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COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER



# The Press



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Vol. 12 - Issue 12 | Tuesday, March 21, 2023

Premier Smith discussed the possibility of a surgery waitlist guarantee for Albertans during live town hall event

*Premier Danielle Smith spoke with Albertans during a Facebook live town hall meeting on Tuesday last week. Callers asked about various topics, including the healthcare system, policing, the UCP budget, and insurance rates. The Premier brought up the possibility of having a guarantee for patients on surgery waitlists.*  
See article page 10



## R.C.M.P. members lace up their skates with Whitecourt youth for the first Winter Skate Party

Read article on page 3.



RCMP officers Belan, Goulet and Amponsah alongside Crime Prevention Coordinator Tina Prodaniuk and AHS Health Promotion Facilitator Courtney Koopmans.



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## Financial variance update and credit card surcharge vote at recent Woodlands County meeting



Woodlands County Council voted yes on the surcharge change.

Woodlands County Council receives a monthly variance report to help grow its financial understanding. The County's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan identified the need for a greater understanding of how the County financially runs. Council also voted to add a surcharge to credit card transactions at the County office.

By Serena Lapointe

One of the focal points of Woodlands County's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan concerned Financial Understanding. One of the ways the Administration was tasked to increase financial awareness was to create standardized reports for Council and provide them regularly. One of those reports is the monthly Variance Report. As a new document, Woodlands County Council continues to help Administration by giving feedback on any changes.

Victoria Chan, Woodlands County's Director of Corporate Services, provided the monthly Variance Report as of February 28, 2023, during the March 15 regular meeting of Council. The colourful report itemized department-specific financial changes and described each cost. It listed the budgeted amount, actuals, the variance (dollar amount and percentage), and the actuals from the previous year. It also showed the revenue and expenses. The report featured a pie chart of the revenue and a donut chart that broke down the budgets for each department.

In speaking about the pie chart, Chan said it visually showed the size of the revenues from an account-

ing perspective. "We have about 31.9 million dollars as a revenue. The majority of it comes from property tax (91 percent), municipal grants (four percent), airport (three percent), and then planning/water/sewer/waste management is one percent each. As of the end of February, we (have) only received about one percent of the revenue because the property tax won't be due until June and July."

Chan explained that since most of the County's funding comes through municipal taxes, which don't arrive in the bank account until early summer, one of the biggest challenges the County faces is making sure its cash flow "keeps us floating."

Moving to the donut chart, Chan said it represented the expenses. "Those are the budget expenses by department. At the end of February, the County used about 5.5 percent, about two million dollars of the overall budget. Most of our major spending will be happening in the summertime during the construction (season). Right now, we are processing as planned. No particular funding pressure at this point."

Chan said that in the next couple of months, Administration would

bring a borrowing bylaw to Council to help fund the road rehabilitation projects planned for the summer. "We are going into debentures for the road projects," she said.

Reeve John Burrows asked about the reserves. "Part of this Economic Recovery Plan that we are trying to execute is to make sure we have a ten million dollar operation reserve. We do have a ten-million-dollar operation reserve, right?" Chan responded that the County's reserves are close to eighteen million dollars.

"Good. I just wanted to make sure that we're not running on credit because I know we kind of run six months before we collect any revenue. We've got to keep running, so (that's) good," said Reeve Burrows. Chan then added that she would bring something forward at the County's next Council meeting, per the Reeve's recommendation. "Based on your recommendation, at the next council meeting, I will present the breakdown of the reserve distribution." Reeve Burrows said, "perfect."

Council members then commented on the document, honing in on chang-

continued on page 3

continued from page 2

es they noticed from the previous meeting, giving it two thumbs up. Councillor Alan Deane said he appreciated the changes and liked the format and headings used. "It makes it really easy to read." Councillor Jeremy Wilhelm agreed. "I appreciate the adjustments in the presentation. It broke down the reports in a much easier, readable manner. Thank you," he said.

During the same meeting on March 15, Woodlands County Council voted to pass the cost of credit card use to the consumer. Policy 1517 – Credit Card Surcharge Fee will become effective on May 1, 2023. Chan said Corporate Services would work closely with Communications to ensure the public knew of the changes. "We are also going to make the website live so that ratepayers can make the payments online." There will be a utility insert notice, posted signage, online notices, and updated invoice information.

Chan said the policy's objective was to neutralize the cost Woodlands County pays to credit card companies when ratepayers use a card to pay for something, such as their yearly taxes. Each credit card transaction includes a fee charged to the County, typically a percentage of the transaction. However, as of October 6, 2022, Canadian merchants can charge consumers a 2.4 percent surcharge fee, keeping the cost from landing on the merchant's lap and, in this case, the County's lap.

