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Spring sewer work

Town of Carman employees Derek Kidd (right) and Curtis Kippen work to clear a plugged sewer line, part of an annual spring effort that sees crews respond to roughly 100 blockages. **STANDARD PHOTO BY DENNIS YOUNG**

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Carman student earns prestigious Loran Scholarship honour

By Holly Thorne-Wiebe

A Carman Collegiate student has been named a recipient of the prestigious Loran Scholarship, one of Canada's most competitive and sought-after awards for youth leadership — an honour he says came as a complete surprise.

"I wasn't expecting it at all," Nathan Froebe said, recalling the moment he received the phone call. "I didn't really know what to say ... I was at a loss for words."

The Loran Awards recognize students across Canada for character, leadership and service — not academic grades alone. Recipients are selected through a rigorous, multi-stage process that evaluates who applicants are as people and how they contribute to their communities.

"It's not necessarily just based on grades," Froebe explained. "It's based on character ... it kind of does a deep dive into who you really are as a person."

Froebe first learned about the opportunity in September after being encouraged to apply by his school guidance counsellor.

"He said, 'This kind of aligns with who I believe you are,'" Froebe recalled.

From there, the process quickly intensified. After an initial written application, candidates were asked to complete timed video responses before advancing to regional semi-finals and, ultimately, national selections.

At each stage, Froebe doubted he would advance further.

"There's so many amazing people ... there's no way I'm making it to the next step," he said.

But he did, earning a spot at the national selection event in Mississauga, Ont., where finalists from across the country gathered for interviews, activities and networking.

"It completely blew my expectations," Froebe said. "I met so many people from all across Canada ... just so diverse, from all walks of life."

He described the experience as both inspiring and affirming.

"The thing that really surprised me was just how passionate every single person was," he said. "Everyone was extremely passionate about something."

The Loran Scholars Foundation places a strong emphasis on values, purpose and long-term impact, encouraging students to reflect deeply on their goals.

"The whole application process makes you look in the mirror at yourself," Froebe said. "What are your core values? What do you stand for?"

For Froebe, that reflection is rooted in a willingness to take risks and stay grounded.

"I'm not afraid to take risks or be the odd one out," he said. "Life's short and you better make the most of it."

He also points to a guiding principle that has helped shape his mindset: "Comparison is the thief of joy."

The scholarship includes significant financial support for post-secondary education, along with mentorship opportunities, summer experiences and access to a national network of scholars.

"I didn't realize how invested they are in shaping your success and future," Froebe said.

Those experiences include opportunities in areas such as policy, entrepreneurship and non-profit work, often with encouragement to travel internationally and broaden perspectives.

Looking ahead, Froebe plans to attend the University of Guelph and is considering studies in agribusiness or crop science, with a long-term interest in sustainable agriculture.

"I'd like to leave the soil in a better spot for my kids in the future," he said.

Beyond academics, his involvement in community initiatives, including local volunteer work, played a key role in his application.

"I didn't realize how many people in our community struggle to put food on the table or have a safe place to live," Froebe said. "If you have the opportunity to help someone, you



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Carman Collegiate's Nathan Froebe has been named a recipient of the prestigious Loran Scholarship.

should."

He credits his parents, grandparents, teachers and coaches for shaping his path, along with a shift in perspective following a sports injury that broadened his outlook beyond hockey.

"It made me realize there's so much more to life than one thing," he said.

Now, as one of 36 Loran Scholars for 2026, Froebe hopes others will consider applying, regardless of whether they believe they will be successful.

"It's 100 per cent worth it," he said. "Even just the application process ... it's life-changing."

For a student who entered the process with modest expectations, the experience has already reshaped what feels possible.

"Just being able to be in a room of incredible, amazing people ... it's just incredible."

Heroes hit the lanes for Children's Hospital fundraiser

By E. Antonio

Capes, costumes and community spirit filled the lanes at Carman 5 Pin Bowl on March 31 as its annual Superhero Bowl-a-thon rolled into action, raising nearly \$1,000 for the Children's Hospital Foundation of Manitoba — double the amount raised last year.

Owner Jeff Lubkiwski called the 12-hour fundraiser a clear success, noting that "anytime you raise money for a charity is a successful day."

Bowlers of all ages joined in the fun throughout the day, many sporting superhero-themed apparel as they took to the lanes. Lubkiwski said the

fundraiser holds special meaning for both him and the community, as many people know someone who has spent time at the Children's Hospital. For him, that connection is personal, as his cousin once received care there.

The superhero theme, he said, adds even more meaning to the event.

"When you raise money for a charity, you feel like a hero," he added. "It's a heroic thing to do — it is our way to be a hero to the kids."

Lubkiwski thanked everyone who came out to support the event and said he is already looking forward to hosting it again next year.

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Provincial government to axe PST from prepared foods, other edible items

By Patricia Barrett

With the cost of food continuing to push some Manitobans to the brink of food hunger, the provincial NDP government plans to implement a tax break on select products in grocery stores.

As part of Budget 2026, released last week, the government will remove the provincial sales tax (PST) from ready-to-eat food and other edible-products starting July 1.

The PST cut is intended to apply only to grocery stores; products sold in small convenience stores and restaurants will still be subject to PST.

Manitoba premier Wab Kinew announced the tax-relief measure last week, saying he recognizes the pressure faced by many Manitobans.

"Manitobans are feeling the cost of groceries every week," said Kinew in a March 25 news release. "Budget 2026 offers real relief for Manitoba families on the items you pick up when you are in a rush to feed the family before hockey practice and swimming lessons."

The list of items that will be exempt from the PST include ready-to-eat sandwiches, soups, rotisserie chicken, prepared fruit and vegetable platters, chips, salted nuts, candy, muffins,



STANDARD PHOTOS BY PATRICIA BARRETT

The provincial government intends to remove the PST from prepared food items, such as the fruit tray (top row middle), and from ultra-processed foods such as chips, cupcakes and donuts. The price of fresh fruits and vegetables continues to skyrocket, with items such as cherry tomatoes priced at \$11 to \$12, and peaches, pears and plums from South America priced at \$4.99/lb at one city grocery store last week.

Continued on page 6

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getheard

EDITORIAL > VIEWPOINTS > LETTERS

Provincial budget prioritizes jobs, lower costs, better health care

By Lorne Stelmach

The Manitoba government emphasized such things as good jobs, lower costs, and better health care for Manitobans as it unveiled its 2026 budget last week.

Finance Minister Adrien Sala also particularly touted his belief that the budget positions rural and northern Manitoba for long term growth, safer communities, and better health care.

He suggested the government is making responsible investments that align with Manitobans' priorities while making progress on the path to balance the budget within four years.

"Budget 2026 reflects the priorities we heard from Manitobans every day, strengthening health care, lowering costs and creating good jobs," said Sala. "We're delivering real progress with relief at the grocery store, more front-line staff in our health care system and new opportunities for workers. This budget is about building a healthier, more affordable Manitoba for families."

Sala billed it as a budget that leaves no Manitoban behind.

"For the third year in a row, our government is making historic investments outside of Winnipeg. This budget includes policies and projects for every region every region of the province, every town, every city and ever regional municipality.

"Each section of the budget contains policies and projects that will have a positive effect on rural, northern and remote families, whether it's for health care, public safety, infrastructure, affordability or agriculture, there's something positive for your community in this budget."

Some key highlights included investing more in health care for the third consecutive year, adding 4,054 net new health care staff to the front lines, and focusing on new initiatives to reduce the number of emergency rooms wait times.

Sala also suggested Manitoba is leading the country in tackling rising grocery prices through new legisla-

tion that would ban predatory pricing and restrict property controls. He said this budget goes further by removing the provincial sales tax from all food sold in grocery stores starting July 1. Additional measures to lower costs for Manitobans include an increase to \$1,700 to the homeowners affordability tax credit, increased rent relief, and free transit for children and youth.

The budget also builds on economic growth with a commitment to train 40 per cent more apprentices in the skilled trades and a new \$10-million Churchill Catalyst Fund to attract more private-sector interest in an energy corridor that will create good jobs.

Sala further suggested the budget reflects the values of everyday Manitobans who want to see everyone succeed with progressive policies that give families with the lowest incomes the most help. This includes the change to the homeowners affordability tax credit to help Manitobans with the most give back to those with the least, new investments in free child care for low-income families, and a \$2.5-million investment in adult literacy programs to help more Manitobans graduate and find a good job.

In reference to economic development, Sala touted a number of key investments in various infrastructure projects that will serve as catalysts for further growth.

"All across Manitoba, we're building, and we know that those investments in capital are going to not only help to ensure that Manitobans have the resources and infrastructure that we need to support our local economies, but it's also going to help put people to work."

