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The Press

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

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Canada

Vol. 15 - Issue 14 | Wednesday, April 8, 2026

Beautification efforts for Highway 43 west are coming soon



Bring on the trees. A large portion of the boulevards on Whitecourt's west entrance will be prettied up this spring, thanks to the Town's Vitalization Plan and a serious influx of grant dollars.

| By Serena Lapointe

The western entrance into Whitecourt, coming from Fox Creek, will be getting green thumb treatment this year following Town Council's March 23 approval of phase one of the Highway 43 Vitalization Plan, which,

thanks to significant outside funding, will see various plant life added to some of the boulevards, improving the community's appearance to visitors and making the area more welcoming.

The work dates back to the Vitaliza-

tion Plan that was adopted in 2013, with a beautification design for Highway 43 finalized three years later, in 2016. The Ad-Hoc Vitalization Committee worked with Stantec Consulting for two

continued on page 3



TRAC U11AA Wolverines capture provincial title with dominant 11-3 final victory

The Trac U11AA team fought through five intense matches to claim the provincial championship. They concluded the tournament with a decisive 11-3 win in the final, showcasing outstanding teamwork, determination, and skill throughout the season.



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Community members and the Rotary Club of Whitecourt marked the sod turning for the new multi-use courts at Festival Park last summer, with the courts expected to open this fall.

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Town of Whitecourt photos

The old court at Festival Park, previously used for various sports.

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| By Haylee Winger



The community will soon get use of new multi-use courts at Festival Park, scheduled to open this fall.

The courts are designed to provide a safe, accessible space for a variety of activities, including pickleball, basketball, bad-

minton, tennis and ball hockey. The project aims to support active lifestyles and meet the growing demand for versatile outdoor recreation facilities in the area.

The total cost of the project is \$790,732, funded through a combination of provincial, municipal and com-

munity contributions. Half of the funding is provided by the Active Community Initiatives Fund, with an additional 33 per cent coming from the Whitecourt Municipal Sustainability Initiative Grant. Woodlands County has contributed 10 per cent, while the Rotary Club of Whitecourt has provided the remaining seven per cent.

The new courts will complement the wide range of amenities already available at the park, including the Whitecourt River Slides, Whitecourt Splash Park, Festival Park Playground, outdoor cooking areas, concession services, fishing access, the Jumbo Jumper and designated dog-friendly spaces.

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Money Matters

One Canadian Dollar = 0.71 US Dollar
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Dollar Values as of April 8, 2026

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The Press

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continued from page 1

years to complete the plan, recommending that beautification work should start from the western entrance and move east.

Last year, the Town of Whitecourt succeeded in its application for grant funding through the Green Municipal Fund's Growing Canada's Canopies Initiative to start phase one of the project, which will focus on the boulevard between 53 Avenue and Riverboat Park Road. Over the years, smaller projects were completed under the plan as funding became available, including the intersections of Highway 43 and 51 Street and Highway 43 and Dahl Drive. The Town's entrance signs and the streetlighting along the highway pathway were also part of the Vitalization Plan.

The Green Municipal Fund is a Government of Canada-funded program, delivered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). This year is the twenty-sixth year for the fund, which grants dollars towards projects that aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance energy efficiency and promote environmental sustainability.

Since it began in 2000, the Green Municipal Fund has supported over 2,700 sustainability projects and contributed 1.53 billion dollars towards Canada's GDP. In the 2024/2025 fiscal year, the program approved its highest funding yet, a staggering 311 million dollars, which was a 400 percent increase from 2018. They ended up doling out just shy of 150 million dollars.

The Growing Canada's Community Canopies Initiative, through which Whitecourt has accessed funding, is one of several funding streams that fall within the Green Municipal Fund. It aims to increase the green canopy in a municipality. Not only does it put dollars towards purchasing and planting trees, but the initiative also helps promote sustainability by educating on what to plant and where. The point isn't to simply plant trees; it's to help the trees thrive

once in the ground, and they want to help plant at least 1.2 million by 2031.

Funding from the program is also significant, with up to 50 percent of eligible costs covered, to a maximum of ten million dollars. The Town of Whitecourt's project received the green light for fifty percent funding. The planned budget for 2026 totalled \$302,243, with the Green Municipal Fund's Growing Canada's Community Canopies program kicking in \$151,120. The remaining half was to be funded through the Vitalization Reserve, dollars previously set aside for the project.