In 2020 alone, Woodlands County paid just over \$40,000 in credit card fees. Woodlands County Council voted unanimously to implement the 2.4 percent surcharge. Residents who use their debit cards, or pay with cash, will not pay a surcharge. The fee is only for credit card transactions.

# R.C.M.P. members lace up their skates with Whitecourt youth for the first Winter Skate Party



**Whitecourt RCMP members got into the fun and laced up their skates.**

**Whitecourt Park Parties were a huge summer hit last year, and Winter Park Parties have proved just as popular. Last week was the first Winter Skate Party which featured R.C.M.P. members skating with the youth and having a ton of fun.**



**A youngster received a "ticket" for being a Calgary Flames fan.**

By Serena Lapointe

Last summer, the Town of Whitecourt, P.O.W.E.R. Group (People of Whitecourt Encouraging Resilience), Whitecourt Crime Prevention, and generous sponsors brought forward Park Parties. The Town held three events at three different parks in June, July and August. The events brought neighbours out to play games, eat food and meet others from their area.

Residents enjoyed the events, coming out in droves, resulting in the Town of Whitecourt to creating Winter Parties. In February, they held a Light Up Toboggan Party at the Dahl Drive toboggan hill, and last week, on Thursday, March 16, they had a Winter Skate Party at Percy Baxter rink.

As with every party event, members of the Whitecourt R.C.M.P. attend, along with various front-line heroes, including firefighters and paramedics, and the P.O.W.E.R. Group. R.C.M.P. officers Belan, Goulet and Amponah were on hand last week and laced up their skates. Crime Prevention Coordinator Tina Prodaniuk explained that the skating party was initially set for March 9 but that they decided to bump it by a week in hopes of getting better weather.

"It's a great turnout, and the sun is shining, finally! People are enjoying themselves, and we couldn't have asked for a better day." Prodaniuk said getting people out of their homes and doing something positive is the whole point of the event. "We want to encourage families to get together. Pembina Pipeline has spon-

sored hot dogs, and we have coffee and Timbits for everyone. We couldn't have done this without their support. There is lots of skating happening, and our R.C.M.P. members are giving out Positive Tickets. When kids get a ticket, they get an extra ticket to go to the Red versus Blue hockey game coming up next month," said Prodaniuk.

Positive Tickets are just like they sound. R.C.M.P. members write tickets when they see a kid riding their bike or skating with a helmet, recycling, volunteering, making positive choices, or using a crosswalk. R.C.M.P. officers handed out tickets during the skate party for much funnier reasons. One kid received one for being dressed too warm for the weather, while another was written up for being a Calgary Flames fan.

The Red versus Blue hockey game will feature the Whitecourt fire department (red) and the Whitecourt R.C.M.P. detachment (blue). The game is on April 15 at the Scott Safety Centre on the Athabasca rink. "Each kid gets to bring a guest with their ticket," explained Prodaniuk. Though everyone in the community is invited to watch and support the players, kids with tickets will get down onto the ice surface for a picture with the firefighters and police officers. "We will even have red and blue bangers to pick which team you're cheering for. It's going to be really fun. We are encouraging people to come out," said Prodaniuk. She said they haven't typically gotten too many spectators

continued on page 8

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**Located within the Carlan Services Community Centre**  
The Whitecourt Food Bank is operated by the Town of Whitecourt Food Bank Coordinator and dependent on volunteers to operate. The Food Bank relies on donations of cash or food from individuals and organizations. Local grocery stores drop off baked goods including bread and pastries weekly. Other corporations and schools schedule food drives throughout the year.  
Open: Mon, Wed, & Fri 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Phone: 780-778-2341

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## WHITECOURT GROUP OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

All meetings are in person and online (hybrid)

- Mondays 7:30pm
- Wednesdays 7:30pm

Meetings held at the Family Worship Center upstairs.

**ZOOM ID: 818 413 483 PASSWORD: gratitude**



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Providing timely and easily accessible financial support for Whitecourt patients and their families who are dealing with a cancer diagnosis.

This can include help with parking costs for hospital visits, living expenses and unforeseen medical expenses. Applications can be made through the Drs at both Whitecourt Medical Clinics or (office hours, can leave a message): **Willow McIntyre** (Community Cancer Navigation Nurse, McLeod River PCN) **780-779-0079**, **Kim Nendsa** (President of Whitecourt Cancer & Wellness Society) **780-778-0932**  
wctcancerwellness@gmail.com

*\*\*Monthly meetings have been postponed due to COVID-19*

## Whitecourt AA Group Of Alcoholics Anonymous



Meetings three times each week

- Monday 8:00 p.m..... (12 Step Meeting)
- Wednesday 8:00 p.m...(Open Topic Meeting)
- Friday 8:00 p.m.....(Big Book Meeting)

