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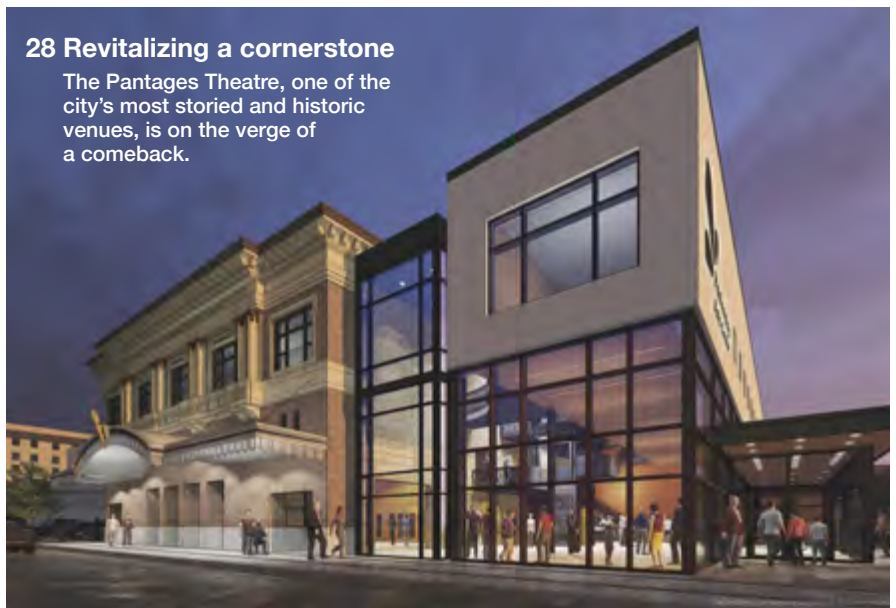
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What's all the fuss?

A cold port with hot potential

HAVE you ever heard so much about Churchill? I certainly haven't. Ever.

For the longest time, Churchill for me was merely the uppermost community on Manitoba's suppertime news weather map. The arctic conditions up there often made me feel like my family was living in the Caribbean.

I never thought I'd ever want to visit there and it was hard to imagine why people lived there. (This kind of ignorance always drove me nuts when people talked about Winnipeg this way.)

Over the years, the community of less than 1,000 people garnered headlines for being the polar bear capital of the world and a great place to see beluga whales and northern lights.

I didn't know much about polar bears, aside from watching the most famous of them all, Debbie, at the Assiniboine Park Zoo for many years. Occasionally, you'd hear of a polar bear or two roaming around Churchill in search of food and you quickly realized why the locals don't lock their vehicles.

But now I've got a reason to head north. I'd like to see what all the fuss is about. When the prime minister of Canada mentions Churchill as a potential game-changing community because of its promise as a year-round shipping hub to Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Central America, you know something is going on.

Both Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau have visited Churchill in the past but this feels different.



Prime Minister Mark Carney believes the Port of Churchill is one of several projects that could be transformational for Canada. If it passes muster, investment will follow to build it into a major four-season gateway, diversifying trade for northern Manitoba and Canada.

Arctic Gateway Group is playing a huge role here. The work that chief executive officer Chris Avery and his team are doing with Ottawa's Major Projects Office to move things along as well as its educational efforts to inform the rest of us what's happening are creating what's quite likely an unprecedented buzz around our northernmost community.

Churchill is putting itself on the map for a whole bunch of great reasons now.

*Geoff Kirbyson
Publisher, Manitoba Inc.*



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MANITOBA INC.

BUSINESS PODCAST

Hosted by Eleanor Coopsammy & Geoff Kirbyson



The Manitoba Inc. Podcast is regularly among the top 20 business podcasts in Canada. Coming out every two weeks (or so), we have covered off the big stories of the day, including the impact of tariffs on everything from automobiles to ice cream, what the election of Prime Minister Mark Carney and his Liberal government will mean for business and what beers we drink.

Join hosts Eleanor Coopsammy and Geoff Kirbyson as we try to understand the potential repercussions of a wide range of developments and issues on the Manitoba economy, and subscribe for regular updates.

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LEA CURRIE

Lea Currie has been writing for as long as she could hold a pencil. She has written for numerous publications across a range of industries, including business, travel and construction. She works in the communications and marketing industry, specializing in magazine publication, advertising and public and media relations.



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Shelley Cook is an Anishinaabe kwe from Brokenhead Ojibway Nation and a graduate of Red River College's Creative Communications program, where she specialized in journalism. A storyteller at heart, Shelley's writing explores themes of identity, culture and community. Her work is grounded in lived experience and a deep commitment to amplifying Indigenous voices. She currently serves on several Indigenous advisory circles and community boards.



CARLY PETERS

Carly Peters likes to tell stories. It makes sense for a communications professional with an extensive background in publishing and a passion for the non-profit sector. From crafting articles for trade and consumer magazines to penning press releases and speeches, she creates content that connects with audiences.



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Jacques Marcoux is a former data journalist with CBC News who has covered issues ranging from municipal politics to international events. He has also worked as a communications consultant in the Canadian agricultural industry. Currently, Jacques is a researcher and data analyst for a national child protection organization.



MICHELLE BAILEY

Michelle Bailey is a writer, a lover of current events, sports and is not too bad at golf. Known by most of her friends as Bailey, Michelle was a reporter and anchor at CKND [Global TV] in both Winnipeg and Saskatoon in the early '90s. She spent more than three decades in media, public relations, government relations and corporate communications.



JEFF SWYSTUN

Jeff helps brands grow their influence and value through Swystun Communications. He was DDB Worldwide's chief communications officer, Interbrand's chief marketing officer and a principal consultant at PwC. Jeff has spoken at more than 40 conferences and his book, *Why Marketing Works*, topped Amazon's advertising category. Jeff has appeared on CNBC, NBC, CNN, BNN Bloomberg and the CBC. His clients include the Tampa Bay Rays, BeaverTails, Bond Brand Loyalty, Ralph Lauren, Deloitte, Ascend TV, Mortgage Professionals Canada and Harvard Developments.



EMMA HONEYBUN

Emma Honeybun is a Franco-Métis reporter who was born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She graduated from the Creative Communications program at RRC Polytech in 2023 and has been writing for the Free Press Community Review ever since. Outside of writing, she is currently a volunteer ambassador with Apathy is Boring's RISE program and a WWOOFer.



JIM TIMLICK

Jim Timlick has worked on the Manitoba media scene for the better part of three decades. He has reported on everything from amateur sports and agriculture to city hall and the local business sector. He is also a former manager of media relations for the CFL's Winnipeg Blue Bombers.



SABRINA CARNEVALE

A familiar voice on Winnipeg radio for more than a decade, Sabrina Carnevale's extensive media experience includes CBC Manitoba reporter, Bell Media radio host and Winnipeg Free Press columnist. Born and raised in Winnipeg, she has become a trusted voice in writing and producing original content that highlights strong community connection and healthy living. Sabrina's multimedia portfolio includes radio and television reporter, columnist, journalist and web series author. Her passion for healthy living has afforded her the opportunity to write for several publications where she encourages people to get out of their comfort zones and find the joy in everyday life.

From space to shore

Community knowledge
meets aerospace
innovation for accessible
technology in the North

BY CARLY PETERS

ON his first research trip to Chesterfield Inlet, Dr. Philip Ferguson, associate professor in the University of Manitoba's Department of Mechanical Engineering, stood on the shore of Hudson Bay with his Space Technology and Advanced Research Laboratory (STARLab) team and area elders. In front of them, a ship sat docked in the water. While a common summer sight, its appearance was unexpected and unsettling.

The community members explained they didn't know where the vessel had come from, how long it might stay or where it was going. Its arrival had scared away the belugas that live in the coastal waters and it left residents wondering whether its crew would come onto the land.

When the researchers asked the elders how they could help, they simply replied: "We just want to know when the ships are coming and where they are coming from."

That heartbreaking answer prompted Ferguson to utilize his galaxy's worth of aerospace engineering knowledge to collaborate with Canada's Northern communities, creating down-to-earth solutions that drastically reduce





digital inequity and give communities sovereignty over space-based data.

“Not a lot of people think of aerospace technology as accessible. That no one can make or afford a rocket unless you’re Elon,” he says. “But accessibility can mean lower time for development, lower cost solutions and exploring the use of the right technology to benefit people.”

CANADA is a world leader in tracking ships from space. Yet, for Northern communities, that data never reaches those most affected by unannounced traffic, environmental changes and climate disruptions. Ferguson’s work focuses on breaking down those barriers and turning that model on its head.

This is the catalyst for ArcticSat, a first-of-its-kind collaboration between the STARLab team and the residents of Chesterfield Inlet. Set to launch next year, the project will deploy a CubeSat, a small, cost-effective satellite created at the U of M, designed to deliver accessible, locally-owned data from space.

“They are part of our team. We’re building the technology, but they are the operators, the researchers and the engineers. We are embracing co-development, having them create it for their own community,” says Ferguson.

For communities like Chesterfield Inlet that rely heavily on the land and sea for transportation, food and cultural stability, reliable communication and environmental data are essential. As climate change affects the sea ice, weather and migration patterns, access to accurate, timely data becomes critical for safety and ensuring a continued way of life.

Satellite data is just one piece of the solution. The STARLab team is also supporting communities in addressing a more immediate concern: connectivity. Across the North, limited infrastructure and dependence on U.S.-based broadband providers like Starlink not only limit basic communication, access to healthcare and education, and economic participation, but often fail to meet the unique needs of the people they're meant to serve.

"What we think is important in the South is very different in the North," says Ferguson, pointing to the loss of a local radio station, which would not only serve as a news source but let locals know about critical information, like who needs a babysitter for the night. Childcare aside, community-led data collection may look like identifying gravel in order to source rocks for roads. "When we go into a community, it's about listening. It's an honour to be in the community and learn what they know about the land."

AS hunters and trappers traverse the vast openness of the North, they currently have no handset data — in other words, they can't use their phones — to stay connected or even check the weather. Many rely on Starlink's technology, which is clunky, unreliable and runs out of power during longer expeditions.

Bring on the blimps. The STARLab team is currently building the prototype for an airship technology that could travel alongside community members. With the ability to lift mass, their speed would match the pace of people to bring along Starlink technology, and even descend when needed, to serve as a power bank. When in the air, it could relay critical remote sensory data, such as cracks in the ice or impending weather events, and allow for continued connection.



Arctic Gateway Group

Freight services and Hudson Bay Railway team members.



A train makes its way across the northern countryside.



COVER

With all the benefits of the system, Ferguson has been in touch with Telesat to get on its proposed 200-satellite, Canadian-made network, in what has been described as Canada's largest-ever space program.

Ferguson notes Starlink's sparse coverage in Northern regions and Canada's currently complicated relationship with the U.S. make developing homegrown satellite communications solutions imperative. And Manitoba is positioned to be a leader in the space.

The province's aerospace legacy dates back to the launch of the first Black Brant sounding rocket from Churchill in 1959. It is now home to aerospace giants like Magellan Aerospace, Boeing, StandardAero and innovators like MicroPilot, a global leader in unmanned aerial vehicle autopilot systems, which highlights that the province has the talent, infrastructure and access to a global supply chain.

"We're a maritime province. We need to get the most out of those nation-building projects to create technology that grows the economy and protects sovereignty. We have everything we need here in Manitoba to do it."



Arctic Gateway Group



The STARLab team is currently building the prototype for an airship technology that could travel alongside community members.



Making waves

Port of Churchill Plus could create a stable and sustainable global supply-chain hub for future generations

“Our project is multi-faceted. It’s about trade and the infrastructure that supports the national goals of diversifying our trade, making us a global energy superpower and supporting our northern sovereignty.”

— Chris Avery, president and chief executive officer of Arctic Gateway Group

BY MICHELLE BAILEY

AT the grand old age of 94, the Port of Churchill is preparing for a revitalization. After decades of uncertainty, its next chapter could firmly anchor the North and Canada as a global trade gateway.

Built by the Government of Canada and then sold to private owners in 1997, the port’s future has been debated for decades by politicians, industry and northern communities. Located just over 1,000 kilometres from Winnipeg, it’s the only port of its size in Canada that doesn’t connect to the national road system – and for much of the year, it’s locked in ice.

Now, with Canada looking to reduce its reliance on U.S. trade and strengthen its

global supply-chain position, the Port of Churchill is back in the spotlight.