During the March 23 Town Council meeting, elected officials were told that the Request for Proposals had come in higher than anticipated. Parts of the project were removed to lower the cost. Originally, Hedgehog Enterprises had proposed \$442,922.50, and West Peak Forestry/Trigg Seasonal Solutions had proposed \$514,854.00, both plus GST.

Following the removal of certain provisional items, including timber posts and boulders which were not funded under the grant anyway, the price dropped to \$370,417.50 from Hedgehog Enterprises and \$513,854.00 for West Peak Forestry/Trigg Seasonal Solutions, both plus GST.

Administration recommended Council select Hedgehog Enterprises Ltd.

"We can say that Hedgehog Enterprises Ltd is a well-established company. They've been in Whitecourt, serving our area since 2004. We've done some major projects with them. Both of the (smaller) highway projects that we did were with Hedgehog, and they (trees/shrubs) are still thriving and growing well today," explained Jennine Loberg, the Town's Director of Planning and Development.

Even with the removal of certain pieces, the project remained over budget by \$68,174.50.

Administration recommended that the balance be covered by the Vitalization Reserve. Just over \$200,000

SCHOOL NEWS



Pat Hardy School photos

Grade 2 students at Pat Hardy school recently explored rock cycles, UNESCO sites, erosion and gemstones during a hands-on geology lesson led by guest speaker Erin Rollheiser, a Pat Hardy parent and geologist, and enjoyed watching a geode safely cracked open before taking home a piece of their own.



Whitecourt & District Chamber Of Commerce photo

Board Members Bill and Clare brought the voice of Whitecourt's business community to Edmonton at the Alberta Chambers of Commerce Political Action Day and Ministers Dinner on March 11.

will remain in the reserve to help cover future phases planned to take place every two years, as per the Vitalization Plan, depending on costs and timelines. Grants will be sought again as well. "Wherever there's cost savings (this year), we will be sure to work with the contractor, and then that money would stay in the reserve if we don't have to pull it

out," said Loberg.

Once the plants are in the ground, Hedgehog Enterprises Ltd will take care of the maintenance and warranty for two years, ensuring the plants are given a strong chance at survival. Loberg said by that point, the trees should be well established and ready for the town's parks crew to take over regular maintenance.

Councillor Tara Bak-

er said she was happy to see beautification efforts in that area of the community, noting that residents had mentioned the need to her previously. "I appreciate there being some care and attention to that side, considering how much traffic passes through. This has been a long time in the making."

Loberg said the timelines from the grant

funding are a bit tight, mentioning that the funder hoped to see groundwork starting next month (April). "Might be some wishful thinking, but we will see," she chuckled, especially given the recent snowfall. Once completed, the boulevards between 53 Avenue and Riverboat Park Road will feature 17 raised planting beds, 93 trees and 617 shrubs.



Central School photo

Kindergarten students toured the Whitecourt Fire Department recently, learning about fire safety and the work firefighters do to keep the community safe. Students also had the chance to meet their favourite firefighter, Sparky.

WOODLANDS COUNTY
**BLUE RIDGE AREA STRUCTURE PLAN
 OPEN HOUSE & SURVEY**

Share your thoughts on the future of Blue Ridge! We are conducting an open house and a survey, and you're welcome to participate in both.

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 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.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OPEN HOUSE APRIL 21

Come learn about the project, ask questions, and share your input!

What you can expect at the open house:

1. A come-and-go event where you can meet directly with the project team.
2. An overview of what an Area Structure Plan is and how the County is seeking community input throughout the development of the Blue Ridge ASP.
3. An opportunity to share your ideas through the Blue Ridge ASP Engagement Survey.
4. A chance to ask questions and provide feedback.

Location: Blue Ridge Community Hall & Community League,
 304 2 Ave, Blue Ridge, AB T0E 0B0

Date: Tuesday April 21, 2026

Time: 4:00pm to 7:30pm

This will be a come-and-go session, and all Blue Ridge residents are encouraged to attend. If you are unable to attend, project information will be available on the project webpage. There will also be future open houses for residents to attend as we progress the project.

ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

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

1. Visit the Blue Ridge ASP Project webpage:
<https://woodlands.ab.ca/p/blue-ridge-area-structure-plan>
2. Use the link or QR code to go directly to the survey:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/X29QWV9>



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>

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



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For Families Daycare hosts Easter Egg Hunt in Downtown Whitecourt

| By Haylee Winger



For Families Daycare held a fun and festive Easter Egg Hunt on April 2. The event took place in downtown Whitecourt, with the daycare kids walking around and

visiting several local businesses that supported the hunt.

The kids, filled with excitement, made their way through the community, stopping at participating

continued on page 6



— FREE WORKSHOP SERIES —

BRANCHING OUT: Tree Health Essentials



Session 1:

What's Killing My Trees?

Learn about factors that could be damaging your trees, including:

- Insects & disease
- Wildlife
- Herbicide
- Human activity

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

5:30-8:00 PM

Fort Assiniboine Legion Hall

Session 2:

Fruit Tree Pruning & Grafting

Head outdoors and learn to properly prune & graft fruit trees!

- Hands-on experience
- Live demonstrations
- Fruit tree care & maintenance

Thursday, April 30, 2026

5:00-9:00 PM

De Herdt Gardens, Barrhead



Register online for one or both sessions!

Sign up by April 27, 2026



Rock solid: Alberta's oil production remained robust in February

| By Siddhartha Bhattacharya, ATB ECONOMICS

Rock solid: Alberta's oil production remained robust in February

Global oil supply is under severe strain, with the Middle East conflict disrupting approximately 20 million barrels per day (bpd). The limited bypass options around the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most critical oil transit chokepoint, are causing this pressure to be felt globally by both producers and consumers. Consequently, the West Texas Intermediate oil price benchmark is trading at over US\$110 per barrel this morning.

In contrast to the global uncertainty, strong oil production provided a vital lift to Canada's national GDP in January; without oil and gas extraction, GDP growth would

have essentially been flat.

Today's Twenty-Four takes a quick look at oil production in Alberta over the first two months of this year.

Alberta's oil output, according to the latest Alberta Energy Regulator numbers, averaged 4.2 million bpd over the first two months of 2026—this is the highest on record and up 3.3% relative to the first two months of 2025. Growth was widespread, encompassing both oil sands and conventional output.

This upward trend is a continuation of growth seen since the completion of the Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) in mid-2024. Last year, production increased by a robust 4.2%, aided by higher shipments to Asian markets. Given the spike in demand from Asia following

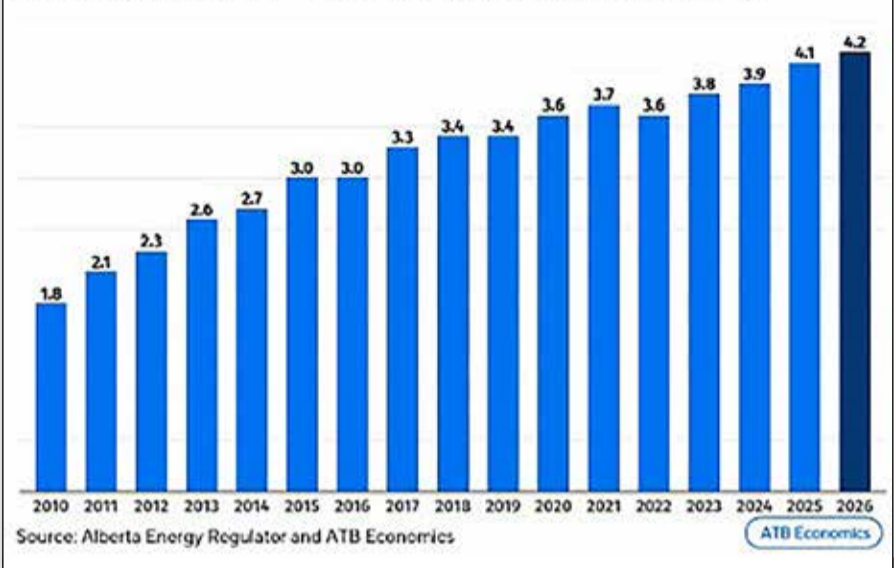
the outbreak of the Iran war, the TMX system is now likely to reach full operating capacity much faster than expected.

Plans to expand Alberta's oil production are in place, driven by the growing demand for Canadian crude, even as the U.S. attempts to increase oil output from Venezuela.