Located at the United Church Basement on Legion St. (formerly 5201 - 50 Street )  
More info Contact: (780) 396-8777. Please Leave A Message For Our AA member or Contact Addictions Helpline @1(866)332-2322



## If your life is in danger or you know someone's life is in danger DIAL EMERGENCY NOW 911!

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, you need to know that you're not alone. You can also call if you are not in crisis, seeking additional information. The new Canada Suicide Prevention Service (CSPS), by Crisis Services Canada, enables callers anywhere in

Canada to access crisis support by phone, in French or English: toll-free **1-833-456-4566** Available 24/7  
Crisis Text Line (Powered by Kids Help Phone) Canada Wide free, 24/7 texting service is accessible immediately to youth anywhere

in Canada by texting TALK to **686868** to reach an English speaking Crisis Responder and TEXTO to **686868** to reach a French-speaking Crisis Responder on any text/SMS enabled cell phone.  
KidsHelpPhone Ages 20 Years and Under

in Canada **1-800-668-6868** (Online or on the Phone). First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness 24/7 Help Line **1-855-242-3310**  
Canadian Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line **1-866-925-4419**  
Trans LifeLine – All Ages **1-877-330-6366**

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Email [wctpress@telus.net](mailto:wctpress@telus.net) All submissions remain confidential

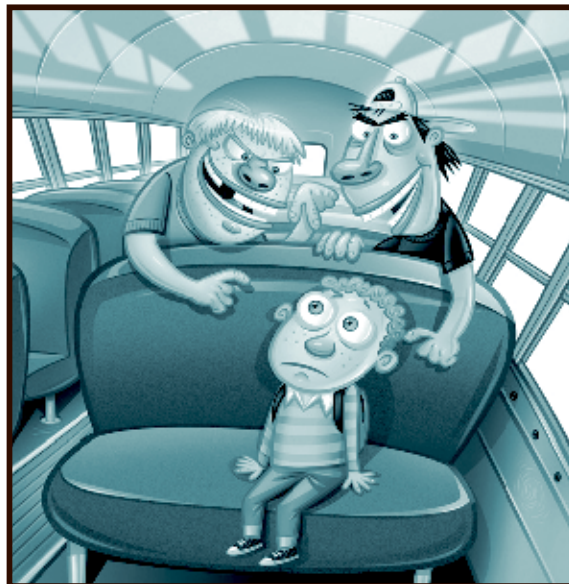


When you keep criticizing your kids, they don't stop loving you, they stop loving themselves.  
Let that sink in.



### Are you or someone you know being bullied?

Call the Bullying Helpline (Confidential)



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**1-888-456-2323**

Stand up! Don't be afraid of bullies!!

## Putting a face on suicide



Steven "Shane" Wickliffe  
Age 24

Every 40 seconds somewhere around the world someone dies by suicide, that's 99 people every 66 minutes. Every day, that's almost 100 people in the United States alone, and over 2160 worldwide. Putting a Face on Suicide (PAFOS) is a suicide awareness project that creates posters and videos to pay tribute to those we have lost to suicide with dignity and respect. PAFOS humanizes the daunting statistics; lovingly replacing numbers with faces.

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## Eagle River Casino & Travel Plaza Now Hiring Cashiers NOC 65100

**Responsibilities:**

- Greet customers
- Receive and process payments by cash, cheque, credit card, or automatic debit
- Provide information to customers
- Calculate foreign currency exchange
- Calculate total payments received at end of work shift and reconcile with total sales
- Verify the age of customers when selling lottery tickets, alcohol or tobacco products
- Operate cash register
- Process money, cheques, and credit/debit card payments
- Scan Items
- Tabulate total payment for goods or services required
- Receive payment for goods or services
- Calculate daily/shift payments received and reconcile them with total sales
- Suggestive selling
- Provide excellent customer service
- Assist customers with self-service items
- Participate in promotional activities

**Qualifications:**

- Some secondary school education is usually required. High school graduation may be required by some employers.
- Eligibility for bonding may be required.
- A casino gaming license may be required for cashiers working in gambling casinos.
- Must be able to complete Smart training courses
- Must be able to complete AML

**Experience:** 2 – 3 years, or we will train.

**Education:** Some post-secondary, high school may require.

**Terms of Employment:** Permanent full-time 40-hour work week.

**Language:** English

**Employment Conditions:** Shift work, Day, Evenings, Weekends, Holidays, Nights.

**Wage:** \$15.00 per hour.

**Benefits Package:** Vision, Dental, Health after 90-day probation period.

**Location:** Twp.Rd.602A, Hwy 32 North, Whitecourt, AB Canada.

**Address:** Eagle River Casino & Travel Plaza P.O Box 10 Whitecourt, Alberta Canada T7S-1N3

**Contact:** 780-779-2727 or Fax 780-706-7451

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## Eagle River Casino & Travel Plaza Now Hiring Casino Shift Manager NOC 62022

