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The Press

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

Locally Owned & Operated

Vol. 14 - Issue 6 | Wednesday, February 12, 2025

Body cameras, new wheels, higher tag/tow numbers and roaming cats, all highlights from last year's Municipal Enforcement report



Community Peace Officers help keep Whitecourt safe.

The bylaw enforcement arm of the community is a busy bunch. Town Council recently received a report on last year's activities, including some of the new gadgets that the team is using to up the community's safety.

By Serena Lapointe

When it comes to the safety of Whitecourt, two main groups are charged with keeping things in check: the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Municipal Enforcement Officers, also called

Community Peace Officers (CPO). Though the two groups regularly collaborate, they have two different roles.

Community Peace Officers are municipal employees hired to enforce the town's bylaws within the jurisdiction

of the town's corporate limits, appointed under the Alberta Peace Officer Act.

They are also unarmed. The role that Community Peace Officers have is vast, as most communities have

continued on page 6



Whitecourt cats need I.D. tags on and are not allowed to roam free.



Patrick Carew

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Sunshine and skis




All smiles after a long trek.



Rounding the last bend.

After a brutal cold snap had area residents hibernating, the warm sunshine on Saturday was a welcomed sight. The Whitecourt Golf and Country Club grounds were buzzing with activity, as enthusiasts utilized the groomed cross-country ski trails that zig-zag throughout the course. Terry, pictured, had just finished a nine-kilometer excursion when The Press spotted her taking the final curve before the parking lot, located by the river spur access point beside the golf course.



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of the most significant financial decisions of their lives, ensuring they feel confident every step of the way.

I also collaborate closely with experienced industry professionals, including my mentor Mike LaRue, to continually refine and expand my expertise. Together, we are building a team dedicated to delivering exceptional mortgage services.

At the heart of my work is a passion for helping people secure the home of their dreams while building lasting relationships based on trust and integrity. As I grow in this field, I'm committed to providing an exceptional client experience that is as rewarding as it is reliable.

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PUZZLES

SEE SOLUTIONS PAGE 15



SUDOKU

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

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!

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!

CROSSWORDS

1	2	3					4	5	6	7
8			9					10		
11								12		
13				14				15		
16							17			
18					19	20				
				21				22		
				23				24		
				25				26		
				27				28		
								29	30	31
								32	33	
								34		
								35		
36								37		
38									39	
40										41

- 41. Popular side dish
 - 42. Global energy firm
 - 43. Chronicles (abbr.)
- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. Type of bomb
 - 2. Polynesian island country
 - 3. Heavenly body
 - 4. Hard workers
 - 5. Covered
 - 6. Johns Hopkins Hospital founder
 - 7. Plant of the grass family
 - 9. Island person of the Bering Sea
 - 10. Storehouse
 - 12. Scarlet-flowered desert shrub
 - 14. A pituitary hormone
 - 15. Female sibling
 - 17. Monetary unit of Afghanistan
 - 19. Empowering
 - 20. Space station
 - 23. Disorder
 - 24. State of fuss
 - 25. Footwear for babies
 - 26. Nuclear reactor (abbr.)
 - 27. Drove
 - 28. Affirmative
 - 29. Male parent
 - 30. Utter obscenities
 - 31. Type of verse
 - 32. Unpleasant person
 - 33. One who settles down
 - 34. Founder of source-based history
 - 36. A way to snarl

Crossword Clues

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Racquet sport group (abbr.)
- 4. Norse god of thunder
- 8. Russian industrial city
- 10. What's good for the __
- 11. Round-ish shape
- 12. Baltimore MLBer
- 13. French modernist painter
- 15. Burned with water
- 16. Intestinal issue
- 17. Take the lead
- 18. Prove oneself worthy
- 21. None
- 22. Tax collector
- 23. Swiss river
- 24. Gymnast Raisman
- 25. Baby's dining accessory
- 26. Canadian beer distributor
- 27. Iconic American tourist destination
- 34. More expansive
- 35. Alert
- 36. Popular boots Doc
- 37. Showings
- 38. Conclusion
- 39. Share a common boundary
- 40. Shooting sport

HOROSCOPE

ARIES

(March 21 - April 20)



A good first impression is really important right now, Aries. Be sure to wear your best clothes and check out your appearance before you meet up with anyone this week.