Enter “Churchill Plus.”

“Our project is multi-faceted,” says Chris Avery, president and chief executive officer of Arctic Gateway Group, a consortium of First Nations, local governments and corporate investors that purchased the port and Hudson Bay Railway in 2018. “It’s about trade and the infrastructure that supports the national goals of diversifying our trade, making us a global energy superpower and supporting our northern sovereignty.”

Avery says they plan to focus initially on upgrading the rail lines to ensure rail access to the port is as reliable as what exists between Thunder Bay and Vancouver.



Arctic Gateway Group

"We're also focused on getting year-round access to the port. That's an important aspect for our shippers and customers."

In September, the federal government unveiled a list of five major projects to receive immediate financial attention as part of Bill C-5, the Building Canada Act, to better compete in the global economy. While Churchill Plus didn't make the cut, it has been flagged as a "one to watch" in future rounds.

"We have the opportunity in Manitoba to truly be a gateway for our natural resources to go out to global markets but also for imports into Western Canada. That's huge for jobs and economic benefits in northern Manitoba," says Avery.



Build Films / Travel Manitoba

Beluga whales are a vital part of Churchill's ecosystem.

RESPECT FOR WILDLIFE, ENVIRONMENT CRITICAL

Dr. Mario Pinto, vice-president (research and international) at the University of Manitoba deems the project "a transformative moment in Canadian history."

"Expanding the port in Churchill to permit export of agricultural energy and critical commodities – from the Prairies to global markets – will indeed be transformational. That said, this needs to go hand-in-hand with an investment in research," says Pinto.

Pinto is in the process of collaborating with experts from around the world who study climate change and wildlife to conduct research as to how to allow the project to move forward while being respectful to the community, the environment and local wildlife.

"Take beluga whales. An estimated 55,000 whales use the Hudson Bay area in the summer and we are still learning where they calve and how they affect the biosphere," he says. "We need to know what the optimal frequency of shipping

"Expanding the port in Churchill to permit export of agricultural energy and critical commodities – from the Prairies to global markets – will indeed be transformational. That said, this needs to go hand-in-hand with an investment in research."

— Dr. Mario Pinto, vice-president (research and international) at the University of Manitoba



Sridhar Chilimuri / Unsplash

The icy landscape showcases the beauty, strength and enduring resilience of Churchill.

should be – how many ships and what types of ships, can pass before belugas are affected.”

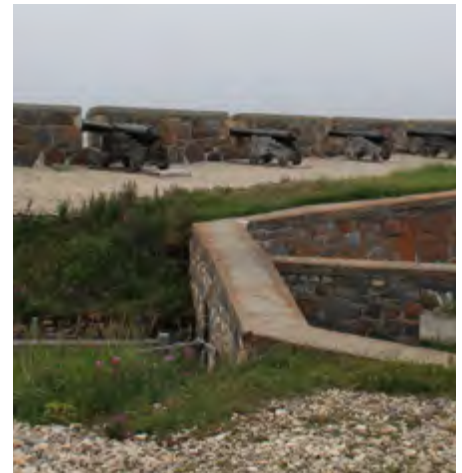
The same consideration must be given to the land, such as how pipelines and increased rail traffic will impact caribou and those who hunt them.

Pinto points to work currently being done at the U of M that is home to The Churchill Marine Observatory.

“It’s the only lab in the world to run controlled experiments in the Arctic Ocean and surrounding areas and is critically important to developing the North,” he says. “We know the research we’re doing

at the University of Manitoba and with our collaborators around climate change and wildlife in the areas will provide the answers that are critical to moving this project forward in a respectful and efficient way.”

Avery says the port has the opportunity to be the biggest example of economic reconciliation in Manitoba. “Wouldn’t it be great if people could train to be locomotive engineers, conductors and port workers in their communities and have jobs there? (They’d develop) skills, have good-paying jobs and could support their families for this generation and the next generation.”



Prince of Wales Fort stands as a symbol of Churchill's enduring role in Canada's northern story – from fur trade stronghold to modern-day gateway for global trade.

MANITOBA

CANADA'S NEW MARITIME PROVINCE

Creating a global energy superpower

If the Port of Churchill is included in the second wave of Ottawa's nation-building projects later this year – as many expect – then Chris Avery has no doubt that Manitoba will solidify its place as a Maritime province.

That's right, a Prairie province AND a Maritime province.

This unique distinction can become a reality once the port realizes its full potential as a year-round shipping hub connecting northern Manitoba and Canada with trading partners in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and South America.

"The Prairie provinces hold vast resources and Churchill can be the major port that gets resources to market," says Avery, the president and chief executive officer (CEO) of Arctic Gateway Group, which owns and operates the Hudson Bay Railway and the Port of Churchill, collectively referred to as the Arctic Trade Corridor.

"We're definitely a Maritime province. In the current geopolitical environment, that view has taken on much greater importance. Our assets enable us to be major port, which will diversify Canada's trade, assert our sovereignty in the North and become a global energy superpower."

The next step for Avery and his team is to work with Ottawa's Major Projects Office to help ensure the port is included in the second wave of Bill C-5, the Building Canada Act.

"That's what Prime Minister Mark Carney has asked us to do. We're working together so we can seize the opportunity for northern Manitoba and Canada," he says.

The first wave of Bill C-5 was announced this summer and featured five nation-building projects:

- phase two of LNG Canada doubling its production of liquefied natural gas in Kitimat, B.C.
- the Darlington New Nuclear Project in Clarington, Ont., which will make small modular reactors
- Contrecoeur Terminal Container Project to expand the Port of Montreal
- the McIlvanna Bay Foran Cooper Mine Project in Saskatchewan
- expansion of the Red Chris Mine in northwestern B.C.

"The top five on the list are projects that are well advanced and at the stage that we aspire to be. We're not there yet but we're confident that working with the Major Projects Office we'll absolutely get there."

Arctic Gateway Group, which also owns the Churchill Marine Tank Farm, supplier of fuel to Churchill, including its airport and other northern communities, is owned by 29 First Nations and 12 northern Manitoba communities. The company has spent millions of dollars upgrading rail lines to Churchill, which saw sections washed away in 2017 due to the former owners' neglect of basic railway maintenance, causing many businesses to find other ports and ways of moving their products to market.

Just as importantly, Churchill was effectively cut off and isolated from the southern part of the province and the other northern communities had to adjust to severely decreased service.



Construction crews replace a bridge along the Hudson Bay Railway.

The railway's owners at the time, Denver-based OmniTRAX, refused to repair the tracks, claiming it was not economically feasible.

Avery begs to differ and is quick to note the home base of its ownership group is a critical differentiator as it takes matters into its own hands.

"The major difference is the railway's ownership lives in the region, this is their backyard. Most of the communities are dependent on the railways for transportation and their supplies. They will not let the asset be neglected the way it was by American ownership," he says.

"We're very much starting back up. It's an entrepreneurial start-up. We're taking advantage of the fact that we truly are a strategic asset to Canada. This is an opportunity to drive more Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment, more training, more development and more jobs for young people. As the business becomes more material, the economic returns will go back to the communities, not Bay Street or Wall Street."

This isn't the first time Churchill's potential has been touted as a major economic driver for Canada. The town and port were built nearly a century ago and exported agricultural products, such as grain and wheat, to foreign markets. The infrastructure, however, was neglected for many years and the potential was

never close to being realized.

Churchill's population today is about 900 but the infrastructure currently in place can support a population more than four times that size.

"That's where the opportunity is from an investment point of view, investment in the port that creates a dual use set of infrastructure that gives the military more infrastructure flexibility in Churchill and strengthens Canada's sovereignty and paves the way for increased year-round commercial traffic. The goal is to see Churchill become a vibrant place with a port that facilitates trade across northern Manitoba and northern Canada," he says.

Avery is quick to note that Arctic Gateway Group continues to educate Manitobans and Canadians about Churchill's potential. It can and will be so much more than a tourist destination to see polar bears, beluga whales and the Northern Lights.

"The more we talk about it, the more people will be in the know. We're committed to creating a balance in developing the business along with tourism. They'll continue to be our neighbours in Churchill. We very much believe the two can support each other," he says.

"Now you have more flights, more seats, more affordable fares, more hotels, more restaurants and more stores. That begets more visitors and more industry."

The power of dividends

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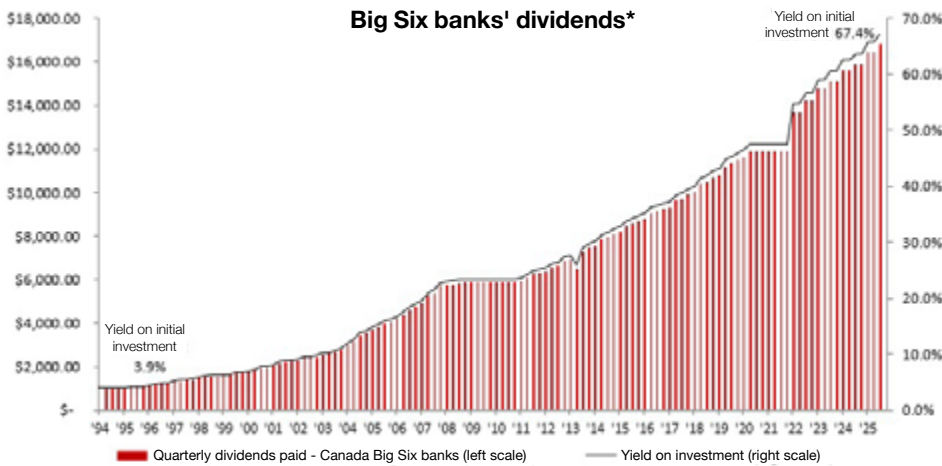
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Cielo can be reached at 204-290-5370 or corellana@cardinal.ca



*Based on a \$100,000 initial investment

“Ultimately, you have to get paid for your investments. That’s why we buy companies that pay meaningful dividends and continuously increase them.”

— Timothy E. Burt, CFA
 Founder of Cardinal Capital Management



AN INVISIBLE BORDER

GHY cuts through red tape for Canadian importers and exporters

NORTH American trade has faced more disruptions in the past 12 months than it has in the previous four decades but one Winnipeg-based customs broker is guiding its clients through the uncertain environment. The on-again, off-again tariffs introduced by U.S. President Donald Trump have shaken many North America importers and exporters. What began as a 25 per cent levy on Canadian goods quickly expanded to include steel, aluminum, autos and eventually a 50 per cent tariff on steel and aluminum.

“We’ve been forced to respond quickly to uncertainty in what was once a very efficient system,” says Richard (Rick) Riess, co-CEO and executive chair of GHY International.

This new uncertainty highlights the crucial role customs brokers play in cross-border trade. They handle the clearance of goods, prepare documentation, calculate duties and arrange payments. GHY supports more than 2,500 importers and exporters and processes more than 750,000 transactions each year worth more than \$18 billion.

This scale is vital as trade conditions shift. For many Canadian companies, especially in Manitoba, the 1988 Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement created a long-standing expectation of duty-free access. That stability has been replaced by rapid, unpredictable and high-impact tariff swings.

“The scale of these tariffs is extraordinary,” Riess says. “You’re going from zero duty to billions of dollars in costs and you’re trying to make business decisions while reacting to tariff threats and supply chain disruptions.”

In this new environment, trade demands more from exporters. Even veteran exporters now require deeper consulting and impact analyses. Some companies can re-engineer products to qualify for preferential treatment under the U.S.–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA).



Supplied photo

Rick Riess, co-CEO of GHY International, says customs brokers play a crucial role in cross-border trade.

“The scale of these tariffs is extraordinary. You’re going from zero duty to billions of dollars in costs and you’re trying to make business decisions while reacting to tariff threats and supply chain disruptions.”

— *Richard (Rick) Riess co-CEO and executive chair of GHY*

Despite the ongoing political rhetoric, many Canadian-made goods remain duty-free until next year when the USMCA will be renegotiated. Still, tariff changes are often announced randomly by the U.S. and pre-emptively by Canada while preparing for those negotiations.

GHY's primary role is to help clients understand and adapt to all the challenges in the evolving customs environment while simultaneously maintaining the flow of trade.

"We help clients evaluate their business cases, give them the facts and outline the impacts on their operations," Riess says. "We make the border invisible in terms of red tape."

Accurate reporting is critical. Ottawa and Washington announce compliance targets annually and the risks of non-compliance include audits and fines.