In light of this, we recently examined the economic impact of building another major oil pipeline from Alberta to the B.C. coast. For a deep dive into this idea, see the recent report we did with Peter Tertzakian and his team at Studio.Energy.

Our baseline forecast, however, projects that real oil and gas exports will rise by an average of 2.2% annually in 2026 and 2027, before leveling off around 2030 due to current pipeline constraints.

Year-to-date oil production in Alberta
January to February of each year, million barrels per day



continued from page 5

locations including Lux Massage Therapy, Town of Whitecourt, CIBC, Whitecourt Dry Cleaners, Gold Nails, McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Association, Whitecourt Stationery, Tap Cha, RE/MAX Advantage and Exit Realty, each offering a little surprise along the way.

The businesses were thrilled to participate, helping create a warm, community-driven event for the children. Not only did the kids enjoy finding eggs, but they also had the

chance to connect with and learn about the local businesses that support the community.

Reflecting on the success of the event, Director Crystal Valcourt and Owner Jaelynn Wilson shared:

"We are so incredibly grateful for the love and effort our community put into creating such a special Easter egg hunt for our children.

Watching their faces light up, hearing their laughter, and seeing the pure joy in those moments truly says it all. These experiences go far beyond the activity itself, they help our

children feel connected, cared for, and part of something meaningful.

It was more than just an egg hunt, it was a beautiful reminder of the strong, supportive community surrounding our program."

The Easter Egg Hunt served as a reminder of how the Whitecourt community continues to come together to create meaningful and memorable experiences for families. Thanks to the generosity of local businesses, the children went home with full baskets and happy hearts, making it a day to remember.

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Child Support Program:
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Preventative Education:
Provides Workshops, Information and Awareness to Schools, Community Organizations, Agencies and Businesses



Family Resource & Crisis Centre
www.whitecourtshester.ca



Recover Out Loud

- Mondays are in person, at the Family Worship Center upstairs, and online (hybrid) at 7:30pm
- Fridays 7:30pm at the Whitecourt Baptist Church in person only.

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

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

Located at the United Church Basement on Legion Street (formerly 5201 - 50 Street), Please Leave a Message for Our AA member or Contact Addictions Helpline @1(866)332-2322

GRIEF SHARE **CALL Ruth 780-674-7182**

Support group on Tuesdays, February 17 to May 5.
Crossroads Community Church, 4719 44 Avenue Mayerthorpe, Pre-registration is required

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- Mental Health Helpline **1-877-303-2642**
- Addiction Helpline **1-866-332-2322** • Health Link **811**

Woodlands County Council Recap

| Woodlands County release

Dallas Choma, Lac Ste. Anne County Enforcement Services presented the 2025 Q4 Enforcement Services Report to Council, highlighting enforcement activity in Woodlands County. Of the 141 citations issued, 52.14% were for speeding. Reported incidents increased significantly from Q3, with dog complaints the most common at 19%. Most complaints were received through the Dispatch hotline, indicating residents are contacting Bylaw Enforcement directly.

Council received the report for information. Joshua Raposo, Manager, Planning & Development, presented the Communication & Engagement Plan for the Hamlet of Blue Ridge Area Structure Plan (ASP). The purpose of this report was to inform Council of the proposed outline on how residents, stakeholders, and Council will be engaged throughout the planning process. Council provided amendments to include evening sessions and an additional question, and adopted the amended Communication & Engagement

Plan for the Hamlet of Blue Ridge ASP. Sheldon Schoepp, Manager, Protective Services, presented the 2025 Woodlands County Fire Services Year in Review to Council. The report informed Council of fire station and contract service activities, including member numbers, annual responses, and average response times, each hall's level of service, and a training overview. Council received the report for information. Council received the March 17, 2026, correspondence from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada regarding the

closure of the Lacombe Research and Development Centre, for information. The letter was in response to Woodlands County's letter supporting concerns raised by Lacombe County. Council directed Administration to revert to monthly Service Request Tracker Reporting commencing in April 2026. Council rescheduled the Regular Council Meeting of June 4,

2026 to June 3, 2026, commencing at 9:30 a.m., being held at the Woodlands County Council Chambers at #1 Woodlands Lane, Whitecourt, Alberta.

