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The Press

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

Locally Owned & Operated

Canada

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CANFOR

Canfor (Whitecourt) Forest Management Plan Open House

This spring, Canfor Whitecourt will be holding an in-person open house on May 5th at the Allan and Jean Millar Centre from 4-8PM. The general public and stakeholders will have the opportunity to review and participate in the development of our 2027 Forest Management Plan (FMP). This provides the general public and stakeholders an opportunity to review the values, objectives, indicators and targets (VOIT's) that guide the FMP process. Join us to be a part of Canfor Whitecourt FMP development at the Allan and Jean Millar Center on May 5th from 4-8PM.

Alternatively, you can visit us at www.canforforestmanagement.ca to view information on our upcoming plans. This is your opportunity to influence our plans, so we would appreciate any comments and concerns that you may have.

For more information, contact:

Ken Anderson | wctplans@canfor.com

“It was one of the craziest things I’ve ever seen in town”

In-game Wolverines host reacts to dazzling game seven win



Photos by Melissa Baker

Whitecourt Wolverines fans and members of the team's organization react to one of the greatest games played at the local rink since the team's first season (2012/2013). Pictured is Goalie Elliott Pratt getting some love from the faithful.



Fans in jubilation near the Wolverines exit.

| By Serena Lapointe

Since the start of the postseason, the Whitecourt Wolverines have given their fans lots to cheer for. They've also made them hold their breath in wild anticipation, especially during chaotic overtime periods with everything on

the line. Whether it's spectators in the seats, team volunteers hard at work, or the owners in the box, the excitement has been on a whole other level.

continued on page 6



A big grin from Wyatt Ball following the win.

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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

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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**

Putting a face on suicide



Joshua
Bart
Owen
Age 18

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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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.



Whitecourt Town Council Update

Town of Whitecourt release

Whitecourt Town Council has approved the 2026 Budget with a 4.45% tax rate increase. The budget supports priorities identified by Council and its intention to sustain service levels, while ensuring the continued sustainability and growth of the community. Based on the approved budget, Administration is preparing the Tax Rate Bylaw which will be presented to Council at the April 27, 2026, Regular Meeting. The 2026 Budget Report will subsequently be published at the end of April and will be posted online at www.whitecourt.ca and paper copies will be available at the Town Office.

Whitecourt Town Council has approved the submission of an expression of interest to the Forest Resource Improvement Program for funding support of

a community icon project. The decision was made after receiving a presentation from a local family suggesting that constructing a landmark attraction would help to grow community pride and attract tourists. Many communities throughout Alberta and Canada have built "the world's largest" or giant roadside attractions, and it is proposed that Whitecourt construct an icon that reflects the community's heritage, industry, and identity. Should funding be approved, the Town of Whitecourt will consult with the community to find out what it thinks reflects Whitecourt as an icon.

The Whitecourt Youth Advisory Committee is hosting Town Hall Meetings at Ecole St. Mary School and Percy Baxter School on May 11. The meetings help educate youth on municipal governance and provide an oppor-

tunity for members of Town Council to engage with community youth.

A representative from Council and Whitecourt Administration will be attending the 2026 Alberta/Japan Twinned Municipalities Conference.

The following groups will receive Community Clean Up projects under the 2026 program. Each group will provide roadside, playground and sport-field cleanup services to raise funds for their non-profit group.

- Percy Baxter School Grade 8 Coast to Coast Exchange Group
- U13 Girls Soccer Team
- U13 Boys Soccer Team
- U15 Girls Soccer Team
- U15 Boys Soccer Team
- U17 Girls Soccer Team
- U17 Boys Soccer Team

- U19 Girls Soccer Team
- U19 Boys Soccer Team
- Whitecourt Skating Club
- Community Lunch Box Society (completed by Canfor Forest Products)

The Whitecourt Legion Branch 44 is celebrating the centenary of the Royal Canadian Legion on Saturday, May 23, 2026. The celebration will include a display of military vehicles, a ceremony at the Whitecourt Cenotaph, and Veteran's Supper. For details on the event, follow the Royal Canadian Legion Branch #44 Whitecourt, Alberta on Facebook.

Members of Whitecourt Town Council will be attending the 2026 Alberta Municipalities Convention in Edmonton September 23-25, 2026. An invitation will be extended to Woodlands County Council to attend with Whitecourt.



A locally owned and family operated newspaper serving Whitecourt

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY

Contact

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



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Under pressure: Many households report strained finances

By Rob Roach, ATB ECONOMICS

Under pressure: Many households report strained finances

On Monday April 20, received the Consumer Price Index (a.k.a. inflation) numbers from Statistics Canada for the month of March. These data help us understand the general direction of consumer prices, which is a handy thing to know when trying to figure out what's next for the overall economy.

