FALL 2026 VOLUME 6 ISSUE 3

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# Not For Sale




**Winnipeg-based IT provider 365 Technologies bucks the industry trend by staying local**




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# TARIFFS 101

IT'S not a good sign for business when students in a high school economics classes have a better grasp on international trade concepts than the leader of the free world.



Manitoba companies in a number of sectors, including plastics, furniture, paper, wood, machinery and beverages, are being squeezed by the latest round of tariffs imposed by U.S. president Donald Trump.

As with most things with this U.S. administration, the tariffs are more bluster than substance. They impact about $28 billion worth of Canadian exports to the U.S. or about five per cent of what we ship south of the 49th parallel.

Economists estimate the tariffs will reduce Canadian GDP by 0.6 per cent to 0.9 per cent and considering the resiliency shown by the Canadian economy since the first found of tariffs were imposed in March 2025, they're not expecting a recession.

A big part of Trump's rationale for the tariffs in the first place is the U.S. has a trade deficit with Canada. We're "ripping them off."

Right there Trump would have failed Mr. Dickens' Grade 11 Economics class at Kelvin High School in the mid-1980s.

All a trade deficit means is that one country buys more goods and services from the other than the other way around. Are there any two countries in the world that are at trading equilibrium? Highly doubtful.

It's not like there's interest to be paid on it. It's just a statistic.

Alan Arcand, chief economist at the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, put it best on our latest edition of the Manitoba Inc. podcast.

"The best way to think about a trade deficit is to never think about a trade deficit," he said.

It simply doesn't impact your life as key indicators, such as the inflation rate and unemployment rate, do.

Arcand admits to having a trade deficit of his own — with Amazon.

"I purchase a lot of goods from Amazon and they've never purchased a single thing from me.

Amazon is ripping me off," he says, in one of the best examples of economist humour I've ever heard.

"Canada runs an overall trade deficit. The average Canadian doesn't know that or care. It just doesn't matter."

So, we've got Trump making trade policy based on an inconsequential metric and calling us "nasty."

Arcand says there's no question that some companies, particularly smaller and medium-sized ones, will be impacted by the tariffs.

But the more that Canada can diversify its trading partnerships with other countries — hello, European Union — that impact will be minimized. He's confident that Canada has the necessary expertise around the trade negotiating table and it certainly helps that Prime Minister Mark Carney is an economist.

"I think that's good. But I'm biased," he says.

Me, too. But it doesn't take much. I passed Grade 11 Economics.

*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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## BROOK THALGOTT

Brook Thalgott is a writer, editor and communications professional with more than 20 years of experience. She writes and edits for several business and trade magazines and loves telling the stories of the people, businesses and communities that make Western Canada such an interesting place to live and work.



## 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.



## JACQUES MARCOUX

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.



## 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.



## ALISON GILLMOR

**Born and raised (mostly) in Winnipeg, Alison Gillmor is a freelance journalist and educator. When she's not walking her dog, she reviews movies for the *Winnipeg Free Press* and teaches film in the McNally Community Classroom. She has written on art, books and design for *The Walrus*, *Border Crossings*, *Canadian Geographic*, *Canada's History*, *The Globe and Mail* and the Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.**



## 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.



## 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.**




# Local for the long run – GUARANTEED

Photos by Tanner Banas

**365 Technologies monitors clients' networks and systems from its Winnipeg office to help identify and respond to potential cyberthreats.**

## Winnipeg-based IT provider 365 Technologies bucks the industry trend by staying local

365 Technologies is here to give your company the most precious of commodities – the ability to operate without interruption.

Every part of a business, whether it's invoicing, payroll, client records, scheduling, contracts, communication and others, runs through technology.

And as a business grows, the scope of each function becomes more complex, making it increasingly difficult – impossible, really – for an internal staff member to handle.

Everything can run smoothly for years, until it doesn't. Systems don't get patched, hardware ages out and that's when a company is vulnerable to a cyberattack.

"When your system goes down and nobody knows how to fix it, that's lost time, lost productivity, lost money and, perhaps more importantly, reputational damage," says Michael Anderson, president and CEO of 365 Technologies. "A managed IT service takes care of all of this."

The good news for the Manitoba business community is you don't need to go to an international firm to get the IT services you need. Small and medium-sized businesses can outsource their IT requirements to 365.

The Winnipeg-based company is a managed IT services provider that works with small and medium-sized businesses that have "outgrown the boss's nephew doing IT on the weekends."



**Michael Anderson, president and CEO of 365 Technologies, says the company gives small and medium-sized businesses access to a full team of IT professionals.**

Founded in 2010, it is the outsourced IT company for more than 90 organizations supporting 3,000 managed users across Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Its clients range from companies with a dozen computer users on the low end up to 150 on the high side.

365, which has more than 230 Google reviews, provides 24/7 help desk services, project management, technology consulting, cyber security, backup and disaster recovery.

"We give our clients access to an entire team of IT professionals at a lower cost than if they hired a dedicated internal staff member. It gives them a scalable option as they grow. We've had companies start with us at 20 users and they're at 50, 60 or 80 computer users now," Anderson says.

The managed IT industry is undergoing "massive" consolidation, similar to what's happening with insurance companies, dental offices and veterinarian clinics, Anderson says. A number of 365's local competitors have been sold over the last few years and such transactions — despite initial claims to the contrary — have invariably led to changes in the client experience.

The changes are small at first – your account manager leaves. But then they start to grow – the support line is routed somewhere unfamiliar and service tiers are standardized to a national template that wasn't built with your firm in mind. Then prices change at renewal and you discover that the people making decisions about your technology have never met your staff, the people who have to live with those decisions.

**"We give our clients access to an entire team of IT professionals at a lower cost than if they hired a dedicated internal staff member. It gives them a scalable option as they grow. We've had companies start with us at 20 users and they're at 50, 60 or 80 computer users now."**

*— Michael Anderson, president and CEO 365 Technologies*




365 Technologies employees connect at the company's newly constructed office.

## CLOSING THE GAP

365 Technologies wants its clients to get the most out of the technology at their disposal.

It offers hands-on training for teams so they can work smarter, faster and more confidently with the tools they're already paying for. Most companies only use a fraction of the technology at their disposal.

The training includes live webinars, workshops and personalized training so clients and their employees can close the gap between having great technology and using it to fuel the growth of their business.

"That's what happens when you don't have ownership that's rooted in the communities that they're serving. That's not what we want to be. We're committed to the communities we serve," he says.

Anderson doesn't just talk the talk, he puts it in writing. The "365 Promise" features a local ownership guarantee that's part of its service agreement with clients. The guarantee enables clients to exit their contract with 365 if the company is sold to a foreign company.

Another reason for outsourcing IT to the experts is cyber insurers are increasingly requiring additional proof for how a company manages its systems, including what security controls are in place, whether backups are tested, even proof that staff have continued security awareness training. If a business can't meet those standards, premiums go up, coverage gets declined or a claim doesn't get paid after an incident.

Anderson is adamant about not doing a local "wash" to make it appear that 365 is local if it's not. There are many companies that used to be Canadian and now have American owners but still wrap themselves in the Maple Leaf. (Hello, Tim Hortons.) He admits ownership isn't likely something that prospective clients think about when evaluating an IT provider but he wants to change that.

We've all had a great relationship with a company, a restaurant or a store and then something changes and it's fundamentally different. You're dealing with a completely different group of people. We put our money where our mouth is. This is our home, this is where we're invested. These are our communities and our participation



365 Technologies employees work in the company's 5,000-square-foot office in southeast Winnipeg.

in these communities isn't going anywhere," he says.

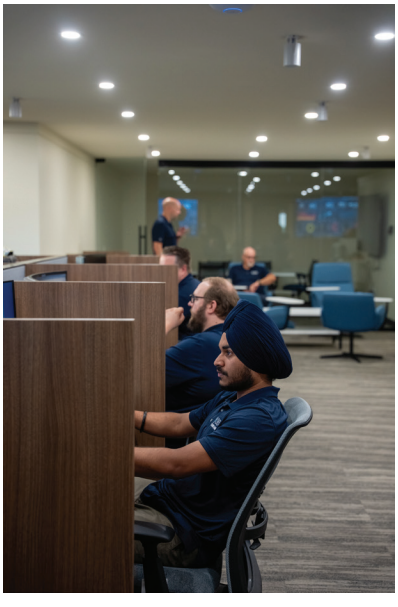
Anderson is quick to note that 365 doesn't do IT support by the hour or on an ad hoc basis. He much prefers to have clients who are fully on board. By farming out their IT needs to 365, clients are able to focus their attention on what they do best – running their companies and growing them. They can be confident that the people handling the technology know the business behind it and aren't going anywhere.

"Everything we do is a flat rate per user per month. It's unlimited support with a very predictable cost. Being in a reactive mode where the only time we hear from clients is when the house is on fire, that wasn't how we wanted to operate. We don't profit from our clients' pain. It's quite the opposite. When our clients grow, we grow, too. When a client struggles, we feel it. We are profitable when our clients are stable and productive," he says.

There's no question the model is working as 365 has seen its annual revenues grow from less than $3 million five years ago to more than $5 million in 2026.

Because its business model has recurring revenue, 365 – which recently moved into 5,000-square feet of newly constructed office space in southeast Winnipeg – is "highly attractive" to private equity firms.

"I get three to five offers a week to buy 365 Technologies," he says, noting he has turned them all down.



IT professionals at 365 Technologies work closely with partners to monitor cybersecurity threats. AI threats are rising, as are all others, and 24/7 monitoring flags and shuts down at-risk identities in real time.



365 Technologies employee monitor client systems from the company's Winnipeg office.

"But I made my company harder to sell. If you're a private equity group or a U.S.-based company trying to buy 365, all of my customers are free to walk if we sell. I would no longer have any agreements in place for my clients if I sold."

"We're local for the long run. Guaranteed."

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## THE 365 PROMISE

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# QUESO, Manitobans love Mexican



Manitoba's appetite for Mexican food is creating opportunities for a new generation of local restaurant owners and chefs

BY CARLY PETERS

IF you had a hankering for a taco in the 1980s, you were likely tucking into a large platter — complete with rice, refried beans and a generous glob of sour cream — at Chi-Chi's Mexican Restaurante.

While the menu was undoubtedly Americanized Tex-Mex, it was many Manitobans' first taste of south-of-the-border dishes. And they ate it up.

At one point, Chi-Chi's on Maroons Road was the largest freestanding restaurant in Canada, with seating for 400 people looking to indulge in complimentary baskets of warm tortilla chips, smothered enchiladas and chimichangas, the chain's most popular dish. Located across the street from Winnipeg Stadium and Winnipeg Arena, the Polo Park locale was a hot spot for pre-game crowds tipping back cheap beer and margaritas. The Regent Avenue location was equally hopping during the happy-hour taco bar. And no doubt, most Winnipeggers celebrated at least one birthday there, serenaded by lively, clapping staff, while being served the restaurant's signature deep-fried ice cream.

When Chi-Chi's closed its two Winnipeg restaurants in the early '90s, it left a burrito-sized hole in restaurant goers' heart and a legacy that makes it one of the top spots people still wish would return to the city.

The rumour mill is stirring up something as spicy as picante salsa — it might.

Chi-Chi's reopened last October in St. Louis Park, Minn. Michael McDermott, the son of chain founder Marno McDermott, struck a deal with Hormel Foods, which owns the trademark, to revive the beloved brand.

"Chi-Chi's is back stronger than ever," McDermott said in a statement. "We're bringing back the food, energy and fun that people love, now with a fresh twist for a whole new generation."



Chi Chi's closed its two Winnipeg locations in the '90s.



Carlos & Murphy's in Osborne Village has long filled a gap for local Mexican-style dining.

The brand's rebirth was built hand-in-hand with its fans as more than 2,000 people invested $2.3 million through the restaurant's crowdfunding campaign. It notes there are plans for a second location in Minnesota and possible future franchise options.

McDermott was noncommittal about Chi-Chi's returning to Winnipeg and Canada.

"Not at this time, but that could change," he said.

But while Manitobans wait to see whether the chain makes a comeback, local businesses have been serving up Mexican-inspired food for decades.

While Chi-Chi's left us hungry, Carlos & Murphy's has filled stomachs and become a fixture in the community with its Tex-Mex for 40 years.

Nick Diacos and his sister Jennie started the Osborne Village restaurant in 1986, filling a gap for local Mexican-style dining. Great staff, affordability and a vibrant atmosphere paired with comfort-focused cantina fare have drawn generations of Manitobans, making it one of the city's oldest standalone establishments.

"We don't take that lightly," says current owner Daniel Henry, who bought Carlos & Murphy's just over five years ago. "We are a lot people's watering hole after work. A lot of people had their first date here. It's an institution and people love it."

Their massive menu, which has remained relatively untouched for the past four decades, features 100 items, including their famous nachos, Carlos Wings and hearty enchiladas and burritos.

But while Carlos & Murphy's still sells countless chimichangas, Henry recognizes that tastes are evolving. While growth in Mexican cuisine in Canada is largely driven by quick-service restaurants (QSRs) — brands like Taco Time Canada and Chipotle Mexican Grill continue to expand their footprints — there is a notable appetite for authentic options. Travel, the internet and food-delivery apps have expanded people's understanding and appreciation of the complex sauces, slow-cooked meats, corn tortillas and fresh toppings that define traditional Mexican food.

MANITOBA has also been enriched by a growing, diverse population that brings heritage, traditions and culture, broadening local culinary horizons for the better.

Cristhel Pipper, co-owner and chef of La Taqueria Mexican Street Tacos, came to Winnipeg from Veracruz, Mexico, to visit her daughter, but ended up falling in love and launching a taco food truck.

It's the simplified version of the former professor's story, who is now focused, alongside her husband Lyle Jackman, on operating a bustling restaurant on Ness Avenue and a high-demand food truck.

While her mother would never let her cook at home, Pipper's nanny would sneak her into the kitchen to learn the regional dishes of Veracruz, which emphasize fresh-grown ingredients, lighter sauces and slow-cooked meats.

Making authentic Mexican food is a true labour of love. When the couple first opened their food truck in 2011, Pipper would start her day at 2 a.m., roasting beef and pork inside Classic Billiards' kitchen during off-hours. Jackman would swing by later to load everything into the car before delivering it to the truck, where Pipper would prep and plate.