**Responsibilities:**

- Co-ordinate, assign and review the work of casino workers
- Establish work schedules and procedures and co-ordinate activities with other work units or departments
- Resolve work-related problems and prepare and submit progress and other reports
- Hire and train staff in job duties, safety procedures, and company policies
- Requisition of supplies and materials
- Ensure smooth operation of computer systems, equipment, and machinery, and arrange for maintenance and repair work
- May perform the same duties as workers supervised
- Perform the same duties as workers supervised
- Assist clients/guests with special needs
- Co-ordinate, assign and review work
- Ensure smooth operation of computer systems, equipment, and machinery, and arrange for maintenance and repair work
- Establish work schedules and procedures and co-ordinate activities with other work units or departments
- Hire and train staff in job duties, safety procedures, and company policies
- Requisition materials and supplies
- Resolve work-related problems and prepare and submit progress and other reports.

**Qualifications:**

- Completion of secondary school is usually required.
- Completion of college courses related to the area supervised may be required.
- Experience in the occupation supervised is usually required.
- AGLC casino gaming license will be required.
- Must be able complete Smart training courses
- AML certificate

**Experience:** 3 – 5 years.

**Education:** Completion of secondary school is required, casino gaming license.

**Terms of Employment:** Permanent full-time 44-hour work week.

**Language:** English

**Employment Conditions:** Shift work, Day, Evenings, Weekends, Holidays, Nights.

**Wage:** \$23.08 per hour.

**Benefits Package:** Vision, Dental, and Health after a 90-day probation period.

**Location:** Twp.Rd.602A, Hwy 32 North, Whitecourt, AB Canada.

**Address:** Eagle River Casino & Travel Plaza P.O Box 10 Whitecourt, Alberta Canada T7S-1N3.

**Contact:** 780-779-2727 or Fax 780-706-7451

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*It's officially spring, and you know what that means; rubber boots are a must! This enticing puddle, located along Mink Creek Road, was one of a couple of mini lakes on Friday afternoon, thanks to a hot sun beaming down on the pavement. Many culverts were uncovered last week to help deal with the melt, keeping most areas dry. The path around this "lake" was easy enough to manoeuvre, but it still made for a funny picture, as the crosswalk sign could've easily been swapped out for a swimming one.*



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# Woodlands County Council discussed the following items at their recent meeting:

Karen Gariepy, Dausen Kluin, and Leslie Penny with the Barrhead & District FCSS Society were in attendance virtually to provide information on the organization and update Council on proposed changes to their board by-law. The FCSS Society is seeking new board members and asked if Council wanted a County representative on their board. Woodlands County has a funding agreement with Barrhead & District FCSS Society to provide access to programming for Goose Lake and Fort Assiniboine area residents.

Policy 1517 – Credit Card Surcharge Fee was adopted to allow the municipality the ability to recoup loss of revenue from processing payment fees on all credit card transactions. The County offers several methods of payment to allow convenience to the public to pay in their preferred meth-

od, including, cash, credit, debit, pre-authorized debit, cheque, bank draft and certified cheque; only credit card payments incur a 2.4% surcharge fee. The new policy also includes measures to support protection of credit card payments, which will only be accepted in-person.

Western Star North Trucks was awarded the provision of one Tandem Gravel/Plow Truck with Viking- Clives attachments at a value of \$452,812, pending confirmation of chassis and extended warranty pricing later this year.

The next scheduled regular Council meeting is Wednesday, April 5, 2023, 5:00 pm. The meeting is held in-person at the Regional Office in Fort Assiniboine and streamed on the Woodlands County YouTube channel. Agenda packages are available on the Woodlands County CivicWeb Portal.



## Eagle River Casino & Travel Plaza

### Now Hiring Executive Chef NOC 6321

#### Responsibilities:

- Plan and direct food preparation and cooking banquets and specialty functions.
- Plan menus and ensure food meets quality standards
- Estimate food requirements and may estimate food and labour costs
- Supervise activities of sous-chefs, specialist chefs, cooks
- Arrange for equipment purchases and repairs
- Recruit and hire staff
- May prepare and cook food on a regular basis or for special guests or functions.
- Demonstrate new cooking techniques for and new equipment to the cooking staff
- Prepare and cook complete meals or specialty food, such as pastries, sauces, soups, salads, vegetables, meats, poultry, and fish dishes. Create and decorate food displays for special events such as banquets.
- Instruct cooks in the preparation, cooking garnishing, and presentation of food.
- Maintain records of food costs, consumption, sales, and inventory
- Analyze operating costs and other data

