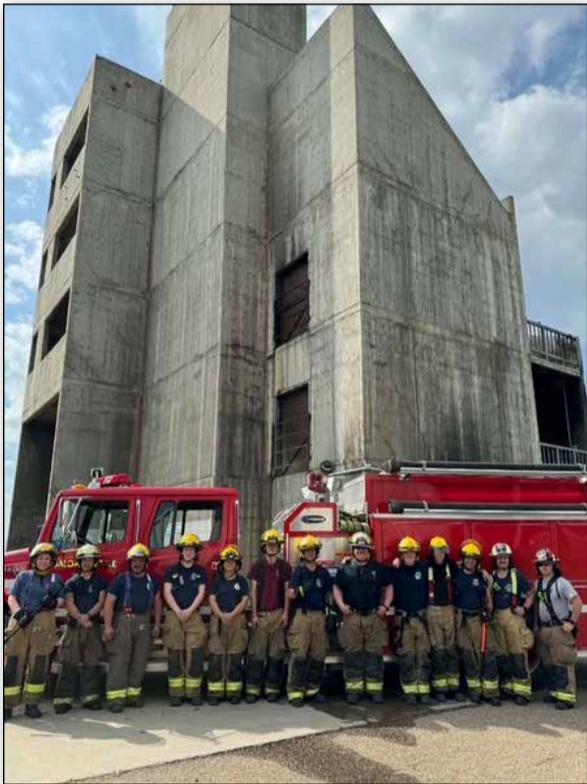




A sister publication to **The Free Press**, Morinville, Alberta

## Vilna volunteer firefighters host 42<sup>nd</sup> annual Dine and Dance



Marked as a milestone accomplishment, several of the Vilna/Smoky Lake crew finished getting their NFPA 1001 in Vermillion.



Photos courtesy of Vilna Volunteer Firefighters Association

The Vilna Fire Department had the 1929 refurbished bickle truck restored and it is now sitting on the Iron Horse Trail.

**By Brandie Majeau**

The Vilna and District Volunteer Firefighters Association is set to bring the community together for its 42nd Annual Dine and Dance, a tradition that

combines fun, food, and fundraising for an essential cause. Set for January 31 at the Vilna Cultural Centre, the night promises an evening filled with music, great company, and generosity.

Music will be provided by Millenia, whose energetic performance is sure to get everyone of any age on their feet. The festivities begin with dinner at 6:30 p.m., followed by the dance starting at 9 p.m.

Organizers emphasize that the event is family-friendly and encourages residents from Vilna and surrounding districts to join in the celebration.

But beyond the entertainment, the Annual Dine and Dance stands as a crucial fundraiser for the Vilna and District Volunteer Firefighters Association. In many rural communities, volunteer firefighters form the backbone of emergency response teams.

They are the first to arrive at the scene of fires, accidents, and other crises, often putting their own lives at risk to protect neighbours, homes, and

Continued on **page 3**

## Mushroom Park becomes a flurry winter of activity

**By Brandie Majeau**

Vilna's Mushroom Park was alive with laughter, camaraderie, and the rhythmic sound of skates gliding across ice on January 3, as the community hosted its first-ever Family Fun Skate. The event, sponsored by the Vilna Fire Department, was an afternoon to bring residents together during the quiet days of the Christmas holidays and the school winter break.

With many local families opting to stay home due to challenging road conditions,

the Family Fun Skate offered a much-needed opportunity for neighbours to reconnect and children to expend energy outdoors. The outdoor rink is now the only skating venue following the closure of the local arena's rink and became the center of something a little magical for the day. Skaters, from toddlers taking their first tentative steps on ice to seasoned adults reliving childhood memories, took part in the merriments because everyone that skates knows that the simple feel of gliding on ice transports one back to their

childhood and favourite winter memories..

The air was filled with the inviting scent of roasting hot dogs, while volunteers from the fire department handed out cookies and mugs of hot chocolate. A roaring bonfire provided both warmth and a gathering point, where friends and newcomers could swap stories, thaw cold fingers, and enjoy the cheerful atmosphere. Despite the brisk winter weather, the fire and friendly company kept spirits high throughout the

Continued on **page 7**



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# Flu activity in Alberta shows signs of peaking after intense early season



**By Haylee Winger**

This winter's influenza season has had a serious impact on Albertans, with provincial health data showing unusually high numbers of deaths and hospital admissions linked to the virus.