TAURUS

(April 21 - May 21)



Taurus, you are bound to have a lot of fun this week, and you will spread cheerfulness to others. You might host a party or plan some sort of night out with friends.

GEMINI

(May 22 - June 21)



None of the usual strategies to confront family issues are working right now, Gemini. You may need to take a step away and give others distance for the time being until things cool off.

CANCER

(June 22 - July 22)



Cancer, some tech upgrades can help ensure an exciting new project starts off on the right foot. Enlist others to help and welcome any insight.

LEO

(July 23 - August 23)



This week is your chance to take a break and let someone else take center stage for a bit while you enjoy time out of the spotlight, Leo. Right now you may need a little alone time.

VIRGO

(August 24 - September 22)



Virgo, you know what you have to get done, so it is well past time to put one foot in front of the other and get moving. Others have helped, but you have to see it to completion.

LIBRA

(September 23 - October 23)



Focus all of your energy on the important people in your life right now, Libra. Other things can wait for the time being. Don't be too hard on yourself for not getting everything done.

SCORPIO

(October 24 - November 22)



Scorpio, as things in your life continue to evolve, you may be tempted to jump into something new. You might want to slow the pace and exercise due diligence first.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 23 - Dec. 21)



Sagittarius, have you bitten off more than you can chew this week? If so, you probably have to ask for some helpers to step up and pitch in. Teamwork is a good thing.

CAPRICORN

(Dec. 22 - Jan. 20)



Some tough decisions are ahead of you, Capricorn. It might be best to think things through logically and leave emotion out of the equation for the time being.

AQUARIUS

(January 21 - February 18)



Aquarius, it can be dangerous to think you know everything. This week, listen to what others have to say before deciding if their ideas have merit. This approach can benefit all involved.

PISCES

(February 19 - March 20)



Step up this week with confidence, Pisces. Now is not the time to be inflexible or shy. Go with the flow as much as possible, and learn and listen along the way.

FARM AND AG WORD SEARCH



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

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

WORDS

- AGRICULTURE
- AGRONOMY
- ANIMALS
- ANNUAL
- APIARY
- BIODIVERSITY
- BODYNAMIC
- CAPACITY
- COVER
- CROPS
- CULTIVATION
- DEADHEADING
- DRAINAGE
- DRILLING
- ECOLOGY
- EROSION
- FARMING
- HARVEST
- HUSBANDRY
- IRRIGATION
- LIVESTOCK
- ROTATION
- SOIL
- TILLAGE

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WHITECOURT GROUP OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

All meetings are in person and online (hybrid)

- Mondays 7:00pm
- Wednesdays 7:30pm

Meetings held at the Family Worship Center upstairs.

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



WHITECOURT
CANCER & WELLNESS SOCIETY

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):

Kim Nendsa (President of Whitecourt Cancer & Wellness Society) **780-778-0932**
Aimee Grierson **780-262-0222**

<https://wctcancerwellness.com/>

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



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The Food Bank relies on donations of cash or food in order to help families in need.

Open Mon, Wed & Fri 11:00am to 2:00 pm
Phone: 780-778-2341

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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Child Support Program:

Child Care & After School Programs - Age Appropriate Programs & Support for Children Who Have Been Affected By Family Violence.

Preventative Education:

Provides Workshops, Information and Awareness to Schools, Community Organizations, Agencies and Businesses



Family Resource & Crisis Centre

www.whitecourtsheelter.ca

GRIEF SHARE

Support group on Tuesdays 6:30pm - 8:30 pm.

Our next series starts Tuesday, February 4 at Crossroads Community Church, 4419 44 Ave, Mayerthorpe. \$35 includes 12 weekly sessions.

Pre-register by calling 780-786-2533.