"It's important to get reporting right. You don't want to trigger an audit," Riess says, noting the role of customs brokers is more crucial than ever.

"We've gone from free trade among many countries to protected trade quickly, often at the whim of one person. The biggest challenge is randomness. There's no time to plan. You're always reacting, never certain where tariffs will go next."

EVEN with all the pressures, GHY has expanded over the last five years under the leadership of Chris Bachinski (president and co-CEO), Vicki DeLuca (executive vice-president of corporate solutions), Alan Dewar (executive vice-president of client relations), Bob Cowie (vice-president of consulting), Roger Labossiere (chief financial officer), Carrie Sott (vice-president of U.S. operations) and Bruno Biondi (vice-president of Canadian operations).

This growth fuels investments in broader Canadian and U.S. markets, building a strong foundation for future expansion from Winnipeg.

GHY is entering a new era thanks to a majority investment from Halifax-based SeaFort Capital and co-investment from Jessiman Family Investments in Winnipeg. This includes both Geo. H. Young & Co. Ltd. and GHY USA, Inc., providing resources to accelerate growth while keeping the corporate headquarters and leadership in Winnipeg.



Supplied photo

GHY leadership team from left: Roger Labossiere, Bruno Biondi, Carrie Sott, Chris Bachinski, Alan Dewar and Vanessa Nelson.

Riess retains significant equity ownership and several executives remain shareholders, ensuring continuity as the company moves forward with GHY 2.0.

"Working alongside Rick for the past eight years and laying the foundation for another 125 years has been a great privilege," says Bachinski. "Through careful diligence, we selected the right partners in SeaFort and JFI to continue the stewardship of GHY."

One thing that won't change is the company's level of care for both clients and associates. "We will accelerate our growth through significant investment in technology and acquisitions," Bachinski says.



Supplied photo

President and co-CEO Chris Bachinski and Riess.

About GHY International

Founded in 1901 by Riess's great-grandfather, George Henry Young, GHY International began as a small family customs brokerage. Over four generations, it has evolved into one of North America's most trusted trade compliance and customs brokerage providers.

Riess feels it's important to recognize the people who have been instrumental in the company's success over the past few decades as well as those leading it into the future. "Leading alongside Reynold Martens for nearly three decades was transformational for GHY, providing the foundation for Chris Bachinski's leadership, which has inspired our organization's leaders, accelerated growth and strengthened our readiness for what lies ahead. His vision has opened new avenues of opportunities, fostered a culture of care and secured GHY's position for lasting success," he says.

Building on this legacy, the company also extends its appreciation to the many long-serving team members whose dedication, expertise and passion continue to define GHY's success. They are:

Adam Fron, Alan Dewar, Alexander McNabb, Amanda Bilowus, Andrea Lavallee, Andy Cheung, Andy Szutiak, Anita Smith, Anthony Dumenchuk, Brent Boulter, Bruno Biondi, Carol-Ann Kjartanson, Carrie Sott, Christie Medeiros, Cliff Tuck, Corey Tkach, Corie Koropatnicki, Corrine Farler, Crystal Cann, Curtis Meagher, Cynthia Fortlage, Darcy Calder, Darian Houston, David Rostek, Debbie Rodewald, Donna Fetterly, Ed Burnett, Elizabeth Bill, Erica Fritz, Florevic Protacio, Gary Stempnick, Glen Linington, Glen Beer, Gwen Kozak, Hayley Shirtliffe, Heather Rivard, Helen Kozak, Jackie Marchenko, James Kwong, Jean Carter, Jeff Homstad,

GHY's history, defined by four eras

- 1960s–1980s** – Under Charles Riess, Gordon Feir and Amie Decock, GHY built its Manitoba-based brand on personalized service excellence and customer relationships, laying the foundation for future growth.
- 1980s–2017** – Led by Rick Riess, Reynold Martens and a strong leadership team, GHY expanded its footprint as technology enabled broader market reach. Martens spearheaded U.S. expansion through GHY USA, Inc. while serving in key trade associations, including Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME) and I.E. Canada, a national, non-profit organization representing importers and exporters. During this period, GHY was recognized by Deloitte as one of Canada's best-managed companies, a distinction it has maintained for 18 consecutive years.
- 2017–Present** – Under Chris Bachinski and the current leadership team, GHY has advanced its legacy through strong growth, new opportunities and a culture of care, ensuring the company's continued success well into the future.
- GHY 2.0** – Recent investments from SeaFort Capital and Jessiman Family Investments provide the resources to accelerate growth, drive innovation and expand service offerings.

Jeremy Giesbrecht, Jess Ian Poblete, Jessica Mason, Jim Thompson, John Smith, Krissy Kiziuk, Lisa Ward, Lorraine Hradowy, Mackenzie West, Maria DaSilva, Mark Balitsky, Neil Feir, Noreen O'Gorman, Nyree Menzies, Paul Courcelles, Rita Gerardy, Robert Schwartz, Robert (Bob) Cowie, Roger Labossiere, Scott Sturby, Sheri Robb, Shirley Jolly, Tanya Copet, Tony Gurniak, Trevor Caners, Valerie Michaud, Vanessa Nelson and Vicki Deluca.



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YES! Winnipeg is Economic Development Winnipeg's business development team, promoting our city as the ideal location for new business, expansion, investment and top talent. Our ability to make a strong economic impact on our city is contingent on our continued partnership with the business community and government. In February 2021, YES! Winnipeg launched its five-year Real Impact Campaign 2025 with the goal of creating 10,000 jobs, attracting \$350 million in capital investment and generating \$900 million in GDP.

We wish to thank our YES! Winnipeg investor community for making a Real Impact on Winnipeg's economy.

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BUSINESS BRIEFS

Highlights from Manitoba business



The Canadian Press

Mark Chipman's 2011 investment has increased the Winnipeg Jets' value to \$1.33 billion.

CHIPMAN, THOMSON TURN UP VALUE OF WINNIPEG JETS HOCKEY TEAM

The \$170-million investment by the Chipman family and David Thomson in 2011 is paying handsome returns.

According to Sportico, a U.S.-based website covering the business of sports, the Winnipeg Jets hockey team is worth \$1.33 billion, up from \$1.11 billion a year ago, an increase of nearly 20 per cent. (All figures are in U.S. dollars.)

Just four years ago, the club was valued at \$745 million.

Despite the growth, the Jets are still second from the bottom of the 32-team league, ahead of only the Columbus Blue Jackets at \$1.3 billion.

The Toronto Maple Leafs are the most valuable NHL team at \$4.25 billion, up from \$3.7 billion a year ago, followed by the New York Rangers (\$3.7 billion), Montreal

Canadiens (\$3.3 billion) and Boston Bruins (\$3 billion).

The Chipmans and Thomson paid \$110 million to the owners of the Atlanta Thrashers and a \$60-million relocation fee to the NHL.

Sportico compiles its list by examining revenues, financial records and interviewing lawyers and team executives. This is the fifth year that Sportico has ranked the value of NHL teams.

PROVINCE INTRODUCES NEW TAX BREAKS AND LOANS FOR MANUFACTURERS

Manitoba manufacturers could see their up-front costs fall this fall, thanks to new measures under the province's economic development plan. The government has converted the existing Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit into an immediate retail sales tax exemption on new machinery and equipment, eliminating the need to wait for rebates at tax time. Alongside this change, a new \$50-million loan program is being launched to support businesses looking to boost productivity through equipment upgrades and technology adoption. The province says these moves will provide more certainty for firms considering capital investments and help accelerate modernization in a sector under pressure from global competition.



The Canadian Press

AGRI-FOOD SECTOR GETS \$6-MILLION BOOST

Nineteen Manitoba food processors are receiving more than \$6 million in joint federal and provincial funding to modernize their operations. Announced in late September, the investment is designed to help agri-food companies purchase new equipment, expand facilities and adopt technologies that improve efficiency, quality

control and environmental performance.

Recipients range from large players like Maple Leaf Foods in Brandon to small and mid-sized processors across the province including Buffalo Creek Mills in Altona and Prairie Flour Mills Ltd. in Elie. Officials say the funding will support jobs,

enhance competitiveness and position Manitoba producers to meet the growing demand for sustainably produced food.

As one of Manitoba's economic cornerstones, modernization of the agri-food sector is essential to keep pace with evolving regulations and international competition.

WINPAK INVESTS \$100M IN ECO-FRIENDLY PACKAGING EXPANSION

With a \$100-million expansion of its Saulteaux Crescent facility, Winpak Ltd. is making one of the largest private-sector investments that Winnipeg's manufacturing sector has seen in recent years. The 210,000-square-foot addition will allow the company to ramp up production of recyclable packaging, part of its push toward more sustainable product lines.

A key innovation is Winpak's plan to use starch by-product from local processors like Roquette to produce "eco-form" packaging materials, creating a circular economy link between Manitoba's agri-food and manufacturing sectors. The expansion will add jobs, increase research and development capacity, and strengthen Winnipeg's role as a hub for advanced packaging solutions in North America.



Winpak

Winpak Ltd. is expanding its Saulteaux Crescent plant.

AGWEST DOUBLES DOWN ON EXPANSION IN BRANDON AND RUSSELL



Agwest

Agwest Ltd. is investing in two new infrastructures.

AgWest Ltd., one of Manitoba's leading farm equipment dealers, is making a major investment in rural infrastructure with two new 20,000-square-foot facilities under construction in Brandon and Russell. The Russell site will nearly triple the size of the company's existing location, adding service bays, expanded parts storage and a modern customer area. Brandon's new build will serve as a regional hub, reflecting growing demand for agricultural equipment and after-sales service.

Company leaders say the twin projects will enhance efficiency and customer care, while positioning AgWest to meet the needs of farmers adopting larger, more sophisticated machinery. For the rural economy, the projects mean construction activity, long-term jobs and greater service capacity at a time when uptime during harvest and seeding is critical. This signals a high level of confidence in Manitoba's farm sector, even amid global supply chain volatility.

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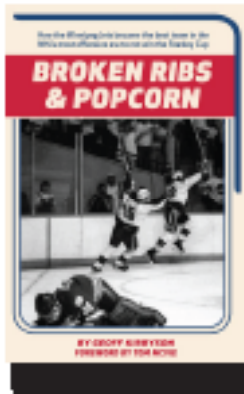
Did you know if it weren't for the players whose numbers hang in the rafters of the Canada Life Centre, there would be no Winnipeg Jets today?

The stories of the trailblazing WHA Winnipeg Jets teams of the 1970s, led by Bobby Hull, Anders Hedberg and Ulf Nilsson — the most influential line in hockey on both sides of the Atlantic — plus the jubilation and heartbreak once the club made the jump to the NHL are in two award-winning books:

The Hot Line: How the Legendary Trio of Hull, Hedberg and Nilsson Transformed Hockey and Led the Winnipeg Jets to Greatness
AND

Broken Ribs & Popcorn: How the Winnipeg Jets Became the Best Team in the NHL's Most Offensive Era to Not Win the Stanley Cup

Both books have been honoured with the Ed Sweeney Memorial Award, given out annually by the Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame to recognize works that contribute significantly to knowledge of Manitoba's hockey history.

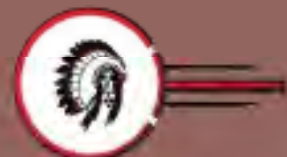


The Hot Line sells for \$30 and Broken Ribs & Popcorn retails for \$35 but you can buy both for just \$50!

To order, send an email to geoff.kirbyson@manitoba-inc.ca



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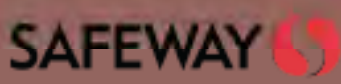


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“Not everyone can thrive in a large-scale business or government environment. And our economy can’t survive without the ‘mom and pop’ shops that help define a neighbourhood. There’s a certain amount of pride that comes with starting something from the ground up and creating employment for local people.”

— Loren Remillard, president and CEO of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce

BY MICHELLE BAILEY

AFTER Rene Rheault’s time at Winnipeg’s Collège Louis-Riel, he followed what he calls the “traditional route” – a path many of his family members had taken toward professional success.

Rheault studied finance at university but left before completing his final year, realizing it just wasn’t the right fit. He then spent nearly eight years flipping houses as a general contractor, but the desire to be his own boss persisted. In 2016, Rheault had a “light bulb” moment when he decided to invest in A Buyer’s Choice Home Inspections franchise. Today, the entrepreneur has grown it into a successful eight-person operation.

