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Keeping it local

First youth summer camp for Pumpjack Players



Cheers, from the summer theatre kids!

Sixteen kids took part in the first summer theatre camp for Pumpjack Players last week, creating plays, testing their improvisational skills, playing games, and singing karaoke, all while making friends and staying local. See story page 6.



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Transformation is underway for one of downtown’s gems



After over two decades housing a downtown jewellery store, first Sean David Jewellers and now Caine’s Jewellers, 5012 50th Avenue is getting a major facelift. Ron Caine and his crew are in the midst of a transformation that will keep their store closed for the next few months but will have it looking better than ever upon completion. Pictured is the proposed new front for Caine’s Jewellers.

| By Serena Lapointe
Kandice Izzard has been one of the friendly faces greeting customers as they walk into 5012 50 Avenue for the last twenty-three years. Fifteen of those years have been as the manager of Caine’s Jewellers Ltd, and the previous eight were as staff for Sean David Jewellers.
Earlier this month, Caine’s Jewellers announced that substantial changes were on the way for the store. “I think we realized that after fifteen years, it

was time to make a major change. In the time I’ve been in that building, with the previous owners and the current owners, not a lot has changed. It’s time to update the showcases and the whole layout. As things get older, carpets and things, it is nice to get a refresh,” explained Izzard.
It is a lot more than just a refresh, though. The project being undertaken inside Caine’s Jewellers needed the complete removal of everything inside the space. The showroom,

displays, flooring, and wall décor that customers have known is now long gone as the transformation gets underway. It’s a shell of a building.
Izzard said that seeing things disappear was emotional. “I felt a couple of emotions because I have been there so long. I felt both sadness and elation that change is happening. You can see how empty it is. It’s bare walls. We posted a couple of pictures on Facebook to show everyone.” She added that security is

on-site for the entirety of the project.
Izzard said they plan to create a collage with pictures from the project, starting with the way it looked before, to the work in process, to the brand-new finished space, and will share it once everything is done, to show how much work went into it. Until then, though, much of the work being done is hush, hush.
New colours? Secret. New floor plan? Secret. New décor? Secret. New displays?

You guessed it, secret. The staff want to keep as much of the change under wraps so that when it comes time to reveal it, it will be extra special, and they are planning a worthy celebration too.
One of the things that has been important is using the community as much as possible, including hiring local contractors and tradespeople. “If we can, we’re keeping all of it local, that way if something happens, we know we can deal with it right here. Even

all those mirrors that were along the side-wall, a local person took them. They were building a dance studio in their basement for their young daughter. They were over the moon with them,” said Izzard. “We’ve always been about community support. As a small business, we rely on this community to support us. We’re not in the city where you have a big population that can come and whatnot. So, we understand that the

continued on page 3

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by PETER MARINACCI

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continued from page 2

community supports us, and we want to support the community as well,” smiled Izzard.

Caine’s Jewellers, as a business, is deeply rooted in family, so having a tight connection to the community is not a stretch; it is a match. “Ron Caine is a third-generation owner. His grandfather started the store in Rocky Mountain House. When Sean Robinson, who owned Sean David Jewellers here, in this same store, was moving, Ron saw the opportunity to expand into Whitecourt. Other jewellery stores have come and gone in this town, and we are still here. We are grateful to the community for the continued support,” said Izzard.

One of the changes they hope to make, and nearly the only tidbit Izzard would share, has to do with accessibility into the store’s front entrance. “Right now, it’s not really accessible for those with limited mobility. We are

working with the town to see if we meet the requirements for doing that there. Hopefully, we can revamp it.”

To help offset some of the costs of the building’s exterior changes, Caine’s Jewellers was successful in snagging \$7,740 from the Town of Whitecourt’s Vitalization Grant. The image of what the proposed exterior will look like was included in a public Town Council meeting and is attached. She credited Kevin at Doucette Exteriors Ltd with helping them navigate the process. “He really helped facilitate that and worked with Ron. It is community helping community,” smiled Izzard.

As for the rest of the details about the transformation at 5012 50 Avenue, mum’s the word. “We are keeping it a secret. But I will say that I’m excited about the brand-new showcases and the setup. I think it’s going to be fabulous. I think people are going to be pleased with the outcome.”

When will it open? Izzard said they are hoping for the end of October. “As with anything, though, there are hiccups along the way, so our hope and our dream is to be open before December 1, and to be here for the community for Christmas. The crew working on this with us have said they are going to work hard to get it done because they know the importance of the season for retail. They know there are certain times of the year where it’s important to be open.”