Whitecourt Alcoholics Anonymous Group



Meetings are three times each week

- Monday 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm
- Wednesday 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm
- Friday 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm

New Women's AA Group on Saturdays @11 am

Located at the United Church Basement 5201 - 50 St

Please Leave a Message for AA member (780)424-5900

or **Contact Addictions Helpline @1(866)332-2322**



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CONSUMER CHOICE AWARD 2024 NORTHERN ALBERTA

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Wheelchair Accessible 

continued from page 1

a wide array of bylaws from cannabis use to advertising, fees and rates, burn permits, land uses, hawkers and peddlers, residential waste, pet ownership, false alarms, and RV parking, to name a few.

Community Peace Officers can also enforce provincial statutes and regulations such as the Petty Trespass Act, Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Act, Dangerous Dog Act and the Traffic Safety Act. While there is a lot that CPOs can do, there are certain things within the acts that they cannot. However, a quick call to their colleagues in the RCMP for back-up solves that.

The Town of Whitecourt employed three COPs in 2024, Lance Grywachski, Tapanga Lang, and Aby Thomas. All three are Level 1 Community Peace Officers. Last year, a policy change upped the game, giving them the authority to deal with moving violations and pullover vehicles within the community. With the big change, two of the department's vehicles were retrofitted with in-car radars for speed detection and one handheld lidar was also purchased.

On any given day, Whitecourt's trio of CPOs deal with varying duties, including receiving complaints and investigating them, educating/warning or prosecuting violators, conducting patrols of roads and public highways within the corporate limits of the town and along the community's vast trail system, working interagency, assisting the local RCMP, working with the public and being a visible and approachable mode of support/assistance for residents.

Over the last three years, complaints received by the town's Municipal Enforce-



Photo by Town of Whitecourt

Two of Whitecourt's CPOs on patrol at Festival Park.

ment Services have both dipped and grown. In 2022, there were 1869 complaints. In 2023, it lowered to 1772 but grew last year, rising to 2163. During a recent Whitecourt Town Council meeting, Director of Community Safety Lee Hardman explained that the numbers didn't incorporate the total workload performed by the officers, calling it a snapshot.

Complaint categories that saw a reduction last year compared to the previous two years included blocking a hydrant or parking in a fire lane, drivers with expired license plates, Land Use Bylaw violations, parking without consent, and snow removal from sidewalks.

Categories that grew last year included animal control, department assistance calls, no parking zones, and snow removal towing. Councillor Derek Schlosser

was confused as to why the towing had increased after dropping significantly in 2023. "In 2022, it was here (motioned high with his hand). In 2023, it went to like a quarter of that, which is awesome. It looked like people were learning

before? Why would those numbers go up again. Did we do more enforcement?" Hardman explained that it varied. "We've seen it on a day-to-day basis where sometimes there's no vehicles on the roads. It just varies on the time and from area to area."

One category that increased significantly was Patrols. Councillor Paul Chauvet asked what the category meant and asked for an example. "Patrols are in relation to a call for service. That could be anything from (people) speeding in a school zone, (and a patrol) that's been requested by a resident, and then a patrol happening in relation to that complaint," explained

Hardman. Councillor Braden Lanctot asked what typically happens when officers patrol an area following a request. "That can vary

depending on the call or patrol. I'll use my school zone example for speeding. If they requested for them to be in a school zone for speeders, then the outcome of that could be tickets," responded Hardman, adding that bylaw officers' first step is usually education.

Another high area is animal complaints, specifically cats. "We had noticed that cats were the majority of our animals throughout the years. That is (one) reason we changed the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw late last year. Hopefully, that change will reduce those numbers," said Hardman when asked about the feline situation. He said the numbers in Whitecourt are consistent with those in other municipalities. Out of the 151 animals impounded last year, 110 were cats. Recent changes to the bylaw include treating cats just like dogs in that allowing them to roam free is not permissible. Rather than use an annual license, cat and dog owners must put

visible I.D. tags with a phone number on their pets.

Other new things added to the Municipal Enforcement Services' arsenal last year include extended hours for officers to help serve the community better, body cameras to protect both the public and officers and a new patrol vehicle. A logo was also added to officer's uniforms and vehicles, bringing the department "into current standards," said Hardman.

