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The Press

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

Locally Owned & Operated

Canada

Vol. 15 - Issue 39 | Wednesday, October 7, 2026

Community comes together for Truth and Reconciliation



By Haylee Winger

Whitecourt residents gathered at Festival Park on September 30 as the Whitecourt Indigenous Friends Society hosted a community event marking both the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day.

The event began with an opening ceremony before attendees took part in a round dance

continued on page 10



Photo: Whitecourt Wolverines

ASIRT investigating death at Whitecourt hotel



By Haylee Winger

The Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT), which investigates serious incidents involving police officers in Alberta, is looking into the circumstances surrounding the death of a 47-year-old man following an encounter with Whitecourt RCMP at a local hotel.

According to information released by ASIRT, officers were called to the hotel shortly after 11:30 p.m. on September 17, 2026, after receiving a report about a man who was possibly intoxicated.

When officers arrived, they found the man unconscious in a hallway. Police learned he was a long-term resident of the hotel and, with assistance from hotel staff, gained access to his suite.

ASIRT said officers brought the man into the suite before leaving

continued on page 7

Yubetsu Deputy Mayor Noriyuki Hosokawa meets with Whitecourt Mayor Ray Hilts and members of Whitecourt council during a visit to the community from September 25 to October 2. Hosokawa visited Whitecourt with 10 students and two adult chaperones from Yubetsu, Japan.



Photo: Town of Whitecourt



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Whitecourt forest takes on some magic



Everett, Cooper, Aubrey and Hadleigh Hagman take in the sights along the Forest Interpretive Trail as they search for fairies, gnomes and other mystical creatures during Whitecourt's Enchanted Forest Walk.



By Haylee
Winger

Whitecourt families are getting a chance to add a little magic to their fall outings with the return of the Enchanted Forest Walk. The Enchanted Forest Walk began September 15 and continues until October 15, giving residents plenty

of time to explore the 1-kilometre Forest Interpretive Trail at the Forest Interpretive Centre while searching for fairies, gnomes and other mystical creatures. If you have not made it out to the trail yet, there is still time to take part in the magical hunt before it comes to an end. Participants can pick up a Magical Hunt Checklist at the Allan

& Jean Millar Centre or access one through the Town of Whitecourt's recreation website before heading out. As families make their way along the trail, they can search for the creatures featured on the checklist and mark them off as they are found. Once the hunt is complete, participants

continued on page 9



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.

If you are needing an item for a special occasion, please reach out via text to **Kandice @ 780-778-3302** or email at **wckandice@cainesjewellers.com.**

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Whitecourt rig welders push for higher rates amid rising costs



By Haylee Winger

Approximately 30 welding trucks took part in a stand-down in Whitecourt on October 1 as local rig welders joined a broader push for higher contract rates and changes to how some operating costs are covered.

The Whitecourt stand-down was part of an Alberta-wide effort involving mobile rig welders seeking a new minimum contract rate of \$150 per hour,

along with provisions for contractors to have certain expenses, including fuel and welding supplies, covered.

Fort St. John, B.C.-based rig welder Vahid Aghdasi helped organize the stand-down in Fort St. John and said he also worked to rally support and find organizers in communities across Alberta.

The effort began in northern British Columbia, where participating rig welders stood down on September 1 while seeking a new minimum contract rate of \$150 per hour. The

proposed terms also included having companies supply fuel for field and out-of-town work. The push then moved into Alberta, with Whitecourt among the communities where rig welders participated in the October 1 stand-down. Participants have referred to the broader effort as the "Welder Wobble," with mobile rig welders calling for rates they say better reflect the increasing costs of operating their businesses.

Rig welders are mobile contractors who bring their welding

trucks, equipment and supplies to job sites. The contractors are responsible for the costs associated with operating and maintaining their equipment.

Aghdasi said rates have remained largely unchanged for more than two decades while the costs associated with operating welding trucks have continued to increase.

"What led us to wobble today was our rates staying stagnant for over 20 years, which makes operating a welding truck impossible," he said. "We also

got tired of rate cuts, and with inflation being drastically high, it's not feasible to operate."

"The cost of welding equipment has doubled to tripled in the past 15 to 20 years. Our rates have stayed the same."

Aghdasi said the goal is to establish a \$150-per-hour minimum contract rate across Alberta.

Along with the rate increase, Alberta welders are seeking changes to how welding supplies and other operating expenses are covered.

