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The Press

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The Youth Advisory Committee shows growth and leadership in recent presentation



Photo submitted

The Youth Advisory Committee has been mostly flying under the radar, supporting community events, working hard to resolve youth-related concerns, and creating opportunities for youth to have fun. The dedicated group recently presented to Council about their plans for this year and the Press is happy to shed light on their hard work. Pictured is Whitecourt Town Council and eight of ten YAC members. See story page 2.

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The Youth Advisory Committee shows growth and leadership in recent presentation



Council listening to the YAC presentation.

By Serena Lapointe

Ahead of Whitecourt Town Council's Strategic Planning event held in January each year, the elected officials requested presentations from the town's committees. Before the end of 2024, every committee had taken its turn except the Youth Advisory Committee, which presented at the Council's first meeting of the year. The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) comprises ten youth and two Council representatives, currently held by Councillor Derek Schlosser and Councillor Serena Lapointe. Youth on the committee are between the ages of 13-18 and actively participate in many of the town's most popular yearly events. Lucas Boudreau, Logan Glidden, Beckett Holloway, Dax Holloway, Kahlen Johnson, Carly Lai, Abbeygail Lapointe, Victoria Benson, Brielle Smallwood, and Alyssa St. Pierre make up the current Youth Advisory Committee roster. All but two members, Carly Lai and Dax Holloway, attended the presentation on January 13.

Logan Glidden, who is in his second year on the committee, introduced his fellow

committee members to kickstart the presentation and gave some insight into being on the YAC. "We meet once a month throughout the school year and provide insight into youth needs in our community. We are youth representatives across the school districts and the town. We serve for one term and can reapply." Glidden explained that youth who complete the attendance requirements of the board receive a \$500 bursary towards post-secondary education.

The group presented together, with each member helping to explain something specific about the committee. Beckett Holloway and Lucas Boudreau explained what members get to do. "As Youth Advisory Members, we get to volunteer on many different occasions. We get to volunteer at Party in the Park, where we help with maintenance and setting up. We get to volunteer for Senior's Week and spend time with the seniors. For the Run for Fun, we either hand out wristbands for the kids or maintain the trails while everyone does the run. We also annually plan and host the Town Hall, which al-

lows the youth at Percy Baxter and St. Mary to get a better understanding of Council and the Youth Advisory," explained Holloway.

Boudreau explained one of the projects that he had a chance to work on. "We applied for the Enabling Accessibility Fund from the Federal Government, and we successfully completed that project." YAC helped facilitate the addition of push buttons for the ECHO Society building, helping make entry and exit more accessible for patrons. "One of our strategic goals was to increase the intergenerational events in Whitecourt. During Seniors Week, we had a cook-off with the youth and seniors. That was fun," said Boudreau. "We also talked to the maintenance at the AJMC and helped to replace some of the sporting equipment so that youth could enjoy sports with new equipment."

Abbeygail Lapointe explained the group's strategic goals for this term. "Our first goal is to increase activities for older youth in our community. We want to hold some events and programs dedicated to the older age demographics, from 15 to 18. Some of the things

we have on our list of potential activities are field trips to play paintball, sports clinics, outdoor campouts or bonfires, and a video game party. We will review the Youth Week survey results and see about potentially adding some of these activities into Youth Week."

The second goal was a collaboration with the Whitecourt Library. "With the library moving so close to Festival Park, we saw an opportunity to help the library with its Library of Things. A Library of Things is a program where libraries allow free rental of things other than books. Our library's program offers cross-country skis, snowshoes and various games. Some ideas of things we wanted to suggest and add were things like soccer balls, volleyballs, and footballs," she explained. They also want to provide chalk bags and plan to hold chalk art competitions, possibly partnering with existing events like Canada Day or Party in the Park.

"Our third goal is to expand the Here for You Campaign, which we started in 2023, to get free menstrual products placed in all town-owned facility

bathrooms. We want to discuss with the administration in the schools regarding providing free menstrual products in their bathrooms.

We also want to create a short list of businesses that could be approached and encouraged to provide free products in their bathrooms."

The youth committee also chose two topics to focus some advocacy towards, which Victoria Benson, Brielle Smallwood, and Alyssa St. Pierre explained. The YAC identified vaping as an issue affecting youth in the community, including the ease of access to vaping products, the age at which kids begin vaping and the lack of awareness of the issue at schools. "It can become very addictive, and it's not good. It affects our community a lot. It shouldn't happen, but it's really easy for them to get it," explained St. Pierre. The ladies also explained that crosswalk/pedestrian safety was the other advocacy goal.

YAC Member Lapointe finished the presentation by explaining a few of the committee's aspirations for the year. "We want to continue to provide youth in Whitecourt

the opportunity to have their voices heard and to promote the continued involvement of youth in positions of leadership, politics and advocacy as they become adults. We want to allow youth the opportunity to provide their voices to other committees."

Councillor Schlosser asked the YAC members what they felt was the most valuable thing about being on the committee. The youth responded that feeling like they were part of the community, the experience of helping plan and running events and having their voices heard were valuable to them. When asked what their favourite thing about the committee was, nearly every member said volunteering was number one.