Health officials now report that 130 people across the province have died from influenza since the start of the 2025-26 season in August. During that same period, more than 2,700 patients have been admitted to hospital with flu-related illness, placing sustained pressure on the health-care system.

While flu severity varies year to year, this season stands out when compared to recent trends. At a similar point last

winter, fewer than half as many deaths had been reported, with most occurring later in January. Earlier seasons also saw fluctuating outcomes: the winter of 2023-24 recorded a higher death count by late December, while the 2022-23 season reported slightly fewer fatalities around the same time. The mildest recent season occurred in 2021-22, when flu-related deaths were not documented until spring.

Despite the heavy burden so far, provincial surveillance suggests the worst of the flu wave may have passed. After weeks of rapid growth, the number of confirmed cases and positive test results has stabilized. Hospital admissions declined sharply in the latest

reporting period, falling by more than half compared with the previous week.

Vaccination coverage, however, remains modest. Roughly one in five Albertans has received a flu shot this season, amounting to just under one million people province-wide. In Calgary, uptake is slightly higher but still lags behind levels seen earlier in the decade. By comparison, vaccination rates during the 2020-21 season were nearly double current levels.

Public health officials continue to urge residents to get immunized, noting that vaccination remains the most reliable way to reduce severe illness and complications. Alberta's chief medical officer of health has previously

pointed to the dominance of Influenza A as a key factor behind the elevated hospitalization rates observed this year.

Experts from the University of Alberta and the Institute of Health Economics say shifts in circulating flu strains have made this season harder to predict. Although models correctly anticipated when activity would crest, actual case counts exceeded expectations. Data shows infections peaked in mid-December before beginning a gradual decline.

Even with signs of improvement, health officials warn that hospitals and emergency departments are likely to remain busy as respiratory viruses continue circulating through the winter months.

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Continued from page 1  
local businesses. Funds raised through this event will directly support the purchase of vital equipment, ongoing training, and essential resources for the volunteer fire department.

This ensures that firefighters are prepared and equipped to handle emergencies swiftly and effectively, ultimately keeping themselves and the entire community safe.

Supporting volunteer firefighters is about more than expressing gratitude; it's about investing in the safety and future of the community. This statement is a simple reflection of the Vilna Volunteer Firefighters Association. They encourage and welcome everyone to come out, enjoy a wonderful evening, and show their appreciation for the men and women who keep Vilna safe.

The Association also hopes the event will inspire

more community members to consider volunteering. Serving as a volunteer firefighter is both rewarding and impactful, offering opportunities to develop leadership skills, build strong friendships, and make a tangible difference. In small towns like Vilna, these volunteers are vital, providing emergency services that might otherwise be limited.

Tickets for the Dine and Dance are available at local businesses like the ATB and grocery store and through the Association. Tickets can also be purchased that day at the door. All proceeds will go towards enhancing the capabilities of Vilna's volunteer fire department and their ongoing commitment that local residents can rely on their local heroes in times of need.



# Understanding Ukrainian Christmas and its celebration on January 7



On December 17, 2025, despite the snowfall and icy roads, patrons came together to celebrate Radway Public Library's annual Christmas gathering. A special thanks goes out to Bev Litwin and Joan Perrot for providing the beautiful Christmas music. **Photos courtesy of Radway Library**

**By Brandie Majeau**

Ukrainian Christmas is a centuries-old holiday celebrated by Ukrainians everywhere. Unlike Western Christmas, it takes place on January 7th instead of December 25th. This is because many Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches follow the Julian calendar, while Western churches use the Gregorian calendar. So, Ukrainian Christmas comes 13 days after Western Christmas, creating a special time of celebration and spirituality for Ukrainians.

The celebration of Ukrainian Christmas

is deeply rooted in Christian faith and ancient folk traditions. The holiday begins with Sviat Vechir, or Holy Evening, on January 6th. Traditionally, families gather to share a special meal consisting of 12 meatless dishes, symbolizing the 12 apostles. This meal is meticulously prepared, often featuring dishes such as kutia (a sweet grain pudding), borscht, varenyky (dumplings), and pickled herring. The meal is traditionally meatless as a sign of fasting and reverence, reflecting the solemn anticipation of the birth of Jesus Christ.

One of the central rituals is the appearance of the first star in the night sky, representing the Star of Bethlehem. Only when the first star is seen, signaling Christ's birth, does the family sit down to eat. The meal is accompanied by prayers, the singing of carols known as koliadky, and symbolic gestures such as placing a sheaf of wheat (didukh) in the house to honour ancestors and the year's harvest.