What the inflation stats don't tell us is how people are actually doing when it comes to their personal finances.

Imagine, for example, you just paid a plumbing company to unclog a blocked pipe. It was worth the money, but it wasn't cheap and now you're

wondering how to pay off the charge on your credit card. Even if the fee was the same as it was a year earlier (i.e., zero inflation), you're probably not feeling great about how much it cost.

Or take that jug of milk your kids empty almost as soon as you put it in the fridge; the price may not be going up as much as it was, but between this year's soccer fees and a recent speeding ticket and your mobile screen shattering when you dropped it, your cost of living feels out of control.

There are different ways to define the cost of living and to measure it, but one of the most direct and telling ways is to ask people questions about their finances. In this vein,

the accounting, tax and business consulting firm MNP conducts a quarterly survey of Canadians* that asks about their ability to pay their bills, endure unexpected expenses, and absorb interest-rate fluctuations.

The latest results for Alberta came out on Monday and point to a high degree of financial stress with 77% of respondents saying rising prices for essentials like food and gas are straining their finances. It was essentially the same result nationally at 74%.

The composite national index, which combines answers to multiple survey questions, has remained steady the last year at levels well below those seen before the pandemic (the higher the

index, the more positive Canadians feel about their personal finances).

This suggests the level of financial strain among Canadian households has been elevated for several years.

Other survey results also point to the financial stress facing many households (see the chart below):

Turning to another source, the Bank of Canada's Canadian Survey of Consumer Expectations (done in January, prior to the Iran war) also points to weak sentiment, which the Bank attributes to high prices and trade uncertainty.

There are multiple ways to address the financial strain faced by households with stronger economic

growth—and the jobs and income that go along with it—playing a critical role.

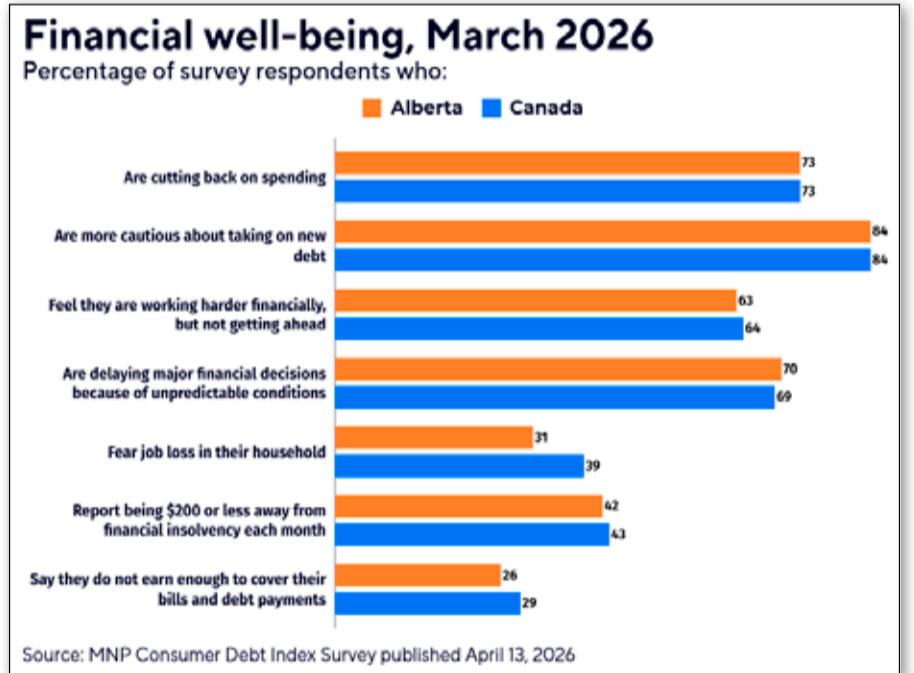
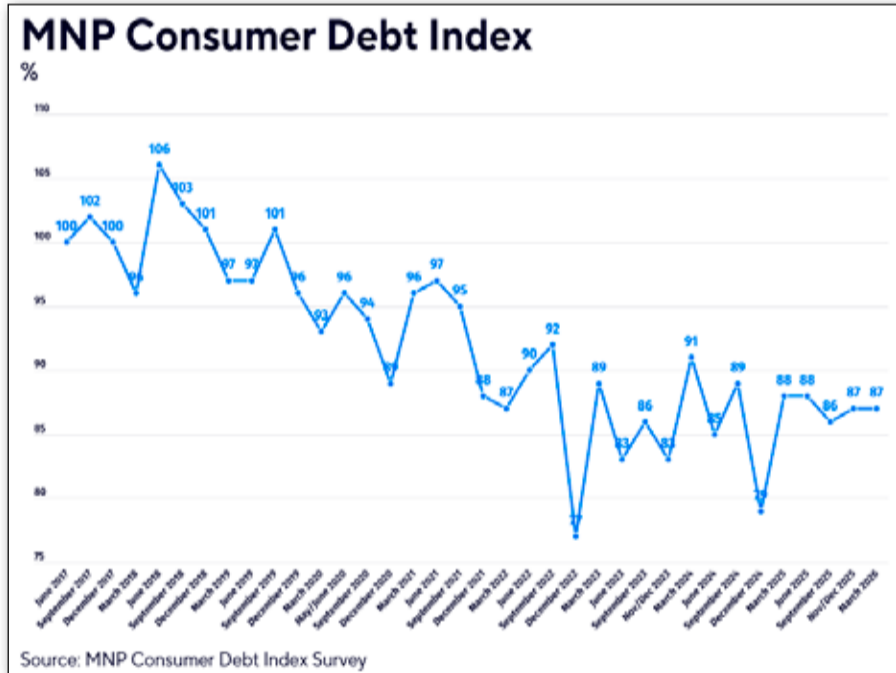
In the short-term, U.S. tariffs, higher prices due to the war in the Middle East and the uncertainty related to both are significant headwinds holding back economic growth and there is little we can do about this on our own (other than doing the best we can negotiating with the U.S. on trade). Circling back to the Consumer Price Index numbers we get next week, inflation in March is going to be higher due to spiking gasoline prices with other costs rising the longer the conflict lasts and higher energy and fertilizer costs flow through to other goods and services.