Mayor Pickard congratulated the group on a job well done and credited staff. "The growth of the committee and the influence it has within the community has certainly developed over the last couple of years. I hope that that growth continues and that with the people you have here with you today, I think that Whitecourt's in a really good place for the future."

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Handcrafted bowls soon to be filled with handmade goodness



Every year, the Whitecourt Potters' Guild uses their imaginations, creativity and talent to design amazing creations for the community. Each spring, the group sets time aside to create bowls of all styles and colours as part of the guild's Chili Bowl Fundraiser. Each one-of-a-kind bowl is made with love and donated, along with ingredients from generous local businesses, to help create a delicious meal and raise money for Tennille's Hope. The fundraiser sells out every year, with happy customers in its wake. Recently, the guild posted a sneak peek at some of the bowls made so far. This year, the fundraiser will be on Thursday, April 3, and orders are typically accepted starting the Sunday before. Mark it on the calendar, and don't miss out!



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The Press

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PUZZLES

SEE SOLUTIONS PAGE 15



SUDOKU

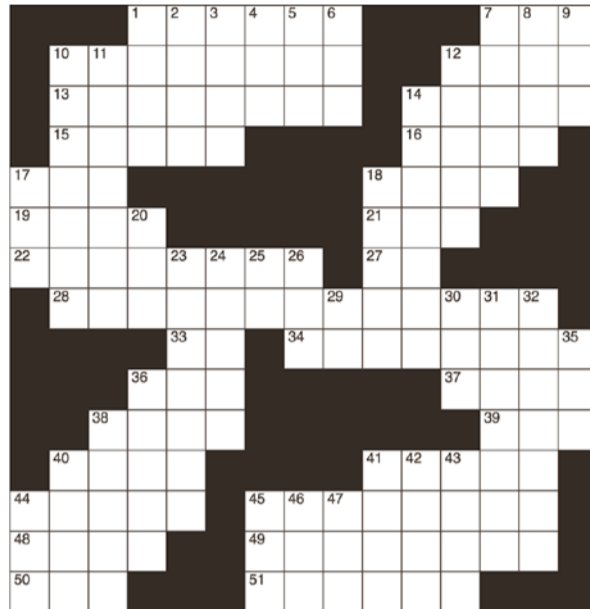
1					6			9
		2			8			
	6			4				
6	7							9
							2	6
	3	5						8
	5			9			4	
4	8			3	2	7		
3								

Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

CROSSWORDS



Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Crossword Clues

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Where entertainers perform
- 7. Miller beer variety
- 10. Ageless
- 12. River in SE Europe
- 13. Able to be repaired
- 14. Type of wrap
- 15. Atomic #54
- 16. Type of tent
- 17. U.S. Treasury position
- 18. Opposed to
- 19. Protective covering
- 21. Bridge building degree
- 22. Clouding of the lens
- 27. Priestess of Hera loved by Zeus
- 28. Unacceptable
- 33. Mr. T's "The A-Team" character

- 34. American national park
- 36. One point south of due east
- 37. Assist in a crime
- 38. Greek mythological personification of Earth
- 39. A major division of geological time
- 40. German courtesy title
- 41. English family dating back to Norman times
- 44. Discounts
- 45. South American nation
- 48. Former Milwaukee Buck Michael
- 49. Hostile
- 50. Passports and drivers licenses are two
- 51. Discourages from

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Supreme god of ancient Egyptians
- 2. Nevada city
- 3. Energy, style and enthusiasm
- 4. Bird's beak
- 5. Language
- 6. Midway between south and southeast
- 7. Punjab village
- 8. Small biting flies
- 9. Sportscaster Patrick
- 10. A way to get around
- 11. Repeat
- 12. A way to cook with fat
- 14. Temporary loss of consciousness
- 17. Reciprocal of a sine
- 18. Fir tree genus
- 20. "Transformers" director Michael

- 23. Criminals who steal
- 24. Genus of leaf-footed bug
- 25. Music product
- 26. "Talk to you"
- 29. Santa says it three times
- 30. Doctors' group
- 31. African nation
- 32. Ageless
- 35. When you hope to get somewhere
- 36. Worn
- 38. Deprives of vigor
- 40. Used to have (Scottish)
- 41. Where you live
- 42. Muslim ruler title
- 43. Basics
- 44. Type of drug (abbr.)
- 45. Spanish soldier
- 46. It precedes two
- 47. Illuminated

HOROSCOPE

ARIES

(March 21 - April 20)



Aries, you feel loved and appreciated this week and you would like to share those feelings with others by being supportive of their needs. Focus your attention on a close friend.

TAURUS

(April 21 - May 21)



Taurus, even if you do not have anything in common with someone, you can find a way to be friends. Open a dialogue to get the ball rolling.

GEMINI

(May 22 - June 21)



Gemini, accept that you cannot change some things and look for a silver lining. Soon enough you'll come out on the other side.

CANCER

(June 22 - July 22)



Cancer, you are getting hungrier and hungrier, which makes you determined to get ahead. Just be sure this determination is balanced by a little reservation as well.