Christmas Day itself, January 7th, is typically marked by attending church services. The holiday continues with

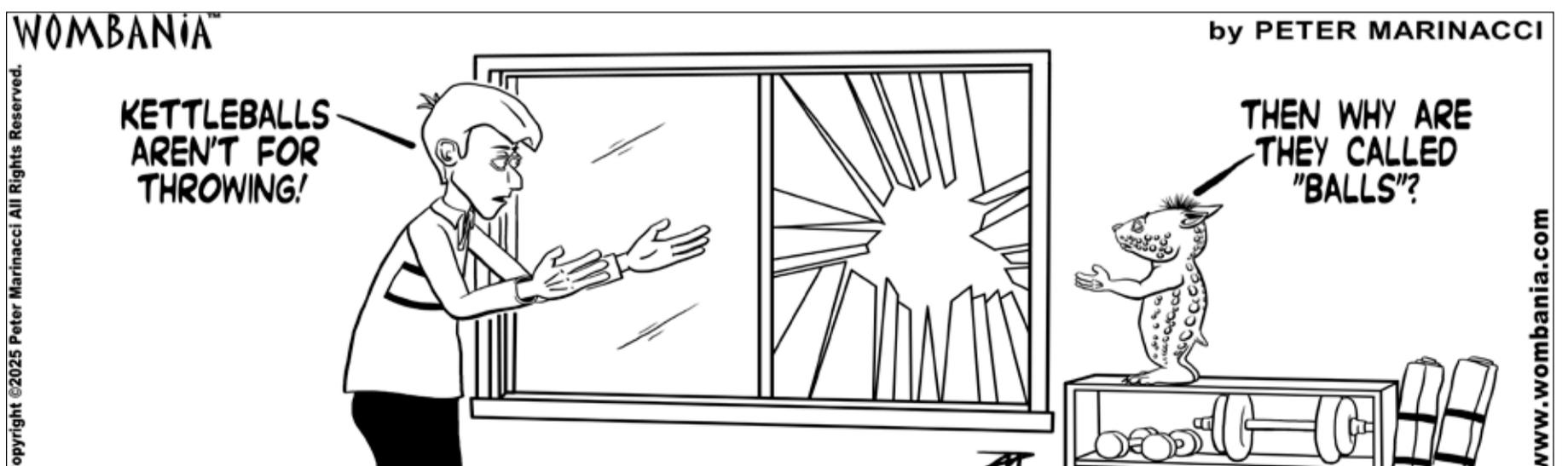
visiting relatives, singing carols, and enjoying traditional foods. Children and adults alike may participate in caroling, going door to door in their communities to sing songs and receive treats or coins in return. Ukrainian Christmas is a special religious observance and an affirmation of cultural identity. It reflects the resilience of Ukrainian traditions, which have withstood centuries of foreign occupation and attempts at suppression.

Consequently, the beginning of the traditional Orthodox New Year falls on January 14, 2026.

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Range Road 205, between Township Road 574 and Victoria Trail, has now reopened following the Redwater Recreation Area fire, as indicated by the green line on the attached map. Please be advised that the Redwater Recreation Area itself remains closed until further notice, as shown by the red-shaded area on the map. The prohibition on recreational OHV and ATV use in the area also remains in place.

**Sturgeon County photo**



**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Take notice that the following Development Permit has been approved on January 8, 2026 in accordance with **Land Use Bylaw No. 1272-14** of Smoky Lake County:

**Permit Number: DP 046-25**  
**Legal Land Description:** PLAN 9122788, BLOCK 1, LOT 11  
**Area:** HANMORE LAKE  
**Division:** 4  
**Land Use District:** MULTI-LOT COUNTRY RESIDENTIAL (R1) DISTRICT  
**Use Type:** PERMITTED USE – **VARIANCE GRANTED TO MINIMUM SIDE YARD SETBACK – REDUCED FROM 1.5 METERS TO 0.9 METERS**  
**Proposed Development:** DWELLING, SINGLE-DETACHED

For information or to view this Development Permit, please contact Jordan Ruegg, Development Authority Officer & Planning and Development Manager at 780-656-3730 to arrange an appointment.

Persons wishing to appeal the above decision must do so by filing a written "NOTICE OF APPEAL" along with the \$250.00 appeal fee, to the Clerk of the Intermunicipal Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (ISDAB) 4612 McDougall Drive, Box 310, Smoky Lake, Alberta T0A 3C0, no later than **Friday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.** The appeal letter should indicate the Development Permit number, contact name, phone number, mailing address, and reason(s) for appeal.