Supplied by La Taqueria Mexican Street Tacos

**La Taqueria Mexican Street Tacos feature fresh-grown ingredients, lighter sauces and slow-cooked meats.**

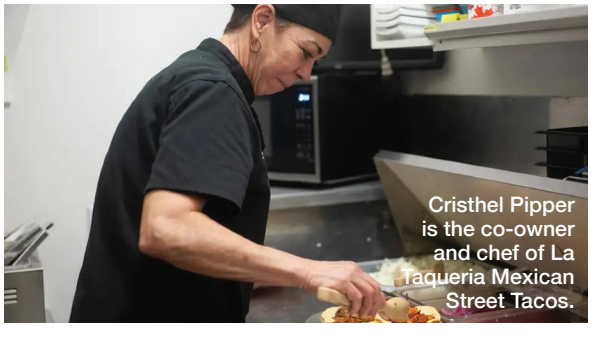
"We laugh because I'd always have my back to the customers cooking, so all they would see is this white guy serving authentic Mexican tacos to them," she says.

Today, Pipper is in their own restaurant's kitchen — still early, but 5 a.m. now — alongside a co-chef who hails from Mexico City. Jackman claims their signature dish is the Yucatan-style cochinita pibil tacos, while Pipper argues it's the birria with red salsa.

Whatever you order, it's guaranteed authentic—literally. In June, La Taqueria was awarded the prestigious Mexican Gastronomic M Seal. This official distinction is presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Mexican Academy of Gastronomy for serving 100 per cent authentic Mexican gastronomy, preserving traditional cooking techniques and honouring Mexico's rich cultural heritage.

While Pipper appreciates praise from her local patrons, there is something extra special, and validating, about this recognition. "Who would criticize me more than a Mexican?" she laughs, noting it fuels her to continue teaching customers about the flavours of Mexico. "If someone asked me to do Tex-Mex food, I'd say 'over my dead body.' My ancestors would be rolling over in their graves."

Luckily, Manitobans have plenty of places to get schooled.



Cristhel Pipper is the co-owner and chef of La Taqueria Mexican Street Tacos.



Supplied by Berto's Taqueria

**Berto's Taqueria in Windsor Park specializes in suadero tacos.**

- Led by Peruvian-born chef Roberto Cano Rodriguez, Berto's Taqueria recently opened a new location in Windsor Park. Cano Rodriguez started cooking his Mexican street tacos out of a ghost kitchen in Tommy's Pizzeria before opening a physical location on Main Street (which has since closed with the new spot). He has won Taco Week with his suadero tacos, which features slow-braised brisket confit crisped on the grill, though the seasoned barbacoa remains a constant crowd favourite. Vegetarian note: try the mushroom chipotle tacos; you can thank us later.

- Rigoberto and Betty Calderon-Villaseñor transitioned BMC Market from a Mexican product store into a full-blown taqueria in 2011. Across the restaurant's two locations, Betty pays homage to her grandmother's Michoacán recipes by hand-making thick corn tortillas, pressed to order and topped with fresh salsas and slow-roasted meats, including their signature, tender barbacoa.

- When Sargent Taco chef and owner Carlos Bosque moved to Winnipeg nearly 20 years ago, he couldn't find the tacos he loved from back home in Mexico City, so he made them himself. Out of this small shop comes big-flavour street food, featuring classics like vibrant al pastor tacos and specialties like the quesabirria - corn tortillas stuffed with melted cheese, tender beef, fresh cilantro and onions, served with a side of savoury birria broth for dipping.



Supplied by BMC Market

**BMC Market's tacos feature slow-roasted meats, including their signature, barbacoa.**

- If burritos are your thing, chef-owners Marvin and Mayra Dubon dish up hefty portions at JC's Tacos and More. The regular burrito — a 12-inch tortilla stuffed with rice, beans, your choice of meat, lettuce and house-made pico de gallo — is easily enough for two, though they also offer a shareable El Señor option. The "more" on the menu includes Marvin's Salvadoran specialties, like pupusas and empanadas.

- You might be surprised to find that some of the most authentic Mexican flavours lie outside Winnipeg. Winkler offers a few options (we don't have space here for a full history lesson on the connection between Mennonites and Mexico), including Flavours of Mexico. Owned by the Rodriguez family, the restaurant/store boasts a massive scratch-made menu, featuring fresh salsas and sauces you can buy by the jar to take home. Or, pop out to Portage la Prairie for Mole Guacamole's namesake signature dish: mole guacamole enchiladas, tacos and empanadas served with homemade chips and salsa.



Supplied by Flavour of Mexico

**Flavours of Mexico in Winkler boasts a scratch-made menu.**



Supplied by JC's Tacos and More

**The menu at JC's Tacos and More on Henderson Highway includes burritos, pupusas and empanadas.**



Supplied by Sargent Taco

**Sargent Taco features Mexican classics like pastor tacos.**

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# MANITOBA INC.

# BUSINESS BRIEFS

## Highlights from Manitoba business




Wawanesa photo

## WAWANESA DEAL BOOSTS COMMERCIAL INSURANCE

Wawanesa Mutual Insurance Co. is expanding its commercial insurance capabilities with the acquisition of Everest Insurance Company of Canada, adding specialized products and expertise that will broaden its reach among Canadian businesses.

Wawanesa announced Sept. 8 that it has received all required regulatory approvals to complete the acquisition from Everest Group Ltd. The transaction, first announced in March, is expected to close before the end of the year, subject to customary closing conditions.

The deal will bring Everest Canada's portfolio of specialty commercial insurance products, employees and industry expertise into the Wawanesa group of companies. Everest Canada will continue to operate as a distinct entity following the closing.

For Manitoba, the acquisition adds scale to one of the province's largest financial services companies and strengthens Winnipeg's position as a base for businesses serving national markets.

The expanded offering will give Wawanesa greater capacity to serve companies with specialized or complex insurance needs, supporting its strategy to diversify and grow its commercial insurance business.

"This is a major milestone in our journey to serve more Canadian organizations across an even broader range of industries, complex risks and unique needs," said Evan Johnston, president and CEO of Wawanesa.

Founded in Winnipeg in 1896, Wawanesa reported more than $4.1 billion in annual revenue in 2025 and $12.5 billion in assets. It serves more than 1.8 million members across Canada and is the parent company of Wawanesa Life and Western Financial Group.

The acquisition comes as businesses face increasingly complex risks, including supply-chain disruptions and severe weather. Greater access to specialized insurance products can help companies manage those risks as they invest and expand.

The transaction adds scale and commercial expertise to a Manitoba-headquartered company while expanding the insurance options available to businesses across Canada.

## STANDARDAERO EXPANSION STRENGTHENS MANITOBA AEROSPACE

StandardAero has completed an expansion of its Winnipeg maintenance facility, adding capacity to one of Manitoba's key export-oriented industries and strengthening the city's role as an aerospace hub.

The project adds about 70,000 square feet to the facility, increasing its overall footprint by nearly 40 per cent. The Manitoba government supported the expansion with a $3-million investment.

The additional space will allow StandardAero to handle more maintenance, repair and overhaul work on GE Aerospace CF34-3/8 and CFM International CFM56-7B engines, which power commercial and military aircraft.

For Manitoba's economy, the expansion increases the capacity of a Winnipeg operation serving customers in Canada and international markets. It also creates potential opportunities for local suppliers and service providers supporting aerospace maintenance and manufacturing.

Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation Minister Jamie Moses said the project will support economic growth, increase provincial exports and create jobs.

"The aerospace industry has long been a cornerstone of Manitoba's economy and an important part of who we are as a province," Moses said.

StandardAero has operated in Winnipeg for more than a century and traces its roots to the city. Continued investment keeps high-value aerospace work in Manitoba while giving the operation more capacity to compete for global business.

"Our new, larger facility is central to how we support the CF34 and CFM56 programs that power some of the world's most widely flown aircraft," said Peter Wheatley, vice-president and general manager, CF34/CFM56 at StandardAero.

The expansion strengthens Manitoba's aerospace supply chain and advanced manufacturing sector while supporting demand for specialized services, industrial supplies, transportation and engineering.

The province said the project reinforces Manitoba's position as a leading aerospace centre and supports growth in advanced manufacturing and aerospace innovation.

## ABACUS DATA EXPANDS MANITOBA PRESENCE WITH PROBE RESEARCH ACQUISITION

Abacus Data is expanding its presence in Western Canada with the acquisition of Winnipeg-based Probe Research, creating a new Prairie base for the national public opinion and market research firm.

The deal brings Probe's 30 years of Manitoba market knowledge and its full team under the Abacus Data banner. Winnipeg will serve as the company's hub for Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, giving Manitoba businesses access to a larger national research operation while retaining a local team and presence.

For Probe clients, the acquisition is expected to expand the research tools and capacity available to them. Abacus Data's national infrastructure includes regular national surveys and a larger team of researchers, strategists and analysts. The company also works with corporations, associations, governments and other organizations across North America.

Probe principals Curtis Brown and Mary Agnes Welch will become Abacus Data shareholders. Brown will serve as vice-president and managing director of the company's Western Canadian business, leading its growth across the Prairies. Welch will become vice-president, qualitative and chief of talent and culture, while continuing to work with clients in Manitoba and elsewhere.

The acquisition also gives Manitoba businesses a company with deeper capacity to connect local market insights with national research and consumer trends. That could be particularly relevant to businesses operating across provincial markets or looking to understand how Manitoba consumers compare with Canadians elsewhere.

The Probe Research brand will transition to Abacus Data over the coming months, but the Winnipeg office and team will remain in place.

# About Cardinal

## A Common Sense Path to Long-Term Wealth

*Where our ability to translate common sense into concrete results has been the cornerstone of our clients' success.*

Cardinal Capital Management is an independent, employee-owned investment firm founded in 1992. For over 30 years, we have helped high-net-worth individuals, families and advisors build and preserve wealth through a disciplined, value-based investment approach. We aim to deliver consistent, above-average returns while assuming below-average risk.

### What We Believe

Successful investing isn't about reacting — it's about staying disciplined.

- Own great businesses, not markets
- Focus on dividend income that grows over time
- Ignore short-term noise
- Let compounding do the heavy lifting

### Why Cardinal

- Over 30 years of consistent, disciplined investing
- $5.7+ billion in assets under management
- 100% employee-owned — fulled aligned with clients
- In-house research, no reliance on external opinions
- Offices across Canada: Winnipeg, Calgary, Brandon, Toronto, Edmonton, Kelowna
- Direct access to the portfolio managers managing your investments

### How We Invest

We focus on high-quality companies with strong balance sheets, reliable earnings and a proven ability to dividends.

Our portfolios are designed to generate a growing stream of income, which over time drives long-term portfolio value.

***Because it works.***

### Who We Help

- Individuals and families seeking a disciplined, long-term investment approach
- Professionals approaching retirement who want to turn savings into sustainable income
- Business owners and incorporated professionals balancing personal and corporate planning
- Families focused on wealth transfer, legacy planning, and multi-generational outcomes.

### What This Means for You

An integrated approach that simplifies decisions and strengthens long-term outcomes.

- One coordinated plan so that your investments and financial plan work together
- Better conversations so you understand trade-offs and make clearer decisions with fewer blind spots
- Planning depth where it matters so retirement income, estate considerations, and legacy goals are always considered
- Continuity you can rely on with a team-based approach designed for long-term stability



To learn more about Cardinal and how it can help you reach your retirement goals, please contact Cielo McKee, client relationship representative at Cardinal. Cielo is committed to helping individuals and families navigate the complexities of financial planning with clarity, compassion and confidence.

With more than 20 years of experience in the financial services industry, she has built lasting relationships based on trust and a personalized approach to each client's unique goals. Whether guiding families through major life transitions, planning for retirement or building a legacy for future generations, Cielo focuses on delivering thoughtful, customized strategies that prioritize long-term well-being.

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

Jeff Swystun has been a trusted and entertaining source on branding and marketing issues in Winnipeg and across North America for three decades. He was miles ahead of the curve on branding – informing us that a brand was a relationship based on trust – back when most of us thought it was nothing more than a logo.

"Swys" has been a valued contributor to Manitoba Inc. for a couple of years, both in the magazine and on our podcast. He loved to hear ideas about the magazine's growth and future and provided invaluable insight on those ideas. He was prolific and loved to tell the stories of iconic companies and would-be iconic companies.

Jeff died unexpectedly in September, shortly after filing a number of columns for our magazine and our website.

He was a uniquely funny and knowledgeable guy and utterly unforgettable. We will miss him immensely.

*Geoff Kirbyson, publisher, Manitoba Inc.*

# The High Cost of Poor Business Writing



BY JEFF SWYSTUN
**BRANDING**

WRITING is a skill. It affects every function of a business because it shapes how people understand, trust and act. Strong writing is not just a communications skill, it is a business performance skill. Every email, proposal, website, report, advertisement, presentation or strategy document either moves an idea forward or slows it down.

Poor writing is expensive. Josh Bernoff wrote an article in *The Daily Beast* that reported it costs nearly $400 billion annually in wasted time in the United States. Employees struggle through unclear emails, jargon-filled reports and documents that never arrive at the point. We have all sat through meetings that existed only because a document failed to communicate clearly in the first place or were subject to a presentation that had no point or logical flow.

The problem is not simply grammar or spelling. Most bad business writing is really evidence of unclear thinking. Writers bury their main point beneath paragraphs of corporate clichés and impressive-sounding language. Somewhere in the middle is a simple idea struggling to escape.

Consider this executive job description, "The Area Vice President, Enterprise Customers will develop and manage a sustainable strategic relationship that transforms the current commercial model by creating joint value that results in the ongoing reduction of costs, continuous process improvement, growth and profitability for both partners with the ability to export key learnings."

The sentence sounds important without saying anything. Business writing is full of phrases like futureproofing, leveraging synergies, sustainable ecosystems and omnichannel solutions. They are substitutes for clarity rather than examples of it. Poor writing results in unnecessary meetings, duplicate work, slower decision-making, project delays, customer confusion, inconsistent execution and employee frustration. The cost rarely appears as a line item in the budget, but it is paid every day.

Businesses often believe they have communicated simply. They assume they have been heard and, more importantly, understood. Often neither has happened. The presentation was delivered, the report distributed, the email sent but the message never landed.

Good writing respects the reader. That means making the point early, organizing ideas logically and removing anything that distracts from the message. Every unnecessary sentence asks the reader to do more work. Every paragraph should earn its place.