LEO

(July 23 - August 23)



Could it be that you are in the market for some romance, Leo? If so, make a plan for rekindling the flame with a current partner or finding someone new who also is looking for love.

VIRGO

(August 24 - September 22)



Challenges may arise in your relationship this week, Virgo. A serious approach to the partnership is required by both side. Work toward resolving the situation as a couple.

LIBRA

(September 23 - October 23)



Libra, although your creative juices are flowing, some type of roadblock pops up and restricts your path. Explore ways to work around this obstacle.

SCORPIO

(October 24 - November 22)



Scorpio, take a deep look at yourself this week, examining all facets of your personality. Instead of being judgemental of others, you may need to make some changes.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 23 - Dec. 21)



Sagittarius, emotions are running high for you and you may not be able to focus on what needs your attention most. Try delegating some of your tasks.

CAPRICORN

(Dec. 22 - Jan. 20)



Be careful when listening to what another has to say, Capricorn. Read their body language instead of just their words. The two may not match up with one another.

AQUARIUS

(January 21 - February 18)



Opportunities you may never have expected are presenting themselves, Aquarius. Find time to process these unexpected developments and mull the best approach.

PISCES

(February 19 - March 20)



Pisces, resist hurried efforts to get to a destination without enjoying the journey. There is a lot to see along the way, so it's best if you savor all of it while you can.

NEAT AND TIDY

WORD SEARCH



P A C K R A T Z S A A N O I T A N O D V
 Y M M S B B D G P A Q N U A T L L K F G
 P P A E E I G V E R T I C A L S P A C E
 Z Y D I T L C I Q G N I Y D I T S E N T
 Q T R E N S B T D G N I C N E U Q E S O
 R C P G P T Y I Q Z U S T E S O L C B B
 C E O R G U E S T S Z E A B B I D S S E
 B G P M O N R N A C Y C G F P B U R B R
 R R R U M C I G A B E C O A E I E K M K
 T O U E R O R Z I N N L B T R U K O M D
 I U A L R P N A I N C C L G F A E N A A
 M P C A Q E O A S N G E G O E T G Z N C
 F I T B K R T S R T A V B O C V R Q A V
 A N I E I T P T E E I G C F T O S I G Q
 Z G V L V Y E R U R A N R Q I M L I E D
 E D I S G K R Z P L C L A O O U A I M N
 K C T E C K P Y V E C R L T N R I K E F
 E T Y S O R T I N G T E E S I I D L N V
 F I L I N G L O D I T N O B S O E O T C
 S R E N I A T N O C L P O U T L N A Y I

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS

ACTIVITY
CLOSETS
CLUTTER

COLLECTIBLES
COMMON AREA
CONTAINERS
DONATION

FILING
GARAGE
GROUPING
LABELS

MAINTENANCE
MANAGEMENT
ORGANIZING
PACKRAT

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PROCRASTINATION
PURGING
REPURPOSE

SEQUENCING
SORTING
SYSTEM
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Aimee Grierson **780-262-0222**

<https://wctcancerwellness.com/>

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



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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.

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Family Resource & Crisis Centre

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Old Ferry Road residents speak at County Council meeting, ask for help



OFR resident Dennis Brown (bottom right), addressing Woodlands County Council.



Old Ferry Road resident Patricia McNeil.



Dennis Brown's property, now within the river's potential path.

Concerns over the growing erosion on the banks of the McLeod River, specifically along Old Ferry Road are worsening for residents. During a recent Woodlands County Council meeting, two residents expressed their worries about the conditions near their properties.

By Serena Lapointe

The future of Old Ferry Road, following the immense damage from the June floods in 2023 and steady erosion, continues to be a topic of discussion for residents and the County. In September last year, Woodlands County's Director of Infrastructure Services, Jeff Zhang, provided an update on possible paths to deal with the growing issue of erosion that is edging uncomfortably close to Old Ferry Road.

Options varied in cost, from less expensive to more so, from road realignment to rebuilding the slope to a sheet pile retaining wall. Four options for road realignment, from 20m to 100m from the current roadway, were provided, along with property impacts from minor to major. There was also an option to close a portion of Old Ferry Road, removing the loop.

At the time, public consultation had not yet occurred. On September 30, 2024, a Public Information Session took place to share options with affected residents and gather feedback.

On December 4, during the Woodlands

County Council's regular meeting, Zhang presented the findings. "Over 10 families attended the session on September 30 and were asked to complete a questionnaire form. Ten written questionnaires were received". Three supported the road's closure, one supported gravel stabilization, and six supported different combinations of solutions. None of the attendees supported the road realignment options.

Ideas from the Public Information Session included waiting until erosion expanded or damage from the next flood happened, rendering travel on the road dangerous before permanently closing a portion of it and hiring a second engineer to either validate the current options or provide new ones. Zhang said a second opinion would cost between \$20,000-40,000. Zhang added that the administration regularly communicates with the Alberta Government as part of the 2023 Disaster Recovery Program (DRP). Though funding is not guaranteed, the administration hopes to receive near-

ly 2.4 million. "That would represent the cost to restore prior to the flood," said Zhang, adding that funding could also cover the equivalent cost of an innovative alternate option if bank restoration proves not feasible.