In a press conference, Sala fielded a question about producers facing lower crop prices and higher input costs, and what the government was going to do to help farmers maintain their profitability beyond the usual supports and loan programs.

"I think we're doing the important work of making sure they have ad-

equate access to those programs that we know will help our producers across the province," he said. "We know that producers are the backbone of the provincial economy, and we know that trade disruptions are creating increased risk and uncertainty, and I think it's critical our government is stepping up with more support to help producers."

"Our government is investing in the strength of rural and northern Manitoba," Sala emphasized. "These communities deserve reliable infrastructure, good jobs and health care they can count on. Budget 2026 delivers real support to help families build a stronger future, close to home."

The budget raises municipal funding by close to \$6 million, bringing total base support to \$198 million by 2026-27, along with new commitments for water infrastructure, Northern Affairs communities, and the Manitoba Growth, Renewal and Opportunities for Municipalities (Manitoba GRO) program.

Sala also emphasized that they are aiming to improve rural and northern health care as a priority with several initiatives to continue the provincial commitment to improving the quality of health care in those areas.

While physician recruitment and retention are at an all-time high, according to Sala, the budget adds an additional \$6.3 million to recruit more doctors to Manitoba, and it also provides funding for new training pathways for nurses, paramedics and internationally trained physicians. Major capital projects include the construction or expansion of a number of hospitals, including Boundary Trails Health Centre in Morden-Winkler.

And for agricultural producers, Sala noted the budget will freeze crown land leases for the third year in a row, and producers will also benefit from the continuation of both the 50 per cent school tax rebate for farm properties and the farmland school tax rebate.

Continued on page 5

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Provincial financial plan gets mixed reviews

By Lorne Stelmach

Manitoba's new provincial budget is drawing mixed reaction from opposition critics, labour leaders and economists.

Midland MLA and Progressive Conservative finance critic Lauren Stone said the budget falls short on affordability.

She pointed to rising education property taxes, noting Statistics Canada data shows Winnipeg homeowners saw nearly a 20 per cent increase between 2025 and 2026.

"When education property taxes ... are going up by hundreds and thousands of dollars, increasing the tax credit by only \$100 and not until next year is a drop in the bucket," Stone said. "Manitoba families need affordability relief now."

Opposition leader Obby Khan echoed those concerns, saying the plan does not provide immediate relief for households struggling with rising costs.

The Progressive Conservatives are

proposing to eliminate provincial income tax on the first \$30,000 earned — a move they estimate would save individuals about \$1,500 annually and families up to \$3,070.

"That's real relief right now," Khan said. "It's higher paycheques every week."

Labour groups, however, highlighted several positive elements in the budget.

Manitoba Federation of Labour president Kevin Rebeck said investments in infrastructure projects and job creation are encouraging at a time of global economic uncertainty.

"It is encouraging to see the provincial government focused on creating good, family-supporting jobs here at home," he said.

Rebeck also pointed to expanded child-care spaces, increased wages for child-care workers and additional training opportunities as measures that could help more Manitobans enter and remain in the workforce.

He added that supports such as free transit for youth and assistance for low-income families could help ease cost-of-living pressures, though more work is needed to address staffing shortages and workplace safety concerns in the public sector.

Economic analysis suggests Manitoba's fiscal position may be comparatively stable.

Cynthia Leach, assistant chief economist at RBC, said the province is projecting one of the lowest deficit-to-GDP ratios among provinces and remains on a path toward balance. However, she cautioned that economic uncertainty and ongoing spending pressures could affect those projections.

"Spending pressures and the uncertain economic environment could erode planned fiscal balances," Leach said, adding the province will need to continue making room for growth-focused investments while monitoring its debt levels.

Manitoba minimum wage to rise to \$16.40 on Oct. 1

By Patricia Barrett

The provincial NDP government announced last week it's increasing the minimum wage this fall to reflect Manitoba's 2025 inflation rate.

The wage will rise from \$16.00 to \$16.40, effective Oct. 1.

The government has increased the minimum wage several times since returning to power in 2022 to help Manitobans facing rising costs.

The cost of living rose significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic due to global supply chain disruptions. More recently, the American-Israeli war on Iran, which began Feb. 28, caused an immediate jump in gasoline prices and is expected to drive global inflation, with potential recession risks depending on its duration.

From \$11.95 in 2022, the wage increased to \$13.50 that year, then to \$14.15 and \$15.30 in 2023, \$15.80 in 2024 and \$16.00 in 2025, according to the province. It had hovered around \$11 between 2015 and 2021.

Following the 2022 increase, the province introduced a one-time Small Business Minimum Wage Adjustment Program to help offset costs for employers.

While some businesses may feel the impact of the increase, some organizations say \$16.40 won't meet the needs of many Manitobans.

Manitoba Federation of Labour president Kevin Rebeck said the 40-cent increase falls well short of a living wage and will keep workers "trapped below the poverty line."

"The small 40 cent increase to the minimum wage announced today falls well short of what minimum wage earners need to afford essentials like groceries and rent," said Rebeck in a March 31 statement. "No one should work full time and still live in poverty, but that is the harsh reality for many minimum wage earners in Manitoba, because ... our minimum wage falls well below a living wage."

Although the provincial budget in-

cludes affordability measures such as free bus passes for youth, free menstrual products and child care for low-income families, Rebeck said a living wage would do "far more" by adding hundreds of dollars to workers' paycheques.

Citing an analysis by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Rebeck said workers in Winnipeg need to earn \$19.77 an hour to meet basic needs.

"The punishing price increases in groceries, housing and other essentials are something all working families are dealing with, but the cost of living crisis is hitting our lowest wage workers the hardest," said Rebeck.

A living wage helps people avoid poverty but may not address future inflation, savings or debt.

The Express contacted several Interlake businesses and the Gimli Chamber of Commerce for comment on the increase.

> BUDGET, FROM PG. 4

ADDITIONAL FUNDING INCLUDES:

- \$45.6 million for AgriStability to help Manitoba producers manage the risks of changing weather and markets.
- \$71.8 million for AgriInsurance to lower premiums and protect producers against crop production shortfalls caused by natural perils.
- \$18.5 million for AgriInvest to help producers manage minor income fluctuations.

tions.

- \$7.8 million for the wildlife damage compensation program to expand eligibility for claims on agricultural losses from predatory wildlife.

And to encourage young Manitobans to enter the agriculture sector, the government increases the cap on the young farmers rebate and the lifetime maximum rebate rises.

Sala also touted what he called record investment in rural and northern infrastructure ranging from twin-

ning of the Trans-Canada Highway to Ontario to rebuilding highway 2 in southwest Manitoba.

A federal-provincial investment in 2025 of \$76.9 million in water and wastewater capacity across rural Manitoba will include 22 million for the Pembina Valley Water Co-op capital plan and \$4.4 million for the Morden-Winkler sewer line as well as other wastewater capacity projects totalling \$28.5 million.

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Living in the "After" of the Resurrection

Easter Sunday is a mountaintop moment — the celebration of Christ's victory over sin and death. But the days following Easter often feel strangely ordinary. The lilies wilt, the music quiets, and life resumes its familiar rhythm.

Yet in Scripture, the days after the resurrection are some of the most intimate, surprising, and transformative moments in the entire gospel story. **The resurrection didn't end on Sunday.**

The events after the resurrection show us that **Jesus doesn't wait for holy days to reveal Himself—He steps into the middle of everyday life - to reshape ordinary lives.**

Think of where the risen Christ appeared:

In a **garden**, where Mary mistook Him for a gardener.

On a **road**, where two discouraged disciples walked away from hope.

In a **locked room**, where fear had trapped His closest friends.

On a **shoreline**, where tired fishermen were simply trying to make breakfast.

These scenes remind us that resurrection life is not loud or dramatic most of the time - It is quiet, steady, and deeply personal. It meets us in commutes, conversations, chores, and moments of uncertainty.

A short passage to sit with - *"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."* — John 20:21

Three movements to reflect on:

Peace — The first word of the risen Jesus is not correction or instruction but peace. It is the peace that steadies anxious hearts, softens weary minds, and reminds us that God is not distant. This peace is not the absence of trouble but the presence of Christ in trouble.

Presence — Jesus appears in the very places His followers feel least prepared to meet Him. He does not wait for them to be brave, faithful, or spiritually "ready." The resurrection means that Christ steps into your real life—your schedule, your stress, your questions—and brings His presence there.

Purpose — *"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."* Easter is not only a celebration of what Jesus accomplished; it is a commissioning. You are sent into your daily world, your home, workplace, friendships, and communities as a carrier of resurrection hope. Not with perfection, but with willingness.