Upcoming scheduled meetings:

- Regular Council Meeting – April 9 @ 9:30 a.m.
- Governance & Priorities Committee Meeting – Wednesday, April 15 @ 5:00 p.m.
- Regular Council

Meeting – April 23 @ 9:30 a.m.

- Governance & Priorities Committee Meeting – Wednesday, May 7 @ 5:00 p.m.

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

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- Job#: 26-023** – Utility Maintenance Operator II – Closes Friday, April 10, 2026
- Job#: 26-024** – Utility Plant Operator III – Closes Friday, April 10, 2026
- Job#: 26-026** – Mechanic II – Closes Friday, April 10, 2026

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



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

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Full Time / Shift Work
- Food Service Supervisor**
Full Time / Shift Work

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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



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Nine-year-old Ophelia Jade Barrett takes the stage at the Citadel in Edmonton during a Spring Break Camp, showing off her natural talent and love for performing. She is set to appear as "Granny" in Into the Woods and as Gretel in the intermission play with Pumpjack Players. The show will be held on May 9 and 10. Tickets can be purchased at pumpjackplayers.com.



PUZZLES

SEE SOLUTIONS PAGE 15

SUDOKU

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

	1	2	3		4	5	6		7	8	9			
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						63					65			

CLUES DOWN

1. A legally binding command
2. General feeling of discomfort
3. Dribble
4. Soft touch
5. South American plant
6. Clouds of gas and dust in space
7. Warm-blooded vertebrates
8. Lines created by folding
9. Strong belief
10. Senior officer
11. Adult
12. Joint entrance examination in India
13. Passports and drivers' licenses are two
14. Those who go against an accepted authority
15. One point east of northeast
16. Journalist Tarbell
17. One's mother (British)
18. Nowhere to be found
19. A way to save for old age
20. Fall behind
21. Midway between northeast and east
22. The work of a sailor
23. Mark with striae
24. Energy, style and enthusiasm
25. Sticky situation
26. Monetary units of Spain
27. Three-banded armadillo
28. Chooses
29. More disreputable
30. Defensive nuclear weapon
31. "The Partridge Family" actress Susan
32. Livestock owners assn. in Spain
33. Duplicating machine (abbr.)
34. OJ trial judge
35. Politician
36. Airborne (abbr.)

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. Health care pros
2. A person inhabiting Benin
3. One thousand cubic feet (abbr.)
4. Split pulses
5. Frozen water
6. Small constellation
7. Perennial mountain rice
8. Pick up
9. Japanese historical period
10. Suggesting the horror of death and decay
11. Unattached
12. Fishing port in SE France
13. Products for dogs
14. One point south of southeast
15. Having the skill or resources to do something
16. Involve oneself deeply
17. Immobile
18. __ pai dong: Hong Kong
19. food stall
20. Move quickly on foot
21. Gathered
22. A way through
23. Another name for Thor
24. Sharp dueling sword
25. The supreme commander of a fleet
26. Seasoned sausages
27. Path
28. Christian hermit
29. Ancient region of Asia Minor
30. Where wrestlers go to work
31. Roman statesman
32. Explosive
33. Licensed for Wall Street
34. Where golfers start
35. Grow old
36. Autonomic nervous system
37. No seats available

ROAD TRIPPING WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

- | | | | | | |
|------------|---------|------------|------------|----------|------------|
| ASPHALT | CARAVAN | HORIZON | MOTEL | PITSTOP | SNACKS |
| ATLAS | COOLER | INTERSTATE | NAVIGATION | PLAYLIST | SUNSET |
| BILLBOARDS | DETOUR | ITINERARY | ODOMETER | ROADSIDE | TOLLBOOTH |
| | HIGHWAY | MILEAGE | OVERLOOK | SCENIC | VASTNESS |
| | | | | | WANDERLUST |

HOROSCOPE

ARIES

(March 21 - April 20)



Aries, you are catching a second wind this week that could rival a hurricane. No one can slow you down right now. Channel this energy into a passion project.

TAURUS

(April 21 - May 21)



Taurus, your eye for recognizing the beauty in things or items that are fashionable is unmatched. This week is the perfect time to curate your space or your wardrobe.

GEMINI

(May 22 - June 21)



Gemini, the connections in your brain are firing at a rapid pace this week. It is only a matter of time before you solve a problem that has been plaguing you and everyone for weeks.