#### Qualification:

- Post Secondary diploma in Business Management, Culinary Arts, or Hospitality
- 3-5 years of supervisory or management experience in the Hospitality or Restaurant industry.
- Ability to provide leadership and communicate with all staff members.
- Ability to compute basic mathematical calculations.
- Knowledge of proper sanitation procedures and food safety guidelines.
- Understanding of food handling and sanitation standards.
- Understanding of restaurant operational procedures.
- Effective decision-making skills.
- Ability to acquire and maintain relationships e.g., associates, customers, and vendors.
- Positive communication and interpersonal skills.
- Positive attitude and a consistent display of professionalism.
- Innovative, detail-oriented, and quality conscious.
- Ability to endure abundant physical movements in carrying out job duties.
- Demonstrated ability to lead and direct a team.
- Ability to respond quickly in a dynamic and changing environment
- Knowledge of cost analysis, fiscal management, and budgeting techniques as an asset

**Education:** Post-secondary in business management, Culinary Arts or Hospitality

**Experience:** 5 years or more

**Terms of Employment:** Permanent full-time, 44-hour work week

**Language:** English

**Employment Conditions:** Shift work, Day, Evenings, Weekends, Holidays, Nights.

**Wage:** \$70,000 per year.

**Benefits Package:** Vision, Dental, and Health, After a 90-day probation period

**Location:** Twp.Rd, 602A, Hwy 32 North, Whitecourt, Alberta

**Address:** Eagle River Casino & Travel Plaza P.O Box 10 Whitecourt, Alberta T7S 1N3

**Contact:** 780-779-2727 or fax 780-706-7451 **Visit our website:** [www.eaglerivercasino.ca](http://www.eaglerivercasino.ca)

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## Eagle River Casino & Travel Plaza

### Now Hiring Security Guard Supervisor NOC 62029

#### Responsibilities:

- Co-ordinate, assign and review the work of security guards and other service workers not elsewhere classified
- Establish work schedules and procedures and co-ordinate activities with other work units or departments
- Resolve work-related problems and prepare and submit progress and other reports
- Hire and train staff in job duties, safety procedures, and company policies
- Requisition of supplies and materials
- Ensure smooth operation of computer systems, equipment, and machinery, and arrange for maintenance and repair work
- Monitor quality and production levels
- May perform the same duties as workers supervised.
- Arrange for maintenance and repair work
- Assist clients/guests with special needs
- Co-ordinate activities with other work units or departments
- Ensure smooth operation of computer equipment and machinery
- Establish work schedules and procedures
- Handle emergency situations
- Monitor quality and production levels
- Prepare and submit progress and other reports
- Requisition or order materials, equipment, and supplies
- Resolve work-related problems
- Supervise the operation of mechanical equipment and machinery
- Supervise, co-ordinate and schedule (and possibly review) activities of workers
- Train staff/workers in job duties, safety procedures, and company policies.

#### Qualifications:

- Completion of college courses related to the area supervised may be required.
- Experience in the occupation supervised is usually required.
- Certification or licensing AGLC.
- Must be able to complete Smart training course
- Must have a valid driver's license class 5
- Must be able to complete AML.

**Experience:** 2 – 3 years.

**Education:** Completion of secondary school an asset.

**Terms of Employment:** Permanent full-time 44-hour work week.

**Language:** English

**Employment Conditions:** Shift work, Day, Evenings, Weekends, Holidays, Nights.

**Wage:** \$20.77 per hour.

**Benefits Package:** Vision, Dental, Health after 90-day probation period.

**Location:** Twp.Rd.602A, Hwy 32 North, Whitecourt, AB Canada.

**Address:** Eagle River Casino & Travel Plaza P.O Box 10 Whitecourt, Alberta Canada T7S-1N3

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- Job#: 23-014,** Guest Services Associate I, Casual, Part-time Position.

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## Money Matters

**One Canadian Dollar = 0.72 US Dollar**  
at an exchange rate of **0.7262** (using nominal rate).



**Dollar Values as of March 21, 2023**

Page sponsored by



As we approach the spring and summer seasons and spend more time outdoors, let's not forget to follow our sun smart guidelines: protect your skin by covering up, avoid peak hours of sun exposure, and apply sunscreen.

For all open career opportunities, please check out our website at [albertanewsprint.com](http://albertanewsprint.com) → Careers.

continued from page 3

in the past but are hoping to see lots of people attend this year. "We would like to see people come out and watch our heroes battle it out."