Watching the store come back to life is something Izzard is excited about, once it reaches that stage. As of this writing, there’s a massive trench inside the main space as they move water lines around. “It’s a good thing, you know? Without change, you die. Everything becomes stagnant.”

In the meantime, Izzard said she and Cheryl are still around to provide customer service. There is a temporary location set up in



An empty store, down to the cement.

the Chamber of Commerce building, where they are open from 11 am to 3 pm during the week at 4907 52 Ave, Unit #7, for repairs and watch batteries.

The store’s number 780-778-3302 is also active. “If you are looking for something specific, reach out, but try not to leave it until Friday if you need it

on Saturday,” laughed Izzard. “We need a little bit more time right now, but we can absolutely do it and are more than happy to. Just reach out!”



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Township	Ranges	Meridian
48	14	W5M
49	13, 14	W5M
50	13	W5M
58	21, 25	W5M
60	23, 24	W5M
61	23	W5M
62	24	W5M
63	23, 24	W5M

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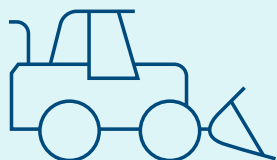
During our Store Renovations Caine's Jewellers' commitment to serving and meeting the Jewellery needs of our community and area still remains.

Starting July 6, 2026, if your Jewellery is in need of repair, or you need a battery for your watch, you can drop it off with our sales associates who will gladly take care of it for you. We can be found through the side entrance of the Whitecourt and District Chamber of Commerce building at **4907 – 52nd Avenue in Whitecourt Unit #7.**
Monday – Friday 11am-3pm

You can also follow us on our Facebook page (**facebook.com/cjewellers**) for updated news as our renovation progresses.

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The Press

Keeping it local – first youth summer camp for Pumpjack Players



Ophelia (right) performing with her group.

| By Serena Lapointe

Until this year, drama-loving kids in the community didn't have the option to stay local if they wanted to participate in a summer camp. Being involved meant their parents had to drive elsewhere, likely Edmonton, spending money on gas, eating out, and maybe a hotel.

Brigette Moore, treasurer for Pumpjack Players, is one of the local parents who has travelled out of town for a camp so that her son could have the experience. She, along with other members of the non-profit, looked into the possibility of running their own. "Several of our theatre kids were driving to other locations. It made no sense for them to leave and go to the city when we could be doing this here," she said.

Moore explained that camps can also be expensive. "Parents were spending three to four times what we are charging here. We are charging \$150 for a whole week. We were able to keep our prices low because we got a grant from Woodlands County and the Town of Whitecourt. And the folks at the Seniors Circle gave us an amazing deal on renting their space because we are a non-profit and because we're doing this for the kids," she explained. The funding enabled

the group to put themselves out there and try the camp without the risk of losing money or incurring costs not covered by their fees should it not be successful. "The funding allowed us to keep our prices low so that it could be accessible to as many people as possible," said Moore.

The first camp ran from July 27 to July 31, while the second camp is slated to run from August 10 to 14, both for kids aged 8-14. Pumpjack Players chose to do full days, 9 am to 4 pm, giving kids an immersive experience and cramming as much fun as possible into the week, including theatre games and even karaoke.

On Thursday afternoon, when The Press visited the camp, the kids were showcasing their group projects. "We have sixteen kids. We divided them up into four groups of four, and they are writing scripts. We walked them through the process of creating their backdrops, set props and pieces and teaching them that something can be not as it seems. Like a chair, when you put three together, can be a couch," said Moore, who volunteered as a camp director.

Once the groups created their plays, they each took turns per-

forming on the Seniors Circle's stage, practicing for Friday, when each group performed for their parents and caregivers, showing off what they had worked hard on all week. Moore said the kids spoke highly of the process. "The biggest feedback is that they loved getting to write their own scripts because they are unleashing their creativity in a way they don't often get to. I'm really impressed with how quickly the kids can think on their feet and do some funny improv. You might not think that kids can make you laugh as an adult, but these kids have definitely kept us adults laughing. They've been awesome," smiled Moore.