CANCER

(June 22 - July 22)



You are feeling more secure in your skin this week, Cancer. People are flocking to you for comfort and advice because you give off a warm energy.

LEO

(July 23 - August 23)



Leo, accept recognition for your hard work when it comes your way in the coming days. Don't be humble; take the bow that you have earned over these last few months.

VIRGO

(August 24 - September 22)



Everything is falling into place for you now, Virgo. Your routine feels like something you can do with your eyes closed. Find the perfect shortcut this week.

LIBRA

(September 23 - October 23)



A friend of a friend is about to become a very important person in your life, Libra. It's important to keep your heart open to all possibilities. An unexpected invitation pops up.

SCORPIO

(October 24 - November 22)



Scorpio, you don't have to try to impress. People are mesmerized by you. You can use this charm to negotiate for something you want this week.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 23 - Dec. 21)



Your thirst for knowledge leads you to a new obsession, Sagittarius. Diving into a new hobby, career path or volunteer experience could be the way to go.

CAPRICORN

(Dec. 22 - Jan. 20)



Capricorn, you are making the impossible look easy right now. Take a moment to see how far you have come and review your accomplishments.

AQUARIUS

(January 21 - February 18)



Your innovative ideas are officially trending around the office or workplace, Aquarius. Don't be afraid to lead the pack, as everyone is just trying to keep up.

PISCES

(February 19 - March 20)



Pisces, you are walking on sunshine this week. Your creative output is at an all-time high. Paint, write, sing, or engage in anything else you enjoy.

NOMBANIA™

by PETER MARINACC



Flood repairs in limbo as Woodlands County awaits approvals, advocacy for expedience on the go

| By Serena Lapointe

Woodlands County is seeking answers from the province on projects linked to the Government's Disaster Recovery Program (DRP) specific to the 2023 flooding, and subsequent riverbank damage along the McLeod River. The county is hoping to convince the government to expedite the review of required regulatory approvals, so the work can begin.

During the March 12 Woodlands County Council meeting, CAO Matthew Ferris explained that through the first half of 2025, administration worked hard on attaining changes to what had been approved for projects along the bank of the McLeod River, and though it ended up being successful, it ate up significant time, and timelines are now getting tight.

"We spent the last year collaborating with the province to come up with a process to make sure the repair work we do reflected what our community needed. The province is quite sticklers on; you get what you had. You can't oversize or upgrade it beyond that when it comes to the funding," said Ferris.

"We did a lot of advocacy over the first six months of last year to get them to under-

stand the true scope because the original scope they gave us was significantly smaller. We then spent the next six months building the engineering packages and tender packages to get that to go out.

With that, though, comes a bunch of provincial and federal approvals."

Woodlands County is awaiting approval on four important pieces of the overall project, and they can't move until they have them. They submitted their Request for Review to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in mid-December 2025, the Temporary Field Authorization in early January 2026, the Historical Resource Clearance on January 19, 2026, and the Water Act Approval in early February 2026. And so far, they haven't heard back.

The County may also need to put in for a Species at Risk Act (SARA) permit, a process that can be lengthy. Typical approval time is anywhere from three to six months, depending on the level of review a project requires. "Administration has responded to all clarification requests and continues to work with regulators; however, approval timelines remain uncertain," he added.

While Ferris understands that things take time, the deadline for work within the 2023 DRP funding, which the County's projects fall under, is coming up at the end of November. Time is of the essence. "We recognize and understand, as administrators ourselves, how things take time and process, and we respect that within reason. But, with the timelines we have coming up in the fall of 2026, that is a problem when it comes to tendering."

He said not having the approvals means Woodlands County cannot tender the projects due to the liability and legal risk of tendering out a project, for which they may not receive approval to follow through on. Since the province's funding is footing a significant portion of the bill, not having approval could mean Woodlands County would be on the hook for the costs incurred.

"Also, the added costs of the potential last-minute scope changes very late into the year will only add to the increased costs, and that's problematic," added Ferris.

Administration's request was to have council join the conversation by reaching out to those who could help speed things up.



A looming deadline for Woodlands County is making things tricky as the municipality eagerly awaits approvals to begin flood-related work, with significant funding from the provincial government.