Two grants available through the province can help areas affected by flooding: DRP and the Local Growth and Sustainability Grant (LGSG). Not every flood triggers a DRP, and the discretion of who gets funding is solely in the provincial government's hands. However, neither grant covers erosion control, which Zhang said is the primary culprit behind the damage. DRP is only available for emergencies that the government deems fundable. LGSG is for growth support but can be used for emergencies threatening health and safety. Though erosion is a serious problem, it doesn't fall under either grant.

Councillor John Burrows asked what else could be available. "If that erosion continues, and it's likely to on the outside of that river,

continued on page 7

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The Press

continued from page 6

there's no supports that kick in from anybody on those lands?" Zhang said they could lobby for help but couldn't tell the government what to offer as support. He said they were actively looking into another grant that provides drought and flood protection dollars, specifically public infrastructure. He added that he didn't know of any other possible grants.

"Administration agrees that a long-term solution to provide erosion mitigation is beneficial to the County and its residents. However, this desire must be constrained within the County's current financial situation and funding ability," said Zhang. Interim CAO Paul Benedetto said two residents from Old Ferry Road, Patricia McNeil and Dennis Brown, wanted to present to Council as a delegation in the new year.

On January 15, resident Dennis Brown spoke first. "It is getting frustrating for us," he began. He invited the Council and administrative staff to his property to see the issue first-hand. His property sits across the

road from the highly eroded riverbank on the low part of Old Ferry Road. "With erosion continuing to damage the landscape, residents live in fear of the next flood.

We ask the County to expedite plans to control the McLeod River flow to prevent future disasters. Additionally, we need assurance that our safety, livelihood and property values will be safeguarded, allowing the current and future families to thrive in Woodlands County," spoke Brown.

He said the "lack of long-term flood mitigation" had led to a "collapsed property value." He said home buyers would view the area as a high-risk investment, further compounding financial difficulties for residents, specifically those wanting to sell. He then showed pictures of the land across the road from his property, before and after, which showed that the river was now open to his property. "Now we face a possible devastation next time this happens, and it's going to happen."

He suggested diverting the river to help protect the area rather than letting it contin-



One vantage of the eroded river bank on Old Ferry Road.

ually erode or be affected by future floods. "If you don't rebuild that bank, the waters going to keep coming, basically. I look out the window, and I go, I'm 77 years old, and you guys aren't going to help me, personally, I mean, so I have to speak up and say, let me sell it or help me sell it. Put something up that makes sense not only for me but for the rest of the residents."

Patricia McNeil spoke next. In pictures, she pointed out that her land is lower than the flooded river on the

other side of Old Ferry Road, alluding to what could happen if the road is unprotected, adding that there was potential for the river to impact dozens of properties downstream. "Any properties damaged due to a municipality's breach of duty or negligence are subject to seek compensation under various clauses of current Alberta legislation," she stated.

McNeil asked that the Council seek more information by hiring "an experienced, expert consultant to create proper impact cost

analysis on going forward with and without bank stabilization." McNeil said that based on that information, more decisions could be made, like an intelligent realignment of the road and appropriate compensation for affected landowners downstream.

Reeve Dave Kusch thanked Brown and McNeil for their presentations. "I hear what you're saying. You are not falling on deaf ears. That's why we've had multiple discussions with (the) administration and (are) trying to

bring back other ideas and options. Today isn't going to be the last time we are having these discussions." He also said there would likely be more public consultation coming. "We're trying to do the right thing here, in the capacity we have, with the help we can receive from the province." He said the administration would continue being active in approaching the province for alternatives before it becomes "more of an issue than it already is." The Press will continue following this story.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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TAKE PART! GIVE BACK! Opportunity for Public Participation

The Town is recruiting citizens to fill volunteer positions on two Boards. Board members provide Town Council with perspective and recommendations regarding important civic issues. Whitecourt is a diverse, growing town, and citizens are in the best position to provide input on our changing community needs. Get involved! It's your town. Share your knowledge and meet new colleagues.

Community Services Advisory Board

"To create a healthy, strong community by meeting the leisure and social needs of the community."

(1) Member – term to expire in October 2027

Applications will be accepted from residents of Whitecourt or the Woodlands County agreement area.

Subdivision and Development Appeal Board

"To make decisions on appeals of subdivision or development decisions made by the Development Officer or Municipal Planning Commission."

(1) Member – terms to expire in October 2027

If being on a Council Committee interests you, please complete an application form which can be found on the Whitecourt website at <https://www.whitecourt.ca/your-town/mayor-council/public-participation> or picked up at the Town Office. Applications must be received before 12:00 noon, Monday, February 3, 2025 to:

Whitecourt Town Administration Office
Attention: Executive Assistant
5004 - 52 Avenue, Box 509
WHITECOURT, AB T7S 1N6
email: administration@whitecourt.ca

You can also scan the QR code for a direct link to the application form:




Applications will be presented to Town Council at the February 10, 2025 Regular Meeting.