Two leaders worked alongside the kids each day, and three other volunteers visited throughout the week to lend a hand. The goal from the start was to give participants a safe place to be imaginative and have fun. "I hope they get to meet other kids in their community who are like them. I know that sending my own son to theatre camps in other towns, he never sees those kids again or at least not very often. Any friendships formed kind of end at the end of the camp, whereas here, that's not the case." Moore said they've

had a few kids take part who had never been involved in Pumpjack Players before, and she hopes they will join now. "We see their talent, and we're like, why have you not been in our shows? We even had kids here that play hockey, which is great to have sports and art kids together because there doesn't have to be a divide between them. Kids like to do both."

Seeing the success of the first camp has Moore and Pumpjack Players excited for the future possibilities. "Our hope is that after we have our first year under our belts, next year we could maybe turn the volunteer positions into paid positions, and we can have maybe some of the kids we've given scholarships to come home for the summer from university, and we could hire them to lead

camps. Because the arts can make money and people do this for a living. So, it would be a way for us to create some jobs for kids or adults and put money into their pockets," explained Moore.

One of the volunteers, Tony Lightning-Vanderhammen, the entertaining in-game host at the Whitecourt Wolverines games, stopped in for a few days last week to hang out with the kids. "He said he really wanted to come help because when he was young, he would have loved to have something like this in our community, and it was never there," added Moore.

Nine-year-old Ophelia Barrett-Gaboury is one of the kids who has travelled to attend camps. When asked how she felt about attending one in Whitecourt, she said it was

nice to be able to make friends and know she will still get to see them. She also said the camp was lots of fun. "I like getting to act and be someone else. I liked getting to make the play and design it and make it ours."

Her group's play was a mix of Ghostbusters and Scooby Doo. "I'm Leah, the leader, who likes ghosts, and I want Wren, the smart one, who doesn't believe in them, to believe in them. At the end of the play, we all share a message that our character learned in the play. Mine was that you can't judge a book by its cover, or in this case, a ghost bite story," she chuckled. The next Pumpjack Players Kids Theatre Camp starts on August 10. Those interested can visit www.pumpjackplayers.com for registration information.



Singing MJ's Thriller together during the karaoke break.

A look at the local weather		Wed., Aug. 05	Thu., Aug. 06	Fri., Aug. 07	Sat., Aug. 08	Sun., Aug. 09
P.O.P. High Low Wind 24-Hr Rain / Snow		Mainly sunny	Sunny	Chance of thunderstorm	Showers	Showers
		10%	0%	70%	60%	60%
		26°C	26°C	23°C	21°C	20°C
		12°C	13°C	12°C	12°C	11°C
		NW 13 km/h	W 10 km/h	N 8 km/h	E 7 km/h	E 10 km/h
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Chins up: Business confidence in Alberta

| By Rob Roach, ATB Economics

From U.S. tariffs to slowing population growth, there is no shortage of negative economic news that could undermine business confidence in Alberta. At the same time, strong oil prices, forward momentum on major projects, and resilient consumer spending are significant patches of blue sky amid the dark clouds. Two surveys provide a sense of how Alberta businesses are feeling about all this.*

The first is the Business Council of Alberta's inaugural Alberta CEO Pulse Survey. Conducted from June 25 to July 7 with CEOs of companies that are members of the BCA, the survey found that "Alberta business leaders are upbeat about the year ahead and are preparing to invest, hire, and grow over the coming year."

About two-thirds (65%) of the business executives who responded expect economic conditions in Alberta to improve over the next 12 months; 28% expect them to stay the same; and only 8% expect them to deteriorate.

Given everything going on around the world, that is a strong vote of confidence regarding what's next for the Alberta economy. The BCA points to improving business conditions in the oil and gas sector as a key reason for the high level of optimism.

The confidence is spilling over to hiring plans, with 50% of respondents saying they are planning to increase their workforce; 39% planning to keep things as is; and just 11% expecting to

cut jobs. This finding comes despite the fact that over half (55%) of executives expect input costs to rise at a faster rate than over the previous 12 months.

As the BCA notes, "There are a number of new projects under construction or on the horizon, including the recent announcement of a major data centre north of Edmonton and the proposal to build a pipeline to the west coast. But, at the same time, debate over the October referendum on separation is intensifying. Amid it all, the mood among Alberta business leaders is remarkably positive."

The second survey is the Monthly Business Barometer from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Conducted from July 7 to 13 with a random sample of CFIB members (who skew more toward the small business end of the continuum than BCA members), the results show that small business sentiment in Alberta dipped slightly in July, but remained optimistic overall with a reading of 54.2. (Measured on a scale between 0 and 100, an index above

50 means owners expecting their business's performance to be stronger over the next 12 months outnumber those expecting weaker performance.)