On the bright side,

U.S. tariffs are lower than originally threatened and the Alberta labour market has improved over the last year.

There is also much we can do in terms of improving Canada's productivity via reducing internal economic barriers, diversifying our international trade and successfully executing major projects. As the survey results highlight, this is not just about generating more GDP, but improving the financial situation of real people.

*The latest data were compiled by Ipsos on behalf of MNP LTD between March 10 and March 11, 2026. For this survey, a sample of 2,000 Canadians aged 18 years and over was interviewed.



Meet Celestia
Celestia is a gentle adult cat looking for her forever home.

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Celestia is currently awaiting her spay surgery and is up to date on her vaccinations. We are still getting to know her personality, but so far she enjoys a calm environment where she can relax and watch the world around her. She loves attention and affection from people.

If you're interested in meeting Celestia or would like more information, please call the **Whitecourt Pound** at: **780-778-5767**

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WOODLANDS COUNTY

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Woodlands County Planning Department is here to guide you through the process every step of the way:

- ! Learn what permits you need
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- 🔍 Stay informed on zoning rules and timelines

For more information, please visit our website at: woodlands.ab.ca/p/planning-and-development
Or contact us at planning@woodlands.ab.ca 780-778-8400



Join AFKA (Alberta Foster and Kinship Association) in supporting the incredible caregivers who open up their hearts and homes to children and youth across Alberta - and you could win the ultimate outdoor adventure!

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DUST CONTROL

Starting **March 16**, Woodlands County is accepting application forms from residents who want dust control applied to County roads adjacent to their property.

Rates for dust control are as follows:

- \$425 + GST for 100 metres • \$750 + GST for 200 metres
- \$750 + \$4.25 per additional metre over 200m + GST

Application forms and more information about dust control are available at woodlands.ab.ca/p/dust-control.

Deadline for submitting your application form is Friday, May 1, 2026.

#woodlandscounty #dustcontrol #roadsmanagement



ROAD BANS IN EFFECT

WOODLANDS COUNTY

Spring is here, and so are road bans! Weight restrictions in place in Woodlands County include:

- Gravel Roads: 75% legal axle weight
- Cold Mix Roads: 50% legal axle weight
- Pavement Roads: No restrictions

Road bans are temporary weight limits implemented during spring thaw to protect roads when they are soft and more vulnerable to damage. Conditions are monitored closely, and restrictions will be adjusted or lifted as needed.

Follow us on Facebook to stay updated! For more info and to read the full Road Ban Order, visit: <https://woodlands.ab.ca/p/road-bans>, or scan the qr code:



WOODLANDS COUNTY

BLUE RIDGE AREA STRUCTURE PLAN SURVEY

Share your thoughts on the future of Blue Ridge! Woodlands County is developing an Area Structure Plan (ASP) for the Hamlet of Blue Ridge and is inviting residents to provide input on this long-range community planning document.