"We are going to get

full supply just like every contractor, which is going to be called welding supply now," Aghdasi said. "That means we are going to charge for everything that we burn, that we wreck and that we have to use to get the job done."

"We want our fuel paid for that we burn to make their products," he said.

Aghdasi said some companies have been cooperative as welders continue working to establish the proposed rates and terms across Alberta.

Woodlands County Council meeting recap

| Release

Woodlands County Council met on Thursday, September 24, 2026, to consider reports, presentations, and policy matters. Highlights of the meeting include:

- Chief Administrative Officer, Matthew Ferris, named CAO of the Year in Canada in 2026
- Emergency Management Reserve Established
- Whitecourt-Woodlands IDP Update Advances
- New Community Services Initiative Presented to Council
- County Receives Strong Legislative Compliance Review Results

Reeve Dave Kusch began the meeting by congratulating Matthew Ferris, Chief Administrative Officer for Woodlands County, on being named Chief Administrative Officer of the Year in Canada for 2026 through the gov Business Review Canada. The award recognizes Matthew's leadership and commitment to building a strong, sustainable future for Woodlands County and its residents.

The Woodlands Community Initiatives Foundation (WCIF), a newly formed nonprofit organization, presented a report seeking County funding to support transportation, mental wellness, and food se-

curity programs in Fort Assiniboine, Goose Lake, and Lone Pine. The report was accepted for information, with a regional social services feasibility study planned for 2027, expected to help identify service gaps and community needs across the area. Members of Whitecourt Search and Rescue (WCTSAR) attended the meeting to provide an overview of their volunteer-led organization, which assists emergency services in locating and rescuing lost, injured, and vulnerable individuals throughout the region and across Alberta. Council received the presentation for information and approved

a one-time \$10,000 contribution to support WCTSAR's operations and equipment needs. Council also directed Administration to explore future partnership opportunities with the organization, including potential collaboration and resource sharing to strengthen local emergency response capabilities. Residents interested in volunteering can contact WCTSAR at whitecourtsar@gmail.com.

Consideration of two governance policies, including a new Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Performance Review Policy and a Council Self-Evaluation Policy, was deferred to a future

meeting to allow for additional review and discussion.

To support long-term planning and intermunicipal cooperation, Administration was directed to apply for Alberta Community Partnership funding to undertake a joint update of the Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) with the Town of Whitecourt. The existing plan was adopted in 2013 and will be reviewed to reflect current land use policies, growth priorities, infrastructure planning, and other changes over the past decade.

Council approved a new Emergency Management Reserve to help fund future

emergency response and recovery efforts. Administration was also directed to bring forward the necessary amendments to the County's Financial Reserve Policy to reflect the new reserve.

Administration also presented results of an Internal Municipal Accountability Program (MAP) review, which assesses the County's compliance with legislative, governance, financial, and administrative requirements. The review found the County was compliant in 63 of 66 areas examined, with no areas of non-compliance identified and only minor administrative improvements recommended.

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

continued from page 1

him alone and departing the hotel.

Within an hour, the man's wife returned to the hotel and found him in medical distress. She called 911, and paramedics and firefighters responded and attempted life-saving measures. The man died at the scene.

ASIRT said the infor-

mation released reflects what investigators know at this early stage and what can be shared without compromising the investigation.

The investigation will examine the circumstances surrounding the man's death and the actions of the RCMP officers involved.

The investigation remains ongoing.

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Interested in Cheeto? Contact the Whitecourt Pound at: **780-778-5767** for more information or to inquire about adoption.



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2026/27

SNOW REMOVAL TENDER REQUEST

Pembina West Co-op invites tenders for snow clearing during the months of October through April at our Whitecourt, Mayerthorpe, Barrhead and Westlock locations.

Tenders accepted until 4:30 PM on Oct. 15, 2026

visit pwcoop.ca/tenders for details and tender packages

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Photos: Whitecourt Central School



Whitecourt Central School students welcomed students from Yubetsu, Japan, last week for a traditional Japanese drumming performance. The students also took part in Japanese games and crafts during the visit.



Photo: Central School





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Tues, Oct 13 to Sat, Oct 17, 2026



Election Day

Monday, October 19, 2026

You have three ways to vote:

1. **Vote during Advance Voting** from
October 13 to 17, 2026, at an advance
voting place in your electoral division.