The index for the 12-month outlook among Alberta small businesses has been hovering around 55-58 over the first half of the year, which is a significant improvement over last year's average of 49.2. Sentiment was particularly low in the spring of 2025 when President Trump's tariff threats were in full swing.

Just under half (48%) of the Alberta respondents cited insufficient demand as a factor limiting their ability to increase sales or production. Second on the list at 44% was a shortage of skilled labour. It's a different question, but there is some overlap here with the BCA results, which found that 47% of respondents were experiencing difficulty finding or retaining employees.

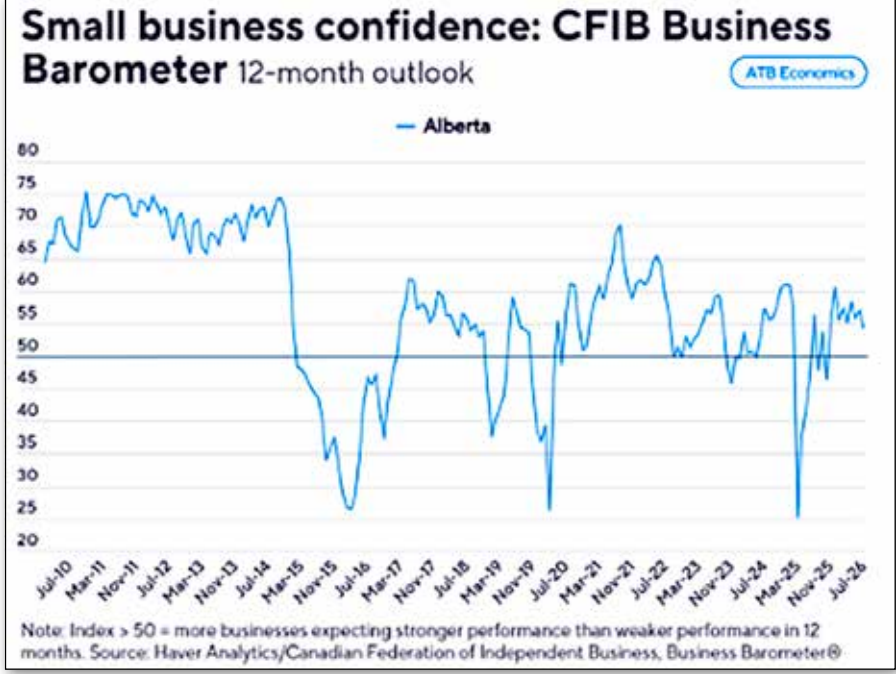
Almost three-quarters (73%) of small businesses in Alberta report that tax and regulatory costs are a problem, with 68% citing fuel costs as a diffi-

culty for their business.

Hiring plans are not as robust among CFIB members in Alberta as they are in the BCA survey, though the time frame is shorter, with 15% expecting employment levels outside normal seasonal variation to go up over the next 3 to 4 months. Most small businesses expect employment levels to stay the same with only 8% expecting them to go down (an improvement over previous months).

Bottom line: While we have to be careful lumping two different surveys together, the general picture painted by both the BCA and CFIB is one in which business optimism in Alberta currently outweighs pessimism. The results also point to continued employment growth in the province in the months ahead. At the same time, finding skilled workers remains a key challenge as does the cost of doing business.

*Both surveys were conducted before the latest round of U.S. tariff threats, so we will have to wait and see what effect that has on confidence going forward.





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EAST MOUNTAIN ROAD SLIDE REPAIR

Woodlands County is preparing to begin construction on the East Mountain Road Slide Repair Project in early August 2026, with work expected to be completed before the end of fall, weather and site conditions permitting.

This important infrastructure project will stabilize the affected slope area, improve roadway drainage, and reconstruct the roadway to support safer long-term use of East Mountain Road.

Construction will include installation of a pile wall approximately 65 metres long, made up of more than 100 piles, followed by roadway reconstruction and drainage improvements.

Residents and road users should expect traffic impacts during construction, including full road closures for portions of the work.

Additional details, including exact closure dates and detour information, will be shared once construction timelines are confirmed.

CUTBANKS & OLD FERRY ROAD BANK REPAIR

Construction on the Cutbanks and Old Ferry Road Bank Repair is anticipated to begin in early August, weather and river water levels permitting.

These repairs are a direct result of the 2023 riverbank flooding and are an important step in restoring and protecting this infrastructure for the future.