"If council thought it necessary, perhaps we start the advocacy. You all have a lot of great connections and interplay both provincially and federally, and using the force of council as a whole to help us get further ahead based on the public good and the need of these projects as a governance body," said Ferris. He suggested that they send letters to local MLAs, relevant Provincial Ministers, the area's MP, and relevant Federal Ministers, all of whom are related to the different applications they've sent in, in the hopes that they can be expedited. Reeve Kusch said they should also send emails, and

Councillor St. Martin recommended phone calls be done as well.

Councillor Alan Deane said the deadlines attached to DRP funding are different than other forms of funding, something that should also be brought up through the advocacy. "When you repave a section of road, and you apply for funding, it falls in a different bucket, but they don't have these types of restrictions. And we're dealing with the river. I would hope that Municipal Affairs understands that there's a difference between this type of application and a regular funding request that doesn't

have the same restrictive things."

Councillor Patricia MacNeil said she was concerned about the possibility of not getting projects completed in time and losing out on the funding entirely. "I'm super concerned about losing 1.6 million dollars in funding for a project that we can't afford to do on our own. So, hopefully, we will be able to successfully advocate and not lose it before the November 26 deadline." Woodlands County Council unanimously voted to begin advocating for expedience, in hopes of hearing back sooner rather than later.

A look at the local weather

P.O.P.
High
Low
Wind
24-Hr Rain / Snow



Wed., Apr. 8
Mainly cloudy
30%
1°C
-13°C
NW 10 km/h



Thu., Apr. 9
Mainly sunny
20%
3°C
-11°C
SE 9 km/h



Fri., Apr. 10
Mainly sunny
30%
6°C
-6°C
W 9 km/h



Sat., Apr. 11
Flurries
40%
7°C
-5°C
E 16 km/h



Sun., Apr. 12
Flurries
60%
6°C
-5°C
E 12 km/h



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- Community Services Committee – 1 youth vacancy (Ages 16-25, 1-year term)
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For more information, please contact admin@woodlands.ab.ca

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UPCOMING FIRESMART INFO SESSIONS



Raise FireSmart Kids! Join Woodlands County on **April 16** for our **FireSmart Kids Drop-in Session**, where they'll learn about wildfire hazards and how they can help protect their community.

Blue Ridge Community Library, Thursday, April 16, 5:00 PM – 7:30 PM

What to expect:

- Interactive games & puzzles
- A FireSmart property demonstration
- Fun activity booklet with challenges



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.

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

Topics include:

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

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

SERVICE REQUEST TRACKER

Introducing Citywide Portal! Woodlands County's new and upgraded service request system. Submit service requests, report issues, ask questions, or even send a thank-you, all in one place.

Now you can **track requests, receive updates, and stay informed** by creating an account. Not a resident? You can also submit a request as a guest.

Get started! Scan the QR Code, or go to:

<https://woodlands.ab.ca/p/service-request>
Need help? Call 780-778-8400 for assistance.

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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., April 14th, 2026**. The Development Authority will be making a decision on the following development permit application following this deadline.

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

Legal Description	Development Permit Application Number	Proposal
NE 18-58-11-W5M LOT 10 BLOCK 3 PLAN 1423727	26-DP-021	Home Occupation Major: Woodcraft and Farm Goods

Information regarding this application may be obtained by inquiring prior to **4:30 p.m., April 14th, 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

UPCOMING WOODLANDS COUNTY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The following is a list of upcoming Woodlands County Committee Meetings:

- Community Services Committee Meeting - April 9 at 5:30 p.m.
- Finance & Taxation Committee Meeting - April 13 at 9:00 a.m.
- Governance & Priorities Committee Meeting - April 15 at 5:00 p.m.
- Economic Development Committee Meeting - April 28 at 1:00 p.m.

at #1 Woodlands Lane, Whitecourt, unless otherwise posted.

Access meeting schedules, agenda packages, minutes, and more through by scanning the QR Code or going to our CivicWeb Portal: woodlands.civicweb.net/Portal/



JOIN US! All Committee Meetings are open to the public. All meetings are held at the Woodlands County Administration Building

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.