Looking ahead, Hardman said that officers would continue training to increase skill sets and that schedules would adjust depending on the community's needs. One specific item planned for 2025 is improving the current radio communications and dispatch system. Municipal Enforcement Services are available six days a week. Residents can reach the department by emailing peaceofficer@whitecourt.ca or calling the town office. After hours, residents can call 1-866-477-1221.

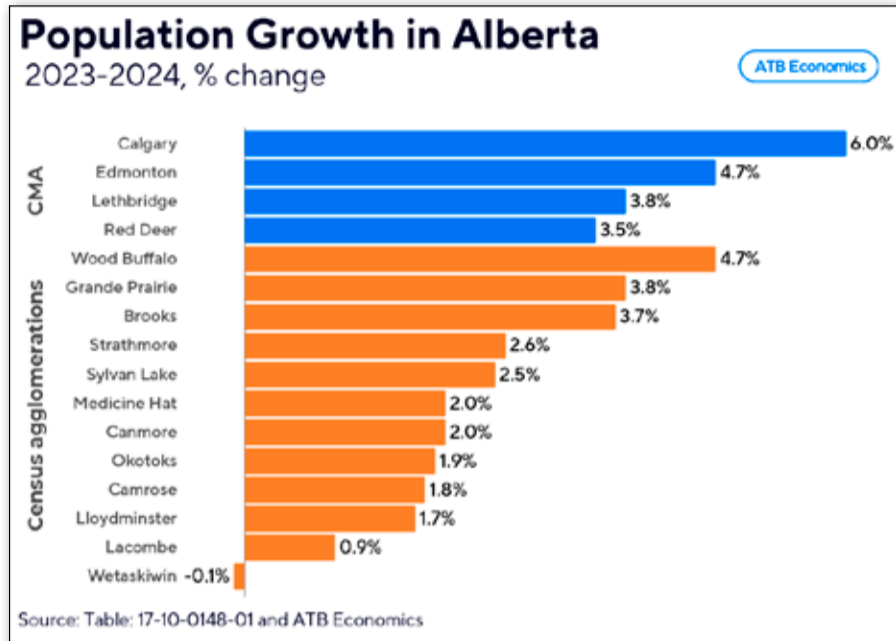


Photo by Town of Whitecourt

The new logo for Whitecourt Community Peace Officers.

that they shouldn't park in a tag and tow zone. Then it went up again last year. So, what was the deal there? Was there way more snow than a year

Burgeoning: Alberta's population growth coming from all corners



By Siddhartha Bhattacharya
ATB ECONOMICS

Burgeoning: Alberta's population growth coming from all corners

We learnt last month that Alberta's population expanded by 3.9% (from the year prior) on October 1, 2024, far surpassing the national increase of 2.3% and leading all provinces.

Now we have a gauge of how population levels fared within the province with new data from Statistics Canada showing sub-provincial population estimates as of July 1, 2024.

Calgary's population soared by more than 100,000 (or 6.0%) in 2024*, the fastest among all 41 census metropolitan areas** (CMAs) in Canada, to reach almost 1.8 million last year. This comes after a 5.8% increase in 2023. In fact, nearly half of Alberta's annual provincial increase (over 204,000) occurred in Calgary last year. Relative to five years ago, the number of Calgaryans jumped by 18.3% in 2024 vs 2019 levels.

It was a fairly similar story for Edmonton as the city's population rose by almost 73,000 (or 4.7%) in 2024, fourth fastest growth rate among all CMAs in the country and up 13.4% from 2019.

Together, over two-thirds of Calgary and

Edmonton's explosive population gains were from international migrants (mostly net non-permanent residents) last year. The two cities were also hotspots for attracting Canadians from other parts of the country as they welcomed nearly 35,000 net interprovincial migrants, representing nearly 80% of Alberta's total interprovincial gains in 2024.

It was not just the CMAs that have experienced rapid population growth. Over the last five years, Canmore (+14.3%) and Sylvan Lake (+11.5%) attained top spots across all census agglomerations (CAs)*** in Alberta for growth.