The Survey will close on May 4, 2026, at 12:00 pm.

For more information, visit the Blue Ridge ASP Project webpage: <https://woodlands.ab.ca/p/blue-ridge-area-structure-plan>

The purpose of community engagement is to understand how residents want the Hamlet of Blue Ridge to look like over time. We want to learn what residents value about the community today and what they would like to see in the future.

You may also contact the Planning Department at any time with questions or feedback for the project team. Please email planning@woodlands.ab.ca or call 780-778-8400.

Access the short four-question Blue Ridge ASP Engagement Survey:

Use the link or QR code to go directly to the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/X29QWV9>



WOODLANDS COUNTY

FIRESMART COMMUNITY INFO SESSION



Join Woodlands County on April 30 for our FireSmart Community Drop-in Session, where you can learn how to help protect your home and community from wildfires.

Topics include:

- Creating a FireSmart community
- Tips for homes and acreages
- Wildfire preparedness

Learn more wildfire tips at <https://firesmartalberta.ca/>

Blue Ridge Community Library
Thursday, April 30, 5:00 PM – 7:30 PM



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Photo by Melissa Baker

A release of pure exhilaration.**continued from page 1**

Melissa Baker has been capturing the Whitecourt Wolverines as the official team photographer for years. Game seven last Tuesday night at JDA Place, between the Whitecourt Wolverines and the Grande Prairie Storm, was unlike anything she had experienced before, with over 1200 people in the stands. It was the third highest attendance ever, and the highest since the team's inaugural season in 2012/2013. "You couldn't even hear yourself. The glass was moving! If you closed your eyes, you wouldn't know if it was an offside call or a goal because the crowd was so loud. Their reactions made every play seem like such a big deal."

For Baker, who wanders to different spots during the game to capture different angles, hanging out at the players' entrance between periods and after the game gave her a perspective she won't forget. "Getting to watch the full emotion of the players and the kids and

fans as they come on and off the ice is nothing short of spectacular. They are absolute heroes to those kids. Watching the players hype the kids up as they lean as far as they can over the railing to get a fist bump is everything good in this sport," she recounted.

Over the years, Baker has seen the highs and lows. "I love this team, whether there's 100 people in the stands or 1000, but the whole experience of the community coming out and being so loud and engaged is so much more special. This Wolverine's team is nothing like we've had before. You know they are playing for more than their name on the back. They're in this for the fans just as much as they are for themselves."

For co-owner Terrann Massé, a full arena means one word: community. "There's nothing quite like it. Seeing the arena full reminds us why we took this on in the first place. When the stands are packed, you can feel the energy, the pride, and the connection in the building. It's incredibly reward-

ing to see Whitecourt come together like that, and it means everything to us and to the organization."

For the players, Massé said the difference of having a full rink is incomparable. "It makes a huge difference. All of these young athletes come from out of town, and to step onto the ice and feel that level of support it gives them a real sense of belonging. It lifts their confidence, fuels their energy, and pushes them to give more. They notice it, they talk about it, and it absolutely impacts how they play," she explained.

Although high attendance always helps, Massé said seeing it in the postseason is critical. "Playoff hockey is intense, and every little edge matters. A loud, supportive crowd can shift momentum, build belief, and help the players dig deeper when it counts.

Knowing the community is behind them gives them that extra drive; it reminds them they're playing for something bigger than themselves."

For Tony Light-

**A packed house on Tuesday night.**

ning-Vanderhammen, the team's in-game host, the energy was sky high for game seven. "I've been to a lot of games, and the energy in that building was different. It was like the crowd was living the game, every low, every high, you could hear through gasps and cheers. While we definitely have that on usual games, it was turned up to 11. There was one part where I was just hyping up the crowd, and hearing 1200+ voices brought a smile to me that I could not stop. Getting a crowd invested is one thing but getting a crowd that big invested was like pure euphoria."

Lightning-Vanderhammen said that although there were a lot of Grande Prairie fans at the game, the crowd gave the visual of what more than ten percent of Whitecourt's population looks like. He said that's a visual he won't forget anytime soon. "It just made the scope and scale of everything so much bigger. It's so much more fun to have a building packed with fans, the team feels it, the players feel it, it radiates in every aspect

of the game and the culture that the Wolverines have built. You can even rewatch that game-winning goal, and just from Wyatt Zieger's call, you can tell it makes all the difference. Probably a decent amount of that excitement came from winning the series, too, but that crowd's intensity radiated throughout everyone in that building."

For longtime fan Marc-Alain Danis, the game seven at JDA Place brought back memories of watching the Wolverines 20 years ago. "It was really nice! They overpowered Grande Prairie the whole game. I am really surprised it went to overtime. It felt like the win they had 20 years ago in the finals. It brought back memories."