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

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

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

#woodlandscounty #dustcontrol #roadsmanagement



DAVE KUSCH
Reeve, Division 1 – Anselmo
dave.kusch@woodlands.ab.ca
780-778-9337



PATRICIA MACNEIL
Councillor, Division 2 - Whitecourt West
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780-268-3000



ALAN DEANE
Councillor, Division 3 - Whitecourt Central
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780-778-0894



KAREN ST. MARTIN
Councillor, Division 4 - Whitecourt East
karen.stmartin@woodlands.ab.ca
780-778-0822



JENNA WRIGHT
Councillor, Division 5 - Blue Ridge
jenna.wright@woodlands.ab.ca
780-779-6765



PETER KUELKEN
Councillor, Division 6 - Goose Lake / Freeman River
peter.kuelken@woodlands.ab.ca
780-284-2425



BENNY WHITTEN
Councillor, Division 7 - Fort Assiniboine / Timeau
benny.whitten@woodlands.ab.ca
780-305-4655



www.woodlands.ab.ca
780-778-8400
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admin@woodlands.ab.ca
1 Woodlands Lane,
Whitecourt,
AB T7S 1N3

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**

Putting a face on suicide



Darin Cunliffe

Age 15

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.



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.

It's easy to be nice

I'm 13, and I don't think the people who bully me actually know they're doing something that sticks. Like, they probably go home and eat dinner and watch TV and just forget. But I don't forget. I remember the exact words sometimes, even when I don't want to.

It's not like in movies where someone gets shoved into lockers every day. It's quieter than that. It's people not moving their backpacks so you can sit down. It's laughing when you say something normal, like you said it wrong somehow. It's group chats you find

out about later that you weren't in.

There's this one thing that happens a lot where I'll be talking, and someone will look at their friend and make a face. Not even a big one. Just a quick look. But I see it. And then I start thinking about it for the rest of the day, like what did I do wrong?

I've tried changing things. Like talking less. Or trying to be funnier. Or just agreeing with people so they don't get annoyed. It kind of works for a bit, but then I feel like I'm not even acting like myself anymore. It's weird, like you're

there but also not really there.

Sometimes I count how long until the bell rings. Like actually count seconds in my head when it gets really bad. That probably sounds dumb, but it helps a little because at least time is moving, even if everything else feels stuck.

I don't tell a lot of people. Not because I want to keep it a secret, but because it's hard to explain without sounding dramatic. If you say "they're just being mean," it doesn't sound like enough to explain why it messes with your head so much. But it does.

There are still okay moments though. Like when I'm drawing in my notebook and I forget where I am for a bit. Or when someone actually talks to me like a normal person and I don't have to think so hard about every word I say. Those moments feel kind of important, like proof that things aren't always bad.

I don't really have advice or anything. I'm still figuring it out. I just wish people thought a little more before they said stuff or did those small things they think don't matter.

Because they do. Even if no one says anything, they do.

Got a news tip?

Call Valerie Winger at 780.706.1858 or email wctpress@gmail.com

The Press



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

CROSSWORDS

	E	M	S		F	O	N		M	C	F				
	D	A	L		I	C	E		A	R	A				
S	M	I	L	O		N	A	B		M	E	I	J	I	
M	A	C	A	B	R	E		U	N	M	A	T	E	D	
A	N	T	I	B	E	S		L	E	A	S	H	E	S	
					S	E	B	S		A	B	L	E		
I	M	M	E	R	S	E		S	E	S	S	I	L	E	
D	A	I											R	A	N
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A	D	M	I	R	A	L		S	A	L	A	M	I	S	
B	E	E	L	I	N	E		E	R	E	M	I	T	E	
M	Y	S	I	A			M	A	T		C	I	M	O	N
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SUDOKU

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

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DEVELOPMENT PERMITS

Ready to build your new shop or put that addition on the house?

In Woodlands County, if you want to build a new structure or conduct a new land use, a development permit is required.

- Ensure your business and/or project meets local bylaws
- Avoid costly delays or penalties
- Support smart, sustainable community growth

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

- Learn what permits you need, • Get step-by-step application support
- Stay informed on zoning rules and timelines

LEARN MORE: Visit woodlands.ab.ca and search Planning and Development
• planning@woodlands.ab.ca • 780-778-8400

ROAD BANS IN EFFECT
WOODLANDS COUNTY

Spring is here and so are road bans! Effective Monday, March 23, weight restrictions are in place in Woodlands County.

Restrictions 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.