Housing affordability has become a major factor driving population movements within Alberta with elevated borrowing costs and home prices, as we have discussed in detail.

There are some signs that this 'chasing affordability' trend is unfolding within Alberta. Population growth in the Edmonton CMA, a relatively inexpensive urban housing market, accelerated from 3.9% in 2023, and its housing market has heated up. Further, we have witnessed noticeable increases not just in major CMAs but across smaller jurisdictions

last year. There were about 11,500 (+2.8%) more Albertans living in CAs last year, a pick up from the 2% pace set in 2023. In fact, outside of Wetaskiwin, every CA posted population increases last year, led by Wood Buffalo (+4.7%) and Grand Prairie (+3.8%). Despite Calgary posting massive population gains, the city lost a net 729 people to other parts of the province last year - the most since 2008. Meanwhile, Edmonton's CMA gained 2,924 from the rest of the province.

Robust population gains continue to keep the housing market strong in Alberta. Looking ahead, we expect new federal immigration targets and moderating interprovincial gains to slow Alberta's population growth from 4.4% in 2024 to 1.9% this year, but still outpacing the rest of the country. We expect the slowdown in international migration to be felt most in major centers, and that people will continue to be drawn to less expensive housing markets.

*All data in today's report is July 1 of a certain year to July 1 of the following year. For example, 2024 refers to the period from July 1, 2023, to July 1, 2024.

** A census metropolitan area (CMA) is

formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core). A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000, of

which 50,000 or more must live in the core.

***A census agglomeration (CA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre

(known as the core). A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000 based on data from the previous Census of Population Program.

PUBLIC NOTICE

www.whitecourt.ca | facebook.com/TownofWhitecourt | 780-778-2273

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Current opportunities are posted on the Town's website and when required, opportunities are posted on purchasingconnection.ca. Currently, Whitecourt has the following opportunities:

- 2025-22-01: **JDA Place – McLeod Arena Dasher Board Replacement**, Closes: February 14, 2025
- 2025-23-01: **Whitecourt Regional Landfill – 2025-2027 Leachate Hauling**, Closes: February 13, 2025

For further details on any of these opportunities visit www.whitecourt.ca and search the project title.

2025 BUDGET OPEN HOUSE
Wednesday, February 26
4-7pm Alan & Jean Millar Centre
Drop in, ask questions, share your thoughts.

Meet Town Council and share your thoughts on what is planned for 2025 and future budgets. Information on this year's budget, including budget allocations and service enhancements, will be available.

Drop in between 4pm and 7pm to see what is planned, ask questions and share your thoughts. Feedback received at this event will be considered by Council during final budget deliberations.

CANADIAN Kids Corner



Math Blocks

Fill in the missing blocks with numbers between 0-20.
The numbers in each row add up to the totals on the right.
The numbers in each column add up to the totals on the bottom.

14			23
1		5	15
	12	2	22
23	24	13	

2	12	8
5	6	1
6	3	14

Solution

CANADA



HISTORY

1764

Fort Erie is constructed. It is the first British fort to be constructed in the Canadian territories that were newly annexed from the French.

Animal FACT:

This activity is a popular hobby that enables people to interact with and observe wildlife.

Answer: Bird feeding

Get Scrambled

Unscramble the words to determine the phrase.

B N S E L I B N O D S E E S

Answer: Nibbles on seeds

NEW WORD

FLEDGLING

a young bird that is learning to fly

How they say that in...

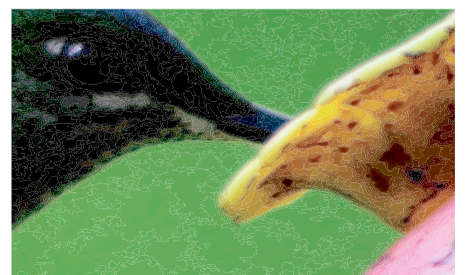
- English:** Seed
- Spanish:** Semilla
- Italian:** Seme
- French:** Graine
- German:** Samen

Did You Know?

Bird feeders can be placed at different levels, including on the ground, on a table top or higher. This allows various birds to enjoy a meal.