Construction is expected to continue into late fall. As work gets underway, we'll share additional updates with more details, including timelines, traffic impacts, and what residents can expect.

TOWER & BISON ROAD REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation work on portions of Tower Road and Bison Road will improve safety, extend the lifespan of the roadway, and provide a smoother driving surface for residents and visitors.

The project includes widening and strengthening the road foundation where required, replacing deteriorated culverts to improve drainage, placing new granular base material,

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Completed applications can be submitted:

- In person at the Whitecourt or Fort Assiniboine offices
- By email: communityservices@woodlands.ab.ca
- By mail: Woodlands County, Attn: Community Services, Box 60, #1 Woodlands Lane, Whitecourt, AB T7S 1N3

For more information, contact Community Services at 780-778-8400 or communityservices@woodlands.ab.ca.

paving with new asphalt, restoring disturbed areas through topsoiling and seeding, installing new pavement markings, and upgrading roadside signs and delineators.

These improvements will enhance road performance, improve drainage, and help ensure the roads remain reliable for years to come.

Estimated start date*: Early September 2026

Estimated completion date*: Late October 2026

*Weather and site conditions permitting.

To support responsible, evidence-based decision-making for its transportation network, in 2025, Woodlands County retained an engineering firm to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the County's cold mix road network.

The review evaluated more than 67 km's of existing cold mix roads and included detailed visual condition assessments, traffic counts, culvert inspections, and drainage evaluations. Roadways were not only evaluated structurally but also evaluated against traffic volumes. The collected data was used to classify roads according to their function and condition, identify maintenance and rehabilitation requirements, and develop practical rehabilitation strategies with associated lifecycle considerations.

The resulting information provided Woodlands County with a defensible, data-driven framework to prioritize maintenance and rehabilitation projects, support long-term asset management planning.

Roughly 50% of each roadway, Tower Road and Bison Road, were selected for rehabilitation in 2026.

Please obey all posted signage, slow down near construction areas, and watch for workers and equipment. Woodlands County appreciates everyone's patience while this important roadway repair and improvement project is completed.

For more information Roadway Projects, please visit: https://woodlands.ab.ca/p/roadway-projects, or call 780-778-8400.

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UPCOMING WOODLANDS COUNTY COUNCIL & COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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

- Community Services Committee Meeting – August 13 at 5:30om
- Regular Council Meeting – August 13 at 9:30 a.m.
- Governance & Priorities Committee Meeting – August 19 at 5:00 p.m.
- Finance & Taxation Committee – August 20 at 9:00 a.m.
- Economic Development Committee Meeting – August 25 at 1:00 p.m.

JOIN US! All Committee Meetings are open to the public. All meetings are held at the Woodlands County Administration Building at #1 Woodlands Lane, Whitecourt, unless otherwise posted.

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

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Staying tick-smart during Alberta's outdoor season



By Haylee Winger

Summer in Alberta brings plenty of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, whether

it's hiking local trails, camping with family, walking the dog or spending time in the

garden. Along with those activities comes the possibility of encountering ticks, mak-

ing awareness and prevention an important part of any outdoor adventure.

Ticks are tiny parasites that survive by feeding on the blood of animals and people. They are most commonly found in grassy areas, shrubs, forest edges and other places where they can latch onto a passing host. Although they are small, ticks can transmit diseases, making it worthwhile to check for them after spending time outside.

The species residents are most likely to encounter in Alberta is the Rocky Mountain wood tick. While blacklegged ticks—often called deer ticks—are occasionally found in the province, Alberta Health says the overall risk of contracting Lyme disease within Alberta remains low because established populations of Lyme disease-carrying blacklegged ticks have not been confirmed. Even so, health officials encourage people to take precautions and remove any attached tick promptly.

Reducing the chance of a tick bite starts before heading outdoors. Wearing long sleeves, long pants and closed-toe footwear can help create a barrier between skin and ticks. Light-coloured clothing also makes it easier to spot ticks before they attach. Insect repellents containing DEET or icaridin provide an added layer of protection when used according to the manufacturer's directions.

Once back indoors, a thorough tick check is one of the simplest and most effective prevention measures. Ticks often attach to warm, hidden areas of the

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5km north of Blue Ridge, east off of Highway 658

WOODLANDS COUNTY

continued on page 10

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



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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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body, including behind the knees, under the arms, around the waist, along the hairline and behind the ears. Children should be checked carefully, and pets should also be inspected since they can carry ticks into homes and vehicles.