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." — Matthew 28:20

Local author shares message of hope and healing in new book

By Annaliese Meier

A local author is hoping to inspire others to find strength and healing through faith with the release of her new book, *Victimized No More!*

Helene M. DeWitt has drawn on more than four decades of personal experiences to write a deeply personal account focused on overcoming hardship and embracing perseverance. Through the book, she shares stories of navigating pain, betrayal, fear, rejection and trauma, while ultimately finding peace, joy and purpose.

Victimized No More! is a revised and expanded version of her earlier work, *A Broken & Crushed Heart Restored*, which was published through FriesenPress in 2023 and is no longer available. The new edition includes several additional chapters that delve deeper into her story.

"What inspired me to write the first book were friends back in Fergus, Ontario, that had read some of my stories and said I should write a book," said DeWitt. "But I didn't until I felt God had placed it on my heart to put a book together."

After releasing her first book, DeWitt said encouragement from others prompted her to continue sharing more of her journey.

"After reading my first book, a friend suggested I go deeper because there's still more to tell. I was surprised. But since 2023 more of my past came up and that's how *Victimized No More!* came about," she said.

DeWitt said the title itself reflects a turning point in her life.

"This title came to me and I believe it means freedom — that I am no longer controlled by the pains of my past," she said. "Readers can be free from unforgiveness, bitterness, resentment — the list goes on."

Her book speaks directly to readers who may be struggling with emotional wounds or difficult life circumstances, offering encouragement to keep moving forward and to trust in God during challenging times.

"I believe everyone has a story. I chose to share mine with the hopes of touching lives for the better — mostly to share the amazing faithfulness of God and all He's done in my life," she said. "He gave me a new, full heart that doesn't ache anymore when certain memories come back to try and haunt me. I'm redeemed."

DeWitt described her greatest challenge as enduring years of suffering, including depression and sadness.

"I thought the depression and sadness were my lot in life and I just had to live with it," she said. "I never had a clue that God was such a personable Savior that wants us to be free from the chains of the past."

Writing the book also became part of her healing journey — one that began many years ago with a simple but emotional step.

"I was led to write a story of hurt down on paper so many years ago.

While writing, I was shaking and crying. I was devastated," she said. "But it was doing something about the issue at hand. It brought a sense of relief."

She later revisited those early writings with a different perspective.

"I thought I would rip it up and throw it out because I was doing better, but God said, 'don't throw it out; type it up,'" she said. "He showed me how to turn it into a story of hope."

DeWitt now encourages others to take a similar step.

"I would recommend people write out their hurts. Don't worry if it's all pain and sadness — get it out and then put it aside and wait. Watch the faithfulness of God working in your life," she said. "Go back and read it again as a healed person."

Her message throughout the book is one of encouragement and renewal.

"There is plenty of hope, joy and happiness for people feeling defined by their painful past," she said. "I hope readers enjoy the book, that some get a much closer walk with Jesus and that they take their faith deeper and learn to trust Him more."

DeWitt said she is sharing her story locally in the hopes it will resonate within the community.

"I'm sharing with the community in the hopes that individuals will be touched and encouraged by reading *Victimized No More!*," she said.

The book is available on Amazon in



STANDARD PHOTO SUBMITTED

Helene M. DeWitt holds a copy of her newly released book, *Victimized No More!*, a faith-based account of overcoming hardship and finding healing, hope and renewed purpose.

paperback for \$16.99 and as a Kindle eBook for \$4.99. The paperback is printed in size 14 font to make it easier to read. Copies are also being made available locally at Toews Printing & Supply, with some already placed at the Golden Prairie Arts Council.

DeWitt can be contacted at helenedewitt70@gmail.com for more information.

> PST AXED, FROM PG. 3

cupcakes and other baked goods, and carbonated drinks and fruit juices.

The government embarked on a study earlier this year to look at the overall affordability of food.

"In February, we launched a government grocery study to examine food prices and affordability province-wide, including access, availability, market concentration and unfair pricing practices that contribute to higher grocery costs," states the budget. "This study will help us identify steps the provincial government can take to lower grocery costs."

The high cost of food continues to

exert undue pressure on household budgets, with fruit, vegetables, meat, bread and milk becoming unaffordable to some Manitobans.

Winnipeg-based Harvest Manitoba welcomed the PST cut, saying in the news release that any means of saving money on groceries can make a difference to those forced to make choices between eating and other expenses.

Although the PST cut is sure to be appreciated, many of the items the government is exempting are ultra-processed foods (UPF), which scientific studies have linked to poor health outcomes.

UPFs are industrial formulations

that may contain some measure of food ingredients, but also contain combinations of fat, salt and sugar and other substances harmful to health. UPFs undergo chemical modifications when they're made and include additives that make the final product hyper-palatable, according to a 2019 report titled *Ultra-processed foods, diet quality, and health using the NOVA classification system* published by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization.

UPF products include breakfast cereals, energy bars, cookies, fruit and carbonated drinks, packaged snacks, chocolate, candy, ice cream, yoghurts,

mass-produced breads, margarine and other spreads, pies, nuggets and sticks made from chicken or fish, sausages, hot dogs, instant soups and meal replacement shakes.

The consumption of UPF products can lead to excessive levels of sodium, sugar and fat intakes. They can also fail to deliver adequate intake of dietary minerals such as potassium and magnesium, vitamins, fibre and protein.

UPFs are associated with a range of harmful health conditions, including obesity, cardiovascular disease, cancer, depression, asthma, gastrointestinal disorders and frailty.

"In sum, the evidence from analyses of nationally-representative data sets collected in 11 countries from 2001 to 2015 shows that the displacement of non-ultra-processed by ultra-processed foods is consistently associated with an overall deterioration of the nutritional quality of diets," states the report. "This has several important implications for public health includ-

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Elm Creek artist earns prestigious Ontario poetry residency

By Lana Meier

Local artist and poet Desiree Penner is preparing to spend June immersed in her craft after being selected for a highly competitive national writing opportunity at the Al and Eurithe Purdy A-Frame Association residency in Ontario.

Penner has been awarded a month-long, paid writer-in-residence position at the lakeside A-frame cabin once owned by renowned Canadian poet Al Purdy. The juried residency is considered one of the country's most respected poetry programs.

"I am so honoured to have been selected to attend the residency for the whole month of June," Penner said. "To be honest, I almost did not apply, as the vast majority of recipients have already published multiple collections of poetry."

Penner submitted an application package last fall that included a proposed community event and a portfolio of 10 to 15 poems. She said she hesitated before sending it in, but ultimately trusted her work — a decision that paid off.

"I received the phone call from the selection committee on my birthday, offering me a slot for 2026," she said. "I think it will be hard to top that gift in the years to come."

Penner's path to poetry began just two years ago during a writing retreat in the Whiteshell, where she took a workshop with Lauren Carter.

"This was the first time I wrote a poem and instantly fell in love with storytelling through poetry," she said. "I've been writing poetry almost every day since."

She has since immersed herself in workshops and collaborative writing groups, developing a style she describes as rooted in both playfulness and pre-

cision.

"Every word is a little gem, just waiting to be polished," she said. "I especially love how I can carefully craft line breaks in a poem to bring forward emotions, questions, or double meanings."

During her residency, Penner plans to continue work on her first poetry manuscript — a collection centred on her experience moving into her grandparents' long-vacant farmhouse at the start of the pandemic.

"There were squirrels living under the bathtub, bees in the walls, no hot water, and a roof that leaked every time it rained," she said. "The collection also explores themes of grief and loss as I sorted through what was left behind, finding many treasures along the way."

She also hopes to draw inspiration from her temporary lakeside surroundings.

Penner credits her rural Manitoba roots as a defining influence on her work.

"I always joke that I'm a prairie poet," she said. "These poems are deeply rooted in the prairie landscape — from golden willows casting long shadows at dusk to speckled fawns moving through grasses. Disconnecting my writing from the prairies would be impossible."

Her background as a visual artist also shapes her writing, with strong connections between her painting and poetry practices.

"Poetry is painting a scene and characters with words," she said. "Interestingly, my manuscript begins on the shores of Vancouver Island, where the decision was made to return home."

Beyond her own work, Penner is also focused on fostering connections within the writing communi-



STANDARD PHOTO SUBMITTED

Elm Creek artist and poet Desiree Penner has been selected for the prestigious Al and Eurithe Purdy Residency in Ontario, where she will spend June developing work for her first poetry manuscript.

ty. She is offering a series of virtual generative writing workshops this spring, inviting participants to read Canadian poetry, respond to prompts and share feedback in a supportive environment.

"Writing is a powerful connector," she said.