While basic household inspections remain a central part of the business (with many referrals derived from the real estate industry), Rheault says he and his crew have branched out into other areas of expertise such as commercial and environmental inspections.

“Every time you achieve a goal... you set a new one,” Rheault says. “It’s the chase that fuels an entrepreneur. I take pride in seeing my business grow, knowing I’m helping seven other households.”

Rheault’s business is one of thousands across the country being recognized and celebrated during October as part of Small Business Month in Canada.

According to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, small businesses – defined as having fewer than 100 employees – account for 98 per cent of Canadian companies and employ more than 10 million people.

Loren Remillard, president and chief executive officer of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, says taking the leap into entrepreneurship is “not for the faint of heart.” But for those with an idea, the passion and support of friends, family and community, he says the end results can be highly rewarding.

“Not everyone can thrive in a large-scale business or government environment,” says Remillard. “And our economy can’t survive without the ‘mom and pop’ shops that help define a neighbourhood. There’s a certain amount of pride that comes with starting something from the ground up and creating employment for local people.”

The recent push towards shopping local over the last five years is further helping entrepreneurs make their mark.

“For the consumer, having the ability to support local, especially these days, has become extremely top of mind. Recognizing and celebrating the role small business plays is the least that can be done to ensure they maintain momentum,” says Remillard.

Al Dawson would agree. The founder and owner of Harrison’s



Harrison's Coffee Co.

Coffee Co. has two locations in Winnipeg on Waterfront Drive and at The Fork's Johnston Terminal. He also sells java online.

Named after the family's first dog, Harrison's has been roasting and serving coffee for more than five years and employs 15 to 20 people at any one time.

"When you go into business for yourself, there's blood... and 98 per cent of it is your own," says Dawson.

"Make sure you love what you're doing, as only that will give you the strength and courage to keep doing what you're doing. Surround yourself with people who share your values and realize you can't do it alone. Whether it's friends listening, suppliers lending a hand, family supporting you when you're having a bad day and people understanding when you make mistakes," says Dawson. "This is not a solo game, so be grateful for those who stick by you."

"Every time you achieve a goal... you set a new one. It's the chase that fuels an entrepreneur. I take pride in seeing my business grow, knowing I'm helping seven other households."

— Rene Rheault, Winnipeg franchise owner of A Buyer's Choice Home Inspections



Celebrating Small Business Month

Canada has more than 1.1 million small and medium-sized businesses. October's Small Business Month is a time to acknowledge the innovation, job creation and economic resilience that small businesses provide across the country. It also serves as a reminder for entrepreneurs to reflect, engage and grow their company.

To maintain successful growth, here are some steps business owners can take this month and beyond:

Audit your business

operations: Evaluate your operations with the year-end approaching. Is your business on track to meet its goals? Can you streamline processes or cut unnecessary costs?

Engage your community: Thank your customers for their loyalty. Consider offering special promotions or hosting an event to show appreciation. This can boost sales and strengthen your connection with the local community.

Invest in personal development:

Focus on yourself as a business leader. Whether it's learning a new skill or brushing up on industry trends, this is just as important as supporting growth in your company.

Promote your story: Celebrate your entrepreneurial success. Use this time to share your journey with your customers and community. Whether through social media, blogs or interviews, your story can inspire others and help strengthen your brand identity.

Revitalizing a cultural cornerstone

BY SABRINA CARNEVALE

AFTER seven years in the dark, a Winnipeg landmark is getting ready to shine again.

The Pantages Theatre, one of the city's most storied and historic venues, is on the verge of a comeback. Plans are underway to transform the 1,100-seat venue into a modern concert hall that honours its century-old charm. If all goes according to plan, it will become the future home of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra (WSO) and a gathering place for the city's arts community.

But its curtain call depends on raising enough funding to make the \$55-million to \$60-million transformation a reality.

The initiative is being led by the Performing Arts Consortium of Winnipeg Inc. (PAC) and the WSO. PAC has been a steward of the Pantages since 1998 and officially took ownership of the building in 2019. Now, with new design plans and a shared vision for the future, they're ready to restore the iconic theatre and reimagine it for future generations.

For Angela Birdsell, executive director of the WSO, the project is about more than bricks and mortar – it's about revitalizing a cultural cornerstone of the city.

"It seems that almost everyone has a story about Pantages," she says.

The WSO operated the Pantages as a rental space from 2011 until its closure in 2018, hosting performances and community events. In its final year of operation, the space was used by more than 75 organizations over 150 days, Birdsell says.

But the revitalization hinges on financing. The PAC and WSO are working with all three levels of government to secure roughly half of the project's price tag, with the remainder to come from private-sector contributions. So far, the organizations have raised \$15 million in pledges and plan to launch a major capital campaign once total



commitments, including government support, reach between \$25 million and \$30 million.

The City of Winnipeg has recently contributed, donating \$837,500 through its Downtown Arts Capital Fund.

For Curt Vossen, chair of the WSO and a director with PAC, this moment represents a turning point – not just for the symphony, but for how Winnipeg supports the arts. He says the WSO is the last major orchestra in Canada still housed in its original "Centennial-era hall" – the large, multi-purpose venues built in many cities in 1967 to mark Canada's 100th birthday.

"We want to focus on a music-hall type of venue with superior acoustical application and the very best sound transmission," he says. "That kind of quality requires a highly specialized space – something our current, older venues don't naturally provide."



Supplied renderings

So far, \$15 million has been pledged by private donors and foundations. To officially launch the public capital campaign and begin construction, total commitments need to reach \$25 million to \$30 million – a target that depends on government support.

The WSO’s current home has 2,300 seats, which is the largest orchestra venue in the country, located in one of Canada’s smallest capital cities. A renovated Pantages would offer a more appropriately scaled and acoustically tailored setting for the WSO and its audiences.

“We talk a lot about revitalizing downtown,” says Vossen. “But how do you actually do that? One way is by giving people a reason to come downtown. A purpose.”

For Vossen, it’s about creating a domino effect – one that keeps the city buzzing and brings people downtown on a regular basis.

“If you’re drawing 500, 1,000 or 1,100 people into the neighbourhood at a time, they start asking, ‘why don’t we grab dinner beforehand?’ or ‘is there somewhere



Winnipeg audiences will see larger, modernized seating.



The theatre's public areas will include upgraded washrooms, a proper coat check and stylish lounge areas.

to get coffee after the show?" he says. "That kind of foot traffic and regular activity is what brings energy and momentum back to the downtown core."

Architect Brent Bellamy has been thinking about this moment for more than a decade. As the project lead with Number TEN Architectural Group, he and his team have been working behind the scenes to reimagine the historic space.

The design plans include a deeper stage, new orchestra pit, modern rigging systems, improved sightlines and upgrades to the heating, cooling and ventilation system, lighting and digital infrastructure. But the most critical transformation is one that concert-goers may not even think about – the sound.

"Most people don't realize that a theatre and a concert hall are different," Bellamy says. "A theatre is, conceptually, two rooms. The audience sits in one and the performers in another, separated by the proscenium arch. In a concert hall, everyone is in a single room."

Transforming a vaudeville-era theatre into a 21st-century symphonic concert hall is no small technical feat. But it's the kind of challenge that excites Bellamy and his team.

"We've been working on this since 2010, so it's been a long time in the making, but the excitement for this opportunity has never faded," he says. "Winnipeg used to be a city of theatres – the Capital, Walker, Met, Orpheum and the Pantages. We're fortunate that a few still stand and it's a special feeling to know our work will be connected to that timeline in the city's history."

Many of the theatre's upgrades will take place in the 1990s addition, which will be completely reimaged. New amenities include upgraded washrooms, a proper coat check, stylish lounge areas and a rooftop patio.

"The sophistication of the theatre will be extended into new public areas designed to focus on an immersive guest experience," Bellamy says. "We want to redefine what a night out at the symphony can be."

One of the most noticeable changes will be the addition of modern seating – the new seats will be larger with accessible seating a priority. The floors will also be adjusted to give the audience a better view and help them feel more connected to the stage.

“We want that magical moment where the WSO fills the space with music and the audience feels connected not only to the sound, but to the history around them,” Bellamy says.

Since opening in 1914, the Pantages has worn many hats. It has hosted vaudeville, live music, theatre and community performances for more than a century. It was designated a municipal heritage site in 1981 and in 1989, recognized nationally as one of Canada’s last surviving vaudeville-era theatres.

Now, with momentum building, project leaders are calling for renewed focus to move from vision to reality. While private donations have laid important groundwork, securing government support at all levels – municipal, provincial and federal – remains a critical next step.

A rare survivor

Part of Alexander Pantages’ famed vaudeville circuit, Winnipeg’s theatre was the ninth built in his chain of nearly 80 across North America. Few remain today. Designed by Seattle architect B. Marcus Priteca and local partner George Northwood, the \$250,000 concrete structure was fireproof – a cutting-edge feature in 1914. It also hosted Canada’s first-ever jazz concert and later the debut of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. With ornate plasterwork still intact, the building awaits a transformation to carry its legacy into the next century.

“What we need now is a clear signal from all levels of government that they’re on board,” says Vossen. “Public sector support is crucial. We need to know they’re behind this because their commitment will make the project possible.”



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STRATEGIC SAVINGS:

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FACILITY'S ENERGY USE

IN today's ever-evolving industrial landscape, it can be challenging to plan your future activities, investments and costs. Managing your own operations while keeping an eye on the external environment is more than a full-time job — and you're doing it all with expenses at the forefront. With so much to consider at once, energy efficiency may be the last thing on your mind.

However, it's because of all these considerations that it's essential to reframe your priorities and put energy efficiency at the top of your list. It's a crucial resource for addressing concerns related to environmental and economic sustainability. Taking an "energy efficiency first" approach is an investment with guaranteed returns through bill savings, lower operational costs and improved productivity. By addressing inefficiencies now, you'll benefit for years to come.

The good news is that you don't have to pursue this approach alone. Efficiency Manitoba is here to empower you to take control of your energy use and costs. By offering financial incentives, professional training and ongoing support, they can help you implement sustainable energy practices that reduce your costs and contribute to a greener future.

HOW EFFICIENCY MANITOBA'S STRATEGIC ENERGY MANAGER INITIATIVE CAN HELP

Efficiency Manitoba's Strategic Energy Manager Initiative is dedicated to supporting large industrial companies that are interested in taking a strategic approach to reducing energy consumption within the organization. This program supports organizations with financial incentives to offset the cost of hiring and maintaining a full-time dedicated energy manager. This on-site energy manager will be solely committed to identifying energy and cost-saving opportunities in your organization and developing a Strategic Energy Management Plan. Through their guidance and expertise, you can take the burden of leading energy efficiency initiatives off your shoulders and keep rising energy costs from impacting your bottom line.

What is a Strategic Energy Management Plan?

With Efficiency Manitoba's help, your dedicated energy manager will be responsible for putting together a Strategic Energy Management Plan, which is a formal energy reduction strategy for your facility. This plan will outline annual savings targets and potential energy-saving projects. As your organization progresses through the program, your energy manager will continue to receive coaching, training and support to build their expertise and update your Plan annually.

Efficiency Manitoba will assist the energy manager throughout the entire process and facilitate collaboration across your organization, ensuring everyone is involved in creating a culture of conservation.

SUCCESSFUL SAVINGS, BY THE NUMBERS

Since its launch in 2023, Efficiency Manitoba's Strategic Energy Manager Initiative has already seen impressive results. Several large industrial organizations throughout Manitoba are participating in the program, including Boeing, McCain Foods, Malteurop, StandardAero, Winpak, the Royal Canadian Mint, Magellan and Cenovus. Each of these organizations is benefiting from the extensive financial and technical support offered through the program, helping them cut costs and reduce their environmental impact.

The proof of the program's success is in the numbers. To date, this program has helped these industrial facilities achieve electricity savings of 12.5 gigawatt-hours (GWh) and natural gas savings of over 5.2 million m³. These savings, which is equivalent to the energy use of approximately 2,730 homes in Manitoba, also saves these organizations a combined \$1,427,611 in annual energy costs. That's money that can be reinvested to enhance profitability, boost operational resilience and strengthen long-term competitiveness.

PROJECT FEATURE: CENOVUS

Cenovus is Efficiency Manitoba's newest participant in the Strategic Energy Manager Initiative, having joined in April 2025. However, their commitment to energy efficiency goes much further back. Their Minnedosa-based ethanol plant has already participated in several Efficiency Manitoba offers including their Custom Energy Solutions Program, Business Lighting Program and Feasibility Studies.