The winning goal, scored in overtime by #11 Brendan Ruskouski, which snuffed out the Grande Prairie Storm, sending the Wolverines to the league finals against the Camrose Eagles, was made extra special by the fact that Ruskouski had scored an overtime win in

game five, making him the lucky charm for overtime battles. The series between the Storm and Wolverines needed seven games to wrap up. The first round against the Fort McMurray Oil Barons only went to five games. Time will tell how many games it takes for the final series against the Camrose Eagles, which will be two games in by the time this article hits the paper.

Should the Wolverines bring the series back to JDA Place on Saturday, April 25, Massé hopes to see the arena packed once again. "This is the moment. Our team has worked incredibly hard to get here, and now they need their community behind them more than ever. If you've been to a game before, you know how special it is, and if you haven't, these are the ones to come to. Bring your family, wear your colours, and be part of something exciting. Let's pack the arena and show these players what Whitecourt is all about!" And no matter the result, be proud, Whitecourt!



Shelley Winger photos

The Whitecourt RCMP celebrate with the trophy after defeating the Whitecourt Fire Department 10-6 in the community hockey game held Saturday, April 11.**Players battle for the puck during a faceoff in Saturday night's community hockey game between the Whitecourt RCMP and the Whitecourt Fire Department on April 11. The RCMP skated to a 10-6 win.**

Stand Up Against BULLYING

Your Story Matters

If you or someone you know has been affected by bullying, your voice can make a difference. We are looking to hear your story and raise awareness about the impact of bullying in our community.

By sharing your experience, you can help others understand they are not alone in their struggles, and together, we can take a stand against bullying.

How to Share Your Story:

- Reach out to us at thepresswtc@gmail.com
- Your submission can remain 100% anonymous if you prefer.
- Every story shared helps bring us one step closer to ending the cycle of bullying.

We believe in the power of raising awareness. Your story could be the one that helps someone find hope and strength. Let's take a stand together.

Bullying needs to come to an end

My daughter is being bullied, and there is nothing simple about saying that out loud. It is not a misunderstanding or a one-time argument. It is ongoing, deliberate, and it follows her through her days in ways that are hard to fully see unless you are living beside her.

She is singled out at school in quiet but consistent ways. Other girls exclude her on purpose, talk about her within earshot, and make her feel like she does not belong anywhere she stands. It is constant enough that she expects it now.

There are messages too. Words sent through screens that do not disappear when the day ends. They linger. They get reread. They sink in. What might seem small to someone else

builds up over time, and I can see the effect it has on her.

What hurts the most is how it has changed the way she sees herself. My daughter used to be sure of who she was. Now she questions it. She wonders why she is being treated this way and whether it means something is wrong with her. No child should carry that kind of doubt because of someone else's behavior.

I see it in the way she hesitates before speaking, in the way she withdraws from things she once loved. I see it in the effort it takes for her just to get through a normal day. These are not small impacts. They shape how she moves through the world.

As her parent, I feel a mix of anger and helplessness that is difficult to put into words. I

cannot stand beside her every moment to shield her, and that reality is one of the hardest parts of this experience. What I can do is make sure she knows she is supported, believed, and not alone in this.

This is not just about kids being unkind. It is about repeated behavior that chips away at someone's confidence and sense of belonging. It deserves to be taken seriously every time it happens.

My daughter deserves to feel safe where she is. She deserves to be treated with respect. And until that becomes her reality again, this is not something I will ignore or accept as normal. To the girls bullying my daughter-do better. To anyone who bullies others do better. Enough is enough.

- Jennifer. One frustrated mom.



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Construction continues at the intersection of 49 Avenue and 51 Street as part of a project to improve accessibility and connectivity along the transit route. Traffic signals are expected to be operational by the end of the day on Friday, April 24. Work will continue through the spring and summer, with lane closures and changing traffic patterns in place.



Hilltop streets were packed on multiple occasions last week as the Whitecourt Wolverines secured a spot in the AJHL Finals and continued to receive strong community support, with the parking lot full and overflow parking filling nearby streets.



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DISCRETIONARY USE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION

Woodlands County Land Use Bylaw provides opportunity for any person who may have comments on the proposed development to deliver to the Development Officer, a written statement of their concerns indicating: their full name and address and the reasons for their comments to the proposed use.