Attention is scarce and fleeting. We spend much of our working day reading on laptops and phones while interruptions constantly compete for our focus. Length is not the enemy, irrelevance is. A long document can be compelling if every page advances the argument. An email can feel endless if it wanders.

None of this means business writing should become sterile or reliant on dispassionate AI tools. I part company with those who believe brevity alone is the objective. Clarity is essential, but clarity should not come at the expense of personality. Facts persuade the mind; stories persuade people. The strongest communicators combine precision with humanity. They explain complex ideas in plain language without stripping away style, rhythm or imagination.

Like any professional skill, writing improves with practice. Think before you write. Make your point early. Cut unnecessary words. Avoid jargon. Read your work aloud. Edit with the reader in mind rather than your ego. The first draft is never the final draft.

Advertising great David Ogilvy captured it, "People who think well, write well." I would add that good writing is not simply about choosing better words. It is about respecting the time, attention and intelligence of the person reading them.

# BRANDING EXPERT AHEAD OF HIS TIME

BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

JEFF Swystun was regaling the world about branding back when the rest of us thought the term meant nothing more than a corporate logo.

"A brand is a relationship that is based on trust," he said to me back in 2005 when I was a business reporter at the Winnipeg Free Press.

Since then I have quoted him countless times on a wide variety of topics and he always — ALWAYS — provided interesting, unique and invaluable insight.

And when I became publisher of Manitoba Inc. a couple of years ago and needed a branding columnist, I knew exactly who to call.

Not only did "Swys" — I never called him by his given name — write and speak about contemporary topics, he also tapped into retro stories that couldn't help but catch your eye — the rise and fall of TV dinners, the rise and fall of Consumers Distributing and the stories behind classic marketing taglines, including "It's the pause that refreshes" (Coca-Cola), "the Breakfast of Champions" (Wheaties) and "Tastes great, less filling!" (Mlller Lite).

Swys died unexpectedly shortly before our fall deadline. He was 61 years old. He had recently filed his column on the high cost of poor business writing, which should be mandatory reading for business people who think they can write well, but can't.



"When you find what's relevant to an audience, drown them in it."

*— Jeff Swystun, a valued contributor to Manitoba Inc. and the Manitoba Inc. podcast*

"Like any professional skill, writing improves with practice. Think before you write. Make your point early. Cut unnecessary words. Avoid jargon. Read your work aloud. Edit with the reader in mind rather than your ego. The first draft is never the final draft," he wrote.

A prolific writer, he also filed a number of other columns which he suggested we put on our website to keep the content fresh. Find them at manitoba-inc.ca/jeffswystun.

He authored four books, including *Why Marketing Works: 7 Time-Tested, Brand-Building Principles,* which topped the advertising and marketing categories on Amazon when it was released in 2019. He also ghost-wrote 10 others.

A graduate of the University of Winnipeg, he worked in New York and Toronto but returned home a couple of years ago. Known as the "consultant to the consultants," his clients included Ralph Lauren, Paramount, Deloitte Digital, Facebook and Google.

His best quotes weren't always in a story, sometimes they were in the form of advice in a text message.

"When you find what's relevant to an audience, drown them in it," he wrote to me earlier this year.

Thanks, Swys. We will.

*Geoff Kirbyson*
*Publisher, Manitoba Inc.*

# Recommitting to downtown

## IG Wealth Management moving into renovated space at Portage and Main

BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

AFTER nearly 40 years at the western edge of downtown Winnipeg, one of the biggest financial services companies in Canada is moving to Portage and Main.

Over the next two years, IG Wealth Management will move 1,200 employees to six floors of 360 Main Street, one of the three skyscrapers at Winnipeg's most iconic intersection. The new location will feature updated technology and collaborative spaces and amenities such as an outdoor patio, skywalk access and social spaces. The company will also have conference, event and board space next door at 300 Main Street.

"The financial district in Winnipeg is at the corner of Portage and Main," says Nancy McCuaig, executive vice-president and chief operating officer at IGM Financial, the parent company. "This is a great opportunity to recommit to downtown Winnipeg. The space is absolutely gorgeous."

At the same time, IGM will vacate its long-time home at 447 Portage Ave., a 19-storey tower located about a mile to the west.

The company recently listed the building for sale, a move consistent with its real estate strategy in other cities, where it does not own the office space that it occupies. It's looking for a new owner that will ensure the 38-year-old property continues to play a meaningful role in the ongoing development of downtown Winnipeg.

"(The move) signals the evolution of our business and really offering a renewed employee experience. It also gets us out of being a building owner, which is positive," she says, noting IGM had also looked at space at True North Square, but needed more than was available.

IGM, which has offices across the country, owns just one building. For now.

"Owning one building with so much leased real estate doesn't make it a core competency. We provide great financial planning advice and support," she says.

It remains to be seen whether the building will continue to house office tenants.

"Its future could be whatever a potential purchaser wants to imagine it as," she says.

300 Main — the tallest building in town at 42 storeys — will also display IGM's signage.

"It's great branding," McCuaig says. "You can see it from Highway 59 and the Perimeter Highway."

Olivia Billson, director of communications and public relations with the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ, said she's pleased that IGM will remain an active member of the central business district.

She said the company could have relocated to the suburbs or to another city altogether.

"It reinforces their commitment to downtown," she says.

IGM's move into newer leased space also aligns with recent vacancy trends.

"There's a flight to higher class A spaces, newer and renovated spaces," she says.

IGWM, which is celebrating its centennial this year, has $176 billion in assets under management.



**Nancy McCuaig, executive vice-president and chief operating officer at IGM Financial says relocating to Portage and Main is a great opportunity to recommit to downtown Winnipeg.**

IGM Financial

# Building a downtown that thrives

## CentreVenture's new strategic plan puts housing at the centre of downtown Winnipeg's revival

BY BROOK THALGOTT

ON a Jets game night, when fans stream toward Canada Life Centre and restaurants and sidewalks fill before puck drop, Winnipeg's core feels busy, energetic and alive.

CentreVenture Development Corporation wants downtown to feel that way more often—and not only when a game or concert draws thousands of people into the area.

Its new strategic plan sets an ambitious goal: increase downtown Winnipeg's population from approximately 18,500 today to 36,000 by 2050. That target was developed through research, consultation and discussions with stakeholders, architects, urban-density experts and academics at the University of Manitoba.

"If we succeed, downtown will be a thriving hub with shops, venues and people," says Rochelle Squires, CEO of CentreVenture. "It will have that 'game-night' vibe all the time. People will feel safe and at home downtown, 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Squires says 36,000 residents would provide the population needed to create a consistently vibrant, walkable and safe downtown. The goal is not simply to fill residential buildings, but to rebalance a city centre that has historically depended heavily on office workers and visitors.

### From office district to neighbourhood

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 80,000 people travelled downtown for work each day, sustaining restaurants, shops and services. When offices emptied, the vulnerability of that model became impossible to ignore.

CentreVenture is now working toward a downtown supported by the people who live there as well as those who commute into the city centre.



Photo supplied by Rochelle Squires

"If we succeed, downtown will be a thriving hub with shops, venues and people. It will have that 'game-night' vibe all the time. People will feel safe and at home downtown, 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

*— Rochelle Squires, CEO of CentreVenture Development Corp., says adding more residents is key to creating a vibrant downtown Winnipeg.*

More residents create a steady customer base for grocery stores, restaurants, cafés, retailers and personal services. They also bring activity to sidewalks and public spaces outside conventional office hours.

As Squires puts it, “retail follows rooftops.”

The opening of a Red River Co-op grocery store at the Portage Place redevelopment in 2029 will help address one of downtown’s most important amenity gaps. Expansions by Red River College Polytechnic and the University of Winnipeg, together with additional student housing, will also bring more students and residents into the area.

A downtown where people can live, learn, work and play is better positioned to sustain businesses and attract companies looking for a lively, amenity-rich place to establish or expand.

“It’s all hands-on deck,” Squires says.

## Making difficult projects possible

CentreVenture will not build all the homes needed to reach the population target. Its role is to create conditions that enable private, non-profit and Indigenous developers to build them. CentreVenture’s strategic plan calls for residential incentives, renewed financing tools and targeted support for vacant or underused properties.

One current initiative is the Downtown Heritage Residential Conversion Grant Pilot Program, a collaboration involving CentreVenture, the City of Winnipeg and funding delivered through the federal National Housing Strategy.

The program helps property owners convert vacant or underused heritage buildings into housing. The opportunity is significant in Winnipeg, which has one of Canada’s largest historic districts. CentreVenture estimates approximately 10 per cent of its buildings are vacant or underused.

The Millennium Centre illustrates the potential. Its first floor and mezzanine are in use, but its upper floors remain vacant. Finding new or expanded uses for buildings like it could preserve Winnipeg’s heritage architecture while adding homes and street-level activity.

CentreVenture points to its record as evidence that targeted public support can unlock larger investments. According to the plan, approximately $26 million in City of Winnipeg funding over 26 years enabled CentreVenture to make $84 million in direct investments and helped leverage $1.8 billion in private-sector and community capital.

Of the 8,329 downtown homes built, underway or projected between 2003 and 2028, 6,004 are associated with projects that received incentives.

## Building a complete community

Reaching the population target will require adding the right housing mix. Most homes being built downtown are one- and two-bedroom units suited to single residents, couples and small households. Some family-sized homes are being developed, but Squires acknowledges that additional amenities will be needed before downtown attracts a significant number of families with children.

CentreVenture wants downtown to include people at every income level and stage of life: students, newcomers, young professionals, single parents, families, retirees, empty nesters and seniors. That will require market, affordable and mixed-income housing.

Squires points to Osborne Village as an example of the social mix CentreVenture would like to encourage—a neighbourhood where different ages, incomes and household types live alongside one another.

“Everybody is welcome,” she says.

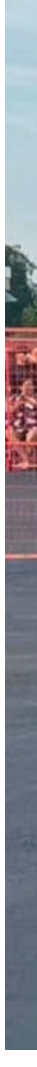
Parking also remains a challenge. Downtown has parking, but it is not always free, convenient or easily accessible. At the same time, a denser, more walkable community should allow more residents to complete daily errands without driving.

## Creating activity and safety

CentreVenture sees greater residential density and mixed-use development as part of improving downtown safety. More residents mean more people using sidewalks, businesses and public spaces at different hours. A downtown that remains active after offices close can feel safer than one marked by vacant storefronts and empty streets.

Development alone cannot resolve homelessness, addictions, mental-health challenges or poverty. Those issues require coordinated responses from governments, Indigenous organizations, law enforcement, health and social-service providers and community agencies.

CentreVenture’s role is to encourage occupied buildings, active storefronts and a larger permanent population, creating conditions that can support broader safety and social initiatives.



## Reimagining Graham Avenue

Graham Avenue is one place where CentreVenture hopes to turn its strategy into visible change.

The avenue lost much of its activity when transit service moved away from the former bus mall. Since then, pilot projects are introducing new planters, lighting, seating, markets and public events. Public-works improvements have also been undertaken.

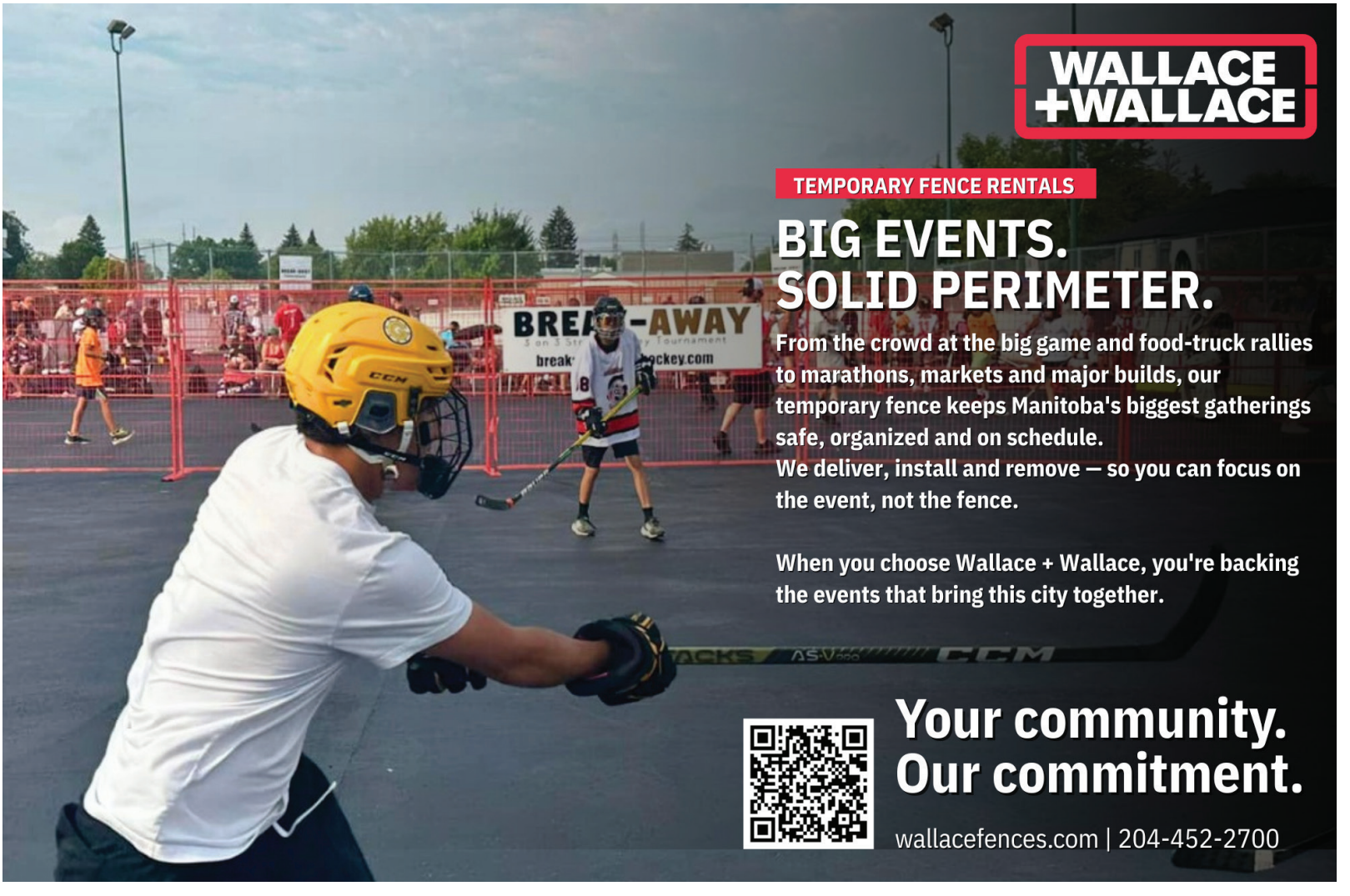
The newly announced $1.4 million Storefront Success Program will assist with eligible capital improvements, including façades, lighting, signage, windows, entrances, patios, canopies, accessibility upgrades and landscaping. Funding may also support interior improvements visible from the street and professional design services.