"We've had great experiences working with Efficiency Manitoba, and we're looking forward to building on that momentum," says Rajesh Gupta, Energy Manager and Senior Technical Advisor at Cenovus. "Their Strategic Energy Manager Initiative supports our ongoing efforts to reduce our plant's energy consumption."

After joining the program, Cenovus held its Strategic Energy Management Workshop in June. "It was a great first step to get buy-in from all our employees and make this a team effort we can all be proud of," says Rajesh.

As their energy manager continues to identify opportunities for the plant to reduce its electricity and natural gas consumption,



Supplied photo

Cenovus's Minnedosa-based ethanol plant has participated in several Efficiency Manitoba offers.

Cenovus has already initiated some lower-cost energy-saving projects. They're also implementing an ISO 50001 energy management system that goes above and beyond the program requirements.

"I've been impressed with the support Efficiency Manitoba provides through this program," continues Rajesh. "Their team is always ready to support us as we work through our energy reduction strategy. I'm excited to see how much our plant can save as the program progresses."

COMING SOON: STRATEGIC ENERGY MANAGEMENT COHORTS

Efficiency Manitoba's Strategic Energy Manager Initiative is ideal for large industrial facilities that use more than 20 GWh of electricity every year. However, plenty of industrial organizations use less than this. That's why they're introducing a new Strategic Energy Management Cohorts initiative, which is aimed at facilities using at least 2 GWh of electricity annually.

Instead of funding a single energy manager, this new program will bring multiple medium-sized organizations together to participate in a shared energy efficiency experience. Participants will still have access to workshops, coaching, technical support and bonus incentives, offering many of the same benefits as the Strategic Energy Manager Initiative. Keep your eyes peeled in the coming months for an announcement about the launch of this exciting program!

START SAVING ENERGY TODAY

If you're a larger industrial facility with a commitment to continuous improvement, innovation and energy efficiency, Efficiency Manitoba wants to help you reach your financial and sustainability goals. Get in touch with their team by emailing energymanager@efficiencyMB.ca; they'll help you determine if participating in one of their Strategic Energy Management offers is the best next step on your facility's path to energy efficiency.

To learn more about Efficiency Manitoba's Industrial programs and other energy efficiency technologies, visit efficiencyMB.ca/industrial.

Program benefits and supports

The Strategic Energy Manager Initiative provides the following supports:

- A fully funded, professionally led Strategic Energy Management Workshop, bringing your facility together as a team and facilitating a collective approach to identifying and implementing energy-saving opportunities
- Ongoing coaching and funding for approved training courses, such as Certified Energy Manager training to help your energy manager build their expertise
- An enhanced incentive structure for large capital projects on top of the standard Efficiency Manitoba offer incentives
- Extra incentives for low-cost and no-cost projects that don't fall under the existing Efficiency Manitoba offers, ensuring you're rewarded for taking additional steps to optimize your energy use
- Access to Efficiency Manitoba's extensive Equipment Lending Library, allowing your energy manager to borrow instruments and logging tools to better understand your organization's energy use
- Access to a variety of marketing materials, templates, and tips to communicate energy-saving initiatives in your organization and encourage employee involvement

By leveraging Efficiency Manitoba's extensive supports, your facility will be well-positioned to achieve substantial energy savings and meet sustainability targets.



CHANGING

Union Station preparing for new tenants

BY JIM TIMLICK

WINNIPEG'S Union Station has been called one of the jewels of the city's architectural landscape and a piece of that gem is available for lease.

Just over 120,000 square feet of space recently came up for lease in the historic building located near the intersection of Main Street and Broadway. That includes 12 office units that range in size between 1,100 and 31,000 square feet on the station's second, third and fourth

floors. Those spaces are currently being updated with new lighting and a heating, ventilation and cooling system, and will be ready for occupancy sometime next year.

Jino Distasio, a professor of urban geography at the University of Winnipeg, says the station offers a great opportunity for the right tenant.

"I'm an urbanist at heart and I love the classic urban architecture, so to me it's a real gem if somebody's interested in a central heritage space that is well situated," Distasio says.



G TRACKS

“For somebody like some small enterprise, an up-and-coming tech company or just somebody looking for what I would hope would be affordable downtown space, it’s a location that would be hard to beat for its uniqueness. You’re in a heritage train station, you’re downtown, you’re near The Forks. The locational attributes of it are outstanding.”

Most of the available office space came up for lease about a year ago. A large portion of it was previously occupied by Environment Canada, which moved to a new location last year.

Union Station is owned by Via Rail, a federal Crown Corporation that also controls passenger rail service and the train shed located adjacent to the station. The leasing agent for the building is Avison Young, which is acting in a similar capacity to lease surplus space for Via at its stations in Halifax and Vancouver.

Wes Schollenberg, Avison Young’s senior vice-president, says there has been “quite a bit of interest” among prospective tenants since the property came up for lease. No deals have been signed yet due in part to the fact

that none of the office spaces will be ready for occupancy for at least six months to complete system upgrades to the building’s interior.

Part of the appeal of Union Station is the fact that the landmark building’s interior has been carefully preserved since it opened to the public in 1912, including its stunning rotunda, Schollenberg says. It offers a panoramic view of the surrounding area including glimpses of tree-lined Broadway, The Forks and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. It’s also located just a short walk from



Photos provided by Avison Young

Union Station's interior, specifically its stunning rotunda, has been carefully preserved since it opened in 1912.

The Forks and multiple nearby bars and restaurants.

“The building is unique and it’s much like the (Manitoba) Legislative Building or the old Manitoba courts building as far as the charm. Those are well-preserved and modern buildings that continue to be very useful,” he says.

Schollenberg notes that there are several redevelopments in the works for Union Station, including construction of a brand-new gym in the building’s basement. The gym will be available to tenants and their employees for a low monthly fee, he adds.

Union Station received a national historic designation in 1976, meaning it must follow strict guidelines for any renovations to its exterior. Schollenberg isn’t concerned that designation could scare off

prospective tenants since it doesn’t greatly impact upgrades to the building’s interior.

“You can’t touch the outside of it, you can’t touch the overall envelope of it as far as the look goes, but the office space itself is completely modern. It’s a wide open, bright space,” he says.

“You can have whatever (interior) design you want. It could accommodate a law firm, it could accommodate a school, it can accommodate an accounting firm. It can accommodate any number of things. It’s a very modern building as far as systems go.”

So, who might be moving into Union Station? Right now, it’s anybody’s guess.

Distasio speculates the most likely candidates are business offices,

government agencies or not-for-profit institutions. However, he says its also possible Winnipeggers could see a return to the mid-1990s when Union Station briefly experimented with a retail mall concept.

There are two pending developments in the area that could go a long way in influencing prospective tenants to move into the historic building. Winnipeg Transit’s master plan calls for Union Station to become a flagship mobility hub for its bus rapid transit system, something Distasio says could bring a lot more folks to Union Station and create new opportunities for any businesses located there. The nearby Rainside at The Forks residential development, which could be home to more than 2,500 people as well as various commercial, retail and public spaces, could do likewise, he adds.



A look back at Union Station

When Union Station opened to the public in 1912, the *Manitoba Free Press* called it the most modern railway terminal in the world.

More than a century later, people continue to marvel at its architectural grandeur and monumental scale.

Built on behalf of the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Canadian Northern Railways, construction of Union Station began in 1908 and was completed in 1911. The building was designed by Warren and Wetmore, the same architectural firm that was responsible for the design of New York's famed Grand Central Station. Its design draws from the Beaux-Arts architectural style which is known for its lavish, highly ornamental and formal approach to design. Some of its character-defining features include the use of

classical elements on a heroic scale designed to make the observer feel small, a domed central rotunda and the Tyndall limestone used on its exterior.

When it was built, Union Station was one of Western Canada's largest railway stations and welcomed thousands of immigrants upon opening.

At the time of construction, it was regarded as a symbol of the confidence of the railway industry and the government in the continued growth of Western Canada. That was reflected in an article published in *Construction* magazine in 1908 that said: "It marks a history-making epoch in the growth of our western country."

Union Station was designated a National Historic Site of Canada in 1976. Because of its heritage status, Parks Canada requires any restoration work on the building to follow the Government of Canada's Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada as well as regulations in the Canada Transportation Act.

During its heyday back in the 1970s, dozens of trains used to arrive and depart from Union Station in a typical week when it served as a connecting point for major routes like the Super Continental (Toronto to Vancouver) and the Canadian (Montreal/Toronto to Vancouver). Today, it handles just three arrivals and three departures most weeks.

On the move

**Neepawa remains a safe home
for Filipino community, businesses**

Jodi Baker / Courtesy of Neepawa Tourism

Neepawa is the third-fastest growing community in Manitoba.

BY EMMA HONEYBUN

NEEPAWA is on the move and it has a southeast Asian country of more than 7,600 islands largely to thank for it.

An influx of immigrants from the Philippines have not only boosted the community's population, but changed the cultural landscape as well.

Many in the community have landed jobs at HyLife, a Japanese pork producer that has locations sprinkled throughout southern Manitoba. The company's nearly 200,000-square-foot plant just east of Neepawa is the biggest employer in the area and the majority of its 1,700 employees are Filipino. HyLife also has operations in other southern Manitoba communities, including Steinbach, Killarney and Morris.

Neepawa's population has grown from 3,298 in 2006 – two years before HyLife began operations – to 5,685 as of the last census in 2021, more than 72 per cent growth in just a decade and a half. It has almost certainly grown further over the last four years. It's the third-fastest growing community in Manitoba and 13th-fastest in Canada.

Brian Hedley, mayor of Neepawa, which is about two hours northwest of Winnipeg, says the influx of HyLife employees has created a "large and vibrant Filipino community who have integrated exceptionally well into Neepawa and the surrounding area."

"With unprecedented growth comes responsibility," Hedley says. "As a council, we've had to understand our evolving role as a municipality... in order to secure and sustain the future of our community. Not only has the community embraced our evolving



Supplied photo

Carmela Comila (right) and her daughter-in-law operate Lola's Bakery.

demographics, we have welcomed our newcomers who bring a positive cultural impact to all aspects of living in Neepawa."

In addition to HyLife, which produces 3.8 million hogs annually, there are also two Filipino bakeries, a Filipino restaurant and two shops dedicated to Asian groceries.

Carmela Comila, who operates Lola's Bakery with her husband, son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren, lived in Winnipeg before she moved to Neepawa. She says she much prefers the small-town mentality and community of people who walk through the front door.

Lola means "grandma" in Tagalog, a regional language in the Philippines, and Comila says she has enjoyed becoming a "grandmother figure" for the local community, noting that people have started to call her "Lola" when they visit. She says that even if she can't recognize someone by name, she can often recognize their face — and their smile.

"You have the feeling that they're not just customers," she says. "But friends and neighbours. That makes a difference. As soon as a customer comes in, it's 'oh, it's you again!'"

Lola's Bakery opened in 2019 and sells pizza, desserts such as doughnuts, custom cakes and buns and Filipino foods, such as pancit. It also does custom catering for weddings and events, such as the recent Neepawa Pride celebration where the team made rainbow-themed doughnuts for participants.

Although the business took a hit during the COVID-19 pandemic, Comila says that its close ties with the community and surrounding areas helped support it through a tough few years.

"When we first came to Neepawa, I felt a warm welcome by the locals," she says. "And that everybody was excited to come in and check out what's inside and chat with the staff... and that helped us survive, especially during the pandemic."

"The only change I see is that it's growing fast," Comila says of the town between now and then. "Because of the big (HyLife) plant ... that's the biggest factor. Even during the



Supplied photo

Fil-Mart is a Filipino specialty grocery store in the community.

pandemic, there are a lot of Filipinos here and they are a big part of this bakery."

"I want to thank the community for its support," she says.

Among the family of Filipino businesses in Neepawa, the Comilas aren't the only ones who have relocated from Winnipeg.

Fil-Mart, a Filipino specialty grocery store, branched out to Neepawa in 2018. The business is owned by Kaye Marinas, who also oversees operations in Winnipeg and Portage la Prairie.

The store carries mainly imported Filipino products and caters to "our 'kababayan,'" Marinas says, which translates to "fellow Filipinos."

Even before expanding to Neepawa, people from the area would head out on the highway to shop at the Fil-Mart in Winnipeg.