**Jordan Ruegg**  
 Development Authority Officer/  
 Planning and Development Manager

**PUBLIC HEARING – BYLAW 1690/25**  
 To close a portion of Township Road 555

**Sturgeon County Council requests public input on proposed Bylaw 1690/25. This bylaw would close the portion of Township Road 555 between Highway 825 and Range Road 223.**

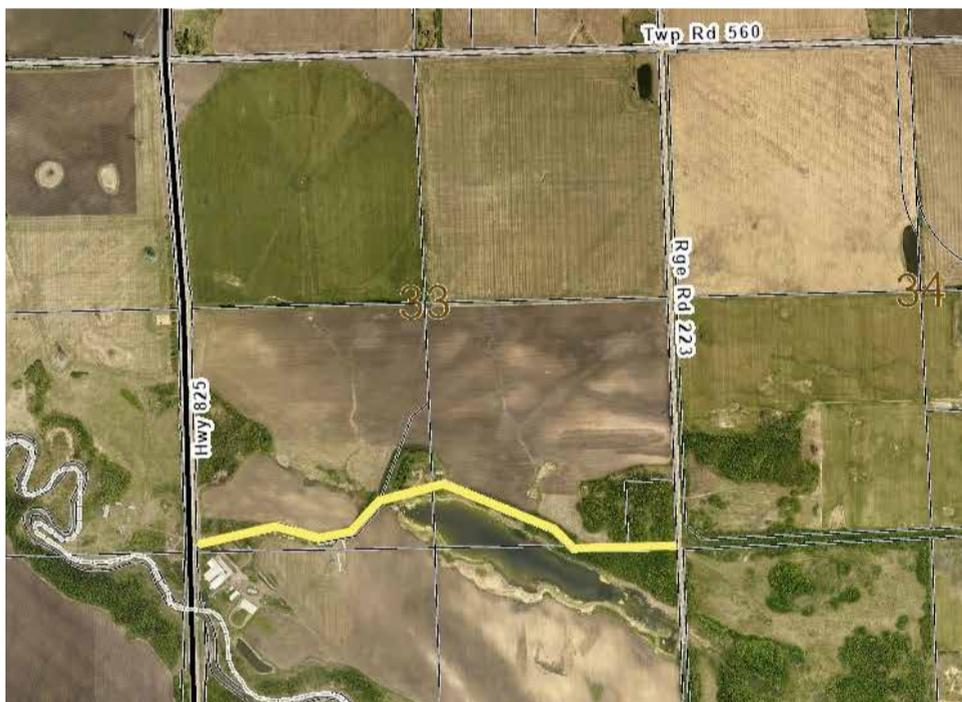
The proposal would consolidate the western portion of the closed road with the adjacent south parcel. The remaining portions of the closed road would be consolidated with the quarter-sections they are located in (SE-33-55-22-W4 and NE-28-55-22-W4).

The eastern portion of the road allowance is undeveloped with no future plans for development. The developed (western) portion is a dead-end road used as driveway access for four adjacent land parcels. **The proposed road closure would transfer the ownership and maintenance of the road from the County to the private landowners.**

View the proposed bylaw at [sturgeoncounty.ca/public-hearing-bylaw-1690-25/](http://sturgeoncounty.ca/public-hearing-bylaw-1690-25/)

**Public Hearing details**

The Public Hearing will be held in person and via videoconference on: **Tuesday, January 27, 2026 at 1 p.m.** (or as soon as practical thereafter) Sturgeon County Council Chambers (9613 100 St. in Morinville) [sturgeoncounty.ca/CouncilMeetings](http://sturgeoncounty.ca/CouncilMeetings)



**Questions? Contact us!**

**Kyle Schole**, Senior Planner, Land Management; 780-939-1397, [kschole@sturgeoncounty.ca](mailto:kschole@sturgeoncounty.ca)

**Important information about Public Hearings**

**Requirements for speakers**

All speakers have five minutes to speak and are encouraged to provide a written copy of their submission before the Public Hearing.

**Speaking in person**

To speak at the Public Hearing in person, contact Legislative Services at **780-939-0620** to pre-register.

**Speak via video conference (phone or video call-in)**

To speak at the Public Hearing via videoconference, you must register by **January 26, 2026 at 1 p.m.** by contacting Legislative Services at **780-939-0620**. This ensures you receive instructions to access the videoconference.