Questions?

Contact our Administration Department at 780.778.2273 or email administration@whitecourt.ca.



CANADIAN Kids Corner

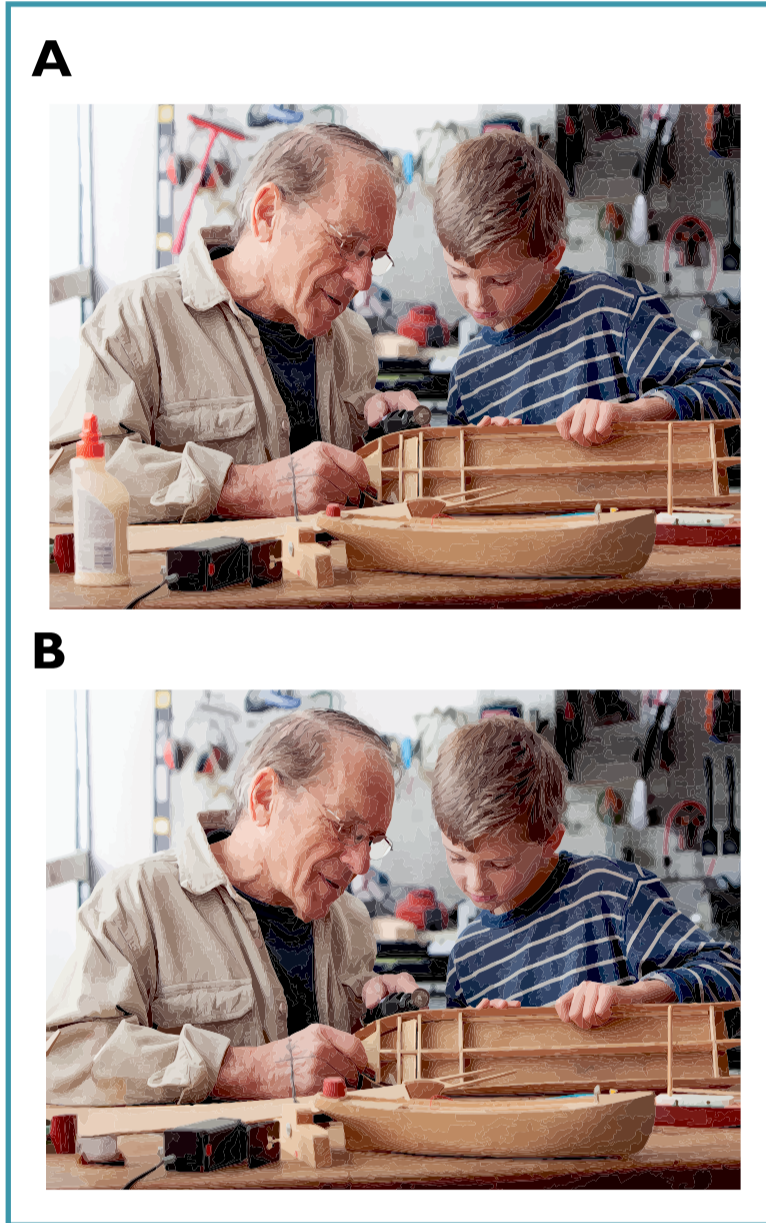



Body FACT!

Hobbies can keep this part of the body stimulated.

Answer: Brain


What's the Difference?
Find the four differences between these pictures.



Answers: 1. Missing glue 2. Red piece on boat is larger 3. Red tool in background is missing 4. There is a second black scrubber in back right

CANADA

MONTH



HISTORY

1947

The Dominion of Newfoundland, which later becomes a province, switches to driving on the right side of the road instead of the left.

NEW WORD

PASTIME

activity done regularly for enjoyment

How they say that in...

English: Hobby
Spanish: Hobby
Italian: Hobby
French: Passe-temps
German: Hobby

Did You Know?



Sewing, like other hobbies, can relax a person by focusing the mind on the task and not on other things in your life.



Get the PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

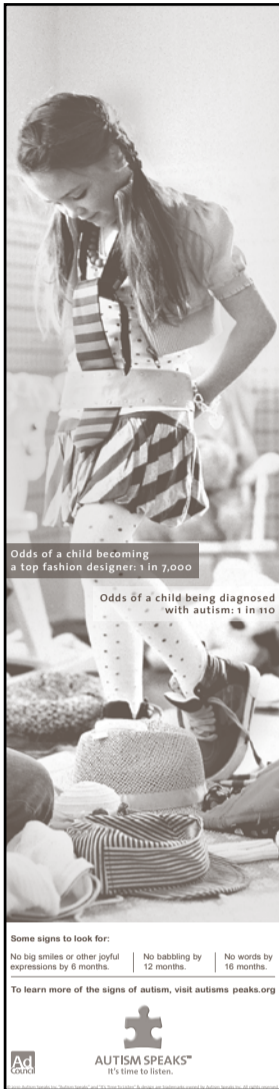
Answer: Paint palette



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A look at the local weather

	Wed., Jan. 29	Thu., Jan. 30	Fri., Jan. 31	Sat., Feb. 1	Sun., Feb. 2
P.O.P.	20%	30%	30%	40%	60%
High	1°C	1°C	-4°C	-11°C	-19°C
Low	-7°C	-5°C	-11°C	-23°C	-24°C
Wind	SW 8 km/h	SW 13 km/h	W 18 km/h	NW 16 km/h	NW 28 km/h
24-Hr Rain / Snow	-	-	-	<1cm	1-3cm

A winter smash for REVZ volleyball



Action on the court.