Continued on page 9

The way it was this week in April 9:

By Dennis Young

100 years ago, 1926: Old Baptist Church sold to Pentecostal Assembly; hemp trials not successful due to soil conditions; Cochran's Ltd. installs elaborate De-Zeng diagnostic equipment, one of only one in Western Canada; 494 auto licences issued by county clerk N.A. Love; wage scale set by RM at \$0.30 per man, \$0.40 for man/grader, \$0.80 for man/four horses; Carman Golf Club, on F.E. Clark's land northeast of town, sets fees at \$7 for men and \$4 for ladies and students; Frank Bridge & Co. sells gas or electric Maytag washers.

75 years ago, 1951: Carman School Choir, under Mrs. Tuft, captures first place in rural schools at the Winnipeg Music Festival; Gus Dupas named Carman Curling Club president and discusses clubroom privileges; D.H. Friesen Jeweller stocks Lady Margaret Bone China; A.W. Mitchell named Roland Curling Club president; Shilson's Grocery offers cash-and-carry quart milk for \$0.20; Hildebrand Service opens in the former Krahn Blacksmith Shop by Carman Auto Body; Dufferin Leader single copies

are \$0.10, yearly subscription \$3.50.

50 years ago, 1976: Merchants on 1st Street SE call for a dike to be built behind their businesses; Eric Lansky named Development Corp. chair; Dufferin the only RM not signed to Boyne Watershed agreement; Carman Co-op employees apply for union status; Morden Bombers awarded SEMHL title after Winkler uses an ineligible player; Sears and Linda Kroeker open office on 1st Street SW; Paul Hiebert reads his works at Boyne Regional Library; for Meals on Wheels, contact Luona Burnett or Marlene Maykut.

25 years ago, 2001: Carman Memorial Hospital performs 441 procedures in 2000, up 146 from previous year; Dr. Hewett promotes Cancer Daffodil Days; Co-op breaks sales record with \$16.98 million; Odds n Ends holds its 20th men's hockey tournament; Doane's Auto Repair offers vehicle inspections for \$35; Delaquis Ford sales staff includes Brad Middleton, George Gray, Lawrence Kwasnitza and Lawrence Delaquis; D & M Fine Foods sells Charmin bathroom tissue for \$9.98/32 rolls.



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Water co-op reports on a year of growth

By Lorne Stelmach

Key projects, priorities, and challenges posed by providing a vital source of water for the greater region were highlighted recently as the Pembina Valley Water Co-op (PVWC) held its annual meeting.

Co-chairs of the PVWC board Don Wiebe of the RM of Rhineland

and Peter Froese of the RM of Stanley suggested that 2025 was a very productive and eventful year.

A highlight was the provincial announcement of a \$22 million capital support grant.

"This grant will be used toward our capital plan to increase our capacity and to produce more potable water

across the entire region," they wrote in their report.

Meanwhile, detailed design for the new Letellier membrane plant has begun with a projected completion date for 2028, and they are also optimistic that the new river intake at Letellier will be completed this spring.

And as far as the financial side of things goes, the volume of water sales and approximated budget projections were on target, while the operating costs were under budget.

"This, along with the municipal contributions, strengthens our financial position," Froese and Wiebe said.

CEO Dale Toews touched on a number of key areas for the PVWC, beginning with the state of the water supply for the region.

"At this time, we don't have spring supply concerns for both the Stephenfield Lake or the Red River. What the summer and fall will look like right now is unclear," he said. "From a water supply stand point, we don't need the high river flows but rather we need the steady river flows throughout the year.

"It is important for us to get the steady rains through summer to fill the dugouts, ponds and private wells so folks can continue using their own raw water sources for livestock and outdoor usage," he added. "When the raw water dugouts and other sources aren't available, we see folks start pulling from our system and that can put a tremendous strain on it."

Toews also touched on some key considerations around seasonal water demands.

"Spring demand is something we

will be working on again this year as the agricultural spraying, livestock, gardening and summer pool filling can create challenges for us," he said "There are those couple of weeks in spring, typically mid-May through to the end of June, that we see a very sharp and very significant demand in water which puts an enormous strain on our entire network.

"The municipalities have been very helpful in helping us get the message out to the public, which is to spread out your high water usage from mid-May to the end of June. Fill your pools early in the year, wash your house earlier in the season, and spread out your landscape watering," Toews said. "The more we can spread that high demand out, it takes the strain off the system."

Toews went on to touch on their key capital projects.

"Construction of the new intake at Letellier has moved slower than we anticipated," he said, adding they are now anticipating this work to be completed midway through 2026. "This is an important project for us as it places the intake in a location in the river that should improve our ability to access water in low flows.

"The new membrane treatment plant in Letellier is moving along nicely," he shared. "Significant design work has already been completed, and we are working on getting formal contracts issued ... so we are looking at a 2028 completion date for that project.

"This will increase our treatment capacity significantly and really help take the edge off during peak usage seasons."

Toews also credited the staff and people who are involved in making the PVWC work and continue to provide safe and secure sources of water.

"It is no secret that our raw water sources—the Red River and Stephenfield Lake—are challenging. The water chemistry in both sources are continually changing, and so our team at PVWC is continually adjusting how they perform their work," he said. "We are fortunate to have the talented and committed people we have here at PVWC working tirelessly to ensure we have safe clean water."

The PVWC is owned by 14 municipalities and is supplying water to over 65,000 people across southern Manitoba. It works with over 400 kilometres of water pipelines over a 9,000 square kilometre service area with 888 million gallons of water distributed and \$10 million worth of water sold across the region.

End of ice season



STANDARD PHOTO BY DENNIS YOUNG

Facility manager Kevin Dyck stands on the A-side surface of the Carman-Dufferin Arena as a Zamboni clears away the remaining ice and water, marking the end of the season on April 2.

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April ONSITE Week 2 Consignment Sale

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Boundary Trails Health Centre opens 24 bed inpatient unit

By E. Antonio

Patients across southern Manitoba are expected to see improved access to care following the opening of a new inpatient unit at Boundary Trails Health Centre (BTHC).

According to a Southern Health spokesperson, BTHC has been operating at 98 per cent capacity in recent years, underscoring the need for additional space. The new two-storey expansion adds 24 medical and palliative care beds to the growing regional facility — a move health officials say is necessary to keep pace with rapid population growth in Morden, Winkler and surrounding communities.

“This expansion represents a significant step forward for health care in our region,” said Kyle MacNair, implementation lead for Southern Health-Santé Sud. “The new inpatient unit will help meet the needs of our growing population while providing patients and families with modern, comfortable spaces designed to support high-quality care.”

The project was driven in part by sustained population growth in the region. The BTHC catchment area saw a 37 per cent increase in population between 2001 and 2019.

The added capacity is intended to ease pressure on existing hospital services while allowing more patients to receive care closer to home — an increasingly important factor as the region continues to expand.

While the additional beds will not change the need to transfer patients requiring a higher level of care to Winnipeg, officials say it will improve patient movement within the system.

“However, it will allow us better opportunity to bring patients home faster from Winnipeg or other sites,” a regional spokesperson said.

The new inpatient unit is one component of a broader redevelopment of the Boundary Trails campus. The project also includes a new community services building, two air isolation rooms, a bariatric room, enhanced clinical spaces, an additional operating theatre, and expansions to both the emergency department and cancer care services.

Describing the addition as “quiet and peaceful,” the spokesperson added that “it is a great place to recover and gain wellness while moving towards better health,” noting the inclusion of private rooms with personal bathrooms, natural lighting, and additional space for patients and families.

Future phases of the project will include upgrades to labour and delivery and the addition of a Level 2 nurs-

ery, with renovations expected to be completed in early fall 2027.

Recruitment efforts for additional staff are already underway to ensure safe patient ratios as the new beds come online.

Health officials say the expansion reflects both immediate needs and long-term planning for continued regional growth.

In a release, the region said the project wouldn’t have been possible without community support, thanking the Province of Manitoba for its investment in health-care infrastructure.

Community fundraising also played a significant role. The Boundary Trails Health Centre Foundation contributed \$10 million toward the project, with Phase 1 carrying a total cost of \$64.9 million.

“The generosity of donors and community partners has been instrumental in bringing this expansion to life,” said Dana Human, interim CEO at Southern Health-Santé Sud. “Their support ensures residents can access more services closer to home.”

As patients begin to be admitted into the new space, officials say the expanded unit is already supporting both clinical and non-clinical teams in delivering care more efficiently.

“The additional beds will go a long way towards supporting the population growth in the area and ensuring we continue to provide care closer to home as often as possible,” said the spokesperson.

The additional capacity is expected to reduce strain on hospital staff and improve patient flow, though officials acknowledge that ongoing growth in the region will continue to shape future health-care planning.