Rather than relying on a single transformative project, CentreVenture is trying to build momentum through overlapping residential, commercial and public investments. Its plan ultimately envisions Graham Avenue as a signature corridor and downtown destination.

## Restoring the everyday city

Downtown Winnipeg already shows it can attract people. Concerts, festivals, sporting events and cultural institutions regularly bring energy into the core. The challenge is turning that episodic activity into everyday life.

CentreVenture is betting that people are the foundation of a more resilient downtown: enough people, living in enough different kinds of homes, to turn the city centre into a complete community. If the strategy works, downtown's most energetic evenings will no longer feel exceptional, but a regular day in the life of the city.



# Get out the vote!

## Winnipeg entrepreneur is bringing tech to local political campaigns

JACQUES MARCOUX

BEHIND the grit and grind of every political campaign is a frenetic logistical operation. Voter lists, volunteer recruitment, fundraising, lawn signs and door-knocking: All of these elements have to come together under intense time pressure and resource constraints.

Between the 137 incorporated municipalities and 38 school districts across the province, hundreds of candidates are discovering the realities of retail politics as part of the lead-up to the 2026 Manitoba municipal general elections being held on Oct. 28.

For Winnipeg entrepreneur Nancy Cooke, the steep learning curve involved in running for office is something she's experienced firsthand as a candidate, and she turned that experience into a software company.

### Filling a logistics gap

Cooke founded Campaign Compass, an all-in-one digital platform designed to help candidates and campaign teams organize nearly every aspect of an election campaign. She formally launched the company in 2022, but the idea took shape several years earlier, when Cooke was busy running her own campaigns as an aspiring politician.

Photos supplied by Nancy Cooke

**Nancy Cooke draws on her own campaign experience to help candidates get organized with Campaign Compass.**

Her political resume includes a 2018 run for Winnipeg city council in the St. Norbert–Seine River ward, where she finished second in a tight race, followed by a second-place finish in the 2019 Manitoba provincial election in the riding of Fort Garry. She also served as director of political operations and interim executive director with the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba.

Throughout all this, Cooke has also been juggling her role as managing partner of Elm Park Dental for the last 26 years, where her husband practises dentistry. Cooke says her business background, combined with her campaign experience, made her particularly conscious of the need for better campaign tools.

“Campaigns are hard and you’re often doing things yourself,” she says. “Maybe one or two people helping you and you’re trying to record your progress and understand whether you’re doing what you need to be doing.”

IN 2018, Cooke developed a prototype designed to handle many of the technical aspects of campaigning. The system could record which neighbourhoods, households or even voters had been visited, identify supporters and flag key concerns being raised on the doorsteps of citizens.

Unlike candidates running for established political parties with the benefit of an entire political apparatus supporting them, those running for local governments and school districts often have to build their campaign infrastructure and branding from scratch as independents.



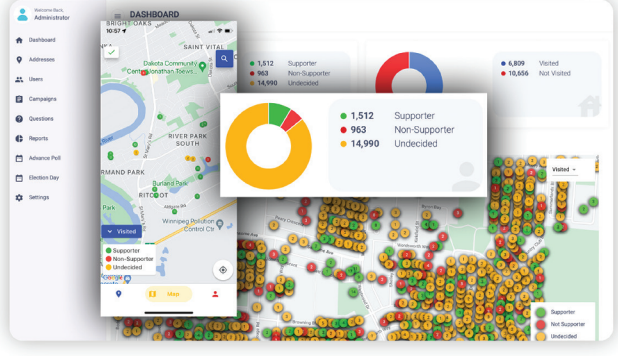

**Campaign Compass won a pitch competition co-sponsored by North Forge and the U.S. Consulate in April 2026. Nancy Cooke (middle) is flanked by event judges who awarded her the prize, a trip to the SelectUSA Investors Summit networking event in Washington, D.C.**

“I realized that it would be extremely helpful to have tools that will allow you to be able to get up and running and organize and make the best use of your time and your volunteers’ time,” she said.

## One platform, real-time data

Initially designed as a canvassing application, Campaign Compass has evolved into a much broader campaign-management platform.

The software combines a voter and contact CRM (or customer relationship management system), mobile canvassing, fundraising and donation tracking, volunteer coordination, lawn-sign management and communications tools. Tiered subscription plans are available to fit different campaign needs, ranging from $150 to $575 per month.




**Campaign Compass provides campaign teams on the ground with real-time geographic information about their canvassing progress.**




**Campaign Compass is an all-in-one digital platform designed to help candidates and campaign teams organize their election campaigns.**




Nancy Cooke at a 2025 networking event speaking with a prospective Campaign Compass customer.



Nancy Cooke (middle) out canvassing during her bid for the Fort Garry riding during 2019 provincial elections. Her husband Bill (left) and nephew Michael (right) were lending a helping hand on the campaign trail.

There's no escaping the hard work involved in running a campaign. Candidates still need to hit the pavement and knock on a sea of doors, but the goal is to replace the old-school approach of collecting information on clipboards and spreadsheets with a system that provides better coordination.

Cooke says although politics is the company's core market with about 80 per cent of clients running election campaigns, Campaign Compass is also increasingly used by advocacy groups and not-for-profits.

"If there's a fundraising event that you're trying to put on, if you're a not-for-profit and you're dependent on memberships, we have all of those tools in there as well," Cooke says.

The common denominator is grassroots engagement.

## A made-in-Canada political tech company

One of Cooke's original motivations was a gap she saw in the Canadian market.

When Campaign Compass launched, she says, most comparable campaign software came from the United States or the United Kingdom. Those platforms weren't necessarily designed to handle the intricacies of Canadian-style campaign practices or the electoral system itself.

That Canadian focus has helped the Winnipeg-based company expand beyond Manitoba. Campaign Compass now has users across Canada, with current municipal campaigns using the platform in British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario. The company has expanded into six additional provinces and is beginning to explore international markets.

Last April, Cooke won a local product pitch competition organized by North Forge, a local startup incubator, and the U.S. Consulate in Winnipeg. That led to a networking opportunity at the SelectUSA Investment Summit in Washington, D.C.

The platform now has more than 2,000 users, and Cooke estimates that number could reach more than 5,000 in the coming months.

## Looking ahead

Campaign Compass is entering a busy phase as general elections are currently underway in two other provinces. Cooke says the company continues to develop its platform by listening to clients and adapting its tools to their needs.

Her motivation to innovate and grow is rooted in her desire to make participation in democracy easier.

"I believe in an open democracy," Cooke says. "You should be able to choose to run and participate and engage, and there should be tools available to make that easier for you."

# Business Transitions Forum

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## I wished I had participated in something like this before we transacted.

**Natalie Benson**
Benson Cabinetry & Millwork • Past Attendee

## A Conference For Entrepreneurs About Growth & Transition



**Noah Palansky**
CEO & Co-Founder
**Taiv**



**Bram Strain**
President & CEO
**Business Council of Manitoba**



**Barb Gamey**
Co-Founder
**Payworks Payroll Services Canada**
*(Strategic investment in Payworks)*



**Ash Modha**
Co-Founder & CEO
**Mondetta Clothing**
*(Sold & Acquired Mondetta Clothing)*



**Sandra Foster**
Managing Partner
**Capstone Ridge Group**



**John Bockstael**
Chairman
**Bockstael Construction**



**Iain Crozier**
Founder
**Trillick Ventures**



**Dale Weise**
Owner
**3 Seasons Landscaping Inc. & Precision Joint Sealing Inc.**
*(Acquired 3 Seasons Landscaping Inc. & Precision Joint Sealing Inc.)*

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Photo by Thomas Fricke

From left, Stuart Blake, Jody Langhan and Thor Richardson, president of James Richardson & Sons, Limited.

# A NEW VIEW, SAME COMMITMENT TO DOWNTOWN



**FILLMORE RILEY** IS PART OF THE GROWING MOMENTUM OF PORTAGE AND MAIN

LAWYERS at Fillmore Riley LLP who went on vacation in early July could be excused for any temporary confusion when they returned to the office.

That's because the Winnipeg-based law firm may have executed the fastest-ever corporate relocation across Winnipeg's most famous intersection when it shut down its office at 360 Main at noon on Friday, July 17.

Less than 72 hours later, Fillmore Riley was up and fully operational on the 17th, 18th and 19th floors of the Richardson Building.

The move was two years in the making as the firm's brain trust started looking at a variety of real estate options for when its lease expired this year. But when it came down to it, the choice was obvious for a number of reasons.

"We wanted to be downtown. We think it's important that we still have our offices at Portage and Main," says Stuart Blake, the firm's chief executive officer and managing partner.

The growing momentum at Portage and Main — including the multi-million-dollar renovation of the Fairmont Hotel, the overhaul of the former Bank of Montreal building by the Manitoba Métis Federation, not to mention last year's reopening of the intersection to pedestrian traffic — played a role, too, says Jody Langhan, the firm's executive chair.

"We see ourselves as a regional, full-service Manitoba firm committed to the Manitoba market," he says. "It's very exciting to be part of what is hopefully a renewal of our downtown post-COVID. I think IG Wealth Management's recent announcement to relocate headquarters to 360 Main Street is great. The more bodies we can have at Portage and Main, the better. It brings more people downtown and hopefully that will benefit all the small business owners in the area."

> "Our focus has never been to have a certain number of lawyers. Our goal is always to provide exceptional legal services and to meet the needs of our clients. As those needs expand and get more sophisticated, we want to make sure we can deliver. The new office supports this goal."
>
> *— Stuart Blake, the firm's chief executive officer and managing partner*

It certainly helped that one of the not-so-small businesses in the neighbourhood — James Richardson & Sons, Limited, one of Canada's largest and oldest family-owned private corporations — is one of Fillmore Riley's longtime clients.

"It made so much sense," Blake says. "We do a lot of work for them in a variety of areas and they happened to have space."

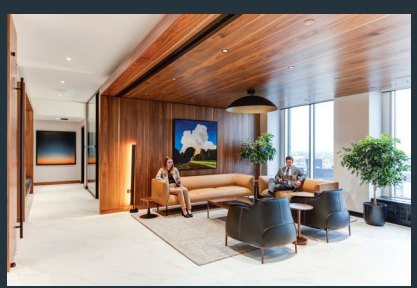
FILLMORE Riley is far from the only tenant in the building to have a relationship with JRSL. Its operating company, Richardson International, and subsidiaries Richardson Pioneer Limited, Tundra Oil and Gas and Richardson Wealth as well as its insurance company Wynward Insurance and its banker, CIBC, all call the 34-storey skyscraper home. Fillmore Riley has the second-biggest tenant footprint in the building.

"They're filling their building with a group of their businesses and strategic partners, and we really appreciate being a part of that group," Langhan says.

Fillmore Riley has been in business since 1883, making it one of the longest serving law firms in Manitoba. It has about 80 lawyers, including 36 partners.

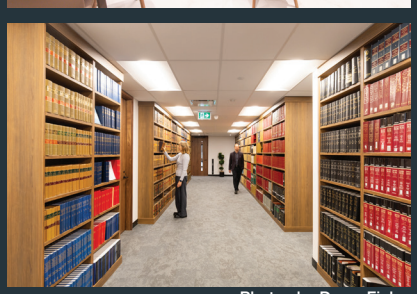












Photos by Darcy Finley

The new 39,000-square-foot space, which was stripped down to the concrete before the renovations began, is much more efficient as the firm now has 18 additional lawyer offices in the same square footage as its previous space.

"Our focus has never been to have a certain number of lawyers," Blake says. "Our goal is always to provide exceptional legal services and to meet the needs of our clients. As those needs expand and get more sophisticated, we want to make sure we can deliver. The new office supports this goal."

The move across the street wasn't done without serious consideration.

"This was a significant, long-term investment and the client relationship added a layer of complexity," says Langhan. "At the same time, we've worked with them for decades and there was a mutual trust and respect that went back and forth, so the process went very smoothly."

It's a homecoming of sorts for Fillmore Riley as the firm operated out of the Richardson Building for a decade before moving into what was then called the Trizec Building when it was christened in 1981. (It was named 360 Main in 2010.)

FILLMORE Riley focuses on high-end corporate commercial work and litigation. Langhan says the firm differentiates itself from the competition with its entrepreneurial spirit.

"We minimize bureaucracy and let our lawyers practise law," he says.

Blake adds that if you look at the firm's practices, you'll find lawyers widely regarded as regional leaders in their fields. Their knowledge is being passed down to the up-and-coming lawyers, ensuring continuity of client service.

Fillmore Riley will continue to be a regional powerhouse in business law and complex litigation, but the firm's also known for its strength across sectors such as agribusiness, manufacturing and transportation.

Fillmore Riley is also doing an increasing amount of Indigenous work, particularly on the economic development side, for the likes of the Manitoba Métis Federation, Treaty One Nations Inc. and the Swampy Cree Tribal Council.

## FILLMORE RILEY

- **Founded in 1883 as Richards & Coutlee, the firm was renamed Fillmore & Riley around the time it moved into the Richardson Building in 1971.**
- **Fillmore & Riley had 10 lawyers and 10 support staff in 1971. Today, Fillmore Riley LLP has 180 employees, including 80 lawyers.**
- **Fillmore Riley is active with charities in the community, including CancerCare Manitoba, FortWhyte Alive and the United Way.**
- **Twenty-three of its lawyers were named to the 2027 edition of the Best Lawyers in Canada.**
- **The firm was named one of the Top Western Law Firms of 2025-26 by *Canadian Lawyer* magazine and it was recognized by the *Globe and Mail* in its annual list of Canada's Best Law Firms for 2026.**

"We're partnering (with First Nations and Indigenous organizations) to create companies and build employment, capacity and economic wealth. It's absolutely been identified as a growth area. It's important work. There have been so many decades of oppression to overcome. Seeing First Nations and Indigenous organizations gain some economic sway and to meaningfully participate in a substantial way in the renewal and development of downtown Winnipeg and across our province is exciting. It's an honour to play a role in that," Langhan says.