With heavy sadness throughout the province and within the tight-knit protective services community following the deaths of two Edmonton Police Services officers earlier that day, Prodaniuk said the skating event helped bring smiles to the faces of the officers. "Today was a heavy day, so I think this was the perfect way for them to start their shift because that's what these guys are doing. Some even came out early to put their skates on and practice. They've definitely got

some smiles on their faces here today."

A.H.S. Health Promotion Facilitator Courtney Koopmans said promoting a healthy community is important for several reasons. "It helps as a protective factor for many things out there. Everybody is experiencing some financial strain at this time or is feeling down and maybe lonely, so we are showing that we can come together and be a community and protect ourselves from family violence, against self-harm, and negative mental health."

She said it also shows families that physical activity can happen, regardless of the weather. "It's about promoting those factors that keep us healthy." Koopmans said one of the items promoted

at the event was the story of Jacob's Heart. "It's about a fictional character, a twelve-year-old boy, that lives in Whitecourt. The story is about how every interaction that he experiences can make or break what he feels and experiences. Nothing really bad happens to him, but nothing builds him up, and slowly his heart breaks apart until there's nothing left."

There were cups and pins on hand with the saying "Drink Coffee & Do Good," which ties into an initiative that Whitecourt P.O.W.E.R. has. "It's the P.O.W.E.R. motto. We base it on getting to know your neighbours and having a coffee with them. Get to know those around you," explained Koopmans.

Park Parties will contin-

ue this summer. Prodaniuk said they have three dates set and will be sharing those with the public as soon as they can. "They have been an absolute hit. We are switching it up with different parks, and this was part of it, just grabbing one of the rinks. The ice was a bit soft today, but it worked out." Koopmans said this summer, the park

parties will feature a graffiti wall.

When asked why it's important for police officers to hang out with the community's youth, Koopmans said it's good for both the officers and the youth, especially because officers tend to move around to different communities. "This shows them that they matter to the community and

that they are part of it."

Prodaniuk agreed. "That engagement piece is so important because we want them to make sure that they know that the police are there to help and that when they need them, they will be there. This is the part of society that the officers want to see. It's happy and good, and these officers need to see that."



The Percy Baxter rink was bustling.

## WOODLANDS COUNTY RFPS AND TENDERS AVAILABLE

MPE Engineering Ltd. (MPE), on behalf of Woodlands County, is soliciting tenders from qualified contractors for the following projects:

- One (1) Sand and Salt Shed at the County Public Works Yard in Whitecourt and one (1) Sand and Salt Shed at the Fort Assiniboine Public Works Yard

Tenders will be accepted on MPE's Bidding System until **2:00:00 pm local time, Thursday, March 30, 2023**. For full project details and to create a Vender Account, visit <https://mpe.bidsandtenders.ca>.

Woodlands County reserves the right to waive informalities in, or reject any or all tenders, or accept the Tender deemed most favourable in the interest of the County.

## REQUEST FOR QUOTATIONS

Woodlands County is seeking quotations for the supply of the following:

### Lease/Purchase of Two (2) New All-Wheel Drive Motor Graders

Quotation documents may be obtained at either of the Woodlands County offices on, or after, March 8, 2023, as follows:

Woodlands County Municipal Office  
# 1 Woodlands Lane, Whitecourt AB T7S 1N3  
Telephone: (780) 778-8400

OR

Woodlands County Regional Municipal Office  
Box 33, Fort Assiniboine AB T0G 1A0  
Telephone: (780) 584-3866

Sealed quotations shall be submitted on, or prior to **April 21, 2023, at 2:00 pm** to

Richard Twach, Manager, Field Services  
P.O. Box 60 #1 Woodlands Lane, Whitecourt, AB T7S 1N3

For further information, please contact the Municipal Office in Whitecourt at 780-778-8400.



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### Coming Events

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**EDMONTON STAMP CLUB STAMP SHOW.** March 25-26, 2023. Saturday 10-5 pm, Sunday 10-4 pm. Central Lion's Rec Centre. 113 Street & 111 Avenue.. Stamps for sale, Evaluations, Door Prizes, Jr Table. THEME: Edmonton's Hockey History. Free Admission, collecting for Food Bank. www.edmontonstampclub.ca.

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### Services

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**WANTED OLD ADVERTISING:** Dealership signs, service station, gas pumps, globes, oil cans, Red Indian, White Rose, Buffalo, Husky, Ford, GM, Dodge, Tire signs, Coke, Pepsi, etc. Call 306-221-5908.