STANCARD PHOTOS SUBMITTED

Boundary Trails Health Centre has completed construction of a 24-bed medical and palliative care inpatient unit, along with a new community services building, two air isolation rooms, a bariatric room, enhanced clinical spaces, an additional operating theatre, and expansions to both the emergency department and cancer care services.



> POETRY, FROM PG. 7

The workshops are scheduled for April 19, April 29, May 6 and May 10, running from 2 to 4:30 p.m., with registration available through her website. Penner noted the sessions are open to community members and cost \$45.

In addition to the residency, Penner has six poems slated for publication in anthologies and literary journals in 2026, with updates to be shared through her newsletter and social media.

As she prepares for her month in Ontario, Penner said she remains grateful for the opportunity — and hopeful it will mark the next step in a growing literary career.

“I’m so glad that I trusted my poems,” she said.

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Carman food pantry expands reach, serving hundreds with dignity

By Holly Thorne-Wiebe

What began as a small, volunteered effort to address food insecurity in Carman has grown into a vital community resource now serving more than 600 people, and organizers say they are just getting started.

At a recent community information evening, the Carman & Area Food Pantry shared its story, current operations, and a vision for a more comprehensive approach to supporting residents.

"We're more than just a food bank," said board chair Terra Huston.

The food pantry was formed in 2022 after multiple community groups independently identified the need for local food support. Rather than launching separate efforts, they came together to create a single, coordinated initiative.

"It was important to us that instead of three groups trying to all do the same thing, that we call a meeting," Huston said.

That decision quickly gained momentum. With support from local partners, including the former Carman Mennonite Church and Harvest Manitoba, the pantry officially opened in November 2022.

On its first day, 19 households had registered. Volunteers prepared for 30, and every hamper was claimed.

"We thought this was a big pantry," Huston said. "If only we knew."

Today, the need has grown significantly. The pantry now serves 228 households, representing 607 individuals, including more than 200 children.

"I want to pause on that for a moment," said board member Mandy



Dyck. "That's 207 children whose daily diet is being supplemented by the food provided through the food pantry."

The pantry operates once a month, with volunteers collecting food from Winnipeg, organizing donations, and preparing the space for a grocery-style shopping experience.

"There is dignity in being able to choose the food that works best for your family," Dyck said.

That approach reflects the pantry's broader philosophy, one centered on dignity, connection, and community.

"We decided from the start that we wouldn't judge people's needs," Huston said. "If they said they needed assistance, we didn't ask any questions."

Beyond food, organizers have worked intentionally to create a welcoming environment where people can connect with others, access information, and feel a sense of belonging.



STANDARD PHOTOS BY HOLLY THORNE-WIEBE

Carman and Area Food Pantry board members Bob Pauls, Terra Huston, Mandy Dyck, Amber Enns, Heidi Bergsma, Bertha Lelond, and Joyce Beichter (missing is member Corey Taylor) at last week's community information night.

"The food bank not just helped me with my needs, it also became the way to meet the community," one participant shared in a written testimonial.

Another described the impact more broadly: "It reminded us that we are not alone and that there is compassion and generosity all around us."

The pantry's growth has been supported by a large volunteer base, with contributions from schools, community groups, and individual residents. Still, organizers say more help is always needed.

"It truly takes many hands," Dyck said. "Whether you're able to give an hour or much more, many hands really do make light work."

The organization also works closely with Carman Wellness Connections, which provides charitable support and helps connect pantry users with additional programs and resources.

"We're stronger by working together than if we're working in silos," said Karen Tjaden, co-chair of Carman Wellness Connections.

That partnership is part of a broader vision, one that goes beyond food assistance alone. Organizers say the long-term goal is to create a shared space where residents can access multiple supports in one location, including mental health resources, employment assistance, and strengthening community connections.

"We began envisioning something far greater than gathering together ... to provide food," board member Bob

Pauls said.

Ideas have included everything from centralized support services to practical additions like a community laundromat, all aimed at reducing barriers and strengthening community connections.

"If our aim is to move beyond food once a month, perhaps we need different space," Pauls noted.

While the vision is still developing, organizers say the need for support remains clear, and likely will for the foreseeable future.

"Look at the world around us ... fuel prices impact food prices and so everything goes up," Pauls said. "So many in this world live on the edge between making it and not making it."

Even so, there are signs of progress. Organizers say some participants have been moving away from needing regular support, often after finding employment or building new connections through the pantry.

"When someone comes in and says, 'I don't think I need this anymore' ... that's pretty exciting," Huston said.

For now, the pantry continues to focus on meeting immediate needs while building toward a more comprehensive model of care.

"At its heart, the Carman and Area Food Pantry is about neighbours helping neighbours with dignity and compassion," Dyck said. "Making sure that no one in our community has to face hunger alone."



The Carman and Area Food Pantry is about "neighbours helping neighbours with dignity and compassion," said board member Mandy Dyck (above) at last week's community gathering in the agency's space in the basement of the Carman Mennonite Church

Heartbreaking finish leaves Hayward with national silver

By Lana Meier

Manitoba's Team Hayward fell just short of a national title Saturday, dropping a heartbreaking final to Quebec at the 2026 New Holland Canadian Under-20 Curling Championships in Sudbury, Ont.

The gold medal game came down to the final shot, where skip Shaela Hayward was forced into a difficult draw against two counters in the eighth end. The attempt rubbed a guard, allowing Quebec to steal two and secure the championship.

"I knew I would be close on the final shot but unfortunately it started curling early and wasn't quite enough to out count the other team's rock," said Hayward. "It's definitely disappointing right now and will definitely take a while to get over but so proud of how hard this team battled this week."

Hayward, alongside third India Young, second Keira Krahn and lead Dayna Wahl, with coach Ron Westcott, captured silver following a strong national showing for the Carman Golf & Curling Club rink.

Despite the result, Manitoba delivered a resilient performance in the final. Quebec opened with two in the first end and stole another in the second to take a 3-0 lead. Hayward limited the damage early with a clutch draw to hold the second end to a single when a bigger score was in play.

"We gave up a few points early, but this team is very resilient and can come back from anything," she said. "We just knew if we focused and stayed patient we were going to be close. After that three and the steal of two we felt in control of the game."

From there, Team Hayward settled in and took control of the game.

The Carman-based rink responded

with a dominant stretch through the middle ends, outscoring Quebec 7-1 over the next four ends to erase the deficit and build a late lead. Their ability to generate offence while limiting mistakes allowed Manitoba to dictate play before the momentum shifted again in the closing end.

"Our team played unbelievable," said Hayward. "We showcased our elite playing abilities and proved that we belonged there. I'm so incredibly proud of this team and what we accomplished this week."

The silver-medal finish capped an impressive playoff run for the Manitoba champions.

Team Hayward advanced to the gold medal game with a 7-5 semifinal victory over Nova Scotia's Blades rink. After trailing early, Manitoba mounted a steady comeback, highlighted by a pivotal two-point sixth end that swung momentum. The team added singles in the seventh and eighth ends before sealing the win with a deuce in the ninth.

The semifinal performance came less than 24 hours after a commanding 6-2 quarterfinal win over Newfoundland and Labrador's Locke rink. Manitoba controlled the pace from the outset, scoring two in both the second and fourth ends while limiting their opponent's scoring chances throughout the game.

Team Hayward entered the playoff round with a 6-2 record in round robin play, demonstrating consistency against a deep national field.

The team opened the championship on March 28 with a narrow 6-5 loss to British Columbia's Fitzgibbon rink before rebounding with an 8-2 win over Northwest Territories' Galusha on March 29. After a 7-3 loss to Alberta's Andoschuk on March 30, Manito-



STANDARD PHOTOS SUBMITTED

Shaela Hayward delivers a stone during action at the 2026 New Holland Canadian Under-20 Curling Championships in Sudbury, Ont., where Team Manitoba went on to capture the silver medal.

ba responded later that day with a 7-5 win over Nova Scotia's Regan rink.

Hayward continued to build momentum through the middle of the week, earning a 7-5 win over Ontario's Vivier on March 31. The team followed that with back-to-back dominant performances on April 1, defeating Prince Edward Island's Gallant rink 9-2 and Northern Ontario's Baker rink by the same score.

Manitoba secured its playoff berth with a 7-5 win over Quebec's St. James rink on April 2, setting the stage for its run through the elimination rounds.

The national silver medal adds to what has already been a remarkable stretch of success for the Carman-based team.

"Although the silver medal stings right now, it means so much to myself and my team," Hayward said. "Winning a medal at a national championship is an amazing accomplishment and something we will always be proud of."