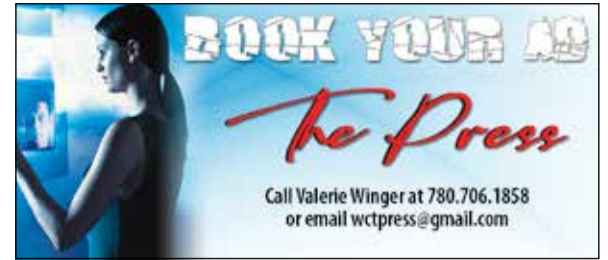
If you have any comment or concern regarding this proposal you may provide a written statement via email to planning@woodlands.ab.ca prior to 4:30 p.m., May 6, 2026. The Development Authority will be making a decision on the following development permit applications following this deadline.

Comments received will be taken into consideration by the Development Authority.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION	APPLICATION NUMBER	PROPOSED USE
NW 31-58-10-W5M LOT 3 BLOCK 1 PLAN 152-5681	26-DP-028	Home Occupation, Major: Contractor Services, Transport

Information regarding this application may be obtained by inquiring prior to 4:30 p.m., May 6, 2026.

Contact: planning@woodlands.ab.ca
Woodlands County
Box 60, #1 Woodlands Lane, Whitecourt AB
T7S 1N3
Telephone: 780-778-8400
Toll-Free: 1-888-870-6315



HELP WANTED

Tim Hortons in Whitecourt is looking to fill the following positions:

Food Service Attendant
Full Time / Shift Work

Food Service Supervisor
Full Time / Shift Work

SHIFT INCENTIVE FOR OVERNIGHTS

Please apply in person at the restaurant.

4331-52 Ave Unit 1
Whitecourt, AB

4216 Elko Drive
Whitecourt, AB



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

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

If you enjoy a fast-paced, progressive work environment and you have a passion for serving the local community- then this may be the opportunity for you! We believe that our values of diversity, collaboration, innovation and mutual respect bring out the best in our team, and we are currently looking to fill the following positions:

Job#: 26-029 – Solid Waste Manager – Closes Friday, April 24, 2026

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

A strong community turnout supported the Bottle Drop-Off and Cinnamon Bun Fundraiser held April 17, with proceeds going toward resident activities and events. Organizers expressed gratitude for the donations and thanked Whitecourt Bottle Depot for their support.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Regional Companies to Share Forestry Plans at Open Houses

WHITECOURT, ALBERTA, May 2026—This spring, forest companies ANC Timber (Alberta Newsprint Company), West Fraser Timber Co. Ltd. (Blue Ridge Lumber), Weyerhaeuser Co. Ltd., and CANFOR (Canadian Forest Products Ltd.) will be holding “joint open houses”, to share forestry operating plans for the year ahead. These events provide the general public and stakeholders with the opportunity to review each company’s planned activities in road development, harvesting, hauling, reforestation and herbicide treatment for the current forestry year. Public stakeholder input is gathered and utilized to influence operations where site specific concerns are identified such as trails, camping areas, recreation areas etc.

Dates and Locations

- May 4 – Fox Creek Multi-Plex – Flex Room. 4pm-8pm**
- May 5 - Whitecourt Allan and Jean Millar Centre 4pm-8pm**
- May 6 - Edson Galloway Station Museum – 4pm-8pm**
- May 7 – Swan Hills Community Club 4pm-8pm**

Companies Attending

- BRL, ANC, CANFOR
- BRL, ANC, CANFOR
- BRL, ANC, WEYERHAEUSER
- BRL, CANFOR

We would also like to invite you to visit the websites below or contact your company representative to view each companies upcoming forest activities. We will have a variety of plans available for review including: Annual Operating Plans for 2026-2027 season; Company Reforestation Plans; and Herbicide Treatment Plans.

- Alberta Newsprint Company (ANC) - <https://www.albertanewsprint.com/woodlands/>**
- West Fraser Timber Ltd – BRL–Ryan Lanning (Planning Superintendent) – ryan.lanning@westfraser.com**
- Canadian Forest Products Ltd. (CANFOR) - www.canforforestmanagement.ca**
- Weyerhaeuser Co. Ltd. – Pembina– <http://PembinaTimberlands.ca>**

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PUBLIC NOTICE

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Enhanced Driveway Crossing Replacement Program

The Town of Whitecourt is continuing the Enhanced Driveway Crossing Replacement Program for those property owners wishing to upgrade their private driveway crossings. The Town will cost share with the owner up to 60% for the costs associated with the removal, disposal and replacement of the residential driveway crossing installed according to the "Minimum Standard for Local Improvements".

The program is intended for driveways in areas with high profile of older, rolled curb and gutter which create a harsh entrance into private driveways.

The program application for 2026 must be completed, signed and submitted with a minimum \$800.00 deposit prior to April 30, 2026 to be considered for replacement in the current calendar year.