2. **Vote on Election Day, October 19, 2026**
at your designated voting place.

3. **If you've already requested a
special ballot**, it must be received by
mail at Elections Alberta by 5:00pm on
October 16. Canada Post recommends
you mail it no later than October 9.



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Find everything you need to be
referendum ready at **elections.ab.ca**



Construction notice



KEY MAP

Photo: Town of Whitecourt



DAHL DR DITCHES, HWY 43 TO 43 AVE
DITCH CLOSURE FOR DIRECTIONAL DRILLING



Underground telecommunications infrastructure work is
underway along Dahl Drive and is expected to continue
through November 15. Work is scheduled daily from 7:30
a.m. to 7 p.m., with signage and barricades marking affected
areas. Pedestrian access remains available throughout the
construction period.

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The Press welcomes readers to write
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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
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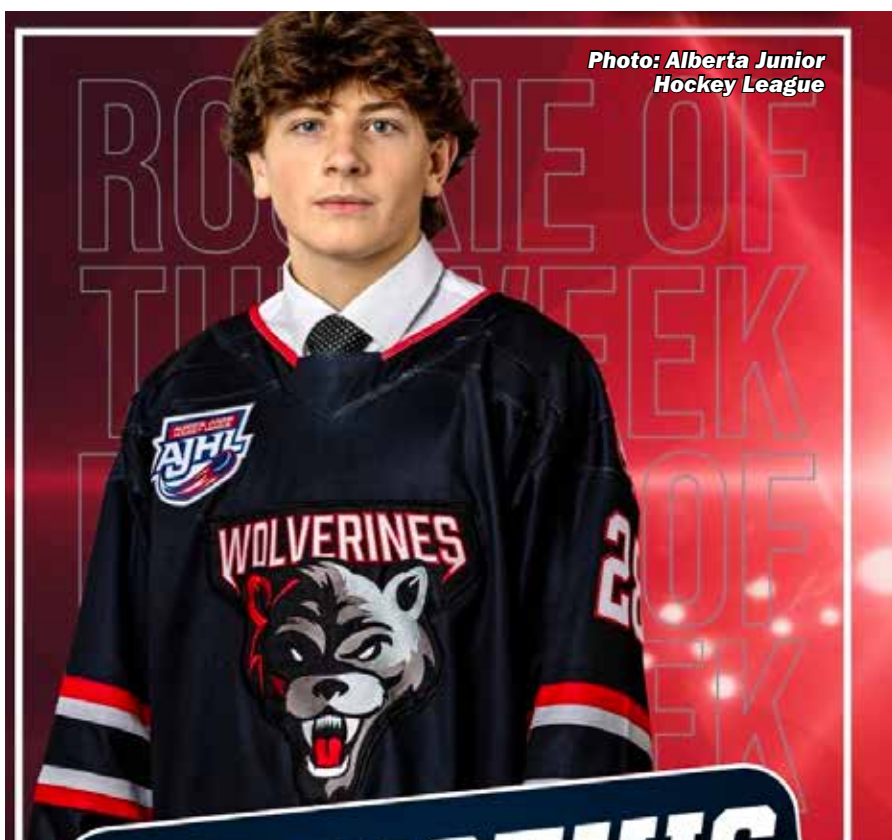


Photo: Alberta Junior
Hockey League

BANICEVIC
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FORWARD
2008
VANCOUVER, BC

Wolverines rookie Jake Banicevic named AJHL Rookie of the Week



By Haylee
Winger

Whitecourt Wolverines rookie forward Jake Banicevic has been named the Inter Pipeline AJHL Rookie of the Week for September 21 to 27, 2026.

The 18-year-old forward led the Wolver-

ines in scoring during the week, recording four points on two goals and two assists.

Banicevic was named the Bunge AJHL Player of the Game on September 23 after scoring twice and adding an assist in Whitecourt's 7-4 home victory over the Grande Prairie Storm.

The rookie was held off the scoresheet in

Whitecourt's September 25 game in Olds before adding an assist in a 6-2 loss to the Drumheller Dragons on September 26.

Through the opening four games of the season, Banicevic has recorded six points, including three goals and three assists, to lead the Wolverines in team scoring.

continued from page 2

can return their checklist to the Allan & Jean Millar Centre to be entered into the Grand Prize Draw. The 1-kilometre Forest Interpretive Trail offers an easy route through the area, making the activity a chance for families to spend some time outdoors while exploring

the forest. With winter just around the corner, now is a great time to get outside and enjoy the beauty of fall at the Forest Interpretive Centre. The changing season provides a beautiful backdrop for a walk through the forest and a chance to enjoy the outdoors before the snow arrives.