Hayward captured back-to-back Manitoba junior provincial championships in 2024 and 2025, and added the 2026 title with Young, Krahn and Wahl to earn a return trip to nationals. She also won back-to-back Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association provincial curling championships during her high school career, underscoring her sustained success at multiple levels of competition.

In 2024, Hayward skipped her rink to a Canadian U18 national championship, defeating Quebec in the gold

medal game to secure a national title for Manitoba. That same season, she made provincial history by becoming the first curler in Manitoba to win three provincial championships in a single year, capturing U18, U21 and mixed titles in a dominant campaign.

The team also claimed the 2024 Manitoba U21 championship with a perfect 5-0 record, further establishing itself as one of the province's premier junior curling programs.

With much of that championship core still intact, Team Hayward's performance in Sudbury reinforces its position among the top junior teams in the country.

"This was my third Canadian junior and it is such an amazing event," said Hayward. "Of course I'll remember how hard my team played this week and all the great shot making, but I'll also remember the moments off the ice — the car rides to the rink, late night food runs, our pre-game warmup. We bonded so much on this trip and will never forget this week."

Looking ahead, the team isn't done yet this season.

"We've got one more event this year in Edmonton at the end of April that the team is really looking forward to," she added.

Despite the narrow loss in the final, the silver-medal finish represents another significant milestone for the program — and adds to an already decorated resume that continues to grow on the national stage.



From left, coach Ron Westcott, Shaela Hayward, India Young, Keira Krahn and Dayna Wahl with their silver medals.

Long before the Olympics, Patrick Fischer found a home in Carman

By E. Antonio

Long before he stood behind the bench at the Winter Olympics, Patrick Fischer was a teenager lacing up his skates in Carman.

The head coach of Switzerland's men's hockey team returned to the Olympic stage in February, capping a journey that decades earlier included a formative year in the small Manitoba town.

At 16, Fischer left Switzerland to attend high school at Carman Collegiate and immerse himself in Canadian hockey culture. He stayed with the Leslie family — Bob and Barbara and their sons Boe and Nate — who had previously lived overseas and built ties with the Fischers.

Bob and Barbara, who now live in Vancouver, have remained in touch with Fischer over the years. They first met when Barbara was on a teaching sabbatical and Bob was coaching hockey in Zug, Switzerland — the city where Fischer was born.

"Patty was your normal 12-year-old kid," Bob recalled. "He loved sports, he loved his family and he loved hanging out with his friends."

Four years later, Fischer's parents were transferred for work to the southern United States, where opportunities to play hockey were limited. Wanting to keep their son's passion for the sport alive, they reached out to the Leslies, who were now living back in Manitoba.

"He wanted to keep playing hockey and we had a place for him here in Carman," Bob said. "It was an easy decision and he quickly became like one of our sons."

Barbara said Fischer quickly adapted to the Canadian way of life, making friends, navigating the school system and continuing to develop his English.

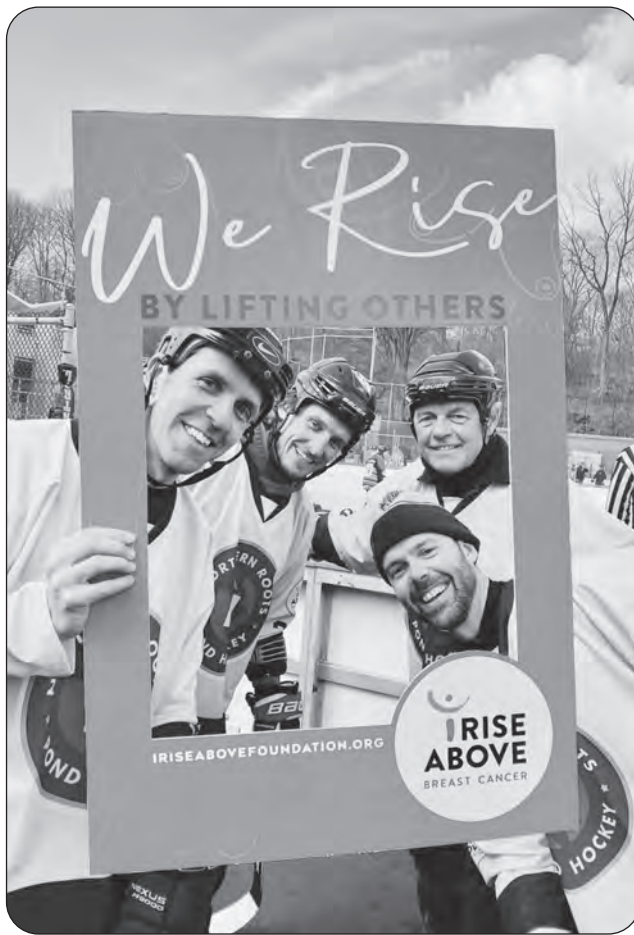
"He had a lot of self-confidence and a great personality, so he fit in well," she said. "He already knew the family, so it was just a matter of him getting to enjoy life and school."

Both Bob and Barbara said Fischer's outgoing personality helped him integrate easily into the Carman community, which offered plenty of academic, athletic and social opportunities.

Fischer joined Carman Collegiate's hockey team, which Bob coached at the time. The school also hosted several other exchange students that year, creating opportunities for students to learn about different cultures and form international friendships.

For Boe Leslie, the connection with Fischer had already been years in the making.

"I always like to say this — by the time he got to Carman when we were 16, we had already been like



STANDARD PHOTO SUBMITTED
Boe Leslie, Patrick Fischer, Bob Leslie and Nate Leslie reconnect at the Northern Roots Charity Pond Hockey Tournament in support of the iRise Above Breast Cancer Foundation a few years ago. Fischer lived with the Leslie family while attending Carman Collegiate as a teenager, forming friendships that have lasted decades.

brothers for four years," Boe said. "Once he arrived in Carman, he fit in like he had grown up there his whole life. He has never been shy. He talked to everyone. He also knew that his year in Carman was going to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience and he made the most of it."

Decades later, Fischer's career would take him from professional rinks in Switzerland to the National Hockey League and, ultimately, to the Olympic bench.

After leaving Carman, Fischer went on to play 14 seasons in Switzerland's top professional league before transitioning into coaching. He eventually rose through the ranks to lead Switzerland's national men's team, guiding the country into inter-

national competition against the world's best.

For Boe, many of the memories from that year have nothing to do with the spotlight Fischer stands in today.

He recalls playing badminton, hockey and soccer together, and said Fischer quickly became part of the community.

"The town welcomed him with open arms and he loved it," Boe said.

The friendship has endured over the decades. The two still meet up when their travels allow.

"When we see each other, it's always like we never missed a beat," he added.

Nate, who was 14 at the time, said adjusting to life with what felt like a second brother came naturally.

"Patty didn't hold back," he said. "He could drive my mom crazy but make her laugh at the same time. He taught our family how to be both a 'high performer' and the class clown at the same time."

For him, simply sharing the ice remains one of the biggest highlights of that year.

"When he's on the world stage with the Swiss national team and I see him on TV, it often prompts me to send him a text congratulating him or giving him a jab," Nate said. "Watching Patty's success over his career always reminds me that we can be hyper-focused on our personal success while also choosing not to take life too seriously. The Patty Manitobans see on TV at the Olympics is the exact same guy who laughed his way through Grade 11 at Carman Collegiate."

Fischer's year in Manitoba is widely seen as a period of personal growth — one that required independence, adaptability and resilience. Leaving home at a young age helped broaden his perspective and, Bob said, gave him tools that would later help him connect with teammates and players from Canada once he returned to Switzerland.

The Leslies never imagined the teenager who once lived in their home would one day coach at the Olympics, but his determination made his success less surprising.

"He worked very hard to establish his career," Bob said. "He took full advantage of his opportunities and I'm happy he has done so well."

Looking back, both Bob and Barbara say it's difficult to sum up the impact Fischer's year in Carman had on their family.

"As any family who has had a connection to an exchange student would say, our lives have been enriched," Barbara said. "And those who knew Patty would feel the same. For us, it was more than a short year — it's been decades."

> PST AXED, FROM PG. 6

ing a clear potential to increase the risk of several non-communicable diseases."

The provincial government declined to comment when asked whether it has concerns that removing the PST may encourage people to turn to UPF products as the cost of real food increases, and whether

it anticipates rising health-care costs associated with the consumption of UPF products.

The plan to cut the PST on grocery store items comes after a number of provincial government interventions to help lower the cost of living for Manitobans. Those included the elimination of the gas tax and a price freeze on a one-litre carton of milk.