Odds of a child becoming a top fashion designer: 1 in 7,000

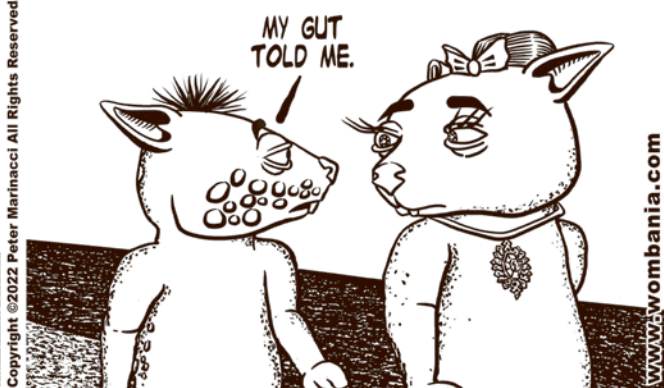
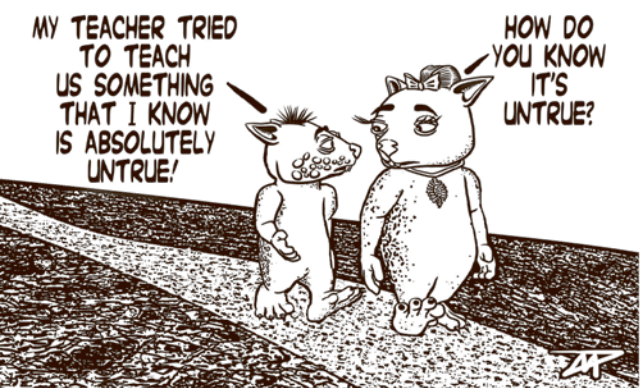
Odds of a child being diagnosed with autism: 1 in 310

Some signs to look for:  
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by PETER MARINACCI

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### Letter to the Editor policy

The Press welcomes readers to write letters to the Editor. A maximum of 300 words is preferred but not necessary. Letters must carry a first name or two initials with surname and include an address and daytime telephone number. All letters are subject to editing. Please email letters to wctpress@telus.net.



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# The Press

A locally owned and family operated newspaper serving Whitecourt

**PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY**

## Contact

Valerie Winger at 780-706-1858  
Email: wctpress@telus.net

Find us on: & &

The Press is printed on high quality newsprint using vegetable based ink. We encourage you to share, save, reuse, rehash & recycle.

### A look at the local weather

	Tue., March 21	Wed., March 22	Thu., March 23	Fri., March 24	Sat., March 25
	Mix of sun and clouds	Mainly sunny	Mainly sunny	Mix of sun and clouds	Mainly sunny
P.O.P.	10%	20%	20%	40%	20%
High	-2°C	7°C	8°C	-1°C	3°C
Low	-10°C	-5°C	-3°C	-12°C	-9°C
Wind	E 9 km/h	SE 6 km/h	SW 8 km/h	NW 15 km/h	W 14 km/h
24-Hr Rain / Snow	-	-	-	<1cm	-

# Premier Smith discussed the possibility of a surgery waitlist guarantee for Albertans during live town hall event

By Serena Lapointe

Premier Danielle Smith held a recent virtual town hall event. Held on March 14, live on Facebook, the hour-long conversation touched on numerous topics. One of the first questions she received stemmed from the recently released provincial budget, asking her for her key takeaways.

She pointed to affordability, specifically the \$100/month Affordability Payments, electricity supports and indexing of specific programs, AISH, income supports, and personal income tax system. She also talked about the reprieve on fuel taxes. "That's going to be especially important on April 1 when the Federal Liberal/NDP coalition increase the fuel tax again. We will do whatever we can to make sure people aren't feeling those costs by making sure we don't have our own fuel tax in place."

Premier Smith spoke about the surplus budget as key to being able to provide support to Albertans. "There's only been four times in the last fifteen years that the government has run a surplus budget. That was really important to me, and I

know it was important to our colleagues. When you have surpluses, you have choices. A surplus is also an indication that everything is going in the right direction. Not only are we finally seeing recovery in oil and natural gas prices but also the fact that we've got a record number of people coming to our province, that increase personal income tax revenue. The eight percent corporate income tax brought in record corporate tax revenue. After so many years of being on the downslide, things are really beginning to turn around."

One question posed to Premier Smith circled policing. She agreed it was a big issue. She said a big part of the focus had to be mental health. "Almost every one of us has been touched by mental health and addiction issues in our families. It is devastating to watch somebody lose themselves in the throws of an addiction or a mental illness. This is why we have put so many resources into addressing this issue. We've increased our mental health budget. It was 87 million dollars when we first got in. It's now \$275 million a year. There was a \$40

per day user fee for anybody trying to access a publicly funded bed for addiction treatment. We got rid of that. We look at this mental health and addiction crisis as being a healthcare issue, and we have to make sure that the first thing is getting people their lives back."