**Written submissions**

Email your written submission to Legislative Services at [legislativeservices@sturgeoncounty.ca](mailto:legislativeservices@sturgeoncounty.ca).

Written submissions are accepted up to the close of the Public Hearing. If making a written submission, you must include your name, state your interest in the matter (such as a County resident directly impacted by the proposed bylaw), and indicate if you are in favour of or opposed to the proposed bylaw.

**Watching the Public Hearing**

You can view the Public Hearing in person or online at [sturgeoncounty.ca/CouncilMeetings](http://sturgeoncounty.ca/CouncilMeetings).

To view the livestream, click on the meeting date on the calendar, then click on the video link.

By submitting comments on this bylaw, either orally or in writing, the personal information you provide may be recorded in the minutes of the public hearing or otherwise made public. This information is collected under section 4(c) of the Protection of Privacy Act (POPA). If you have any questions about the collection, use or disclosure of your personal information, please contact the Sturgeon County Access and Privacy Advisor at 780-939-1306 or [accessandprivacy@sturgeoncounty.ca](mailto:accessandprivacy@sturgeoncounty.ca).



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# Winter activities safety tips

## Alberta Health Services

Getting outside in the winter is a great way to be active. You can play outside or try activities like sledding and tobogganing, skating, ice hockey, downhill skiing, and snowboarding.

To lower the risk of you, your child, or someone else getting hurt when you're doing activities outside in the winter:

- Check the weather. Stay indoors if the temperature or wind chill falls below  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-13^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). At this temperature, exposed skin can freeze in a few minutes.
- Know the signs of frostnip, frostbite, and hypothermia.
- Do winter sports in a safe area.
- Check your equipment to make sure it is in good shape.
- Wear the right protective gear and clothing for the activity.
- Learn how to do the activity safely.
- Never do winter activities alone.

### Sledding and tobogganing

Winter activities such as sledding and tobogganing can be fun for the whole family. Follow these tips to help you, your child, and others stay safe.

### Watch over your child

- Always go sledding with young children and watch over them closely.
- Don't let young children go down the hill alone. If your child is 5 years old or younger, a responsible adult should be with them on the sled.

### Find a safe place for sledding and tobogganing

- Check the temperature before you go. Only go sledding when the temperature is warmer than  $-19^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Think about the wind chill factor because wind chill makes it feel colder.
- Choose hills with a gentle slope and a long, clear run-off area.
- Choose snowy hills. Stay away from icy hills and don't sled

on ice-covered rivers, streams, or ponds.

- Look for any nearby dangers, like trees and water.
- Stay away from roads, rivers, railway tracks, and parking lots.
- Only go sledding in the daylight on hills that are well-lit. Don't go sledding at night.

### Learn how to sled and toboggan safely

- Sit up or kneel on the sled when you go down the hill.
- Don't go down the hill head first or flat on your back. It's easier to hurt your head or spine in these positions.
- Keep your arms and legs inside and on the sled.
- Slide down the middle of the hill.
- When you get to the bottom of the hill, move quickly out of the way, and walk up the side of the hill away from others. Teach your child to do this before they start sledding.
- If your child falls or crashes, watch them for signs of a concussion. A concussion is a brain injury that can be caused by a blow to the head, face, neck, or body.

### Check your equipment, wear protective gear, and wear warm clothing

- Check the sled to make sure it's in good shape before you use it.
- Don't go down hills on plastic discs or inner tubes. They aren't safe because they're hard to control.
- Wear a ski, snowboard, or hockey type helmet. If possible, wear a ski helmet because they're made for cold weather and for falls and speeds that are similar to sledding and tobogganing.

Dress in warm layers including:

- mittens instead of gloves
- warm, dry, waterproof boots that aren't too tight
- a neck warmer instead of scarf (scarves, hoods, and drawstrings can get

caught on things and strangle a child)

- clothes without drawstrings
- a hat that keeps ears covered (children under 3 need to wear a hat because they lose heat quickly from their head)
- Tell your child how important it is to dress warmly and teach them about frostbite. Take off wet clothes and boots when you're done.

### Ice skating and hockey

Ice skating and ice hockey are popular activities. There are things you or your child can do to lower the risk of getting hurt while skating or playing ice hockey.