The Enchanted For-

est Walk has become a returning fall activity in Whitecourt, giving residents another reason to get outside and enjoy the community's trails as the season changes.

For more information about the Enchanted Forest Walk and the Magical Hunt Checklist, visit the Town of Whitecourt's recreation website.



Pat Hardy students raised \$2,991.50 for the Terry Fox Foundation, with teachers getting in on the fun by taking pies in the face as part of the fundraiser. Whitecourt IGA donated the whipping cream used for the pies.

continued from page 1
and giveaway. SLB also provided a barbecue for those attending.
The Whitecourt Indigenous Friends So-

ciety is a local grass-roots organization that brings Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together to share culture, stories and knowledge and build connections within the

community.
September 30 is recognized as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, honouring residential school Survivors, their families and communi-

ties and remembering the children who never returned home.
The date is also Orange Shirt Day, which raises awareness about the history and lasting impacts of residential

schools. The day was inspired by Phyllis Webstad, who shared her experience of having her new orange shirt taken away on her first day at residential school. The gathering

at Festival Park gave community members an opportunity to come together, take part in cultural activities and reflect on the history and legacy of residential schools.



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WOMBANIA™

by PETER MARINACCI

A look at the local weather		Wed., Oct. 7	Thu., Oct. 8	Fri., Oct. 9	Sat., Oct. 10	Sun., Oct. 11
 P.O.P. High Low Wind 24-Hr Rain / Snow		Mainly sunny 30% 13°C 4°C SW 14 km/h -	Light rain 60% 10°C 5°C NW 8 km/h ~3mm	Scattered showers 60% 7°C 1°C E 313 km/h ~1mm	Mainly sunny 40% 5°C 0°C NW 25 km/h ~1mm	Mix of rain and snow 60% 6°C 0°C NW 24 km/h ~5mm

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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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Crossroads Community Church, 4719 44 Avenue
Mayerthorpe, Pre-registration is required

Whitecourt Alcoholics Anonymous Group



Meetings are three times each week

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

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Screen Test celebrates 35 years of mobile mammography

| Primary Care Release

Primary Care Alber-
ta's (PCA) Screen Test
program celebrates a
significant milestone
this fall. The popular
mobile mammogra-
phy program has been
travelling to rural and
remote communities
for 35 years, improving
access to routine breast
cancer screening for
thousands of Albertans.

Screen Test began
in 1990 with two of-
fices in Calgary and
Edmonton. The mo-
bile mammography
program launched the
following year with the
very first community
visit in Hinton on Sep-
tember 18, 1991. In its
first year, the program
visited 26 different
communities across the
province. Screen Test
now has two mobile
mammography trailers
travelling to 120 Alber-

ta communities, seeing
up to 15,000 clients
each year.

"Breast cancer is the
most common cancer
among women in Al-
berta, which is why
making screening eas-
ier to access matters.
For women in rural
communities, mobile
mammography means
less time travelling,
fewer added costs and
better access to impor-
tant screening closer to
home. I want to thank
the dedicated staff who
keep this program run-
ning and help Albertans
get the care they need."

- **Justin Wright**, Min-
ister of Primary and
Preventative Health
Services

Between October
1990 and January 2025,
Screen Test completed
over 575,000 mammo-
grams. Of these, 28,068

abnormalities were de-
tected with additional
testing recommended.
Screen Test mammo-
grams also identified
more than 3,100 breast
cancers in that time.

"I've been involved
with the mobile mam-
mography program on
both sides. Coming
from rural Alberta, I
know firsthand the im-
pact this program has
had over the years. I
am so grateful – for
myself, my family, my
community, and many
other women just like
me who have had their
lives touched by the
mobile mammography
program."

- **Colleen Waters**,
three- time breast can-
cer survivor and retired
Screen Test staff member

A mammogram cap-
tures diagnostic images
of the breasts, similar

to an x-ray. It is esti-
mated that about one
in seven Alberta women
will have breast cancer
during their lifetime.
Regular screening
mammograms are the
best way to find breast
cancer early when
treatment may be most
effective.