In Budget 2026 the government will be extending measures to lower

the cost of groceries, including banning algorithmic pricing that uses consumers' data to raise item costs, potentially implementing regulatory oversight over "shrinkflation," in which stores charge the same price for a product that has shrunk in weight or volume, and allowing competition in the grocery industry by removing grocery chains' exclusive property agreements that prevent other grocery chains operating

in their vicinity.

The government is also introducing supports for people with disabilities, free transit for children, free child care for low income families, increasing the renters affordability tax credit for Manitobans - including a top-up for seniors - an affordability tax credit for homeowners, and measures to lower costs for farmers.

SEMHL celebrates all-time leaders as 75th finals begin

By Annaliese Meier

With the 75th SEMHL finals upon us, what better time to look back at the players who have helped make the South Eastern Manitoba Hockey League one of Manitoba's premier senior circuits.

The SEMHL is celebrating its history with an updated list of all-time statistical leaders, recognizing some of the most accomplished players to ever compete in the league.

Leading the way among career regular season goal scorers is Rob Hamm (Carman/Morden), who finished his SEMHL career with 376 goals. Hamm also sits atop the league's all-time points list with 764, further cementing his place as one of the most dominant offensive players in league history.

Close behind in the goal-scoring race is Shane Moffatt (Portage/Notre Dame) with 349, followed by Greg Waldvogel (Portage) with 311. Other notable names in the top 10 include Mike Mutcheson (Morden) with 291, Dale Rempel (Carman/Morden/Morris) with 286, and Mike Kehler (Altona) with 279, all of whom were consistent offensive threats throughout their careers.

Also among the top goal scorers are Marlin Vanrobaeys (Morden/Winkler) with 274, Brian Miller (Carman/Elm Creek/Starbuck) with 259, Pat Owen (Carman) with 241 and Darren Seymour (Morden/Swan Lake) with 223.

While Hamm leads in goals and points, Marlin Vanrobaeys (Morden/

Winkler) holds the distinction as the league's all-time assist leader with 466. Vanrobaeys also ranks second in career points with 740, highlighting his playmaking ability and longevity.

Rob Hamm (Carman/Morden) sits second in assists with 388, followed by Ryan Dyck (Altona/Carman/Morden) with 357, Troy Ehnes (Morden/Winkler) with 338 and Mike Kehler (Altona) with 333. Rounding out the top 10 are Shane Moffatt (Portage/Notre Dame), Paul Harland (Portage/Notre Dame), Greg Waldvogel (Portage), Dale Rempel (Carman/Morden/Morris) and Jeremy Matuszewski (Morden/Altona/Winkler), all of whom surpassed the 290-assist mark.

The SEMHL's all-time points leaderboard mirrors many of the same names, with Hamm (Carman/Morden) leading the way at 764, followed by Vanrobaeys (Morden/Winkler) at 740 and Moffatt (Portage/Notre Dame) at 674. Waldvogel (Portage) and Kehler (Altona) round out the top five, while Dale Rempel (Morris/Morden/Carman), Ryan Dyck (Morden/Carman/Altona), Mike Mutcheson (Morden), Troy Ehnes (Morden/Winkler) and Paul Harland (Portage/Notre Dame) complete the top 10.

Physical play has long been a hallmark of senior hockey, and that is reflected in the penalty minutes category. Darrin Husak (Warren) tops the list with 1,225 career penalty minutes and remains active. He is followed

by Mark Heinrichs (Altona) with 848 and Ryan Dyck (Altona/Carman/Morden) with 677. Brent Toews (Altona), Jeremy Matuszewski (Morden/Altona/Winkler), Craig Johnston (Carman/Morden), Phil Letkeman (Altona/Winkler), Marcel Pruden (Oakville/Portage/Swan Lake), Greg Clayton (Morden) and Mitch Wicklund (Warren) round out the top 10, with Husak and Letkeman still active.

Durability and commitment are highlighted in the games played category, where Darryl McElroy (Morden/Winkler) leads all players with 380 career games. Scott Corbett (Warren), an active player, follows with 355, while Hamm (Carman/Morden), Husak (Warren), Jeremy Matuszewski (Morden/Altona/Winkler), Wes Friesen (Altona), Bill Sisson (Elm Creek/Carman/Starbuck), Craig Johnston (Carman/Morden), Greg Heinrichs (Altona) and Dale Rempel (Morris/Carman/Morden) complete the list.

Longevity is further recognized in the years played category, with Wade Duncan (Warren) leading the way at 22 seasons. Husak (Warren) follows with 20 years and Corbett (Warren) with 19, both still active. Also at 19 seasons is Darryl McElroy (Morden/Winkler). Pat Demke (Morden/Winkler/Carman) leads the 17-year group, alongside Brian Dyck (Winkler/Carman), Craig Johnston (Carman/Morden) and Bill Sisson (Carman/Elm Creek/Starbuck).

At 16 seasons are Rob Hamm (Carman/Morden), Jeremy Matusze-



STANDARD PHOTO SUBMITTED

With the 75th SEMHL finals underway, the league is recognizing its all-time statistical leaders, celebrating the players who have helped shape one of Manitoba's premier senior hockey leagues.

wski (Altona/Morden/Winkler), Mark Thiessen (Morden/Winkler), Greg Heinrichs (Altona), John Mintenko (Altona) and Jean Prejet (Notre Dame).

The updated statistical lists serve as a tribute to the players who have shaped the SEMHL over the decades, showcasing not only elite skill but also the dedication and passion required to compete at a high level in Manitoba's senior hockey ranks.

With the 75th finals now underway, the SEMHL continues to celebrate its rich tradition while highlighting the players who helped build it.

Hawks hand out awards



By Staff

Their seasons now behind them, both the male and female U18 AAA Pembina Valley Hawks teams handed out their awards in recent weeks.

On the women's team, Delaney Darby went home with the Most Sportsmanlike Award, Ariel Rondeau clinched the Coaches Award, Leah

Klassen is this year's Unsung Hero, Top Scorer went to Casey O'Brien for her 27 points (20 goals, seven assists), Rookie of the Year is Claire Boyd, Most Improved Player is Rylee Harms, and sharing the Most Valuable Player nod is Madison Froese and Casey O'Brien.

On the men's team, Carson Hiebert's



STANDARD PHOTOS SUBMITTED

82 points (36 goals, 46 assists) earned him the Eric Fehr Top Goal Scorer Award and the Terry Yake Top Scorer Award, Ocean Fehr won the Coaches Award, Logan Delichte was named Most Improved Player, Casey Magarell and Parker Henderson are this year's Unsung Heroes, Rookie of the

Year is Caden McMahon, Top Defencemen is Paxton White, MVP is Carson Hiebert, Playoff MVP nods went to Tyson Pethybridge, Ocean Fehr, and Carson Hiebert, and the Best Defensive Forward Awards is shared by Tyson Pethybridge and Ragnar Gillis.

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INVITATION FOR SEALED TENDERS

The Rural Municipality of Roland invite sealed tenders from qualified and experienced contractors for the addition and renovation of the Roland Memorial Hall.

Project is located at the RM of Roland's, Roland Memorial Hall. Demolition of the existing two-floor office area and rebuilding with a larger footprint. See Bid Documents for more information.


For all information regarding the project please see:
https://www.merx.com/mbgov/solicitations/open-bids/Roland-Memorial-Hall-Addition-Renovation/0000319015?purc_hasingGroupId=699163402&origin=2

Or
www.rmofroland.ca

Tender documents are available beginning April 2nd, 2026.
 Submission deadline: April 24th, 2026 at 2:00pm

The lowest or any tender will not necessarily be accepted. Award of the tender is subject to Council approval.

Enquiries:
 Seth Klassen
 204-325-5114
sklassen@steckley.ca



Rural Municipality of Grey PUBLIC NOTICE
 Regarding the 2026 Financial Plan

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to subsection 162 (2) of The Municipal Act that the Council of the Rural Municipality of Grey intends to present its financial plan for the fiscal year 2025 at a public hearing in the:

R.M of Grey Council Chambers
 27 Church Avenue East, Elm Creek, Manitoba
 Thursday April 30, 2026 at 7:00 p.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 financial plan will be available for review and may be examined by any person during the regular office hours of the Municipal Office at 27 Church Avenue East, Elm Creek, Manitoba.

Allie Henderson
 Chief Administrative Officer
 R.M. of Grey

Please notify our office if you require special accommodation for disability or medical need.

Classified booking deadline is Monday at 4 p.m. prior to Thursday's publication Please Call 204-467-5836

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OBITUARY



Donna Jane Doyle (Nichol)
 December 26, 1923 – March 30, 2026

With sadness, but gratitude for a life that spanned over 102 years, we announce the peaceful passing of our Mom, Grandma, Great-Grandma at Boundary Trails Health Centre on March 30, 2026, following a fall in her home at River Cove. A witness to over a century of change, Mom lived a life with determination and strength. She had lived independently in her condo up until her fall on January 11.