"I figured it's high-time to go remote," Marinas says.

"Filipinos are a fun people. We love drinking and eating, we love karaoke-ing. Fil-Mart provides, as much as we can, everything they need on a daily basis — and on birthdays and holidays — and we try to keep our products at fair prices given today's economy and the distance from Winnipeg."

Working together

Due to HyLife's direct involvement in Neepawa's growing population — a collective 50 per cent increase over the last two consensus periods, according to Statistics Canada — the town is in a unique position in which council and corporation are made to work together and support each other.

"It's important for our community to nurture a strong relationship with HyLife and actively demonstrate our commitment to local diversity," says Brian Hedley, mayor of Neepawa. "Understanding and welcoming HyLife's success... (and) our elevation as a community that fosters positive relationships with both people and business, will prove strategically important to attracting further investment and growth opportunities in Neepawa and rural Manitoba."

In 2025, HyLife made Deloitte's list of the top 50 best managed companies in Canada.

Marinas adds that although the target demographic at the store is the Filipino community, everyone is welcome and orders are made if folks can't find what they're looking for.

Other Neepawa businesses with the Filipino community in mind include Tsibog's Eatery and Rotor's Bakery. The town is also home to the Filipino-Canadian (FIL-CAN) Association in Neepawa & Area, a cultural heritage group that organizes the annual Filipino Heritage Month Celebrations — such as a parade and other cultural performances — throughout the month of June.



M.D. Steele photos

A STEELE OF A DEAL

Beating the clock – and the cold – to open Portage and Main

BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

If there's one thing more remarkable than Portage and Main reopening to pedestrians in June for the first time in nearly half a century, it's that the company that reconfigured Winnipeg's most famous intersection did so on time and on budget.

It took M.D. Steele less than seven months to complete the overhaul. In fact, its team beat the absolute deadline by about a week.

Project manager Matthew Schiak says the West St. Paul-based company has worked on far bigger projects in the past – the Provencher Bridge is perhaps the most highly visible – but none was in the public eye like this one.

"Everyone knows about Portage and Main. It's been talked about since they closed it in the 70s. We've never had a project before that has had so much attention from the public and stakeholders," says Schiak. "We had our main crew available and we

knew it would take quite a bit of manpower to get it done. We knew there was a lot of risk and a pretty crazy deadline. We went in feeling pretty confident we could get it done."

The other not-so-insignificant wrinkle was the City of Winnipeg wanted the intersection fully functional when it unveiled its new master transit plan on July 1.

In addition to taking jackhammers to the unsightly concrete barriers on every corner, the job entailed new traffic lights, accessible curbs, new street lights and patio stones, changing some traffic lanes, some structural repairs plus infrastructure contributions from Manitoba Hydro and Bell MTS.

"Everyone knew how important this job was for the city. It was a very collaborative effort," Schiak says.

One of the biggest challenges was creating a "summer in winter" feel for the construction team as major construction began in November 2024 and spanned the winter months. The company built large



tents on all four corners so employees could work in a heated environment – crucial for placing concrete, waterproofing and other tasks that had to be done at 10 C or warmer.

“That was unique for that kind of work. You don’t see a lot of sidewalks or road projects happening in the winter months. In the summer, you could have a lane closed for easy access. It definitely presented some unique challenges with accessibility and staging of the work,” he says.

Schiak says his team worked hard to find efficiencies throughout the lifetime of the project. The budget was a bit of a moving target because it wasn’t known what kind of damage might be uncovered when the jackhammers came out — such as to the waterproofing membrane protecting the underground concourse — but M.D. Steele came in just under the project’s budget of \$21 million.

At the official reopening ceremony on June 27, Winnipeg Mayor Scott Gillingham was quick to praise the company’s work. “For 46 years, we’ve been debating whether or not people should be allowed to cross the street. Today, we’ve ended the debate. I’m so grateful to everyone involved, including and especially the team at M.D. Steele. Whether people were behind the scenes in the office doing work or people on the end of a shovel or people working in January, thank you to everyone for working hard, your diligence and your professionalism,” he said. “You’re part of history.”

“Everyone knows about Portage and Main. It’s been talked about since they closed it in the 70s. We’ve never had a project before that has had so much attention from the public and stakeholders. We had our main crew available and we knew it would take quite a bit of manpower to get it done. We knew there was a lot of risk and a pretty crazy deadline. We went in feeling pretty confident we could get it done.”

— M.D. Steele project manager Matthew Schiak





Making Business Accessible

A barrier-free path to success

BY LEA CURRIE

EMBRACING accessibility is not just a box to check for legal compliance – it’s a smart business move that can unlock new growth, foster innovation and give you a powerful competitive advantage.

Nearly one in three Manitobans identify as having a disability, whether visible, invisible, permanent or temporary. When businesses do not consider this significant portion of the population and fail to remove barriers, they are turning away a sizable and loyal customer base.

An inclusive business foundation is a strategic investment in your company’s resilience and can support a smarter, more adaptable and more profitable business.

Manitoba became the second province in Canada to introduce accessibility legislation with The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) in 2013. Its intent is to improve accessibility for all Manitobans and create a process to identify, prevent and remove barriers.

A new section of the AMA, the Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation, came into effect this past May and two more are on the way in the coming years, so it’s a good time to get reacquainted with the rules.

The AMA is broken down into five main standards:

Accessible customer service:

Create a respectful barrier-free customer service experience by developing policies and practices that ensure people with disabilities are able to fully access goods and services. This may include welcoming assistive devices, service animals and support persons.

Accessible employment:

Provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the workforce and have accessible practices related to recruitment, hiring and retention. This may include creating accommodations for potential and existing employees.

Accessible information and communication:

Ensure all information is provided in accessible formats for everyone or is available through a communication support. This may include websites (which must meet the globally recognized WCAG 2.1 Level AA guidelines) and printed collateral.

Accessible transportation:

(Comes into effect in January 2027.) Create a transportation system that is more inclusive and removes barriers to access transportation to attend work or school, visit family and friends, and participate in daily activities.

Accessible design of outdoor public spaces:

(This standard is currently in development.) Address areas outside of the jurisdiction of the Manitoba Building Code and create accessible outdoor public spaces, including sidewalks, parks and pathways.



Community Futures Manitoba

Community Futures Manitoba delivered training on the Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation throughout Manitoba.

Beyond compliance: Adopting an inclusive mindset

Accessibility isn't just about physical ramps or automatic doors or a legible font; it's a fundamental shift in how you approach your business.

"It's about adopting an inclusive mindset," says Susan Bater, entrepreneurs with disabilities program manager with Community Futures Manitoba. The non-profit organization received funding from the province to deliver training on the Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation for staff in rural and northern Manitoba to help entrepreneurs learn how to better prevent barriers and remove them for customers.

Having an inclusive mindset, Bater explains, is about "thinking about every Manitoban." This kind of thinking is a powerful engine for innovation. By intentionally including diverse perspectives and needs, you're more likely to uncover creative solutions and untapped market opportunities.

Consider the invention of the telephone. Alexander Graham Bell was focused on creating a device to help his deaf mother hear. The result was a groundbreaking invention that



The Forks Market

The Forks is a prime example of a local business leading the way in accessibility.

changed the world for everyone. Similarly, the accessibility features we see today, like captions on videos and voice-to-text software, were created to remove barriers, but are now used daily by millions of people.

While sloped ramps on sidewalks were conceived by disability activists in the 1970s to help people using wheelchairs, they are now a worldwide feature that benefit many, from parents with strollers to travellers with rolling suitcases and delivery workers with dollies.

Innovation driven by a need for inclusivity often results in universally beneficial solutions.

The Forks is a prime example of a local business leading the way in accessibility.



Dan Harper / Tourism Winnipeg

“It opens doors to more customers, employees and community connections,” says Jessica Floresco, its chief operating officer, on embracing accessibility.

With a nearly \$35,000 grant from the Manitoba Accessibility Fund, The Forks partnered with the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities to conduct a comprehensive accessibility audit. The results led to the installation of new accessible

doors, ramps and washrooms. The findings will be used to inform long-term planning as well as staff and tenant awareness initiatives.

“By removing accessibility barriers and making thoughtful upgrades, The Forks strengthens its role as a true community gathering place where millions of visitors each year can feel welcome and included,” says Floresco.



Elizabeth Woolner / Unsplash

Assistive technology devices, such as a Braille display, can make information on a computer screen accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired.

Future-proofing your business

One of the key drivers of accessibility is a resilient and adaptable team. As Bater emphasizes, it’s about making your business future-proof. By proactively making your workplace and your services accessible, you are better prepared for unforeseen challenges. A business with strong digital accessibility practices and flexible, accommodating work policies, for example, is far more resilient in the face of disruption.

The AMA and organizations like Community Futures Manitoba are not just about compliance – they are providing the tools and resources to help businesses thrive. The non-profit offers assistance with business plans and training, as well as loan programs for entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Ultimately, research shows that businesses that prioritize accessibility are better positioned for long-term success. By removing barriers, they can reach a broader customer base, foster a culture of innovation and build more resilient teams.

In fact, a 2021 Canadian survey by the Rick Hansen Foundation found that 90 per cent of consumers are more likely to support businesses that are accessible and inclusive – a clear sign that accessibility is both a social responsibility and a forward-thinking business strategy.

Visit www.accessibilitymb.ca for full details, requirements and resources on accessibility and compliance in Manitoba.

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Advice for both ends of the journey

Susan Motkaluk helps entrepreneurs build their businesses and also find an exit ramp

AFTER 42 years of running his company, Dean McIntyre was used to making all of the major decisions during his 70-hour work weeks.

He had built up the McIntyre Group, a Kitchener-based company in the office interiors and warehousing business, to five operating companies and nine brands that employ more than 100 people. But with his 62nd birthday approaching, he realized it's time to slow down and let members of his management team start to spread their wings.

It sounds easy but when you've only had to answer to yourself for so long, it's trickier than it appears.

"I'm trying to determine how do I get out, how do I transition my businesses and how do I keep the culture? The culture is so important to me," he says. "I needed strong advice from people that I trusted, who I can tell my challenges to and get a different perspective than what I was thinking."

Enter Susan Motkaluk. The chief executive officer (CEO) and owner of Sustainable Development & Monitoring offers fractional C-suite services, executive coaching and business advisory to entrepreneurs who are either looking to build their businesses or find an exit ramp.

The majority of her work is with entrepreneurs running companies with more than \$5 million in annual revenues who are looking to reduce their day-to-day activities or retire.

"I work hard to create a plan and execute on the plan that makes their job redundant so they can exit the company. I help install a strong enough

leadership team that enables the business to run without them," she says.

Her duties entail an environmental scan of the business, including a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis and pre-sale preparedness. No detail is too minor.

"A few small things can be the difference between getting a sale price of two times EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization) and eight times EBITDA," she says.

Each situation is unique so there's no set time for the execution of such a plan although it often takes between 18 to 24 months to come to fruition.

"I can make an impact in six months," she says.

Motkaluk is quick to note there's a very deliberate process involved in essentially working a CEO out of a job. In one example, she determined that the first step was to delegate 10 per cent of the CEO's non-essential duties to others. To get the next 10 per cent, she designed a decision-making matrix to help some of his inner circle make the decisions he would have made.

The following 10 per cent is typically more difficult because the CEO no longer had a clear line of sight on the business operations. Shoring up the leadership team is often needed before the CEO can step back further.

Eventually, this CEO was able to step back to 50 per cent of his original workload.

"He actually got out of his own way. The company is making more money, he's doing less work, he's happier and the next generation of

Born and raised in Manitoba, Motkaluk earned a Bachelor of Engineering degree from the University of Waterloo before embarking on her corporate career. Her experience includes being the CEO of Southbridge Development Corp., a Cambridge Ont.-based company that runs assisted living long-term care homes and chief administrative officer in the City of Swift Current, Saskatchewan.

Motkaluk recently signed a five-book deal with a Chicago-based publisher and her next offering is about to come out: Seasons of Soul — Leadership lessons, reconnecting our work, families and community.

leaders is coming up and establishing themselves. That's what every single founder wants," she says.

If needed, Motkaluk can also step in if a CEO or chief operating officer (COO) is ill for an extended period of time.

"I can come in and hit the ground running with fractional CEO or fractional COO work," she says.

McIntyre says the coaching he received from Motkaluk has helped him get to where he wants to be in life.