Program information and an application form may be found on the Town's website at www.whitecourt.ca or by contacting:

Town of Whitecourt, Box 509, 5004 – 52 Avenue, Whitecourt, AB T7S 1N6
Email: administration@whitecourt.ca | Phone: 780.778.2273

National Volunteer Week April 19 – 25, 2026

Whitecourt Town Council encourages the citizens of Whitecourt to recognize April 19 – 25, 2026 as National Volunteer Week. We applaud our volunteers who contribute their time and energy to causes that benefit our communities. This year's theme is "Ignite Volunteerism – a year-long nation building celebration, encouraging Canadians to reconnect with their communities through acts of service, civic action, and mutual support."

Take some time this week to thank a volunteer – and if you're a volunteer – we thank you!

Royal Canadian Legion Day in Whitecourt April 23, 2026

Whitecourt Town Council encourages the citizens of Whitecourt to recognize April 23 as Royal Canadian Legion Day in Whitecourt.

The Whitecourt Legion supports numerous youth and adult groups in our community, and helps veterans and their families who may be in need of medical care or other needs. As a community member, you can help support these initiatives by becoming a Legion member, or attending their events. Please share with the Town in celebrating the accomplishments of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch #44 in Whitecourt.



NOTICE OF DECISION

The following decisions were made by the Subdivision Authority:

SUBDIVISION NUMBER: **W26-357 at 5123 Kepler Street West** was approved with conditions.

Date of Decision: April 9, 2026



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Woodlands County is the Centre of Alberta, and will soon take care of the site that proves it

| By Serena Lapointe

On April 9, during the Woodlands County Council meeting, elected officials voted to have the municipality become the caretaker of the Centre of Alberta Natural Area, found about 25 kilometres northwest of Fort Assiniboine, on Highway 33. Their vote in favour allows its administration to enter into a Trail Manager Agreement with the provincial government, which owns and operates the land through Alberta Environment and Protected Areas under the Recreation, Education and Partnership Program, which had previously asked Woodlands County to consider the role.

Parks and Recreation Coordinator Tina Prodaniuk explained that it would help boost the municipality's tourism portfolio, considering the growing interest in rural tourism. "Alberta Parks presented to you guys a couple of weeks ago, so you got to hear all the exciting upgrades on the three-kilometre walkway, as well as the improvements on the day-use facilities at the cairn site."

Alberta Parks had recently completed upgrades at the site, which features a grizzly bear statue, commemorating its proximity to the Grizzly Trail (Highway



Photo Alberta Parks

Woodlands County has always been the Centre of Alberta, but now, the municipality will be doing the upkeep at the site following a decision to sign a Trail Manager agreement with the province. Pictured is one of the signs at the site.

33), including mulching, rerouting wet area crossings, updated signage and the installation of boardwalks. They also cleared debris, including fallen trees, removed deteriorated structures and replaced the aging out-houses, which were unusable, with a new one.

Now, the province wants to see a group take over the site's upkeep, and Woodlands County was their first call. "We are the only ones that Alberta Parks has approached so far, hoping that we would be the ones (to say yes) because it's clearly

within our area and we are the obvious ones to take care of the site," explained Prodaniuk.

She said with the enhancements, the site is a great opportunity for the County. "They significantly improved the visitor experience and increased the site's overall appeal. I'm certain that it's going to be a fantastic little area for everyone to visit. The Centre of Alberta is a unique landmark. I think the potential to draw visitors from across the region is an amazing opportunity. It's one of those things that nobody else

can say. I think that's a tourism initiative and I already have ideas to promote it," smiled Prodaniuk.

Signing the agreement, said Prodaniuk, would formalize the roles and expectations with the partnership, while strengthening the county's relationship with Alberta Parks, opening up the possibility for future collaborations and joint developments. "It positions Woodlands County as a contributor to high-quality regional attraction. It can be

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continued from page 10

come a signature destination that benefits residents, businesses and visitors."

She said once they sign on the dotted line to become trail managers, Woodlands County will have access to grants through Alberta Parks. She said they would be "put on the top of the pile" for this year's funding, but that nothing is guaranteed. Prodanuk added that \$30,000 had been allocated through the budgeting process to support the venture. She said that similar sites cost about \$22,000 for upkeep, and she expected this one to be no different.

Fort Assiniboine/Timeu Councillor Benny Whitten asked if it would be Fort Assiniboine that would specifically be taking care of the work at the site, given the proximity.

Prodanuk said that her staff out of the Whitecourt Woodlands County office would be doing the work, adding it to the work they already do at sites around the county. She said the side-by-side at the Fort Assiniboine office would be borrowed, though.

