twisters fell 4-2 to the St. James Jr. Canucks. Ryan Orchard and Caelan Russell had the lone goals for Pembina Valley, while Owen LaRocque made 43 saves in net in a losing effort.

"We played a strong game against St. James despite the loss as I felt like

we set the pace all game," said Twisters' head coach Braeden Beernaerts. "Unfortunately we were on the wrong side of penalties in the third period that St. James took advantage of."

Twisters' sniper Wiebe is currently sixth in the MMJHL's scoring race with 63 points in 40 games, while Merck Degraeve is in eighth with 61 points in 41 games. Enns is currently fourth in the goalie rankings as he

boasts a 2.88 goals-against average and a .916 save percentage.

The Twisters are back in action with a road game on Feb. 28 against the St. Vital Victorias. The puck drops at 8:00 p.m.

"All in all, we are happy at where we are at as a team," said Beernaerts. "We'll be looking at a few small adjustments going forward, and keep building for the playoffs."

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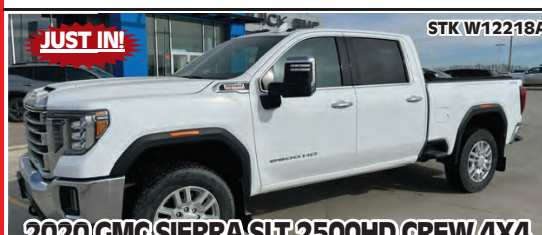
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