"I'm truly learning to be a CEO. During my career, I've always been in the weeds but I've learned over the last couple of years how to stay out of the weeds and be a CEO instead. I will be here to mentor people, work on business planning and get reported to, instead of doing the reporting. My goal is to allow my team to lead while challenging them the same way I've been challenged by Susan.

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Susan Motkaluk is the CEO and owner of Sustainable Development & Monitoring.



Building futures

Habitat Manitoba expands affordable housing in Winnipeg

BY SABRINA CARNEVALE

WITH its Pandora Avenue West development, Habitat for Humanity Manitoba (Habitat Manitoba) is reshaping the landscape of affordable housing in Winnipeg. The project will add 55 homes to support 275 people, including 175 children — a milestone in the organization’s commitment to safe, stable and affordable housing.

“This project represents the largest we’ve built in Winnipeg,” says Jamie Hall, chief executive officer of Habitat for Humanity Manitoba. “It’s elevated our annual home builds to well beyond 20 per year and in

2025, we expect to hand the keys to 29 families for their new homes.”

Each home sparks wider change, he says — better health, education, well-being and economic growth.

“Peace of mind and the ability to focus on what matters most all starts with a home.”

So far, 28 families have settled into their new homes at the development, with another seven set to move in by the end of the year. The final 20 homes are slated for completion in 2026. The organization has also broken ground on a 20-home project on Panet Avenue in the city’s Concordia area, where the first two families moved in earlier this year.



“This project represents the largest we’ve built in Winnipeg. It’s elevated our annual home builds to well beyond 20 per year and in 2025, we expect to hand the keys to 29 families for their new homes.”

— Jamie Hall, chief executive officer of Habitat for Humanity Manitoba

Habitat Manitoba's mission is to provide safe and affordable housing for low-income families. Since 1987, the organization has built more than 500 homes across Manitoba and Kenora, Ontario, helping more than 1,400 children and their families — all with the dedication of committed volunteers and strong community support.

The lessons learned from Pandora Avenue West will help shape future Habitat Manitoba projects. The site has provided opportunities to refine construction methods, including contractor builds, home renovations and partnerships with local builders, ultimately increasing the number of families who can achieve affordable homeownership.

The not-for-profit organization's Affordable Homeownership Program has delivered long-term benefits for the well-being of the families who call the houses home, while also contributing significant value to the economy. Between 2019 and 2023, Habitat for Humanity Canada's work in building and renovating homes added an estimated \$311 million into the economy and generated nearly \$40 million in tax revenues, according to a 2025 Deloitte report looking at the organization's social and economic impact. The findings come from a survey of more than 600 Habitat homeowners across the country. These results underscore the broader value of investing in affordable housing — a message that has Ottawa listening.

A NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Amid Canada's housing affordability crisis, the organization's role has taken on even greater urgency. Through the Affordable Housing Fund under the National Housing Strategy, the Government of Canada has committed \$11.7 million to Habitat Manitoba projects.

"It's no secret that Canada is in a housing crisis," says Ginette Lavack, member of Parliament for St. Boniface – St. Vital and parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada. "Too

many Canadians, particularly young Canadians, are struggling to find homes they can afford. This Habitat for Humanity Manitoba commitment is the result of just one of the many commitments this new government is making to address the housing crisis."

Of that \$11.7 million, \$7.6 million is earmarked for Black Families Funding — a deliberate choice, according to Lavack.

"One of the tenets of the federal government's overall housing strategy is to take a human rights-based approach to housing," she says. "This includes the principles of non-discrimination, inclusion, participation and accountability. This strategy, as defined in the National Housing Strategy Act, sets out a long-term vision for housing and focuses on improving housing outcomes for those in greatest need."

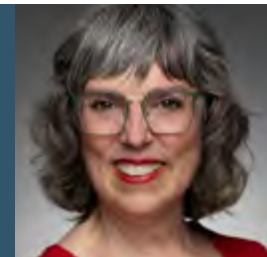
Economic inequality, discrimination and implicit bias are contributing factors to Black families having some of the lowest homeownership rates in Canada, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. This targeted investment helps close that gap while accelerating construction timelines.

"This funding allows us to move more families into homes sooner, while remaining committed to family diversity in our builds," Hall says.

Habitat for Humanity's model depends on collaboration between governments, non-profits and community partners — a strategy that aligns closely with federal priorities. The Government of Canada is expanding its role in affordable housing nationwide to complement investments like those supporting Habitat Manitoba. In September 2025, the federal government launched Build Canada Homes — a new agency within Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada designed to streamline national housing initiatives. Build Canada Homes is the fed's new one-stop shop for affordable housing, with a planned transition to make it a standalone entity in early 2026.

"It's no secret that Canada is in a housing crisis. Too many Canadians, particularly young Canadians, are struggling to find homes they can afford. This Habitat for Humanity Manitoba commitment is the result of just one of the many commitments this new government is making to address the housing crisis."

— *Ginette Lavack, member of Parliament for St. Boniface – St. Vital*





The Habitat Manitoba model depends on collaboration between governments, non-profits and community partners.

As part of its mandate, the new federal agency will allocate \$1 billion toward transitional and supportive housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The initiative aims to support the roughly 235,000 Canadians who face homelessness each year, according to Statistics Canada.

A LASTING COMMUNITY IMPACT

For the business community, supporting Habitat Manitoba represents more than philanthropy. It's an investment in community stability and economic growth.

"The benefits are clear: families experience improved health, education and income, communities see increased volunteerism and engagement, and the economy benefits from a stronger tax base and increased spending," Hall says. "Supporting Habitat is an investment that pays dividends for everyone."

For the families involved, the impact is immediate and life-changing.

"Every family is unique and seeing families transition from rental housing to homeownership is incredibly rewarding," Hall explains. "During our family selection process, we witness the living conditions many families come from and the transformative improvement our program brings."



Through dedicated volunteers and strong community support, Habitat Manitoba has built more than 500 homes across Manitoba and Kenora, Ont.

As housing insecurity continues to challenge communities across Canada, Habitat for Humanity plays a vital role in the affordable housing sector. Through its accessible mortgage programs, the organization is helping families achieve homeownership while easing demand on social housing stock.

"Although we may not have all the answers, our program makes a meaningful difference – one family at a time."

Each new home is a step towards stronger, more resilient communities — proof that affordable housing can change far more than a postal code.



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Refreshing



things

Curated classics, unique estate finds,
and high-value donated goods.

Supplied photos



BY JEFF SWYSTUN
BRANDING

IMAGINE a store staffed by volunteers for nearly 60 years whose profits are entirely donated. Well, it exists.

THINGS on Corydon Avenue turns over all net proceeds to the Royal Winnipeg Ballet (RWB) and has for decades. The unique boutique sells amazing finds from estates, consignors and generous donors to furniture and jewelry to art and dinnerware, THINGS has constantly changing inventory.

After decades of operation, the organization needed to refresh. The business had evolved but the brand had not kept up. This happens all the time in all industries, but THINGS was especially unique given its leadership and staff are volunteers. I offered to help and together, we set goals for the project.

First, was to shift perceptions. Those who knew about THINGS had dated associations that needed updating. Next was to grow awareness to attract new customers. It was also important to diversify the merchandise, volunteers and customers. Lastly, a good brand drives revenue. With the goals set, together we went through a rebranding.

An enthusiastic committee from THINGS drove the project. Through a series of workshops, we explored what could be. Between these meetings, the brand story, copy and logos were developed and all put into visual representations of what the new brand would embody and how it would appear. There was debate but never dissension. In fact, the final logo was a unanimous decision, which rarely happens.

The new brand takes THINGS from classic to cool, antique to unique. It recognizes that the boutique is not just a shop but a connector in the community and a sizeable supporter of one of the city's greatest assets, the RWB.

ing things

Here is a summary of the brand story:

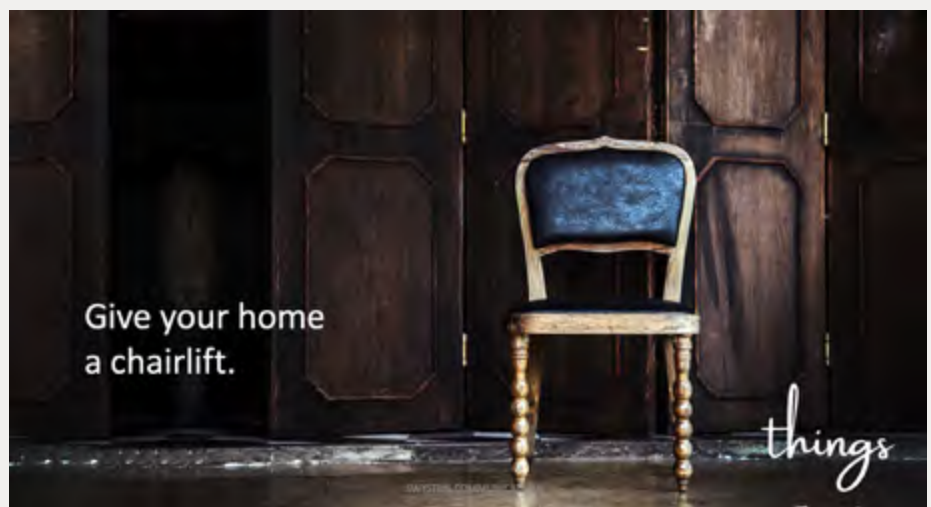
Style your home, complete that collection, be inspired. THINGS curates the incredible from estates, consignors and generous donors. We bring storied objects into modern living, helping the Royal Winnipeg Ballet soar.

From this we established a primary tagline: THINGS — find what moves you. The tagline also helps relate back to the ballet. Next came the logo. There were 12 options and the chosen one is sophisticated, compelling and elegant. It has a slight homage to Saks Fifth Avenue.

There will be a bit of irreverence in the communications to attract attention. In social media, an image of a bracelet could have the copy, Champagne Taste. Soft Drink Price. A chair may be marketed with, WANTED: a loving home for a four-legged friend.

The new brand has launched and with help from the RWB marketing team, is rolling out to make the desired shift.

Holly Beard and Evelyn Mitchell are the co-presidents of THINGS. "The purpose of our rebranding was to highlight our new, more diverse business model," says Beard. "The new brand has generated support and excitement from our customers and motivated our members, so mission accomplished and we couldn't be happier."



A rebranding at THINGS takes the longstanding company from classic to cool while also recognizing that the boutique is a connector in the community.



THE END OF EASY EXPORTS

PNP games

HOW THE REMOVAL
OF THE U.S. DUTY-FREE
DE MINIMIS EXEMPTION
IS RESHAPING MANITOBA'S
BUSINESS COMMUNITY

BY JACQUES MARCOUX

FOR many Manitoba entrepreneurs, access to the U.S. market was like a free flowing highway – particularly for smaller value shipments. That was thanks to a trade rule called the “de minimis exemption” which allowed goods valued under \$800 to enter the U.S. without the burden of tariffs, duties or complex customs

paperwork. Hundreds of Manitoba-based businesses got their start and flourished as a result of this exemption, especially with the rise of e-commerce.

But with the U.S. administration's recent decision to walk back that exemption in August, many sales opportunities with our neighbours to the south have ground to a halt – and the fallout is being felt across the province's business community.



Northlore Goods

Natassia Brazeau is the owner and operator of Northlore Goods in Winnipeg.

WHAT DE MINIMIS MEANS... AND WHY IT MATTERS

Before the change, issued as an executive order by President Donald Trump, lower-value goods could be shipped into the U.S. almost as easily as mailing a letter. With the end of *de minimis* – a Latin expression that means “pertaining to minimal things” – every shipment now potentially faces a slew of barriers, including tariffs, brokerage fees and supply chain documentation requirements. For many small operators, these added costs are eating into their bottom line, making cross-border trade less viable.

MANITOBA BUSINESSES FEELING THE PINCH

Jade Pearce, owner of PNP Games in Winnipeg, has seen his U.S. revenues shrink considerably. His company operates three retail stores and an online business with about 40 employees.

“Many of our U.S. customers are unhappy with the tariffs,” says Pearce. “Nobody benefits from the added costs and complexity.”

“It is very frustrating and trying to train employees on new processes or customs rules is certainly challenging,” he says.

Pearce is now working directly with third-party logistics partners south of the border to overhaul some of his logistics to store more inventory directly in the U.S. to minimize tariff fees.