Councillor Karen St. Martin asked about the wording of the agreement, specifically where it mentioned "society and indemnity," to which she assumed that meant for the municipality, not a society. She also pointed out that the agreement, as written, is retroactive to 2024. Prodanuk said

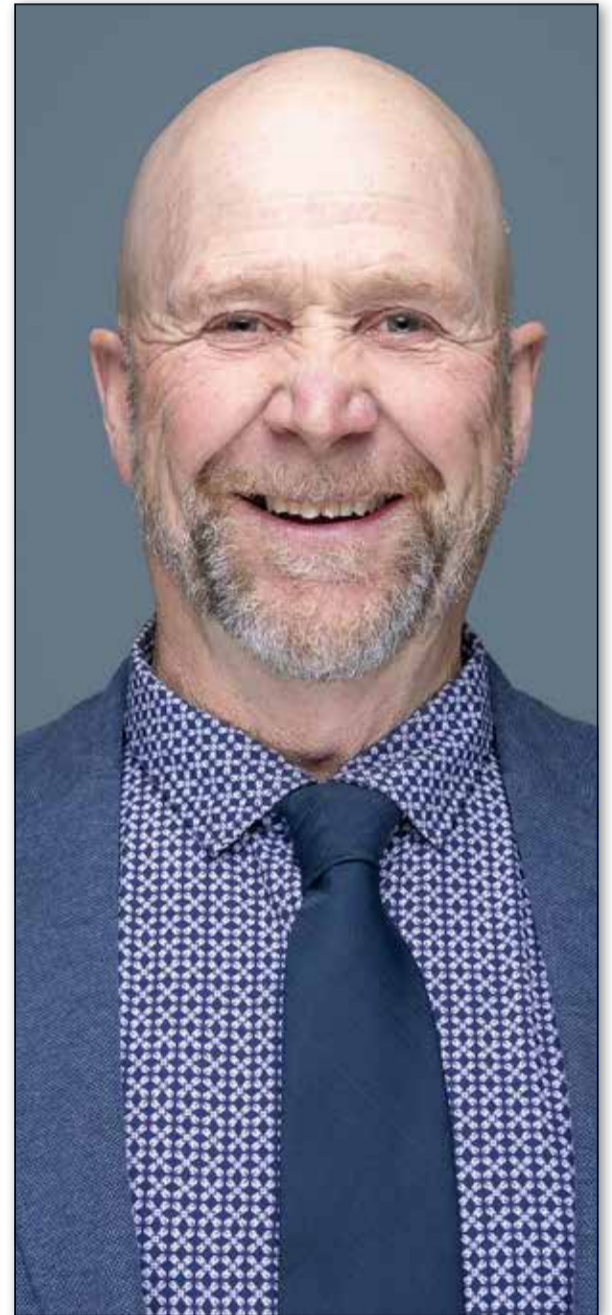
the agreement before the council was a sample and that the proper dates would be added.

CAO Matthew Ferris also spoke to the refinement that would take place. "There isn't anything that we think is insurmountable in changes. The one question I have is that the agreement doesn't really state what happens if the province takes it back, and we've invested new assets. Those are things that, to me, are very important if we are going to do this. We should be able to recoup those taxpayer dollars." He said they would have further discussions and refinements before signing.

Ferris said prior to the province's recent repairs, it gave the impression that the site was mismanaged by Woodlands County, even though they had no part in its fallen state.

"There were signs from Woodlands County up there marking the trail that were deteriorated and rotten. By default, it became our asset for some reason, and I think at least having this agreement ensures we can uphold it to our standard, which I believe is higher than the provinces."

Councillor Peter Kuelken said it will be nice to be able to say where Woodlands County is, as the centre of Alberta. He also noted that it is his understanding that Alberta Parks is interested in spending grant dollars in the north, which should help in



Councillor Peter Kuelken said he is happy to highlight Woodlands County as the center of Alberta.

the goal of accessing funds to offset yearly upkeep costs. He also mentioned that capital projects would still fall onto the province to pay for.

Councillor Patricia McNeil wondered if it would be better to defer the agreement for one year, given that Woodlands County is looking to have a tax increase this year. Reeve Dave

Kusch clarified that dollars were already budgeted. It was noted that if Woodlands County didn't sign on to be the Trail Manager, the province would seek another entity to do it. The group decided to go for it, authorizing their administration to finalize and execute a Trail Manager Agreement with Alberta Parks.

SCHOOL NEWS



Pat Hardy School photo

Students in 3Nimco at Pat Hardy School proudly display their glacial models on April 10, as part of a hands-on science project exploring how glaciers shape Earth's landforms.

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