



## Hockey

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Finland and Switzerland tangle tonight at the MTS Centre, and Canada and Switzerland play tomorrow night to wrap up the series. From there, it's off to Grand Forks for the beginning of the WJHC on Christmas Day.

Hockey Canada paid tribute to the Falcons, a group of eight Icelandic Manitobans who won this nation's first gold medal in hockey at the Olympics in 1920, but long had their efforts overlooked.

This past summer, Team Canada players wore the Falcons jerseys in their opening game of the World Cup and the uniforms were brought out of retirement again last night.

Descendants of the Falcons were honoured on the ice prior to the game and Winnipeg native Brian Johannesson, who now lives in Kitchener, Ont., flew back to his hometown to honour his father, Konnie.

"My dad played defence for the Falcons. This is a very proud moment. I'm glad to see the jerseys again. I taped the game in the summer and just stared at the TV. 'So that's what they looked like,' I said to

myself," said Johannesson, sitting in the crowd wearing his own replica Falcons jersey and surrounded by family.

"I'm glad to see Canada know about the Falcons. Hockey Canada has done their damndest to make sure Canada knows about the Falcons and that's very pleasing."

The Manitoba Moose promoted this series and general manager Craig Heisinger, who won a gold medal with Team Canada at the 1981 WJHC in Moscow as an equipment manager, says it was a natural for Winnipeg.

"There's an aura around the national junior team. You don't get it all the time and it's a great event," said Heisinger. "We haven't had it here in five years and Winnipeg has always embraced international hockey. This is grassroots and people feel close to it."

Remember, this was a pre-tournament game, but Winnipeg took its cue from Manitoban and Los Angeles Kings coach Andy Murray. Murray says there are no exhibition games when you're playing international hockey.

Our city sold out its state-of-the-art barn for what is sometimes known as a "friendly," and proceeded to go

bananas on and off for the next two and a half hours. Tell the teenagers in the brilliant white Finnish jerseys this was a friendly and you'll get their language's version of "whatever."

It's unlikely that any team — Team Canada, the Finns or any hockey nation's team — has ever played a pre-tournament game before a crowd this large.

In case the 22 young Canadians playing for their country needed a reminder of how important and honourable their task is, the fans offered a refresher course in our love of the game. It might sound a little hokey, but Canadians are united on whom to cheer for when our country plays.

Carrying the name of their country on the backs of every sweater, Canada's juniors were treated to a good dose of home cooking. The stands were spattered with Team Canada jerseys and fans roared at the slightest reason.

"It's all about unity as a nation," said Chris Reynolds, a 20-year-old Winnipegger wearing a black Team Canada sweater. "Everyone loves to cheer for Canada. And with the Winnipeg jerseys, it just adds to it."

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## Spending

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An additional \$50,000 for "care and support" of the residents was provided, but the province also initiated an internal audit of the facility's books.

"We wanted to ensure the additional money and the funding in total was being spent appropriately," said Joy Cramer, executive director of the province's child protection branch. The province handed over the additional money before initiating the review to ensure the youths in the home were receiving adequate care.

The province received a draft report of the audit's findings in November.

Cramer said the audit found the \$50,000 was not being used to care for the youths at the facility, but was instead being used for "personal expenses" for the owners of the home.

Calls to the Halldorsson's Group Home went unanswered yesterday. There was also evidence Halldorsson's was paying salaries to two directors when the funding model for the home did not allow for director positions.

Additional transactions listed as operational expenses for the home were not supported by receipts or documentation, Cramer said.

"We had no alternative but to end our relationship with them," she said.

The owners of the facility were notified on Dec. 9 that the province was cutting off funding.

The seven youths who were being housed at the facility at the time were moved to another social service agency on Dec. 16.

Cramer said the province is now looking to see if there is any legal way it can recoup the misspent funds.

Cramer acknowledged the province has had concerns with Halldorsson's three times in the 25 years the facility has received provincial funding.

In 1994, the province conducted a review of the facility that revealed some "problems" with the quality of care. Those issues were adequately addressed by the facility, Cramer said.