Predeceased by her beloved husband, Don, in 2020, after nearly 72 years of marriage; parents Bert and Margaret (Peckover) Nichol; sisters Joyce Cates, Doreen Kirk (twin sister), Joan Anderson, and brother Ron Nichol.

Survived by children, Valerie (Grant), Greg (Carol), Sandra; grandchildren, Scott (Hollie), Donald (Kandace), Sarah, Alex (Megan), Michael (Jenn), Rob; great-grandchildren Alex, Mackenna, Nova, Kennedy, and Austyn.

Mom and her twin, Doreen, were born on Boxing Day, 1923, in the Carman Hospital. She grew up on the farm north of Sperling with her sisters and brother. She took her schooling in Sperling, and the community of Sperling was always near and dear to her heart. She graduated from nurse's training in 1946 from the Carman Hospital, followed by marriage to Dad in 1947. Their honeymoon, and every wedding anniversary up until their 68th, was spent at Clearwater Bay, forever embedded deep in their hearts.

Mom raised us, also helping Dad with the business, while keeping an immaculate home. She enjoyed golfing, bowling, curling, and playing Bridge. And, was extremely proficient in all. In 1974, Mom was elected an Honorary Life Member of the Carman Ladies' Curling Club. She was a member of the Carman Chapter No. 4, Order of the Eastern Star. As well, Mom completed many needlepoint projects, several of which adorn the walls of our homes. In her later years, she became a voracious reader, and enjoyed solving crossword puzzles, along with following the sport of curling on tv. "Jeopardy" and "Wheel of Fortune" were favourites that tested her skill while playing along. We marvelled at the sharpness of her mind and her memory. She took great interest in watching wildlife from her condo on the Boyne; deer, wild turkeys, squirrels and birds. A wonderful view of nature from her wall of windows.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Surgical, Rehab, Medical, Palliative Care staff at Boundary for the caring, professional treatment provided to Mom; to Southern Health home care workers who were always so kind; neighbours and friends; staff at Doyle's Funeral Home for their guidance and compassion.

As per Mom's wishes, cremation has taken place. A celebration of life for friends of Donna and the family will be held on Friday, May 1, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. at the Carman Active Living Centre, 47 Kings Rd, Carman, MB.

Flowers are graciously declined. Should friends so desire, memorial donations may be made to Carman Area Foundation, Box 160, Carman, MB, R0G 0J0, (Boyne Library Fund) or charity of one's choice.

"Those we love don't go away, they walk beside us every day. Unseen, unheard, but always near; still loved, still missed, and very dear".

Doyle's Funeral Home
 in care of arrangements
www.doylesfuneralhome.ca

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
 IN THE MATTER of the Estate of BLAINE LEE SKELTON, late of the Town of Carman, Manitoba, Deceased.

ALL CLAIMS against the above Estate, duly verified by Statutory Declaration, must be sent to the undersigned at Box 1240, 71 Main Street S, Carman, Manitoba, R0G 0J0, within four (4) weeks of the date of this publication.

PKF LAWYERS
 Attn: Mona Brown
 Solicitor for the Estate

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 Tues., April 14, 2026 at 7 p.m.
 At Wes's Tire Shop, Carman
 Everybody Welcome

get inspired

> MEAL IDEAS



Crispy Air Fryer Potato Nuggets and Dip

2 tablespoons honey
2 teaspoons salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 teaspoon chili flakes
1 cup canola oil
Heat air fryer to 390 F.

To make potatoes: In a shallow bowl, combine flour, salt, garlic powder and pepper. Whisk in milk until smooth.

Place panko in a separate shallow bowl.

Working in batches, coat potatoes in batter then toss in panko until fully coated.

Place potatoes in the air fryer and cook 24 minutes, flipping halfway.

To make chimichurri: In a blender, blend cilantro, parsley, lime juice, honey, salt, pepper, chili flakes and canola oil until smooth.

Serve potato nuggets with chimichurri.

Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 24 minutes
Servings: 4
Potatoes:
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 cup milk
1 1/2 cups panko breadcrumbs
1 1/2 pounds Little Potatoes
Chimichurri:
1 bunch cilantro
1 bunch parsley
3 limes, juice only

Shrimp Pearl Couscous Salad



Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 15 minutes
Servings: 4
1 bag Success Pearl Couscous
1 pound large shrimp, peeled and deveined

1 tablespoon seasoned salt
4 tablespoons olive oil, divided
1 can (14 ounces) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon onion powder
1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 English cucumber, diced
1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
1/4 cup fresh basil, chopped
1/4 cup red onions, finely chopped
2 tablespoons fresh dill, chopped
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/2 cup feta, crumbled

Prepare pearl couscous according to package directions.

In medium bowl, toss shrimp with seasoned salt.

In large saucepan over medium-high heat, heat 1 tablespoon oil. Add shrimp and cook 5 minutes. If necessary, cook in batches to avoid overcrowding pan.

In another large pan, heat 1 tablespoon oil over medium heat. Add chickpeas and cook 8 minutes until crispy and golden, tossing often. Add garlic powder, onion powder, paprika and salt. Toss to fully coat and cook 2 minutes.

In large bowl, combine pearl couscous, shrimp, chickpeas, cucumbers, tomatoes, basil, red onion, dill, lemon juice and remaining olive oil. Toss to combine. Garnish with feta.

Expert patient here to help!



Susie Schwartz

By Susie Schwartz

I can't believe it. This is my birthday month, and it feels like I just wrote last year's April column!

Now that I'm most definitely in my fifties (if there was any doubt the last couple of years, ha), when it comes to health — and sickness — I think my friends are catching up with me. One friend needs a hysterectomy. Another needs prolapse surgery. Yet another has stomach issues and is waiting for test results to see if they are benign or cancerous. Knee surgeries, hip replacements and back surgeries — my male and female friends alike are heading in for hospital holidays.

So I find myself in a different seat. Sure, I still have my ongoing chronic illnesses such as gastroparesis and Type 1 diabetes — and, and, and — but now I'm not the only one keeping the doctors guessing. I'm also in a position to understand what my friends are going through and offer compassion and support. I find all my past medical traumas (think: brain surgery, biopsies, blindness and eye surgeries) have led me

to this moment — a moment to give back.

And that's good for their health and mine.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: research shows that helping others helps us. According to the AXA Health UK website: "When you're kind to another person, your brain's pleasure and reward centres are activated, as if you were the recipient of the good deed — not the giver. This phenomenon is called the 'helper's high.'" It goes on to say, "There's growing research that your body benefits too, with kindness associated with lower blood pressure and levels of the stress hormone cortisol," and "...[kindness] is connected with living longer and functioning better as we age."

I can attest to this. It brings a warmth to my body and mind to help my friends. This could mean offering a ride to an appointment, but in my case, it usually means regular text messages or phone calls to check in and offer love and hugs. I don't do it for any reward, but I have to say, I feel like I've been hugged back just by offering one. (I guess it takes two to tango, doesn't it?)

So, as I celebrate another year on this planet, I plan to be the best support to my friends that I can in the coming months and years.

Everyone wins from kindness and support.

Less health stress, yes?

A published author and musician, Susie currently lives in the UK. Find her on Instagram @authorsusieschwartz and at www.lesshealthstress.com. Email: info@lesshealthstress.com. Author of *Help the Doctor Help You: 41 Secrets and Tips for Self-Advocacy* and *Get the Best from Your Appointments*.

Cheesy Mexican Rice Bites

Prep time: 5 minutes
Cook time: 15 minutes
Servings: 2
1 Minute Jalapeno Rice Cup
1/4 cup diced onions
1/2 teaspoon cumin
1/2 cup Mexican cheese blend, shredded
1 egg, beaten
1/2 cup breadcrumbs
nonstick cooking spray
salsa (optional)
sour cream (optional)
Preheat air fryer to 375 F. Heat rice according to package directions.

In large mixing bowl, combine rice, diced onions, cumin and Mexican cheese blend. Mix well.

Add beaten egg to rice mixture and stir

until fully combined.

Using hands, shape about 2 tablespoons rice mixture into ball. Repeat with remaining mixture.

Roll rice balls in breadcrumbs, ensuring they are fully coated.

Lightly coat air fryer basket with nonstick cooking spray to prevent sticking.

Place rice bites in single layer in air fryer basket, leaving space between each for even cooking. Work in batches, if necessary. Spray tops of each ball with nonstick cooking spray to help with browning.

Cook 15 minutes, or until golden brown and crisp, flipping halfway through for even browning.

Allow to cool slightly and serve with salsa or sour cream, if desired.

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