Premier Smith said they are building ten recovery communities. "The one in Red Deer is 75 beds, fifty for men and twenty-five for women. They are partitioned. There's a kitchen on either side. People who are going to go into recovery are going to have therapy in the morning and do chores in the afternoon, and vice versa. We are going to teach people how to shop, how to cook, and how to do basic repairs. They are going to take care of the facility. There will be a community garden. Whether a person needs a month, six months, or a year, we are going to get them back on the road to recovery."

The Premier said the second focus is "shoring up" the sheriffs. "Sheriffs are only about one week short of the kind of training that other officers have. That's a very easy gap to bridge." She

pointed to a thirteen percent increase in the Public Safety and Emergency Services department budget, led by Minister Mike Ellis. "(It's) one of the few that got a double-digit increase. But we know that this is important."

Premier Smith said Minister Ellis would be able to hire 235 more sheriffs. "He's going to start a gang unit. He's going to send officers to the border so that we can apprehend organized crime bringing drugs, human trafficking, (and) gun smuggling across the border. We're going to fill those gaps so that people can feel safe again. This isn't about just a law and order approach. This is about putting the right people on the street to assist with the policing but also connect people to the services that they need." The Premier said their changes are being called the "Alberta Model" and said people are "coming from all over to see what we are doing here."

One caller asked about caps on vehicle insurance rates and why they were removed, resulting in insurance companies skyrocketing their rates. Premier Smith said when they looked at the pre-

vious cap, they noticed that insurance companies raised rates as high as they could go, five percent, every year. "There was a twenty percent compounding rate that increased while the NDP was there. So, we took the cap off, and sadly, the insurance companies abused the freedom that they had. It's unacceptable."

The Premier said having a cap and allowing companies to increase rates "year after year" was not a good solution. "We needed to say stop. You're (the companies) not going to be able to increase at all until we figure this out. This next year is going to be that fact-finding mission about what we need to do to be able to reduce them."

Another topic brought forward was healthcare. A caller said they had been waiting two years for a hip replacement and asked if they could go to another province for the surgery. Premier Smith said she recently spoke with Dr. John Cowell, the AHS Administrator she hired to replace the AHS board. They identified 39,000 Albertans on the AHS waiting list, waiting longer than med-

ically recommended. The Premier said that number quickly dropped by 4,000, down to 35,000. "He said at this rate, because we've got a lot of things ticking along, a lot of new partnerships that have formed, a lot of capacity that has been built, and our system is now getting back to being fully functional, he thinks we are going to eliminate that backlog within twelve months."

The Premier told the caller that her two-year wait for a hip replacement was too long and addressed her question about going elsewhere for treatment. "We need to be able to give a guarantee. Last time I ran, I proposed the idea of a wait time guarantee and if you think that we should take a position where if we can't get your surgery (done) within a reasonable period of time, we pay for you to have it done somewhere else. I would love to get your feedback on whether or not you think that would be a good policy. I share your frustration. Our system's got to perform so much better." The entire live event is available on Facebook by visiting Premier Danielle Smith's page.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

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### NOTICE OF DECISION

The following decision was made by the Municipal Planning Commission:

Application 23-021: 54 Hillpark Trailer Court – Variances to Reduce Site Depth, Front Yard Setback and Separation Distance – Approved with Conditions.

**Date of Decision:** March 9, 2023

**Appeals Close at 4:00pm:** March 31, 2023

An Appeal of the above decision(s) may be made by submitting a written appeal and appeal fee (\$300) to the Office of the Secretary of the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, Town of Whitecourt Administration Building, Box 509, Whitecourt, Alberta, T7S 1N6 prior to 4:00pm on the above noted date. Any person(s) affected by the said proposal(s), has the right to appeal prior to the above date.

# BOOK YOUR AD NOW

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A large group of residents participated in a painting event at the Crown & Anchor last Thursday. Trained artist and instructor Kristi Thebeau walked the creative bunch through a mountain-scape scene featuring a vibrant galaxy-filled sky above it. There was a good mix of first-timers and regulars at the event, which happens monthly. What seemed impossible to some when they first began the process turned out fantastic, surprising those who didn't think they could paint. Thebeau's company, The Creative Canvas, is locally-based and holds events for people of all ages, from children to seniors.



### WHITECOURT MANOR OPEN HOUSE

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Saturday, April 1  
Sunday, April 2

**Time:**  
10:00am-4:00pm

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<b>Edmonton</b> T: 780-489-9606	<b>Lloydminster</b> T: 780-875-7433	<b>Fox Creek/Whitecourt/La Crete</b> T: 780-778-3091	<b>Fort Saskatchewan</b> T: 780-992-0266	<b>Evansburg</b> T: 780-727-2017	<b>T: 780-928-9525</b>

Toll Free: 1-877-489-9606 [METRIXGROUP.CA](http://METRIXGROUP.CA)

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