Get the PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

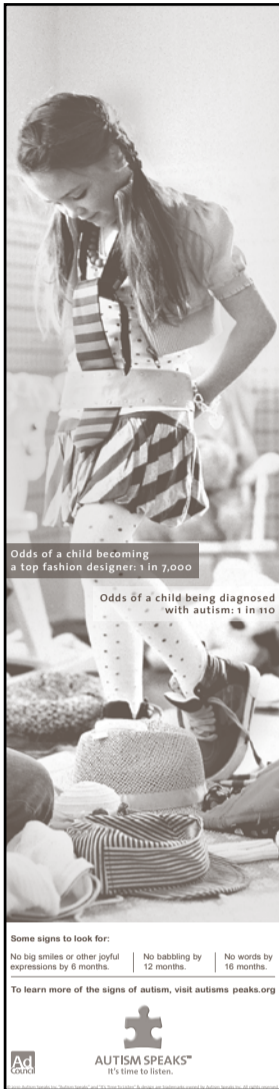
Answer: Hummingbird



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A look at the local weather

	Wed., Feb. 12	Thu., Feb. 13	Fri., Feb. 14	Sat., Feb. 15	Sun., Feb. 16
P.O.P.	Mix of sun and clouds	Mix of sun and clouds	Mix of sun and clouds	Mainly sunny	Mix of sun and clouds
High	30%	20%	30%	10%	30%
Low	-17°C	-21°C	-21°C	-19°C	-15°C
Wind	-28°C	-27°C	-29°C	-27°C	-21°C
24-Hr Rain / Snow	NW 12 km/h	E 13 km/h	E 12 km/h	E 6 km/h	E 7 km/h
	-	-	-	-	<1cm

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?

Email wctpress@telus.net All submissions remain confidential

Putting a face on suicide



Madeline Deyville

Age 16

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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Dollar Values as of February 12, 2025

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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.



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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



At Whitecourt Central School, indoor recesses are no obstacle to student engagement! During the recent extreme cold temperatures, students enjoyed a variety of activities alongside their cross-grade peers. From staying active in the gym with various physical activity centers, to enjoying games in the Community Centre, to engaging in quiet activities such as reading, coloring, and completing puzzles in the Library, there's something for everyone.



Pat Hardy School's dedicated team of Educational Assistants enjoyed a day of learning at NGPS's EA Conference today. Their exceptional skills and commitment make them an integral part of the educational community.

Six actions to help avoid money mistakes

(NC) According to recent research, while three-quarters of Canadians say they have strong financial habits, many are still making money mistakes that could be impacting their financial well-being. These actions range from not setting financial goals to not keeping track of expenses. The research also uncovered that many Canadians feel they lack the time or knowledge to make good financial habits stick.

Want to avoid money mistakes and build stronger financial habits? Here are six actions to help get you started.

1. Set goals and create a plan: Knowing what you want to achieve and creating a plan is an important step in making new



financial habits stick. It allows you to see where you are financially and identify the habits you will need to create, and stick to, in order to reach your goals.

2. Make a budget and track your spending: These are two important habits that can improve your financial wellbeing.

Start by looking at your spending habits and then create a budget that aligns with your monthly earnings. Make sure to capture all expenses, big and small, and to review your budget regularly to ensure you are staying on track.

3. Monitor your cash flow: Knowing and

staying on top of your cash flow is an important step to not only ensure you have enough money to cover your expenses today, but to make long-term planning easier by identifying how much money you have to put towards savings and investing goals. It can also help you de-

termine if you need to tighten up your spending.

4. Save and invest when and what you can: With everyday expenses adding up, it can sometimes seem impossible to find money to save or invest. A common misconception is that it takes a lot of money to get started or make a difference. In reality, finding even a small amount of money to put away can add up over time. The most important thing is to just get started.

5. Chip away at debt: Knowing how much debt you have is a good first step. Make a list of all your current debts, along with interest rates, then look at your budget to see how much you can put towards pay-

ing off your debts. While there are many approaches you can take, one strategy is to focus on your highest-interest debt first.