Fillmore Riley is well-positioned to support that growth, right from the corner where it all started.

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# SO MUCH MORE than a meeting place

## RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg is a signifiant driver of the local economy



Executive Chef Melissa Makarenko teaches her team about the new menu items.

WINNIPEG ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

This business profile is sponsored by Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism

THE RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg is welcoming more of the world in 2026 than ever before.

This year will be the busiest in its illustrious history — the downtown focal point opened in January 1975.

Drew Fisher, president and CEO, says he and his team are proud to host major conventions ranging from the federal NDP Convention and the Canadian Society for Immunology to the National Black Canadians Summit and the World Indigenous Business Forum, and they're passionate about attracting business to the city and province.

"We've seen an increase in national conventions this year, with 10 more coming to the RBC Convention Centre in 2026 than 2025. We are proud to host these events and passionate about attracting business to our city and province," he says.

In May, the 264,000-square-foot facility hosted the national convention for the Canadian Labour Congress, which saw 2,500 delegates descend upon Winnipeg for four days, the biggest event it has ever hosted.

"These events bring with them a significant number of hotel room nights and visitors dining out in restaurants, using transportation and patronizing retail and tourism attractions, which all generate valuable economic impact for Winnipeg and Manitoba," he says.

Indeed, the 40-plus conferences at the RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg this year will contribute many millions of dollars of local economic impact.

As director of operations, Albert Kirby's role is to bring a Manitoba experience to every booked event.

Once the national business starts to take shape, the convention centre works to integrate the community into the operations. This is done through many local event bookings, strong local partnerships and the use of Manitoba or Canadian products where possible.

"Our role in operations is to represent key components of Manitoba and generate a sense of place. Our teams take a 'prairies, lakes and people' approach and strive to showcase strong local partnerships. In addition to our increasing convention business, we work closely with our local event partners to help them achieve their goals," he says.

More than 600 people are employed every year by the RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg. Many of those shifts are in food services but a significant number are also in setting up and taking down the rooms for events which hold anywhere from a few hundred people to more than 6,000.

Feeding tens of thousands of people throughout the year is a gargantuan task, an effort that's overseen by Executive Chef Melissa Makarenko. She and her team aren't fazed by the raw numbers because they break every event down into groups of 200. So, a dinner of 1,000 people is considered as five separate events where 200 people need to be fed.

It's not just dinners, either. She oversees plated meals, buffets, breakfasts, brunches, lunches, snacks and receptions.

Large local events are also crucial in driving economic impact and the facility's busiest time of year is November, when many of Winnipeg's biggest companies hold their holiday parties. One day last year, there were 7,000 people attending six different events at the same time. Getting that many



Photos supplied by RBC Convention Centre

beef, chicken, pasta, vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free meals served hot in a very short window takes highly-choreographed teamwork.

"We rely heavily on our trained sous chefs," she says.

Caterers always build in a cushion in case a group has more people walk through the door than were expected, so Makarenko ensures four to five per cent extra meals are cooked to be on the safe side. (The worst nightmare for a host is having guests who go hungry.)

At the same time, she doesn't want a single steak or pasta dish to go to waste. So, as soon as all of the meals have been served at every event, Makarenko's focus turns to ensuring what's left over is put to the best use.

She connects with "our meal recovery partner Second Harvest" so the meals can be redirected to shelters throughout Winnipeg.

"It's the right thing to do. If we can give back to the community in any way, shape or form, that's why we feel we're here. We want to be sustainable and we do that by redistributing food to those who are in need," she says.

The annual food plan requires a mountain of ingredients and products and the RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg does its best to use local



**Executive Chef Makarenko oversees plated meals, buffets, breakfasts, brunches, lunches, snacks and receptions at the RBC Convention Centre.**

sources whenever possible. For example, it partners with Winnipeg-based Gunn's Bakery to provide thousands of loaves of bread every year and it also has relationships with local egg farmers and pork producers.

"Growing those businesses in those partnerships is really important to growing the city. If we can keep little businesses afloat so they can grow and develop, that's what we're here for," she says.

RBC Convention Centre WINNIPEG

FEATURE

# A NEW




A rendering of the upcoming Hyatt Centric Winnipeg Downtown 325 Broadway

## Changing downtown hotel landscape is **GOOD NEWS FOR CITY**

# VIEW

BY JIM TIMLICK

DOWNTOWN Winnipeg's hotel landscape is undergoing a transformation and some observers say it could significantly impact how visitors and residents alike come to view the city in the not-too-distant future.

Two new hotels — the Hyatt Centric Winnipeg Downtown and Sutton Place — are currently under construction in the city and a handful of other existing hotels have recently completed or are undergoing major renovations worth tens of millions of dollars.

"When you add those up together, that's hundreds of millions of dollars in investment happening in just the hotel market," says Olivia Billson, director of communications and public relations for the Downtown Winnipeg Business Improvement Zone (BIZ).

"That of course is going to have a positive benefit to the downtown and to the city. Those places are employing folks, they're bringing folks in from out of town and out of country. And a lot of them have restaurants and other venues within their spaces that give people reasons to spend time and money downtown."

Jino Distasio, a professor of urban geography at the University of Winnipeg, says one of the major drivers of this transformation has been the expansion of the RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg.

That $180-million expansion, which was completed in 2015, nearly doubled the facility's footprint to 832,000 square feet and created a surge in demand for high-end, short-term accommodations.

"Beginning a few years back, momentum began to build on getting more hotel rooms, premium hotel rooms, in and around the convention centre to really grow the conference and event capacity between Canada Life Centre and all the other sort of meeting places in the downtown," says Distasio, who is also the U of W's current interim president.

"That's kind of the emerging standard for a lot of conferences or events. A lot of organizations like to see that physical connection or a very close proximity (to hotel accommodations)."

THAT will certainly be a major selling point of the luxury Sutton Place Hotel, which is scheduled to open in 2028. The $140-million multi-tower development being built at True North Square will provide nearly 300 upscale rooms and is located just a stone's throw from the convention centre. It will connect to the convention centre via a skywalk link.

"That will be key for the convention centre to attract even more large-scale, high-quality events, having that direct connection into the hotel … and it will sort of finish up that section of our SHED (Sports, Hospitality and Entertainment District)," Billson says. "I think it's going to be a big asset and a great addition to our community."



"When you add those up together, that's hundreds of millions of dollars in investment happening in just the hotel market."

*— Olivia Billson, director of communications and public relations for the Downtown Winnipeg Business Improvement Zone (BIZ)*



The Sutton Place at True North Square is currently coming out of the ground.

The other newcomer is the boutique-style, 140-room Hyatt Centric hotel slated to open later this year in a converted office building at 325 Broadway. The nearly $40-million facility will be the first Hyatt Centric hotel in Western Canada and is expected to create up to 70 hotel jobs within the next three years.

BILLSON says the decision to build the venue in that location is an indication of the growing confidence the business community has in Winnipeg's core.

"I think the fact that we're seeing new brands coming into the downtown market is a sign they're doing their research. They're not going to come here if it's not going to make sense for them," she adds.

New life is being breathed into two of the city's most prominent and long-serving downtown hotels.

The Fort Garry Hotel recently underwent a $1-million upgrade to its first floor as part of its Vice Regal Collection of 12 high-end guest rooms, three luxury suites and a private executive lounge.



The Fort Garry Hotel recently underwent a $1-million upgrade to its first floor.

Meanwhile, the Fairmont Winnipeg at the corner of Portage and Main closed this summer to facilitate a massive $120-million renovation aimed at elevating the 21-storey property to five-star status. It is scheduled to reopen next spring.

Billson says the BIZ and its members are excited to see the project moving ahead and are looking forward to it bringing more attention to the area and what it has to offer.

"I think the significant investment that they're putting in that space really shows the confidence that they have in our downtown community and our city's future. For sure, there's some short-term pain with it being closed. But I absolutely think there's going to be some long-term gain," she adds.

But the news isn't all rosy when it comes to Winnipeg's downtown hotel scene.



The Fairmont Winnipeg closed this summer to facilitate a $120-million renovation.

In August, Canad Inns announced it is looking to sell the Radisson Hotel, along with the adjacent Somerset Building and Metropolitan Entertainment Centre, in an effort to divest itself of property holdings along Portage Avenue.

Distasio says the potential sale of those two properties should not be viewed in a negative light.

"It's not uncommon for assets to be bought and sold. I don't think it signals anything. Take the sale of Portage Place, for example. That was a long time coming and it's gone from a sale to a half-billion dollar project on Portage Avenue," he says.

Billson believes all of these hotel projects are going to play a major role in not only transforming how the city's downtown is going to look in a few years, but also how people think of it.

"Hotels play a key part in our downtown ecosystem and a big part in how people experience our city. If they're having that positive experience, they are absolutely more inclined to come back and spend more time and support local businesses that are within our area."

# Neverending optimism

## Winnipeg business leader was a relentless proponent of the city

BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

THE Manitoba business community got a little less interesting, a little less generous, a little quieter and most certainly a little less funny with the passing of Doug Harvey in mid-September.

The owner of Maxim Truck & Trailer and president and CEO of the DLH Group died after a 13-year battle with cancer at age 73.

Harvey got his start in the trucking business as a sales rep at International Harvester after graduating with a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Manitoba. As the U.S.-based company began privatizing its dealerships, Harvey took the entrepreneurial plunge and bought his first truck dealership in Winnipeg.

Over the next four-plus decades, he expanded into retail and distribution, manufacturing and land development. Maxim was the highest profile of his enterprises, with 17 locations across Canada, including in Winnipeg and Brandon. Harvey's businesses employ about 800 people.

A relentless proponent of Winnipeg and a recipient of the Order of Manitoba, Harvey was long one of Manitoba's busiest and most generous philanthropists, helping raise millions of dollars for causes dear to him, including CancerCare Manitoba, Assiniboine Park, FortWhyte Alive and Harvest Manitoba.

He was the host of FortWhyte's annual Sunset BBQ for many years and you never had to ask him twice to take the mic.

Doug Pollard, co-CEO of Pollard Banknote and who followed in Harvey's footsteps as the chair of the board of FortWhyte and CancerCare as well as the Sunset BBQ MC, said it's virtually impossible to count the number of Manitoba organizations that benefitted from his generosity.

"The fact is he was very generous to everything. If he was asked, he gave and he gave generously," he said.

Pollard said just because Harvey had a great sense of humour didn't mean he could be a pushover.

"He was tough and I bet he ran a tight ship at Maxim. That's the interesting thing about Harv. In some moments, he could be gruff and cantankerous, especially if you bought a truck from a competitor and God help you if that competitor wasn't local. But in the next moment, he could be proud, thankful and emotional. Many times I've seen him grouchy, laugh and cry in the same meeting," he said.

Harvey was the living embodiment that laughter is the best medicine. Diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2014, he hosted numerous galas where he discussed his own situation and had the audience crying — tears of laughter, of course — as he poked fun at the various results of his treatments.

Considering his predisposition to seeing the bright side of, well, everything, I think he would have shared the views of Canadian comedian Norm Macdonald, who died of cancer in 2021.



Maxim Truck & Trailer photo

**Doug Harvey, owner of Maxim Truck & Trailer, died in September at the age of 73.**

"I'm not a doctor, but I'm pretty sure that when you die, the cancer dies at exactly the same time. To me, that's not a loss, that's a draw," Macdonald said.

In an email to me last year, his never-ending optimism shone through as he was preparing for his fifth cycle of chemotherapy.

"It whacks the shit out of me but it still beats the alternative. I'm now in my 11th year since my diagnosis. I have to do what I have to do because there is too much good stuff to live for. I have six grandkids, three beautiful kids and their spouses and the best honey in the world. How lucky am I?"

Countless Manitobans are asking the same question thanks to his tireless work and generosity.

# Keeping the Heat Where It Belongs

## How Air Curtains Reduce Energy Costs in Manitoba Facilities

IN Manitoba, cold weather isn't just a season. Long winters and extreme temperatures have shaped how Manitobans live and work, building resilience while also keeping one priority top of mind: staying warm.

For industrial facilities, maintaining indoor heat isn't just about comfort; it's a major operational cost. Businesses with shipping and receiving areas, particularly those with frequently used loading docks, face a constant challenge. Every time an overhead door opens, warm air escapes and cold air rushes in, forcing heating systems to work harder to maintain stable temperatures.

It adds up quickly. A single loading dock door operating through the winter months can result in substantial energy waste and higher utility bills, especially for large facilities with multiple doors.

So how can businesses maintain efficient operations without sacrificing energy consumption? One increasingly effective solution is the use of air curtains.

### STOPPING ENERGY WASTE AT THE DOOR

Air curtains generate a controlled, high-velocity stream of air across a doorway or other opening, creating an invisible barrier that separates indoor and outdoor environments. This air barrier significantly reduces the mixing of indoor and outdoor air when doors are open, helping maintain consistent indoor temperatures and improving overall energy efficiency.

Today's air curtains go well beyond basic air separation. They help reduce heat loss in winter and limit heat gain in warmer months, easing the load on HVAC systems and lowering overall energy consumption. Modern designs deliver steady airflow that minimizes drafts and improves comfort for employees working near high-traffic doorways. At the same time, they support better indoor air quality by preventing dust, fumes, and insects from entering the facility.

Advancements in motor technology and aerodynamic design have also made newer models noticeably quieter, contributing to a more comfortable work environment. Many systems now feature smart controls and automation, allowing them to integrate seamlessly with building management systems and activate automatically when doors are in use.

With durable components and built-in diagnostics, modern air curtains are also designed for reliability, reducing maintenance needs, downtime, and associated costs. For facilities operating in Manitoba's climate, these combined benefits can have a meaningful impact, not only on energy savings but on overall operational efficiency.

### PROJECT FEATURE: IMPROVING ENERGY EFFICIENCY AT MACDON INDUSTRIES

For companies like MacDon Industries, efficiency and performance are core to everything they do. With more than 75 years of experience, MacDon is a global leader in the manufacturing of high-performance harvesting equipment. Rooted in Winnipeg's prairie heritage, they design and manufacture equipment that supports agricultural operations worldwide, driven by a desire to make harvesting easier and more productive for farmers.