A happy group of silver medalists.

The season's first tournament for the U15 Black team from the Whitecourt REVZ Volleyball Club resulted in shiny silver medals around the necks of the hardworking girls. Eight teams registered for the Winter Smash Tournament hosted by the U15 Black team. Held over the weekend at the AJMC, the tournament was a great display of determination and teamwork.

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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@gmail.com.



The Press

A locally owned and family operated newspaper serving Whitecourt

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY

Contact

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



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

SCHOOL NEWS



Whitecourt Central School welcomed a special guest last week—Carmen Siu, Program Coordinator for the Breakfast Club of Canada. Siu joined WCS staff in preparing and serving breakfast to students, helping to promote the importance of a healthy start to the day.



Students in Miss Chamzuk's kindergarten class at Pat Hardy Primary School engaged in a hands on science lesson as they predicted and tested whether various objects would sink or float. The fun-filled activity not only sparked curiosity among the young learners but also ignited a passion for exploration and discovery in the world of science.

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

Have you been bullied, and want to share your story?

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Putting a face on suicide



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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Business vibes: Sentiment subdued but oil and gas industry is optimistic

By Siddhartha Bhattacharya, ATB ECONOMICS

Released this week, the Bank of Canada's Business Outlook Survey revealed that overall business sentiment remained weak with some positive signs in the fourth quarter of last year.

The most significant economic headwinds cited by firms were sluggish consumer demand, uncertain economic conditions and taxes & regulators. Potential US tariffs are expected to raise input costs and weaken sales, but about

three-quarters of businesses expect inflation to remain with the 1-3% range till 2026.

Having said that, sentiment has improved and this largely reflects ongoing interest rate cuts. Businesses see a boost in sales in the coming months. Labour shortages are less of a concern and hiring intentions remain soft as many firms are not facing binding capacity constraints.

We don't get a provincial breakdown, but this update included a special survey of oil and gas producers. The findings bode well for

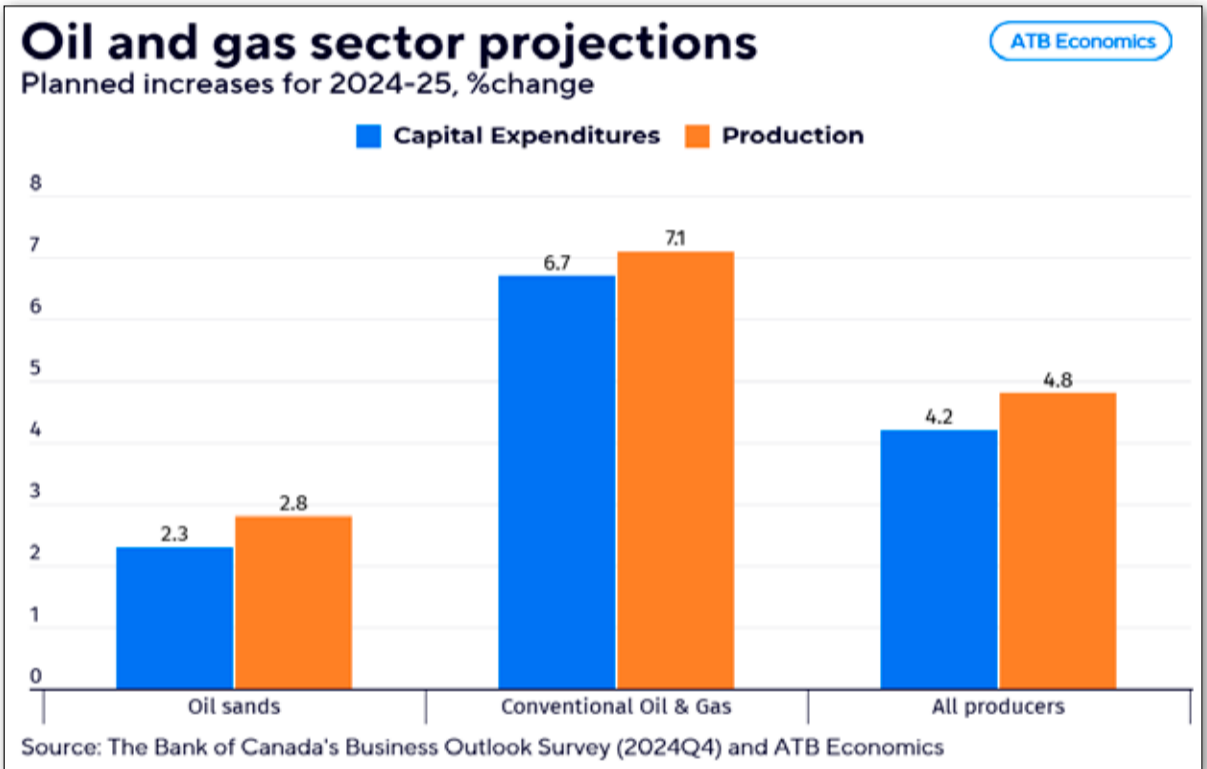
Alberta's energy sector despite the volatility in markets and tariff threats by the new US administration (with no assurances this sector will be exempt).