If an attached tick is discovered, experts recommend removing it with fine-tipped tweezers. Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull upward slowly and steadily without twisting. The bite area should then be washed with soap and water or cleaned with an antiseptic. Folk remedies such as applying petroleum jelly, nail polish or heat are not recommended because they may make removal more difficult.

People should monitor their health in the weeks following a tick bite. Anyone who develops symptoms such as fever, fatigue, muscle aches or an expanding rash should seek medical attention and tell their healthcare provider about the tick exposure. When Lyme disease is diagnosed early, it is typically treated successfully with antibiotics.

Albertans can also help provincial surveillance efforts by submitting photographs of ticks through the eTick program, which assists experts in identifying tick species and tracking where they are found across the province. Ticks are a natural part of Alberta's environment, but they don't have to spoil a day outdoors. By dressing appropriately, using insect repellent, checking for ticks after outdoor activities and removing them correctly, Albertans can continue to enjoy parks, trails and campsites with confidence.

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ON SUICIDE

Halie Paige Freid Lorenz
Age 14

Every 40 seconds, somewhere in the world,
someone dies by suicide. Behind every number
is a name, a family, a community that felt the loss.
This week we remember one of our own.

THIS WEEK'S TIPS

TIP #1

POSITIVE COMMUNICATIONS TIP

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TIP #2

CONFLICT RESOLUTION TIP

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 - Fridays 7:30pm at the Whitecourt Baptist Church in person only.
- ZOOM ID: **818 413 483** PASSWORD: **gratitude**



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Support group on Tuesdays, February 17 to May 5.
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- Friday 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm

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sage for Our AA member or Contact Addictions Helpline
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Whitecourt seeks public input on proposed winter maintenance changes



By Haylee
Winger

The Town of Whitecourt is asking residents to provide feedback on proposed changes to its Winter Maintenance Policy before Council moves forward with adoption of the updated guidelines.

The draft policy was recently reviewed by Whitecourt Town Council and was developed to address evolving community needs, including changes to snow removal priorities, service expectations and communication with residents.

The review follows a winter season that brought significant snowfall to the com-

munity. Mayor Ray Hilts said the amount of snow received highlighted the importance of ensuring the Town's winter maintenance practices continue to meet current demands.

"Last winter, Whitecourt received an exceptional amount of snow. Our crew hauled 7,000 truckloads of snow over the 2025/2026 season compared to 2,000 truckloads the year before. That's a substantial difference and was exceptional, but we also need to make sure the policy and procedures we have in place will meet changing needs," stated Whitecourt Mayor Ray Hilts.

Hilts added that Council has reviewed current priorities and

procedures, with proposed updates focusing on service categories, public communication and clearer expectations for winter maintenance operations.

The proposed policy includes several changes, including a revised road priority system. The current five priority categories would be reduced to four, with residential streets moving to Priority 3. The priority system helps guide the order in which roads are cleared during winter events.

The updated Winter Maintenance Guidelines would also provide clearer benchmarks for services such as snow plowing, snow removal and ice control. The Town is also planning improved communica-

tion tools, including a new online reporting system that will allow residents to submit winter maintenance concerns directly through the Town website or app.

Residents are encouraged to review the draft Winter Maintenance Policy and Winter Maintenance Guidelines available at www.whitecourt.ca and share their feedback through the Town's online form. Comments received from the public will be reviewed by Council in September. Feedback will be accepted until 4 p.m. on Friday, September 4, 2026.

The Town says public input will help Council consider community priorities before finalizing the updated Winter Maintenance Policy.

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NOTICE OF DECISION

The following decisions were made by the Municipal Planning Commission:

Application No. D26-072 – Discretionary Use – Equipment Sales, Rental and Repair, Heavy at 3903 38 Street - Approved with conditions.

Date of Decision: July 23, 2026

Appeal Closes at 4:00 pm: August 13, 2026

An Appeal of the above decision(s) may be made by submitting a written appeal and appeal fee (\$315) to the Office of the Secretary of the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, Town of Whitecourt Administration Building, Box 509, Whitecourt, Alberta, T7S 1N6 prior to 4:00 pm on the above noted date.

Any person(s) affected by the said proposal(s), has the right to appeal prior to the above date.

Whitecourt Veterinary Clinic 4439 - 52 Ave



Thank you to all those loving families who've adopted the pets at the Whitecourt Vet Clinic.

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