That same commitment to performance extends beyond their products and into their facilities.

MacDon's Winnipeg manufacturing site includes a large shipping and receiving area where overhead doors are used frequently. Like many industrial operations, this created ongoing challenges with heat loss, temperature fluctuations, and energy costs.

### UPGRADING TO IMPROVE ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Recognizing the opportunity to improve efficiency, MacDon looked to upgrade its facility with air curtain technology. "In a facility like ours, where doors are opening and closing constantly, managing heat loss is an ongoing challenge. We're always looking for practical solutions that improve efficiency without disrupting operations, and air curtains were a natural fit," explains Shane Sutyla, Product Line Director, at MacDon. "Having previously worked together on energy-saving initiatives, like the upgrades to our air compressor system, connecting with Efficiency Manitoba to explore this project was an obvious next step."

The team installed three new energy-efficient air curtains on overhead doors in the shipping and receiving area of MacDon's Winnipeg facility. These upgraded systems were designed to reduce the amount of cold air entering the facility by counteracting wind pressure and natural air movement through open doors.

By creating a consistent air barrier, the new air curtains help maintain indoor temperatures even during frequent door operation, improving comfort and reducing overall energy demand during the winter.

### TURNING EFFICIENCY INTO MEASURABLE RESULTS

The impact the upgrade had was significant. Through the project, MacDon achieved meaningful energy and cost savings, including annual natural gas savings of over 74,000 m³ and approximately $14,600 in reduced utility costs. MacDon also received more than $22,000 in incentives through Efficiency Manitoba's Custom Energy Solutions program, resulting in a simple payback of 3.5 years.

Beyond the financial return, the facility now benefits from improved temperature stability and a more comfortable working environment for employees. In addition, MacDon has recently joined Efficiency Manitoba's Strategic Energy Management (SEM) Cohorts program further demonstrating their ongoing commitment to energy efficiency and sustainability. SEM Cohorts was recently launched to bring together multiple organizations to participate in a shared learning and engagement experience over a three-year term. Participants gain fractional access to an energy management service provider, professionally facilitated workshops, one-on-one guidance and support, and peer learning to develop a Strategic Energy Management Plan and implement practical measures that deliver measurable and lasting energy savings.

### SUPPORTING SMARTER ENERGY USE WITH CUSTOM ENERGY SOLUTIONS

Rather than offering a one-size-fits-all solution, the Custom Energy Solutions (CES) program takes a systems-based approach by working directly with facilities to understand how energy is used and where improvements can deliver the greatest impact. This tailored approach supports a wide range of industrial systems and processes in addition to air curtains, including compressed air systems, pumps and fans, refrigeration, variable-speed drives, steam and boiler systems, ventilation, and waste heat recovery.

Participants in the program benefit from both technical expertise and financial support to implement their projects. A key part of the program is its performance-based incentives, which are directly tied to the amount of energy saved. For example, businesses can receive $0.25 for every kilowatt-hour (kWh) of electricity saved and $0.30 for every cubic meter (m³) of natural gas saved.



**Air curtains generate a controlled, high-velocity stream of air across a doorway or other opening, creating an invisible barrier that separates indoor and outdoor environments.**

"Projects like this demonstrate how relatively simple upgrades, such as air curtains, can make a meaningful impact on energy efficiency and operational comfort in industrial facilities," says Rob Andrushuk, Industrial Systems Professional, at Efficiency Manitoba. "By taking a customized approach, we're able to help businesses identify practical solutions that align with both their operational needs and energy-saving goals."

By aligning financial support with measurable results, the program helps make energy efficiency upgrades more practical and financially viable for Manitoba businesses.

### START SAVING ENERGY TODAY

For large manufacturing and industrial facilities like MacDon, energy efficiency isn't just about reducing costs; it's about improving performance, working environment, reliability, and long-term sustainability.

The air curtains installed at MacDon's Winnipeg facility demonstrate just how meaningful the results can be when paired with the right expertise.

Efficiency Manitoba's Custom Energy Solutions program helps industrial businesses identify energy savings opportunities, optimize their energy needs, and maximize return on investment through tailored strategies and performance-based incentives.

If you're looking to reduce energy use, lower operating costs, and improve your facilities' efficiency, Efficiency Manitoba's technical team is here to help.

Learn more about how Efficiency Manitoba can help your industrial business improve performance and cut costs. Visit efficiencyMB.ca/industrial.

EFFICIENCY MANITOBA

# Davidson to lead economic development agency

## Whether it's Winnipeg's or Manitoba's still remains to be seen

BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

CHUCK Davidson is the new leader of Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism but he's already talking as if his jurisdiction will include the entire province.

His appointment as president and CEO, after 13 years at the helm of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, comes as Winnipeg EDT has been tapped by the city and province to lead the creation of a province-wide economic development agency.

The idea is to bring provincial, municipal, regional, Indigenous and private-sector partners under one umbrella for both businesses and investors.

Over the next few months, Davidson and his team at Winnipeg EDT will talk to those organizations to flesh out opportunities where they can work together and better serve the Manitoba business community.

"No more fragmentation, one place to come, here's where you go. It doesn't matter if your issue is in Churchill, Thompson, Brandon or Winnipeg, you've got one organization you're going to come to and you're going to get the same level of support and resources. That's the goal with this. It's going to take some time to get there but that's what the province and the City of Winnipeg have asked us to take on," he says.

"If other levels of government want to fund us more, we'll do more. It's going to take some time for us to get there but hopefully we can have this completed within the next year. Do we want to keep more young people in our province? Absolutely. Do we want to see an attraction of business in Manitoba? Absolutely. Do we want to see businesses grow in every corner of this province? Of course. Those are the growth metrics we're going to be looking at."

Davidson replaces Ryan Kuffner, who led Winnipeg EDT for three years before announcing he was stepping down last spring.

Davidson's appointment comes at a crucial time for economic development in all provinces as U.S. President Donald Trump has reignited a trade war with Canada. Davidson says Manitoba — which ships 80 per cent of its exports south of the 49th parallel — needs to reduce its reliance on the U.S.

"I think businesses in our province are getting that. They're looking for different supply chains, they're looking for how they can move their goods and services to other provinces and they're looking for new markets," he says.

Accessing those new markets, however, isn't as simple as loading crates on a truck. The ports of Vancouver and Montreal are at full capacity but the Port of Churchill is being widely touted as the best transportation route for western Canada's resources and commodities to reach international markets. Last April, the Prime Minister said plans to expand the Port of Churchill as part of a trade corridor were a top priority.

"The sooner we can get access to that and be able to move goods (the better)," Davidson says.

Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism It's critical, he adds that the Manitoba business community understands that the trading relationship with the U.S. is not going to revert to "normal."



**Chuck Davidson is the new leader of Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism.**

"We need to make sure that we're helping businesses to diversity as quickly as possible," he says.

Davidson is looking forward to the challenge. After more than two decades with both the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce and the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, his hard hat and steel-toed work boots have had plenty of use.

"I can go into any community and I understand the businesses. I've been touring companies for 20 years. I'm way more comfortable on shop floors than sitting around tables at the corner of Portage and Main. I want to get out there and understand what businesses are looking for," he says.



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FEATURE

# T&T SUPERMARKET

## TO OPEN FIRST MANITOBA LOCATION AT CF POLO PARK




Photos supplied by T&T Supermarkets/Newswire

**T&T Supermarket's planned CF Polo Park location will bring a 48,000-square-foot Asian grocery store to Winnipeg in 2028.**

### Canada's largest Asian grocery retailer set to enter Winnipeg market in 2028, coming to one of the city's busiest retail destinations

BY BROOK THALGOTT

CANADA'S largest Asian grocery retailer is coming to Manitoba.

T&T Supermarket plans to open its first store in the province at CF Polo Park in Winnipeg in 2028, bringing a 48,000-square-foot supermarket to the lower level of the shopping centre at 1485 Portage Ave.

The new location will give T&T a foothold in the Winnipeg grocery market, while extending the company's expansion across Canada and the U.S.

"We've finally figured it out," says T&T Supermarkets CEO Tina Lee, announcing the Winnipeg store in August. "Winnipeg is more than 1,000 km away from the nearest T&T, but we've found a way to bring T&T's immersive Asian food experience to the community."

#### A new anchor for Polo Park

The Winnipeg store is expected to feature many of the departments that have helped build T&T's following elsewhere in Canada, including a self-serve hot food bar, barbecue and sushi counters, fresh produce, live seafood, meat and an in-store bakery.

The company says its bakery offers more than 150 varieties of bread and more than 50 desserts and pastries. T&T has also built a private-label business with more than 300 products and expanded beyond food with Asian beauty sections carrying skincare, makeup, haircare and wellness products from Korea, Japan and China.

Manitobans can already buy some T&T products online, including dried foods, snacks and Asian beauty products, but the Polo Park location will mark the retailer's first bricks-and-mortar presence in the province.




**Shoppers browse the extensive produce selection at a T&T Supermarket, offering a taste of what's coming to Winnipeg in 2028.**

## From two B.C. stores to a national brand

The Winnipeg opening will come 35 years after T&T got its start in British Columbia.

Cindy Lee and her husband, Jack Lee, opened the company's first stores in Burnaby and Richmond in 1993. Lee, an immigrant from Taiwan and a working mother of three, saw an opportunity to bring fresh Asian foods and grocery products together under one roof at a time when many of those products were harder to find in mainstream Canadian supermarkets.

The T&T name has family roots. It refers to daughters Tina and Tiffany, while also reflecting the initials of two of the business's early investors.

The concept expanded beyond B.C. in 1999 with a location at Pacific Place Mall in Calgary. T&T entered Ontario three years later, opening at Promenade Mall in Thornhill.

## Loblaw deal fuels growth

A major shift came in 2009 when Loblaw Companies Limited acquired T&T.

Cindy Lee remained CEO after the transaction before retiring in 2014. Her daughter, Tina Lee, then took over as chief executive, making T&T a second-generation family-led business operating within one of Canada's largest retailers.

Under Tina Lee, the chain has continued to expand its store network and broaden the shopping experience. Its 74,000-square-foot Richmond, B.C. flagship, which opened in 2018, added features including a live




**T&T Ceo Tina Lee is leading the grocery chain's expansion into Manitoba, building on the business her parents founded in 1993.**




**A rendering of T&T's future Winnipeg store front, which will anchor the lower level of CF Polo Park.**

seafood bar and Asian street food station. T&T launched its e-commerce platform and app in 2020. Today, the company has 37 stores in Canada, three stores in the U.S., and will open two more locations in Canada this year.

## Winnipeg joins a growing network

The retailer now has dozens of locations across North America and has begun pushing beyond its Canadian base into the U.S.

Its expansion has come as Asian food has become an increasingly important part of the mainstream Canadian grocery market, giving T&T an opportunity to serve both shoppers seeking familiar ingredients and a broader customer base looking for prepared foods, specialty products and brands that may not be widely available at traditional supermarkets.

Winnipeg is the next phase of that growth strategy.

For CF Polo Park, the opening will add a major grocery tenant to a regional shopping destination traditionally associated more closely with fashion, restaurants and general retail. For T&T, it represents entry into a Manitoba market the company has yet to serve with a physical store.

"We are thrilled to build on our successful and growing partnership with T&T Supermarket to bring their unique retail experience to Winnipeg at CF Polo Park," says Sal Iacono, president & CEO, Cadillac Fairview with the announcement. "This opening represents a significant milestone in our commitment to evolving our properties into vibrant, multifaceted destinations and we look forward to the energy and excitement this new store will undoubtedly bring to our guests in Manitoba."

And when the doors open in 2028, T&T will be entering a city where the appetite for large-format Asian grocery retail has already been tested.

# Bogie or birdie, everybody wins!

WINNIPEG
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

This business profile is sponsored by Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism

DRIVE for show, putt for dough.

A LOT of dough.

After 13 years of running charity golf tournaments, Access Credit Union has broken through the $1-million mark in fundraising.

This summer's event — which included two separate tournaments for the fifth consecutive year, one in Morden and another in Starbuck — raised a whopping $142,159, the most in its history.

"What a great accomplishment for our communities and for the charities we're supporting," says Adam Monteith, chief corporate affairs officer at Access.

This year's beneficiary of the generosity of Access clients, employees and friends is the Dream Factory, a Manitoba-based charity that provides unforgettable experiences for children facing life-threatening illnesses.

There had always been a significant demand for the tournament during its early years when it was held at the Minnewasta Golf and Country Club in Morden, so the credit union's brain trust wondered if they could go any bigger.

Indeed they could. This year was the first in which both venues sold out. In fact, due to extra interest, there were two extra foursomes in Morden, making it technically oversold.




Photos supplied by Access Credit Union

**The Dream Factory was the beneficiary of the Access Credit Union golf tournament this summer.**



**Whether you hit a hole in one or get a snowman, the scramble format ensures it's all for fun.**

After raising $27,500 in the first year, Monteith is confident the second million dollars will come in far less time.