Getting screened for
breast cancer saves
lives. Over the last
35 years, many of our
mobile mammography
clients have said they
would not receive reg-
ular screening if not for
the mobile units. It's an
honour to be helping to
improve access to this
life saving service.

- **Kimberley Sim-
monds**, CEO of Prima-
ry Care Alberta

New and returning
clients can book mo-
bile mammography ap-
pointments by calling

1-800-667-0604. Re-
turning clients are no-
tified six weeks before-
hand with the dates and
location of the mobile
unit in their commu-
nity. Screen Test sched-
ules visits for when
returning clients are
typically due for their
next mammogram.

Individuals between
40 and 74 years of age
are encouraged to dis-
cuss their breast cancer
risk with a healthcare
provider to determine
whether screening is
right for them. If you
notice any breast
changes or have con-
cerns about your breast
health, please see a
doctor right away. Do
not wait for your rou-
tine mammogram.

Screening results
are available online
by signing up for My-
Health Records or the
MyChart app on

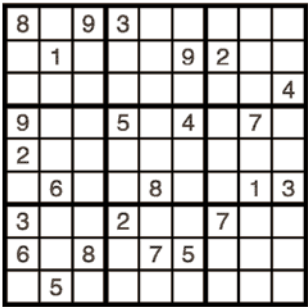
your mobile device.
For more information
about Screen Test mo-
bile mammography
and other screening
programs provided by
Primary Care Alberta,
visit screeningforlife.ca.

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mary Care Alberta. We
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primary healthcare
across the province, im-
proving access to care
providers and offer-
ing front-line services
through Health Link
811 and public health
teams. Throughout the
health journey, we are
by your side – man-
aging, preventing and
reducing illness. Along
with our partners, we
nurture the connections
our communities need
to thrive and strengthen
the health of all Alber-
tans.

SEE SOLUTIONS PAGE 15

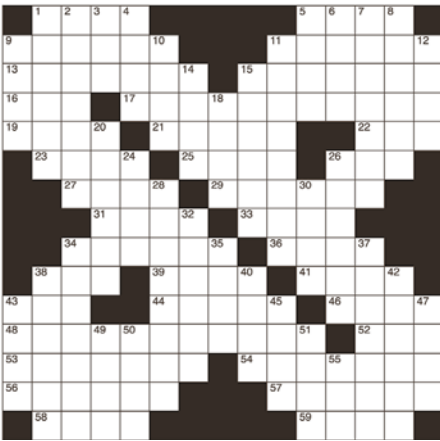
SUDOKU

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Fun By The Numbers

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



Here's How It Works:

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

Crossword Clues

CLUES ACROSS

1. Difficult
5. Coarsely ground corn
9. A group of similar things ordered one after another
11. Loved Romeo
13. Something to solve
15. Pelvic areas
16. Informal debt instrument
17. Ineffective
19. A device attached to a workbench
21. Related on the mother's side
22. "Fresh Prince of __ Air"
23. Astronomer Sagan
25. C. Utah city
26. Turkey
27. Informal terms for money
29. Awakens
31. Those who favored Prohibition
33. Blabbed
34. Looked through
36. Rhode Island rebellion
38. A type of "cast"

39. One's duty
41. Where golfers begin
43. Make a mistake
44. Semitic Sun god
46. Ancient Greek City
48. Removed someone's head
52. A place to stay
53. Unwise
54. Most unnatural
56. "Dennis" is a notable one
57. Ointments
58. Examination
59. Leaked fluid

CLUES DOWN

1. Brave
2. A state of excitement
3. Jest at
4. Sandwich store
5. Chapter of the Koran
6. Dismounted from a horse
7. Small vehicle
8. Irked
9. A disreputable man
10. Monetary unit of Samoa
11. A list of woes
12. Weight unit
14. Alone, single

15. Broadway legend Bernadette
18. Monetary unit of Serbia
20. Worn by exposure to the weather
24. A body of traditions
26. Students seek one
28. Hydrophilic amino acid
30. Nasal mucus
32. Branch of U.S. Congress
34. Swinish
35. Russian assembly
37. Grant an exemption to
38. Set up in advance
40. Satisfy
42. Felt
43. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls
45. Witnesses
47. Strong insects
49. Gasteyer and de Armas are two
50. One of an ancient people inhabiting Scotland
51. Cheerless
55. Unhealthy

Alberta RCMP Traffic Services arrests dangerous driver

| Release

On September 8, Alberta RCMP Traffic Services members from Whitecourt were patrolling Highway 43 near Greencourt, Alta., when a dangerous driving complaint involving a blue Ford Explorer was dispatched to Mayerthorpe RCMP.