For Natassia Brazeau, founder of Winnipeg-based Northlore Goods, the change has also been disruptive. Her business selling body care products made from locally-grown plants had steady U.S. sales – up to 20 per cent of her revenue.

“I chose to halt business-to-consumer sales to the



Brazeau's company sells locally-grown and hand-harvested plant-based skin care products.

U.S. but have also not received any U.S. business orders,” she explained.

Brazeau has since refocused her energy on expanding Canadian markets. She has recently picked up new wholesale clients in Saskatoon, Ottawa and Toronto, which have already made up for lost U.S. sales.



GHY International

Chris Bachinski, the co-chief executive officer and president of GHY International, has been with the company since 2017.

BROAD IMPACT, BUT MITIGATION STRATEGIES EXIST

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) estimates that about 30 per cent of its more than 5,000 Manitoba members have been directly or indirectly affected by the de minimis change, based on its recent survey of small business leaders.

According to CFIB senior policy analyst Tyler Slobogian, many companies have shifted focus to boosting their domestic markets and looking into new ones in Europe, while also struggling to contain costs.

“Over 20 per cent of our members told us they passed on cost increases due to these tariffs onto their customers,” says Slobogian.

Meanwhile, GHY International co-chief executive office and president Chris Bachinski has watched the chaos unfold from the customs brokerage side.

“It’s chaos,” he says of small businesses being blindsided by surprise brokerage fees. “People are sending samples down



CFIB

Tyler Slobogian is the senior policy analyst for the CFIB’s Prairies and North regions.

to an interested U.S. buyer – samples valued at \$50 – and they have to pay \$50 in brokerage to get it cleared.”

“Up until this change, the uncertainty had been causing tons of challenges for regular customs brokerage and now adding additional volumes [caused by the elimination of de minimis], it’s just continuing to tax our organization to keep up and provide the service we’re known for,” says Bachinski.

Some businesses can potentially avoid costs if they get necessary paperwork to prove their products qualify for tariff exemptions under the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUMSA), but Bachinski says many smaller players simply don’t have the capacity or resources to go down this road.

What Prairie entrepreneurs are saying about the trade war

- 16 per cent of Prairie small and medium enterprises (SMEs) exported products to the U.S. before the trade war began.
- 48 per cent of Prairie SMEs are or will soon be CUMSA compliant.
- Elimination of de minimis has negatively impacted 31 per cent of Prairie SMEs.
- 26 per cent of Prairie SMEs are seeking out new suppliers and markets in Europe and 28 per cent in Mexico.
- Of these SMEs, 75 per cent reported reduced profits, 35 per cent have outright cancelled orders and 55 per cent have paused contracts.

— Source: CFIB membership survey, September 2025

RESILIENCE ON FULL DISPLAY

Despite the uncertainty, local businesses and other organizations are showing a great deal of resilience in the face of adversity.

Entrepreneurs like Brazeau are strengthening domestic supply chains, while Pearce is adapting his distribution model. The CFIB is pushing Ottawa to further support small businesses through tax relief and direct rebates. And Manitoba’s new

economic development strategy, launched this past fall, aims to boost competitiveness through investment incentives and workforce training.

As Canadians wait for trade agreements with the U.S. to take shape, Pearce has his own strategy: “We’re planning for flexibility rather than certainty.”



PNP Games

Winnipeg-based PNP Games started as a home-based business selling on eBay in 2005. Today it has three retail locations and ships vintage video games worldwide.

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THE BODY SLAM BUSINESS

Canadian Wrestling's Elite blends enterprise and passion

BY SHELLEY COOK

BEYOND the body slams and kayfabe storylines, independent wrestling has become a small-business ecosystem with devoted fans across the country. In Manitoba, Canadian Wrestling's Elite (CWE) is at the centre of that boom.

CWE may thrill audiences with high-flying moves and dramatic rivalries, but behind the curtain, it is a touring company with the pressures of a small business. It runs more than 100 live events a year across five provinces, demanding logistics, sponsorship and risk management rarely seen outside major promotions.

Founded in 2009 in Winnipeg by veteran wrestler Danny Warren, better known as "Hotshot" Danny Duggan, CWE has staged nearly 1,000 shows and grown into Canada's only national touring wrestling company.

"When I came back to Winnipeg after wrestling across Canada and the U.S., there were lots of shows but no platform for wrestlers who wanted to achieve more," Warren says. "Outside of WWE, nobody else in the country is touring like we do. It's a full-time job, 24/7."

For Alberta-born wrestler Cameron Toms, known in the ring as CAM!!ikaze, CWE isn't just a stage – it's a livelihood. With his long colourful braids and high energy, Toms has turned CWE into his career.

"CWE is my bread and butter," he says. "They've kept me one of the busiest wrestlers in Canada. On tour we're sometimes wrestling twice a day – I did 44 matches in 22

Alberta-born wrestler Cameron Toms is known in the ring as CAM!!ikaze.

All photos from CWE



days. It's intense, but it's paying the bills and it's all I ever wanted to do."

CWE operates as a midsize business. Every tour requires the same diligence as any other small enterprise – securing venues, negotiating sponsorships and ensuring the product delivers. The company also books fairs and festivals, and positions itself as a community partner to stay top-of-mind with local decision-makers.

"We've built our brand on partnerships," he says. "Let's get everybody involved and make them part of the team."

With venues, travel, equipment, insurance and accommodations being paid up front, it creates pressure on cash flow and ticket sales. Warren reduces risk by working with trusted promoters and keeping a lean, dependable roster.

"We have to have people we trust in these local markets," Warren says. "Otherwise, it's not financially or physically viable."

Independent wrestlers themselves work as contractors. They negotiate bookings, travel across provinces and build reputations and personas that may eventually translate into steady income. The independent wrestling



circuit offers flexibility, allowing wrestlers to work with more than one wrestling promotion.

For years, Winnipeg's wrestling scene was fragmented, with promoters enforcing exclusivity.

"It was very political. If you wrestled for one organization, you didn't wrestle for another. It really limited your ability to get good at this job. So, when CWE started, we did away with that. If you wrestle here, you're welcome to wrestle anywhere else, as long as it's professional and courteous," Warren says.

That openness has helped wrestlers develop and build fan bases. Merchandise is a major part of that.

"Merch is huge," says Toms. "I sell T-shirts, hoodies, flags, keychains, even temporary tattoos. You need variety at different price points so anyone in the crowd can take something home."

Sponsorship is just as critical. Hundreds of small businesses, gyms, hotels, restaurants and after-party hosts provide cash or in-kind support. Warren is always open to explore partnership opportunities.

"Without local sponsorship, ticket prices would have to be at a point that probably wouldn't be viable for the consumer," Warren explains.

**EVERY TOUR
REQUIRES THE
SAME DILIGENCE AS
ANY OTHER SMALL
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SECURING VENUES,
NEGOTIATING
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AND ENSURING THE
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THE COMPANY ALSO
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AS A COMMUNITY
PARTNER TO STAY
TOP-OF-MIND
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“IT’S THE KIDS THAT MAKE IT SPECIAL. WHEN THEY BUY IN, IT RIPPLES THROUGH THE CROWD. FOR A FEW HOURS, PEOPLE FORGET THEIR BILLS AND THEIR STRESS. THAT’S THE MAGIC OF WRESTLING.”

— Wrestler Cameron Toms on the small-town Manitoba support that makes the schedule worthwhile

CWE’s model focuses on small and mid-sized communities, where competition for entertainment dollars is lower and word-of-mouth spreads quickly.

“When you go into small-town Manitoba, it doesn’t take long for everybody in town to find out you’re coming,” Warren says.

For wrestlers, that support makes the schedule worthwhile.

“It’s the kids that make it special,” says Toms. “When they buy in, it ripples through the crowd. For a few hours, people forget their bills and their stress. That’s the magic of wrestling.”

Despite CWE’s scale, few wrestlers in Canada make their entire living from the ring. Most balance day jobs with weekend bookings. Warren is one of the rare exceptions as CWE is its own business, while Toms has earned a reputation as one of the busiest wrestlers in the country.

Toms describes a career built on persistence: training at 17, travelling for experience and slowly building a reputation. Early pay was meager – often less than gas money – but steady bookings and



merchandise sales eventually tipped the scales.

“It takes years of hustling, getting your name out there, proving yourself,” he says. “Now I can make a living at it, but it didn’t happen overnight.”

BOTH Warren and Toms agree wrestling is in a boom period. Packed houses in towns like Steinbach and Grunthal prove demand is strong, but they know the industry is cyclical.

“Right now, we’re seeing a boom but there are times when wrestling’s not cool in pop culture and the business will drop accordingly,” Warren says.

“It started blooming a couple of years ago. I think we still have some time on this wave but we’ve got to ride it,” adds Toms.

As CWE grows, both men are looking ahead. Warren continues refining his touring model, while Toms is mentoring younger talent and sees himself moving into talent relations. What unites them is a belief that independent wrestling isn’t just entertainment – it is a small business built on discipline, diversification and community ties.

“Whatever preconceptions you have about pro wrestling are probably false,” Warren says. “Take a chance on it. You may end up a fan – or a business partner.”

Churchill: Canada's next major port



BY CHRIS AVERY
PRESIDENT AND CEO,
ARCTIC GATEWAY GROUP

CHURCHILL is ready to step up as Canada's next major port and the federal government's support for Churchill Plus can make it happen.

The Churchill Plus plan builds on real progress: a revitalized railway, Indigenous and local ownership committed for the long haul, and new industry partnerships. Exports are already moving beyond grain to include critical minerals, potash and fertilizer feedstocks, supported by new investments in the port. With Churchill Plus, the Hudson Bay Railway – the only rail line in North America connected to the Arctic Ocean – would be further upgraded to Class One standards and the port opened to year-round shipping with icebreakers, facilitating the potential for an energy corridor, liquefied natural gas exports and an all-season road. Taken together, this plan would transform Manitoba with a true national trade corridor at Churchill.

To get to the place where this kind of plan is possible, we've had to overcome decades of neglect. In the past, the port and rail were placed in the hands of American owners who pulled profits while neglecting basic maintenance. The 2017 washout that cut off northern communities for a year and a half was not an act of nature,

but a preventable failure caused by the neglect of basic maintenance. It never should have happened and when it did, the American owners turned their backs and walked away.

Today, the port and railway have been repatriated and are proudly owned by 29 First Nations and 12 northern communities. Ownership is local and deeply invested in keeping these assets strong and using them to build a better future. With new tools like LiDAR (light detection and ranging), drones, ground-penetrating radar and artificial intelligence, we can monitor and maintain the railway with precision. The results speak for themselves: freight traffic has doubled, travel times are down by three hours and Manitoba-mined critical minerals have been shipped to European markets through Churchill two years in a row.

Momentum is building and the next step is Churchill Plus, which would place Manitoba at the heart of diversifying Canada's trade routes, growing the energy economy and advancing Canada's Arctic sovereignty, all while delivering meaningful economic benefits to our northern and Indigenous ownership group.

While the whole Churchill Plus plan is ambitious, there are two key components that have the potential to open Churchill to a greater range of private investment and chart a bold new future for Manitoba's North.

First, upgrading the Hudson Bay Railway to the same standards as the railways that run to the Port of Vancouver, Montreal and other major

ports. That means building it up to carry any commodity, reliably and efficiently, with better service for local communities and a more diversified range of exports that can be shipped through the Port of Churchill. Those who say it's not possible because of permafrost are wrong. Canada has built and maintained thousands of kilometres of linear infrastructure across permafrost and Arctic terrain. What's been missing in the past is the will to do it.

Second, Churchill Plus could bring year-round shipping with dedicated icebreaking. Climate change is altering Hudson Bay and Canada has the Arctic shipping and icebreaking expertise to navigate it responsibly. By bringing together northern communities, rights holders, academia, tourism, the military and more, we can do this in a way that protects the North and builds our economy.

Together, these investments would transform Churchill from a regional outlet into a true national trade corridor. One that would ease congestion at southern ports, open new global markets for Western Canadian industries, strengthen sovereignty in the North and advance reconciliation in real economic terms.

That is the future of Churchill and of Canada's Arctic Trade Corridor. The ownership is local, the railway is strong and governments are serious about Churchill Plus.

Churchill is ready. Canada is ready. Let's rally behind Churchill Plus and let's build Canada's next great port.

Churchill is ready. Canada is ready.

Let's rally behind Churchill Plus and let's build Canada's next great port.

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