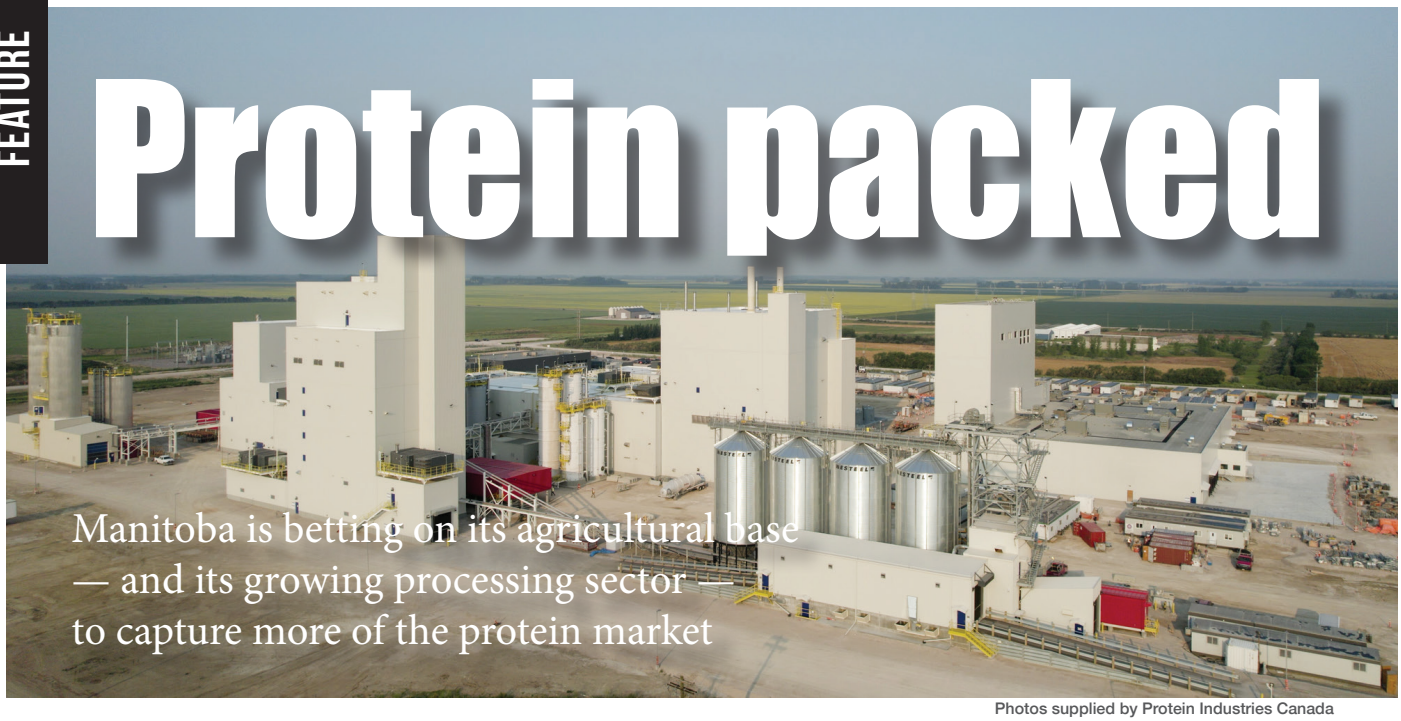
"It's open to anybody — our sponsors, our members, the general public and other supporters. They keep coming back for more. They sign up for the wait list immediately," he says.

The tournament is a scramble format and while you can pick up a score card in the pro shop, there are no prizes for shooting the lights out.

"We're keeping score for the charities. If you want to hand in your scorecards, we're happy to post them online to name and shame you," Monteith says with a laugh.

ACCESS CREDIT UNION

# Protein packed



## Manitoba is betting on its agricultural base — and its growing processing sector — to capture more of the protein market

Photos supplied by Protein Industries Canada

**Roquette's Portage la Prairie plant opened in 2021 and has a capacity to process 125,000 tonnes of yellow peas annually.**

BY SABRINA CARNEVALE

ASK someone what Manitoba's protein industry produces and they might start with pork, beef or peas. The full answer is a lot longer.

The province produces animal proteins including pork, beef, poultry, dairy, eggs and fish, along with plant proteins from pulses, canola, soy, hemp, flax and oats. Those crops can also become protein concentrates, isolates and flours used in baked goods, snack foods, dairy alternatives and fortified beverages. Emerging areas like insect and cellular protein are part of the mix, too.

"Manitoba's protein industry covers the full chain from what we grow and raise here to what gets processed, packaged and shipped out," says Keisha Paul, program facilitator with ProteinMB, a division of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters.

Manitoba is home to the world's largest pea processing facility, the world's largest hemp processing company, North America's first canola protein processor and Canada's largest bacon plant.

There's a growing push to keep more of that processing in Manitoba, rather than shipping crops and commodities elsewhere to be turned into higher-value goods.

"Canada's growing food production and value-added agriculture sector means we can do more than just grow the protein crops the world is looking for," says Tyler Groeneveld, CEO of Protein Industries Canada, one of the federal government's national innovation clusters focused on plant protein. "We can make them into high-quality ingredients and food products, right here at home."

Since its launch in 2018, Protein Industries Canada has co-invested in 22 projects led by Manitoba partners, representing $208 million in total project investment. The projects have created additional demand for Manitoba-grown peas, canola, oats, wheat, soybeans and faba beans. That investment is part of a much larger food manufacturing sector Manitoba has spent years building.

Paul points to a wave of private investment, too. Roquette built its pea protein facility in Portage la Prairie, HyLife expanded in Neepawa, Maple Leaf Foods opened its Bacon Centre of Excellence in Winnipeg and Winkler Meats expanded its operation in southern Manitoba.

Even so, Paul says Manitoba is still leaving value on the table.

"We're seeing more of it, but not enough of it yet," she says. "A lot of what Manitoba grows and raises still leaves the province as a raw commodity, gets processed somewhere else and comes back as a finished product someone else profited from."

Roquette's Portage la Prairie operation is a large-scale example of what that processing can look like.

The plant opened in 2021 and has capacity to process 125,000 tonnes of yellow peas annually. At full production, the company says it can source peas from as many as 300 farms.

Inside the facility, yellow peas and fava beans are processed into protein, fibre and starch ingredients used by food manufacturers. The plant handles conventional and organic production and has Halal, Organic and Kosher certification.

"At our Portage facility, we enhance the unique properties of the constituents of plant-based raw materials, yellow peas [and] fava beans, to produce a range of healthy and functional ingredients across proteins, fibres and starches," says James Bozikis, Roquette's head of communications and public affairs – Americas.

What customers want from those ingredients is also changing.

Pea protein was already well established in sports and nutrition products such as protein powders and shakes. Demand later grew in plant-based meat and dairy alternatives. Today, Roquette says demand is broadening into everyday foods.

"Consumers increasingly want more protein in foods they already know and enjoy. Things like breads, pastas, bars, snacks and beverages, rather than having to turn to traditional protein supplements," Bozikis explains.

He says the growing use of GLP-1 medications is adding to that demand, with consumers looking for more protein and nutrition in smaller, nutrient-dense portions that still taste good.

Longer term, Bozikis expects consumer expectations to keep getting more precise – it won't be enough for a product to simply be "high in protein." Consumers will look for specific nutritional benefits, taste and convenience together, and he points to Manitoba's agricultural base and processing infrastructure as strengths to build on.

Protein is only part of what processors can get out of the peas, though. Pea starch adds texture, crispness and moisture retention to baked goods and snacks, and pea fibre helps with water binding and texture in baked goods and plant-based meats. Roquette is also working with Protein Industries Canada and Pulse Canada to find additional uses for those co-products.

That kind of work is part of a bigger push to build out the province's processing capacity across the sector.

Manitoba is well positioned geographically to grow food processing and reach urban markets in Ontario and Quebec, Groeneveld says. The opportunity, he adds, is to process more of what's already grown in the province instead of shipping it elsewhere.

"By making more from Canadian crops, on Canadian soil, Manitoba's food production and value-added agriculture sector can help grow the country's GDP, create new innovation-based jobs in communities across the province, provide new food options for families here and around the world, and improve the sector's sustainability," Groeneveld says.

Plant protein is one part of a much larger industry.

Food manufacturing is Manitoba's largest manufacturing sector. Sales reached a record $9.46 billion in 2025, up from $6.11 billion in 2020, according to the provincial government, with pork and canola oil among the province's leading food exports.

Japan has become an important market for Manitoba pork, particularly fresh chilled pork. Paul says Japanese buyers have specific requirements around taste, marbling and shelf life, and Manitoba producers have spent years developing herds, feed programs and processing systems to meet them.

"There's Manitoba pork on grocery shelves in Tokyo that was raised, fed and cut here to a Japanese customer's specification," she says.



**Protein Industries Canada CEO Tyler Groeneveld sees growth potential in Manitoba's crops.**

Paul points to HyLife as a Manitoba example. The La Broquerie-headquartered company bought its Neepawa processing plant in 2008 and built itself into Canada's largest exporter of fresh chilled pork to Japan, developing a branded pork program for Japanese consumers and opening a restaurant in Tokyo to build the brand there. The company has also attracted major international investment, including a stake held by the Japanese trading house Itochu. Today, HyLife is one of the province's largest employers and ships products to more than 20 countries.

Finding more customers outside the U.S. has become increasingly important for Manitoba processors, she says.

For decades, the U.S. was the obvious market. It's close, its supply chains connect directly to Manitoba's and demand has historically been reliable. But that's changed: tariffs, the return of country-of-origin labelling and state-level rules like California's Proposition 12, which sets animal housing



**Roquette's James Bozikis says demand for protein-rich foods is creating opportunities for Manitoba processors.**

requirements for pork sold in the state, have made the American market less predictable. A review of the Canada-United States-Mexico free trade agreement means uncertainty will likely continue through at least the next year.

"The U.S. will remain our largest customer," Paul says. "But companies are no longer comfortable being dependent on one market."

She sees opportunities in Japan, South Korea, Southeast Asia and the European Union.

Closer to home, there's another issue limiting how much value Manitoba can capture. Paul calls it "the gap in the middle."

The province has plenty of primary agricultural production and several large processors, but the capacity between those two points is thin, she explains. A company might develop a product and find customers for it, then struggle to find anywhere in Manitoba that can produce it at scale.

"Co-packing and contract manufacturing come up constantly in those conversations," Paul says. "Closing that gap is the single biggest thing that would move the sector."

Groeneveld also sees further processing as central to Manitoba's opportunity. Looking ahead, he points to Manitoba's role in what he calls Canada's "Make It Here" potential – turning more of the province's protein crops into finished food and ingredients. He says the next step is attracting strategic investment, backed by a strong regulatory system and cooperation across all levels of government.

"Municipalities, provinces and the federal government all need to operate with a sense of urgency and cooperation," he says. "With all of these elements brought together, Manitoba can be a leader in helping Canada seize its full food production and value-added agriculture potential."

Manitoba already has the crops, livestock and a significant food manufacturing base. For Paul, the question is how much more of the processing can happen here.

"Every step we do here is value that stays here: jobs, tax base and a stronger position for our producers," she says.

She would like to see Manitoba become one of North America's leading protein-processing jurisdictions, with more processing capacity, enough workers to support it and a broader range of export customers.

Ultimately, she says, the aim is for Manitoba to be known for "what we make and not just what we grow."





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# TESTING, TESTING




Photo supplied Agri-Food Analytics Lab

**Sylvain Charlebois, director of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University, says Manitoba's urban-rural mix gives companies a diverse testing ground for new products.**

## Manitoba proven to be ideal testing ground for new food, beverage products

BY JIM TIMLICK

BEFORE a new burger hits the menu in Toronto or Vancouver, there's a good chance someone has taste-tested it in Manitoba.

For decades, food and beverage companies have used the province as a proving ground for new products, from Chicken McNuggets and Cherry Coke to more recent restaurant menu launches.

But why Manitoba?

Back in the early 1980s, Winnipeg was one of the first trial markets when McDonald's debuted its Chicken McNuggets. It was also one of the first markets for Tim Hortons when it chose to roll out its flatbread pizza and lattes and espresso drinks. It was also one of the first trial markets for Cherry Coke when it entered the Canadian soft drink market in the '80s.

The city of Brandon has also proven to be a popular test market. The first Qdoba restaurant in Canada opened there in 2012 and Smitty's restaurant and lounge chain concluded a test menu trial in the Wheat City this past September.

Michael Mikulak, executive director of Food & Beverage Manitoba, says the province's geographic isolation is one reason companies choose to test new offerings here.

"I think Manitoba has a lot to offer in that regard," he says. "We're kind of self-contained. Everything is kind of here. We have lots of great restaurants, the arts scene, music. We

kind of punch above our weight with those things. We're sort of self-contained in that way and I think that can lend itself to constructing these kinds of test markets."

Mikulak also believes the province's diversity and its mix of both long-established residents and newcomers make it a good place to road-test new foods and beverages because companies can gather a variety of opinions.

Manitobans aren't stuck in their old ways, either.

"I think Manitobans have a reputation for being willing to try new things. They're willing to test things out but they're not necessarily willing to stick with those things," he explains.

THAT willingness to experiment may be another reason food and beverage companies are eager to try out new products in the province. Manitobans' penchant for being, let's say, frugal, could also play a role.

"The fact is that we're maybe a little bit more discerning, that we're maybe a little bit more value-driven in some context. If you're looking at a Tim Hortons or McDonald's, these are all value brands and I think Winnipeg might have a reputation for (wanting good value)," Mikulak adds.

"I think that goes to show, they know that if (a product) can make it here, it'll make it elsewhere too."

Sylvain Charlebois, director of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University in Halifax, says Manitoba's unique urban-rural split is another factor working to the province's advantage.

That means companies can get feedback from a variety of different profiles rather than a single homogeneous one. Those consumers are also more likely to provide the kind of feedback companies are looking for, he adds.

"You can actually look at different profiles very quickly whereas in a cosmopolitan environment, not only is it harder to get the attention of respondents so they can actually give you feedback, but you know that in Manitoba the feedback will be authentic and honest," he says.

"I'm not saying people in a place like Toronto are untrustworthy. It's just they're always on the go, pressed for time. Will they sit down and fill out a survey and tell you exactly how they felt about that last burger they ate? I don't know."

Manitoba's size is another advantage, making it easier for companies to test new products in relative anonymity compared with more populous provinces, such as Ontario or B.C.



Photo supplied by Food & Beverage Manitoba

**Michael Mikulak, executive director of Food & Beverage Manitoba, says Manitoba's mix of consumers and geographic isolation make it an attractive test market.**

That means if a test run goes poorly here, it will not be as "noisy" as it might be in a large city, like Toronto or Vancouver, Charlebois says.

There's also a willingness among Manitobans to tell it like it is when it comes to the products they are consuming.

"People there will be absolutely honest. When you're doing a test or trial, you want respondents that are going to be forthcoming before making a mistake in larger cities," he says.

Charlebois also points to supply chain economics as another reason why Manitoba is an attractive test market. Companies have access to cheap land, clean water and easy access to the ingredients they require to make their products.

Mikulak isn't aware of any new food or beverage products being tested here at the moment, but says that's not unusual as companies often prefer to fly under the radar at the testing stage. He also doesn't think current events will have much impact on Manitoba's suitability as a testing ground.

"There are a lot of difficulties with the trade war and everything going on, but I think it's an exciting time because Canadians are looking for more grown-at-home products and opportunities to support local brands. It's an exciting time for our industry."

# ENERGY FOR LIFE

## Manitoba Hydro ensuring the province will have the energy it needs to grow

WINNIPEG ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

This business profile is sponsored by Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism

IT should come as no surprise that Manitobans are using more energy than ever before.