The survey finds that business leaders in the oil and gas sector are more optimistic following the Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) pipeline commencing operations last year, which has improved market access to Asian countries and delivered better pricing. Firms are similarly optimistic about LNG prospects, with Phase 1 of LNG Can-

ada expected to be in service this year.

As a result, oil and gas capital expenditures are pegged to grow by 4.2% while production is expected to rise 4.8% this year. These estimates for both, investment and production, are very much in line with our latest economic outlook released last month.

*The Business Outlook Survey was conducted from November 7 to 27, 2024. The survey is based on interviews with the senior management of about 100 firms selected to reflect the composition of the gross domestic product of Canada's business sector.



The pros and cons of receiving your Canada Pension Plan benefits early or late

(NC) Financial planners used to ask their clients, "What if you die? How will you look after your family?" Nowadays, with people living longer, the question is, "What if you live?" One of the key decisions that many Canadians need to make in retirement planning is when to begin receiving your Canada Pension Plan (CPP) benefits. It's an important decision that can have a significant impact on retirement income, but it's a decision that is different for everyone based on personal circumstances.

Understanding the impact of early and late benefits: The standard age to receive CPP benefits is 65. You can start as early as 60,

but you'll receive a smaller amount; or you can delay until 70 and receive higher benefits. (The maximum monthly amount is reached at 70, except for increases due to inflation.) Here's how it works:

- If you choose to start receiving benefits before age 65, payments will decrease by 0.6 per cent each month (or 7.2 per cent per year), up to a maximum reduction of 36 per cent if you start at age 60.
- If you start after age 65, payments increase by 0.7 per cent each month (or 8.4 per cent per year) up to a maximum of 42 per cent if you wait until age 70. Based on those fig-

ures, if you were eligible to receive \$10,000 a year in CPP benefits at 65, the amount would be \$6,400 if you started taking payments at age 60 versus \$14,200 at 70.

Factors to consider before deciding: It can be daunting to make the decision, but there are several questions you can ask yourself before you decide – and of course you can choose to begin receiving benefits any time between ages 60 and 70.

For example, you may consider taking CPP earlier if you are ill or have a family history of shorter lifespans. You may also want to pay off debts or invest the money. On the other hand, you

may consider waiting longer if you are healthy, have a family history of living longer and don't need the money for immediate needs.

Benefits assurance: Whatever you decide, the benefits will be there for you – and you'll keep receiving payments for as long as you live. As of September 30, 2024, the Fund stands at \$675 billion. It's professionally managed by CPP Investments, the independent Crown Corporation that operates at arm's length from the federal and provincial governments. The independent Office of the Chief Actuary, which monitors the long-term health of the Fund, says in its latest review that the CPP Fund is financially sustainable for at least the next 75 years.

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- Job#: 25-002**, Infrastructure Summer Labourers, Summer Student Positions.
- Job#: 25-003**, Parks Summer Labourers, Summer Student Positions.
- Job#: 25-004**, Festival Park Attendants, Summer Student Positions.
- Job#: 25-005**, Utilities Summer Labourer, Summer Student Position.
- Job#: 25-006**, Landfill Summer Labourer, Summer Student Position.
- Job#: 25-007**, Visitor Information Counsellor, Summer Student Position.
- Job#: 25-008**, Summer Program Leader, Summer Student Position.
- Job#: 25-009**, Fire Department FireSmart Labourers, Summer Student Positions.
- Job#: 25-010**, Engineering Student, Summer Student Position.
- Job#: 25-011**, Infrastructure Services Engineer, Permanent, Full-time Position.
- Job#: 25-012**, Transit Drivers, Casual Positions.

Please visit www.whitecourt.ca for all employment opportunities and details on how to apply.



Don't let radon ruin your retirement

(NC) As we approach or start to enjoy the first years of our retirement, many of us plan to stay in the same home we raised our family in. To do so safely, you might be looking into "aging in place" measures. These include adding grab bars in the bathroom, widening doorways for easier access for a wheelchair or walker, and adding additional lighting to make it easier to see potential tripping hazards. Before you undergo any renovations to make your home safer and more comfortable for your retirement years, you should take one simple step: have your home tested for radon.