6. Get expert advice and use tools that can help: Get expert advice and use tools to help you keep your financial habits on track. For example, digital tools like RBC's NOMI, which provides a suite of capabilities that use artificial intelligence to help Canadians manage their money, can help remove some of the barriers and friction that can come with creating better financial habits.

Find more tips to help you navigate creating better financial habits at rbc.com/nomi.

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Happy 3rd Birthday Emma!!

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Canadians are facing financial pressures - the CPP offers hope

(NC) Are you feeling financially stressed? It's easy to see why people are feeling this way. Canadians are facing affordability challenges that impact everything from gas and groceries to retirement. Saving for retirement can seem daunting when you're struggling to pay rent, and the cost of living continues to rise. Fortunately, for Canadians there is hope with the Canada Pension Plan

(CPP). A recent survey from CPP Investments reveals that most Canadians are worried about running out of money in retirement. Young people are especially concerned, with the majority of Canadians aged 18 to 24 reporting significant anxiety over financial decisions. Retirement savings head start: Fortunately, there's good news. Canadians have a head

start on their retirement savings with the CPP. It aims to replace up to 25 per cent of the average worker's pensionable earnings. With enhancements introduced in 2019, this rate will increase to approximately 33 per cent for future generations. The pension is indexed to inflation and you receive benefits for as long as you live. Think of your retirement income like a ta-

ble; the CPP is one leg, but you'll need other legs for support, as well. Retirees can rely on Old Age Security, employer pensions, personal savings and investments. Each of these sources can play a crucial role in your overall retirement strategy. Planning for financial security: Understanding your financial situation and planning can reduce stress and give you the confidence you need to

feel good about retirement. Managed by CPP Investments, the fund today has more than \$675 billion in assets, making it one of the largest pension funds in the world. The CPP is projected to be sustainable for at least the next 75 years, providing financial support for generations of Canadians. A successful future starts with a successful plan. Through your contributions, you're

already building a solid foundation for a secure retirement. And with its benefits payable to you for as long as you live and indexed to inflation, you can rest assured that your savings will keep pace with the rising cost of living. Feeling financially secure is about more than just numbers; it's about confidence. Knowing that the CPP will be there for you can help reduce financial anxiety.

Over 50? Take note of RSV this winter

(NC) Of all the things you can get sick with this winter, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) should be top of mind. With positivity rates in Canada reaching record highs, it's especially important for older adults to be aware. RSV is often thought

of as a bug that children pick up in daycare with symptoms similar to a cold or flu. However, adults aged 50 and older are among those at increased risk for serious infection. RSV can worsen conditions like COPD, asthma, and congestive heart failure

and can lead to pneumonia, hospitalization and death. Unlike the flu or COVID, there are no treatments for older adults who become infected with RSV. And sadly, most deaths attributed to the virus occur in this age group, so

prevention is key. In addition to frequent handwashing and regularly cleaning and disinfecting surfaces around you, vaccination is available. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about RSV vaccination or learn more at RSVandme.ca

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- Job#: 25-003,** Parks Summer Labourers, Summer Student Positions.
- Job#: 25-004,** Festival Park Attendants, Summer Student Positions.
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- 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#: 25-014,** Lifeguard/Instructor, Casual Position.
- Job#: 25-015,** Utility Maintenance Operator I, Permanent, Full-time Position.

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

Fifty percent increase in employee kudos among results from County Service Tracker report

By Serena Lapointe

For the last four years, when residents of Woodlands County called the county office or used the website to report a dangerous pothole, a road needing dust control, debris on a roadway or grading and snowplowing needed somewhere, their concerns went into the county's Service Tracker program. Within two business days of sending in their request, the resident would hear back from someone on the issue. Woodlands County Council regularly receives updates from the data collected in the program, such as where in the county calls or emails originate from and for what reasons. When the program launched in April of 2021, details were less defined, as a starting point. Roadway conditions, encompassing nearly everything roadway-related, was one of the categories. Over the years, the information became more detailed and specific, and more categories were added. In the first year, 89 percent of submissions came through staff members, from residents calling or visiting the county office in person. The remaining eleven percent came through the website.