In 1999, as a result of another review of Halldorsson's, the province put a co-manager in place for six months to monitor the operation of the facility.

Tory family services critic Leanne Rowat questioned why the province would increase the facility's funding by \$50,000 before undertaking the review — especially if there had been concerns about the home in the past.

Rowat noted there was no service purchase agreement in place between Halldorsson's and the province.

An SPA is a contract between the province and a funded agency, which sets out how the funding is to be used and details a schedule for when and how the agency must report on its finances to the province.

"They should've put one in place after they had concerns in 1994," said Rowat. "That was the way they could have ensured this place was operating properly. Why didn't they do that?"

The closure of Halldorsson's amid allegations of misspending is the latest in a string of scandals plaguing Manitoba Family Services and Housing.

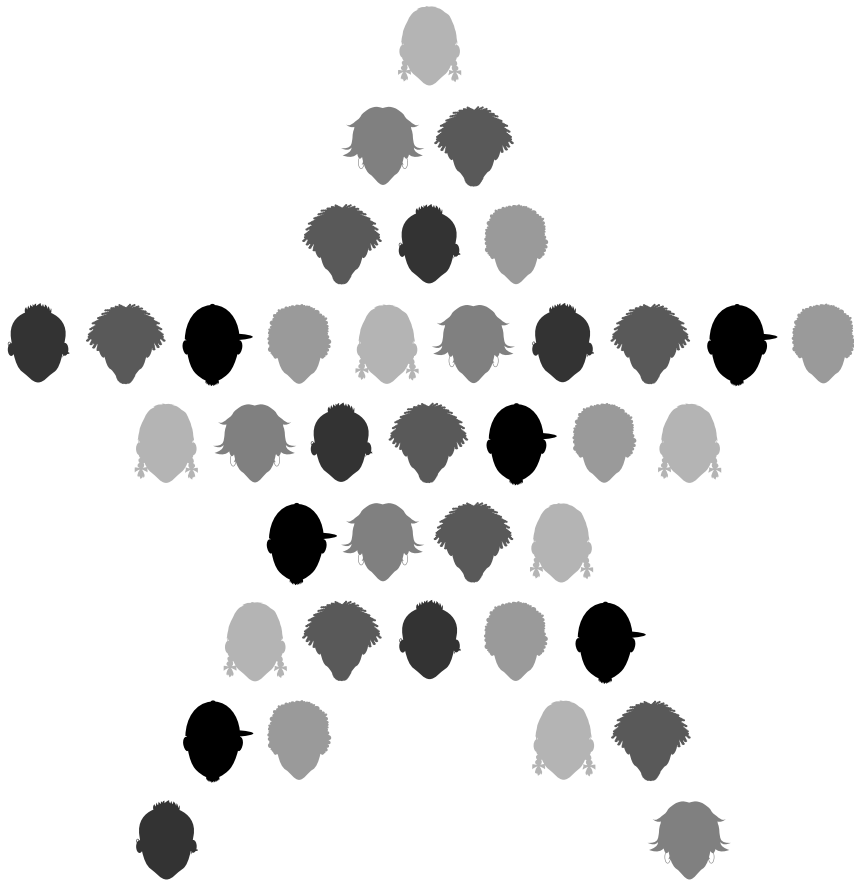
In July, the province announced it was terminating its funding relationship with Hydra House — a for-profit residential treatment service for severely disabled youth and adults — after the provincial auditor found executives at the agency had misspent over \$1.5 million on trips, cars and vacation homes.

This fall, Manitoba Family Services and Housing came under fire again after allegations executives at Aiyawin Corporation — an aboriginal housing agency — misspent over \$1 million. Aiyawin has until the end of the month to respond to those allegations or face losing its funding.

The department is also under fire after the provincial Office of the Children's Advocate discovered a dirty and unsafe shelter for troubled youth that had been ordered closed by the province in May 2003, remained open for a full year without the knowledge of the minister of family services or senior department staff.

Last week, the entire community board of the Osborne House women's shelter resigned en masse, saying they had been bullied by provincial officials over funding and services.

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