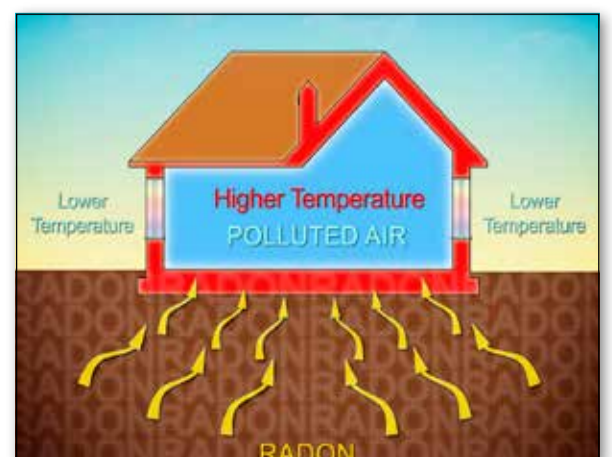
Radon is an odourless, tasteless gas that is also the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. It comes

from the natural breakdown of uranium in the ground. Outside, it's naturally dissipated by the breeze. But in indoor spaces, such as your basement, the gas can accumulate to dangerous levels.

The only way to know if you have high radon levels in your home is to test for it. You can buy a DIY testing kit online or hire a certified radon expert to conduct the test.

If your home has elevated levels there are relatively easy and affordable ways to fix it. A mitigation system can be installed in about a day and will lower radon levels by up to 90 per cent. These systems cost about the same as installing a new furnace or air conditioner.

Learn more about radon testing at takeactiononradon.ca.



2025 SMALL BUSINESS PROPERTY SUB-CLASS APPLICATION DEADLINE

The Small Business Property Sub-Class provides owners who paid a non-residential property tax levy in the previous year with an opportunity to apply for a reduced property tax rate in the current year.

Property owners who operate a business or have businesses leasing their property with fewer than 50 full-time employees in Canada can apply for a reduced property tax rate. Each application will be

reviewed before being approved for the tax rate reduction. Eligible properties must be in compliance with Woodlands County's Land Use Bylaw.

To qualify, each Small Business Property Owner must submit their application annually. Applications for the 2025 tax year are due **February 14, 2025**. Applications are available at the Woodlands County Offices or online at <https://www.woodlands.ab.ca/p/property-taxes>.



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Winter wellness: Seven tips for staying healthy



(NC) Is prioritizing your health a goal this winter? Follow these tips for a healthier, happier season:

- 1. Make your home a haven.** Transform your home into a cozy retreat from the cold. Adding fuzzy blankets, fleece pillows, scented candles and family photographs to your living space can help create a warm, welcoming environment to soothe your soul.
- 2. Try your hand at**

winter sports. Exercise is great for your mind and body, and can strengthen your muscles and immune system. Winter sports like skiing, ice-skating or even snowboarding can be a fun and invigorating challenge

- 3. Be mindful of your mental health.** With low sunlight and cold weather, it's easy for the winter blues to set in. A light therapy lamp can help supplement

natural light, but remember to speak to a mental health therapist or physician if you need extra support.

- 4. Practice good sleep hygiene.** Sleeping well is key to staying healthy. Try to keep good habits, like going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, even on weekends. It may sound obvious, but avoiding screens before bed can help you get to and stay asleep.

If you have trouble staying offline, use an app or timed lock-box to make sure you unplug.

- 5. Get on top of your healthcare.** Check in with your healthcare provider to make sure your tests and vaccines are all up to date. If you have a cough or feel the winter blues, speak to someone sooner than later to feel better faster. To see a doctor or nurse practitioner quickly and conve-

niently, try a virtual care platform like Maple. Connecting with a provider from home can help you stay on top of your health and tackle problems when they arise.

- 6. Plan healthy meals.** Fruits and veggies packed with nutrients, antioxidants and fibre can boost your energy and keep you feeling your best. Try new recipes featuring seasonal produce like sweet potatoes, win-

ter squash, beets and apples.

- 7. Fight back against germs.** Help prevent colds and flus by washing your hands regularly, coughing into your sleeve and carrying hand sanitizer with you when you're on the go. Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces in your home, like doorknobs and light switches.

Find more tips for staying healthy this winter at getmaple.ca.

Woodlands County Council recap

Woodlands County Council discussed the following items at their recent meeting of Council: Woodlands County residents Mr. Dennis Brown and Ms. Patricia McNeil were present to discuss the

impacts of the 2023 flood on Old Ferry Road and the nearby properties and the proposed options presented to Council. Council continues to review options to find a strategy for Old Ferry Road and

the County is continuing to pursue provincial funding.

Council was updated on the financial position of CYZU Airport, landing and fuel flowage surcharge fee comparisons and a 5-year

forecast on the revenue and expenses for the airport.

Upcoming scheduled meetings:

- Regular Council – Wednesday, January 29, 9:30 am
- Regular Council –

Wednesday, February 12, 5:00 pm

- Governance & Priorities – Wednesday, February 19, 5:00 pm
 - Regular Council – Wednesday, February 26, 9:30 am
- Meetings are held

in-person at the Municipal Office in Whitecourt and streamed on the Woodlands County YouTube channel. Agenda packages are available on the Woodlands County CivicWeb Portal.



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