



**LEFT:** New System Store owner Neil Cristall. **MIDDLE:** Sneath Group CEO Robyn Sneath. **RIGHT:** BNRC executive director Rushana Newman. (Photos by Abiola Odutola/The Brandon Sun)

# » Church groups willing to provide their space

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“The Blue Door brings a host of issues such as verbal threats to pedestrians, public urination and defecation, drug use, and increased littering of garbage,” he said. “This application will hurt businesses and properties within this area.”

The city, in collaboration with community groups, is exploring alternative arrangements while engaging in a dialogue concerning homelessness and downtown development.

Brandon Mayor Jeff Fawcett acknowledged the pending appeal by BNRC and

highlighted ongoing community efforts to address homelessness. He disclosed that an alternative arrangement is being explored with churches to accommodate homeless individuals while awaiting BNRC’s decision.

“We’ve been working hard ... BNRC is the lead. We worked hard to get the 24-hour funding, which would mean drop-in evenings for the Blue Door,” he told the Sun. “The application they made was denied based mostly on location. As a community, we’ve reached out to other groups in the community, and there are opportunities to provide this service.”

BNRC executive director Rushana Newman said the group has heightened its efforts since the public hearing to find a suitable location that is not within the downtown business district.

“The mayor has been helping us with that as well,” Newman said. “We humbly approached a few church groups. Right now, we have two church groups who are willing to provide their space to us or allow us to access their space for just the overnight components.”

Clarifying the intention to maintain the Blue Door’s current location for daytime services while using church

spaces exclusively for overnight services, Newman said, “We’re not looking to move The Blue Door; it will remain in its current location and operate daytime services. However, these church groups have proposed that we will use their space for the overnight drop-in service. We will have to submit a variance application for these locations. We will do community outreach, educate neighbours about the intended use, and then finalize one location to apply.”

Newman said BNRC decided not to proceed with an appeal due to the availability of alternative locations and

collaborative support from the Brandon Downtown Biz in finding a semi-permanent or permanent space.

“They’ve scheduled meetings where we will be attending Brandon Downtown Business meetings in collaboration with the city. So it’s going to be a really good partnership,” she said. “These are conversations that needed to happen. Maybe this rejection of a variance application has opened a whole can of worms where we identify and understand that these conversations are needed to help our city grow.”

Addressing security concerns raised by church

groups, Newman outlined security measures and provisions BNRC intends to implement.

“The city of Brandon will provide us with cadets who will monitor the area,” she said. “One church group mentioned that it’s a sanctuary and should be revered, so we would implement something, maybe check backpacks before entry. And one church group mentioned having their staff working the overnight component to ensure things are being kept the way discussed.”

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# Health groups want nicotine pouches pulled

BY MICHELE MCDUGALL

Several Brandon convenience stores are sold out of a new nicotine-flavoured product being marketed to young people that the Canadian Cancer Society says should only be sold in pharmacies — and only by prescription.

The nicotine-replacement product is Zonnic, which consists of a container with 24 chewing gum-sized dissolvable packets offering different flavours like Berry Frost, Chill Mint and Tropic Breeze.

Zonnic was approved in July by Health Canada to help adults stop smoking, and according to the authorization, was not to be used by anyone under the age of 18.

But recent marketing campaigns on social media, TV and billboards caught the eye of a group of leading Canadian health organizations including the Canadian Lung Association, Heart and Stroke, Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, and the Canadian Cancer Society senior policy analyst Rob Cunningham.

“Tobacco companies know what they’re doing — they’ve perfected marketing in a way that has appeal to children, all the while denying that they want children to use their products,” Cunningham said.

“And there are promotions in locations that are reaching youth, such as convenience stores, Instagram, and lifestyle ads in a classic approach that we’ve seen for cigarettes over many, many years.”

There are various advertisements on social media that depict



An advertisement on social media that sells Zonnic, a nicotine replacement product to help adults quit smoking that is not authorized to be sold to anyone under the age of 18. (Submitted)

young people sharing laughs while holding onto, or passing a container of Zonnic, with captions like “Catch up with friends,” “Before your workout,” and “Pop it, tuck it, and it tingles.”

Three gas station convenience stores the Sun visited in Brandon on Tuesday were sold out of Zonnic.

One cashier told the Sun as soon as they get it, “it flies off the shelf,” and added that a new shipment will arrive on Thursday, with the advice, “get here early because you’re not the only one asking about it,” the cashier said.

None of the locations the Sun visited realized the product was not to be sold to anyone under the age of 18, which Cunningham said is a regulatory gap.

That’s why, Cunningham added, he and representatives from the other leading health organizations are calling on Canada’s health minister to suspend the sales of the product.

“What we’re asking is that these products be available on a prescription-only basis, in a way that they can still be obtained, but not sold in convenience stores and gas stations. Have some control. Canada’s Minister of Health Mark Collins should suspend the sales of this product until the regulatory gap can be closed,” Cunningham said.

Hailey Coleman with the Manitoba Lung Association agreed. Coleman is a certified tobacco educator, and lead on youth smoking and vaping prevention who sees

products like Zonnic as a backward step for youth, when many are still trying to kick the vaping habit.

“It worries me because when they came out with vaping and started targeting youth, it started its own pandemic with youth. Vaping was put into our society before a lot of regulations were put in place, so we’re still fighting an uphill battle to get our youth off vaping. And they weren’t even using it as a cessation tool. And when I look at this packaging of Zonnic, it’s the same marketing style,” Cunningham told the Sun.

The Sun reached out to federal Health Minister Mark Collins asking for a comment about the request that Zonnic be pulled from shelves of convenience stores, but

didn’t receive a response by press time.

There is one province where Zonnic is only available in pharmacies and that’s Quebec, said Cunningham, who added, “That is something that Manitoba could do right away with no need for federal action.”

Uzoma Asagwara, Manitoba’s health minister, told the Sun they had only recently learned about the product.

“When I saw the advertising, it was pretty clear to me that they’re trying to reach a younger demographic. And definitely, I have concerns about companies targeting youth for use of products that may have negative health implications for minors,” Asagwara said on Tuesday.

“This is newer information for me as well, so I look forward to being able to get more information on the subject, and always look forward to working with health experts who have concerns about what it is that we can and should do, to make sure that we’re supporting youth and their families and having the best health-care outcomes possible.”

Each Zonnic pouch is made from water, plant-based fibres, flavouring, sweeteners, and four milligrams of nicotine, which falls within Canada’s prescription drug guidelines, allowing it to be sold over the counter and not requiring a prescription.

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## Correction

The Brandon Sun’s Nov. 14 story titled “Get ready to laugh at ‘Where’s Charley?’” incorrectly spelled the name of Tara Leach.

## THE BRANDON SUN

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**PICK 3: 3, 9, 1**

**PICK 4: 6, 4, 8, 5**

**EXTRA: 2117046**

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## ENVIRONMENT CANADA WEATHER

**WEDNESDAY:** Sunny. Becoming a mix of sun and cloud in the afternoon. Wind up to 15 km/h. High 8 C. Low -2 C.

**THURSDAY:** Periods of snow. High -1 C. Low -8 C.

**FRIDAY:** Sunny. High 1 C. Low -8 C.

**SATURDAY:** Sunny. High 2 C. Low -7 C.

## TODAY IS SCHOOL DAY 5