Four years in, the tide is starting to shift. Seventy-four requests came in through the website in 2022, 104 in



Woodlands County's Service Tracker, a non-emergency-situation program which allows residents to share concerns or highlight issues that need remediation, just wrapped its fourth year. Along with reporting issues, like road repairs or snowplowing needs, the tracker also categorizes the data, helping to highlight problem areas. Pictured is Councillor Reeve Dave Kusch who brought up a service request about the transfer stations.

2023 and last year, 143 requests were sent electronically.

Right from the start, a vast majority of the service requests had to do with roads, from sanding and snowplowing in the winter to grading and washboarding in the spring, summer and fall. In the first nine months of the program being up and running, 307 requests were tracked, including 252 specific to road concerns.

In 2024, 500 requests were submitted to the Service Tracker, an increase of 3.5 percent from 2023. Of those, 71 percent were submitted by staff (357), and twenty-nine percent were received

through the website (143). Grading and washboarding topped the list of the most requested items, with 212 requests. Snowplowing and sanding came in second, with 87 requests, and potholes and road repairs were third, with 46.

Over the years, 38 different categories have been created to categorize calls and website requests, including but not limited to water and sewer issues, pest control, airport-related questions, land use, noise complaints, weed control, unsightly properties, illegal dumping, dust control, bylaw enforcement, site management at recreation spots, snowplow flags,

roadway concerns as already mentioned above, staff complaints, and water issues like odour or colour.

The three divisions surrounding Whitecourt (Division 2: Whitecourt West, Division 3: Whitecourt Central, and Division 4: Whitecourt East) are the highest for service requests, which makes sense based on population compared to other areas. Of the three, Division 4: Whitecourt East averages the highest, with 158 requests in 2024, most concerning grading.

The Service Tracker summary also included the requests sent in by council members, as they are residents too.

Councillor John Burrows was the first to send in a request when the program started in 2021. Since then, each council member has sent in at least one service request. Reeve Dave Kusch has sent in the most, with twelve sent since 2022.

During the January 29 Woodlands County Council meeting, Reeve Kusch mentioned that one concern he had recently been made aware of concerned the hours of the county's three transfer stations, Anselmo, Doris Creek, and Goose Lake. It was also one of the service requests sent in December. "I have a couple of individuals from my area (Anselmo). Their concern was that being a shift worker, later in the evenings on the weekdays, was more appropriate for them. We reduced it, and now they have to find other ways to do it. Things pile up more," explained Kusch. He asked if anyone else had heard similar concerns, but no one else had. On November 1, 2024, county transfer stations bumped from 12-6 pm to 10 am to 4 pm. The open days, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, did not change.

One of the neat, feel-good categories of the Service Tracker program is Employee Kudos. Along with the ability to share a concern or ask a question,

residents can also give a shoutout for a job well done. Through 2024, 18 positive remarks were made, thanking various county staff for doing a great job. Two residents, one from Blue Ridge and one from Goose Lake/Freeman River, sent in comments to thank the operators who cleaned their driveways in December. In total, 27 shoutouts have been given to employees in 2024 and 2023, with a 50 percent increase from one year to the next.

The program has already proved to be beneficial in numerous ways. Following a significant increase in requests for grading in May last year, the county launched a pilot program, which saw some roads of concern receive increased maintenance. Gradually, requests for grading reduced as residents saw increased service levels, negating their need to send in more requests.

Of the four years since it launched, the highest year for requests so far was 2022, which saw 565 requests inputted into the system, a 58 percent increase from year one. Though there was a small decrease in requests between 2022 and 2023 (fifteen percent), requests continue to come through the system as residents voice their concerns and, for some, their appreciation too.

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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People often joke that Alberta has two seasons: winter and construction season. But what season is it when the two overlap? Whatever it's called, it's happening in Whitecourt. Last week, the newly walkable rooftop over at the soon-to-be Shoppers Drug Mart site, located beside Mike and Rebecca's No Frills, was alive with the whizzing sound of drills as crews worked to put plywood up against the inside edges of the roof.

PUZZLES SOLUTIONS

WORD SEARCH

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