An Alberta RCMP Traffic Services member located a vehicle matching the description and attempted a traffic stop. The vehicle failed to stop and fled at a high rate of speed. During the incident, the driver operated the vehicle in a dangerous manner, including passing other vehicles on the highway shoulder.

For public safety reasons, RCMP Traffic Services did not pursue the vehicle but provided updates to White-

court RCMP members. Officers later learned that the same vehicle had allegedly fled from Edmonton Police Service officers several hours earlier.

The vehicle was subsequently located abandoned within the Town of Whitecourt. Through the coordinated efforts of Alberta RCMP Traffic Services, Whitecourt RCMP, Police Dog Services (PDS) and a RCMP drone operator, all three occupants of the vehicle were located and arrested without incident.

As a result of the investigation:

- Dylan Johnson (25), a resident of Peace River, Alta., was charged with flight from police and dangerous operation of a motor vehicle;
- Darius Chalifoux (22), a resident of

St. Albert, Alta., has been charged with two counts of breach of probation order; and

- The third individual was released without charges.

Johnson was released on conditions while Chalifoux was brought before a justice of the peace to then be released on conditions. They are to appear before the Alberta Court of Justice in Whitecourt, with Johnson appearing Nov. 24, 2026, and Chalifoux appearing Oct. 13, 2026.

"This arrest highlights the value of coordinated police efforts and specialized resources in locating suspects while prioritizing public safety," said Sgt. Gregory Anderson, of the Alberta RCMP Traffic-Whitecourt Unit.

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

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

WORDS

ASTIGMATISM
AXIS
CASE
CORNEA
CURVE
CYLINDER
DAILY
DIAMETER
DIOPTER
DISINFECTANT
DRYNESS
EXTENDED
HYDRATION
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UPCOMING COUNCIL & COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- Regular Council Meeting – October 8 at 9:30 a.m.
- Community Services Committee Meeting – October 8 at 5:30 p.m.
- Governance & Priorities Committee Meeting – October 14 at 5:00 p.m.
- Regular Council Meeting – October 22 at 9:30 a.m.
- Council Organizational Meeting – October 26 at 9:00 a.m.
- Economic Development Committee Meeting – October 27 at 1:00 p.m.



JOIN US! All Council and Committee Meetings are open to the public. Meetings are held at the Woodlands County Municipal Office at #1 Woodlands Lane, Whitecourt, unless otherwise posted.

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

For minutes and council recaps please visit our website at woodlands.ab.ca/p/council-meetings

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DAVE KUSCH

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



PATRICIA MACNEIL

Councillor, Division 2 –
Whitecourt West
patricia.macneil@woodlands.ab.ca
780-268-3000



ALAN DEANE

Councillor, Division 3 –
Whitecourt Central
alan.deane@woodlands.ab.ca
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



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Opinion

Minimum wage increases can't keep pace with rising cost of living

For low-wage workers, a few extra cents an hour won't close the growing affordability gap

| By Simon Enoch

For low-wage workers, a few extra cents an hour won't close the growing affordability gap

On Oct. 1, five provinces will see their minimum wages increase. Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan will all see their respective minimum wages rise from a low of \$0.25 per hour in Nova Scotia to a high of \$0.40 per hour in Manitoba.

While any increase is no doubt welcome for the well over a million workers in Canada who receive the minimum wage, the brute fact is that these incremental wage bumps

simply cannot keep pace with the acute affordability crisis that disproportionately impacts low-wage working families.

With very little room to manoeuvre, cost increases in non-negotiable expenses like shelter, groceries, or transportation may require families to make the difficult choice to cut expenses in other areas.

For working families, rent is often one of the most significant monthly expenses. We can see what kind of hourly wage is required to afford rent in Canada's cities by consulting the rental wage—the hourly wage needed to afford a one- or two-bedroom apartment while working a standard 40-hour week and spending 30 per cent of income on housing. Despite being

based on 2024 rental costs, none of the Oct. 1 minimum wage increases will come close to matching the rental wage required to afford a rental unit in the major cities of these provinces. For example, Saskatchewan's newly minted minimum wage of \$15.70 falls almost \$7 per hour short of what is required to afford a one-bedroom in Regina or Saskatoon. Similarly, Nova Scotia's increased minimum wage of \$17 falls almost \$10 per hour shy of what it would cost to rent in Halifax. Of course, the gap between these minimum wages and rent for a two-bedroom apartment is even higher.