How many of us have had trouble finding an empty outlet to charge a phone, a laptop or plug in the sixth television in our home or office?

But that's not all.

Electric vehicles are growing in popularity, Manitoba's population expands every year and more new homes and businesses are being built.

To ensure there's enough energy to power the province over the next decade and beyond, Manitoba Hydro developed its Integrated Resource Plan. Created over the past two years with significant public input, using the latest computer modelling systems and following utility best practices, the resulting development plan calls for Manitoba Hydro to invest in several conservation measures and new energy sources.

These include more than 800 megawatts in capacity savings, purchasing up to 600 megawatts of energy from new Indigenous majority-owned wind farms, enhancements to the utility's existing hydroelectric plants, and — subject to regulatory approval — adding 750 megawatts of new generation from three combustion turbines in Brandon.

These turbines will help backstop the additional wind energy being purchased, and help meet the province's energy needs during the coldest winter days and nights, drought, or other system emergencies.

Manitoba Hydro is also upgrading or replacing 41 electrical substations across the province over the next 15 years — at an estimated cost of between $600 million and $1.2 billion. It's also renewing the utility's critical High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) system, to ensure that the roughly 70 per cent of electricity used by Manitobans can move from generating stations in the province's north to the south.



Photo supplied by Manitoba Hydro

**Manitoba Hydro's Integrated Resource Plan will ensure investment in several conservation measures and new energy sources.**

"Our job is to make sure that Manitobans always have the energy they need, that it's reliable, helps drive our economy and supports our businesses," says Scott Powell, the utility's director of corporate communications and marketing.

Exports to the U.S. and other Canadian provinces continue to be an important source of revenue for Manitoba Hydro, which helps keep rates lower than they would be otherwise. In fact, according to a recent study by the C.D. Howe Institute, Manitobans continues to have the second-lowest electricity rates in Canada, trailing only Quebec.

Manitoba Hydro is a "winter peaking" utility, so it's critical that it plans for those periods of highest demand. That's in the middle of winter when daylight is short, lights are on longer and more energy is required for heating.

"We're here to provide safe and affordable electricity and natural gas so Manitobans can live their lives. It's energy for the community, energy for business, energy for education. It's really energy for life," he says.

Manitoba Hydro energy for life

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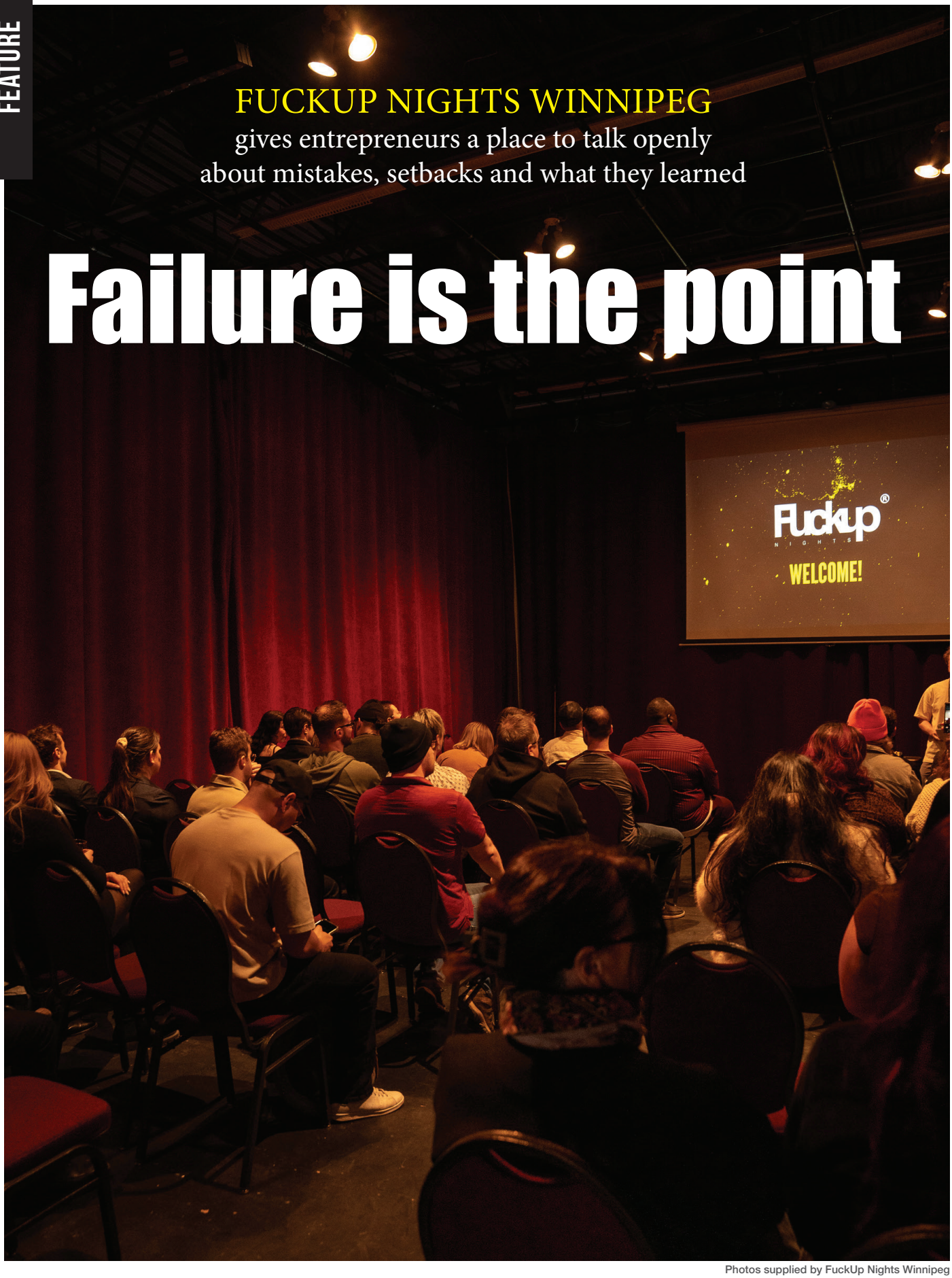
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FUCKUP NIGHTS WINNIPEG
gives entrepreneurs a place to talk openly
about mistakes, setbacks and what they learned

# Failure is the point




Photos supplied by FuckUp Nights Winnipeg

BY ALISON GILLMOR

FUCKUP Nights is a business success founded on failure.

While a lot of business talk focuses on achievements, accomplishments and strategic self-promotion, FuckUp Nights are networking events that encourage "vulnerable storytelling" about mistakes, mishaps and setbacks.

This taboo-busting take on failure started in Mexico City in 2012 and has since grown into a global community, with FuckUp Nights reaching more than 300 cities in more than 90 countries. Participants describe their experiences as "disruptive," "cathartic" and "liberating."

Local entrepreneurs Andres Bazin and Jasmine Bhullar are the license-holders for FuckUp Nights Winnipeg, which kicked off earlier this year with a sold-out April event and has a third get-together scheduled for October. Featured speakers — or, as the FuckUp organization affectionately calls them, "Fuckuppers"— have included Teri-Lynn Friesen, co-founder of Fête Ice Cream & Coffee, Amanda Buhse, CEO and chief creative officer of the Coal and Canary candle company, and Shawn Black, the man behind the "death before decaf" nitro cold brew coffee outfit Sheepdog Brew Co.

Bazin's interest in FuckUp Nights started in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic. In-person business meetups were on the decline, while reliance on social media — where people can present polished, perfect versions of themselves and their companies — was increasing.

"I was craving new experiences, honest experiences," Bazin relates. Social media, he suggests, can be "so fake, so bullshitty, so inauthentic," and it felt completely different from the conversations he was having when he met friends and colleagues for coffee and just talked, person to person.

"That gap is huge," Bazin says. "And I don't think that's good or healthy for anybody."

Bhullar, a board-certified naturopathic doctor who also partners with Bazin on Social Experiment, a creative agency focused on experiential marketing, sees a similar dynamic. Social media was meant to be about "connection and camaraderie," she suggests, but its relentless spotlight on success—often coming off as effortless and inevitable —can have the opposite effect.




**Jasmine Bhullar (left) and Andres Bazin bring Winnipeg entrepreneurs together at FuckUp Nights to share setbacks and lessons learned.**

The beauty of FuckUp Nights, according to Bhullar, is that it tells you that you're not alone. "The people you look up to—guess what?—they're fucking up. They're still figuring it out," she says. "And that's okay.

"What people have said to us after FuckUp Nights is that it feels like group therapy, which is great because I think everyone kind of needs that," Bhullar explains.

After the speakers finish, Winnipeg FuckUp Nights continue with conversation, cocktails and the chance to hand out FuckUp cards (like business cards except you list your screwups). It's informal, easygoing and fun—FUN is the organization's acronym, after all—but these events also offer some serious ideas about how to make businesses and businesspeople better.

Fear of failure can be paralyzing. It can discourage people and companies from taking necessary risks. It can inhibit innovation. By bringing mistakes out into the open, by reframing failure as a tool for learning, growth and change, FuckUp Nights aim to build resilience and create supportive business relationships.




FuckUp Nights Winnipeg kicked off earlier this year with a sold-out April event.



Attendees at the inaugural FuckUp Nights Winnipeg.

At FuckUp Nights, attendees will hear about startups that didn't start, projects that went bust, management styles that didn't pan out and work-life balances that went careening off the rails. Speakers include CEOs, solopreneurs and small business owners, but as Bazin relates, "We do go outside of the business community. One of our first speakers was actually a comedian [Winnipeg funnyman and actor Emmanuel Lomuro]."

For upcoming FUN events, Bazin and Bhullar are looking to book artists and athletes, because these aren't just bottom-line business lessons. They're human stories that speak to universal experiences.

Doug Darling, the founder, CEO and executive creative director of Tripwire Media Group, knows the power of stories. The Tripwire team, which specializes in strategic storytelling and video and animation production, is trained in the neuroscience of attention and emotion, helping them craft stories that stick.




That's one of the reasons Darling was interested in bringing out some of his own cautionary tales at the second FuckUp Night, held back in June.

"In the world of storytelling, that's called a teaching story, because you can learn from failure, sometimes in the best way," Darling explains.

Corporate puffery can be off-putting and informational lectures can be dry, but honest, unvarnished stories about failure seem to reach people and resonate with them. Sharing your vulnerabilities, it turns out, is a great connector.

"When we learn from other people's failure, we feel that a lot more," Darling states. "Whether you're on stage or watching, you see we have more in common than we don't. I think that stays with people."

Finally, some of the success of FuckUp Nights might be right there in the name. Just using the word "fuck" seems to loosen everyone up.

It makes for an atmosphere that feels "real, a little bit laid back," Bhullar suggests. It's easier to have honest conversations, she believes, "when you just came out of a room where someone said the F-word maybe 20 times and you laughed way more than you should at a networking business event."



**"WHEN WE LEARN FROM OTHER PEOPLE'S FAILURE, WE FEEL THAT A LOT MORE. WHETHER YOU'RE ON STAGE OR WATCHING, YOU SEE WE HAVE MORE IN COMMON THAN WE DON'T. I THINK THAT STAYS WITH PEOPLE."**

*— Doug Darling, the founder, CEO and executive creative director of Tripwire Media Group, on bringing out some of his own cautionary tales at the second FuckUp Night.*

# From the C-Suite to Red Chair Ranch:

## Where Corporate Leadership Meets Equine Wisdom

BY SHANNON LEPPKY

IT was a niggling feeling in my gut as I walked into my executive office on the ninth floor of the Manitoba Public Insurance building in March 2017. A feeling that would ultimately change the course of my career and my life.

As vice-president of People and Product, my career had been a fast ascent up the corporate ladder. I was proud of what I had accomplished, the impact I was having and the opportunities ahead. Yet despite every logical reason to stay the course, something deeper was telling me it was time to move on.

As leaders and business owners, how often do we experience that tension? The data may support one decision while our instincts point us in another direction. The most effective leaders learn to pay attention to both.

What followed was my "heels-to-boots" journey. I accepted another senior leadership role, only to find myself released less than three months later. It was a humbling experience that forced me to confront burnout, rebuild my confidence and reconnect with who I was beyond my title.

During a weekend at our family cottage, my attention became fixated on two red Adirondack chairs overlooking the water. That feeling eventually inspired the Red Chair Framework for self-leadership.

Around the same time, trips to the barn with one of our daughters sparked a curiosity about horses. I became fascinated by the relationship between horse and human and began exploring whether horses could play a role in leadership development.

Seven months later, my husband and I purchased 20 acres near Birds Hill Park and began creating what is now Red Chair Ranch.

Today, the Ranch serves executives, entrepreneurs, professionals and leadership teams through equine-assisted leadership development, executive coaching and facilitated team experiences. Hundreds of people from sectors including aerospace, insurance, Crown corporations and not-for-profit organizations have taken part.

So why horses?

Business leaders spend much of their time in their heads. Strategy, analysis, problem-solving, forecasting and decision-making are essential. Yet leadership is ultimately exercised through relationships.

Horses provide immediate, honest feedback about how we show up. They do not respond to job titles or organizational charts. They respond to authenticity, clarity, trust and congruence between what a person says and what they actually project.

In many ways, horses reveal the gap between our intentions and our impact.

Through our work with the herd, leaders often discover patterns they have not previously recognized — tendencies to over-control, avoid conflict or hesitate in difficult conversations. They also uncover strengths they can amplify, such as confidence, empathy, resilience and presence.



Photo supplied by Red Chair Ranch

**Shannon Leppky is an author, speaker, executive coach, business consultant and founder of Red Chair Ranch.**

The result is not simply personal insight. Leaders bring these discoveries back into the workplace, influencing conversations, decisions, team dynamics and organizational culture.

Building the ranch taught me another lesson about leadership: before building something new, we often need to dismantle something old.

Organizations do it through transformation initiatives. Teams do it by changing how they work. Leaders do it by releasing outdated assumptions, behaviours and limiting beliefs.

I still love strategy. But strategy is only as effective as the people responsible for carrying it out.

Sometimes meaningful change begins with a spreadsheet, a strategic plan or a set of market indicators. Sometimes it begins with a quiet feeling in your gut and the courage to listen. The most effective leaders learn to pay attention to both.



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Our programs offer financial incentives and technical support for various industrial technologies including:

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