We can see the same gap between what the minimum wage delivers versus what is actually required to af-

ford a decent living by viewing the discrepancy between the minimum wage and the living wage in these provinces. The living wage is the hourly rate that each of two parents working full-time must earn to support a family of four in a particular town or city. For working families in Hamilton, that hourly living wage rate is \$22.60 per hour, \$4.70 higher than Ontario's new minimum wage rate. Unsurprisingly, the gap in Toronto is even higher, with a living wage rate of \$27.20 required—\$9.30 per hour higher than the minimum wage.

Increasing shelter costs and higher food prices have been the primary driver of higher living wage rates. In Saskatoon, rising rents and grocery bills saw that city's living wage

increase from \$18.50 per hour to \$21.50 per hour in the space of two years.

In addition to increased expenses, reduced government transfers are also burdening working families. In particular, the loss of the much-maligned Climate Action Incentive payment (CAIP), or carbon tax rebate, has meant the loss of over \$1,500 in annual rebates for eligible families. As expenses grow and transfers are reduced, employment earnings become all the more important for making ends meet. Unfortunately, the meagre increase that minimum wage earners will receive on Oct. 1 is nowhere near what is required to keep up with the accelerating cost of living. Governments that are serious about

addressing the crisis of affordability must confront the gap between what the current minimum wage delivers versus what families actually require. That could include accelerating minimum wage increases, holding down shelter costs through rent regulation, improving and expanding \$10 per day childcare access and increasing the size and scope of government income transfers. Tackling the affordability crisis will require a multi-pronged approach that increases income and stabilizes expenses. Incrementally raising the minimum wage by a few cents every year while non-negotiable expenses like rent rise unchecked will only leave working families further and further behind.

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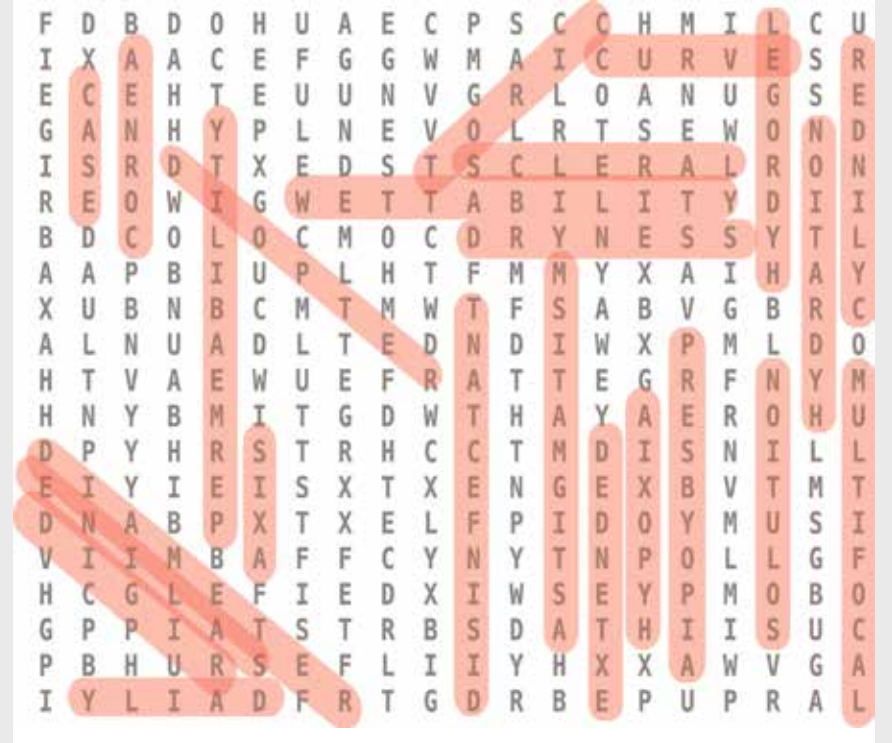
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9	8	1	5	3	4	6	7	2
2	7	3	1	9	6	4	8	5
4	6	5	7	8	2	9	1	3
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