### Make sure the ice is safe for skating or playing hockey

- Before walking or skating on ice, check that the ice is smooth and at least 15 cm (6 in.) thick.
- If you're having a skating party or playing games (including hockey), make sure the ice is at least 20 cm (8 in.) thick.
- Check for hazards like pebbles, rocks, and branches.
- Check that the ice is in good shape without any bumps or melting or slushy ice.
- Only skate on ice that is monitored and maintained.
- Don't let your child skate alone or skate anywhere that isn't safe.
- Always supervise your child or skate with them.

### Learn how to skate or play hockey safely

- Take hockey skills

training (such as workshops or power skating classes) and skating lessons to learn how to stop, how to fall safely, and how to get up after a fall.

- Skate with your head up to prevent an injury, especially when you're heading towards the boards.
- Warm up and stretch before you skate, practise, or play hockey. It's also important to cool down and stretch afterwards. Stay in shape by doing strength, flexibility, and endurance training all year.
- Help your child learn to play hockey by the rules.
- Bodychecking is the main cause of injuries, like concussions, in hockey. The Canadian Paediatric Society says children shouldn't play in leagues that allow bodychecking.
- Learn the signs of a concussion in case of a fall or crash on the ice. A concussion is a brain injury that can be caused by a blow to the head, face, neck, or body.

### Check your equipment and wear the right protective gear and clothing for skating or playing hockey

- Wear a helmet whenever you're skating or playing hockey. Wear one that is approved by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), fits right, and is in good shape. If you don't have a hockey helmet, it's better to wear a bike or multi-sport helmet than no

helmet at all.

- Get your skates a yearly tune-up to make sure they work well. Make sure the blades are sharp and have no rust. Skates must fit snugly and give firm ankle support.
- When you play hockey, always wear a mouth guard. If you find the standard mouth guards are not comfortable, think about getting one custom-made.
- Wear a face mask and protective padding (such as wrist, elbow, and knee pads) for extra protection. When you play hockey, also wear shin and shoulder pads.

### Thin ice

Check with local authorities (such as your city, township, or parks officials) for information on ice thickness. Obey signs on or near the ice. In spring weather, thick ice is not always safe. If you aren't sure the ice is safe, don't go on it.

To stay safe on and near ice outdoors:

- don't skate on community wet ponds
  - don't skate where there is ice over running water
  - don't walk on ice on or near moving water
  - don't walk on ice when you are alone
  - don't let your child play on or near ice unless a responsible adult is watching
- If the ice cracks while you are on it:
- Call 911 for help.
  - Lie down on the ice.
  - Crawl or roll back to land.

If a person falls through the ice, push or throw something to them that they can use to get out of the water or float on until expert help arrives. Remember: reach, throw, but don't go. If you try to go on the ice to rescue someone, you can put yourself in danger.

Teach your child to call for help loudly and clearly if they're in trouble or if they see someone else in trouble on the ice.

### Downhill skiing and snowboarding

Downhill skiing and snowboarding are great ways to enjoy being outside in the winter. As with most winter sports, there's a risk of getting hurt when you ski or snowboard. Ski and snowboard injuries happen most often because of:

- going too fast and losing control
- running into other boarders, skiers, or objects
- being tired
- using equipment

Continued on **page 7**



Continued from page 6

that doesn't fit or work right

- not having enough experience
- being out in bad weather or low light, like when it's snowing or starting to get dark

Follow these safety tips whenever you ski or snowboard.

**Before you go skiing or snowboarding**

- Review the Alpine Responsibility Code. All skiers and snowboarders should know these 10 responsibilities. They help you and others stay safe and reduce the risk of injury while skiing or snowboarding.
- Find out weather and snow conditions.
- Warm up and stretch.
- Make sure your equipment fits right and is well maintained. Lubricate and adjust bindings every season.
- Make sure your equipment is right for your skill level.
- Buckle up your helmet, boots, and bindings correctly before you start down the hill.
- Know the signs of a concussion, because there's a risk of falling or crashing which can shake your brain inside your skull. A concussion is a brain injury that can be caused by a blow to the head, face, neck, or body.
- Plan to go with

someone. Never ski or snowboard alone.

- Take ski or snowboarding lessons with a certified instructor. Get tips on good technique and the best ways to fall. Get training and experience before doing advanced moves like jumps or flips.
- Choose your child's activity carefully. Parachute Canada (a leading safety organization) recommends that children younger than 7 years old shouldn't try snowboarding. And children who are older than 7 years old should use short boards that are no more than chest high.

**While you're skiing and snowboarding**

- Read and follow all posted signs and warnings.
- Match your speed to the snow conditions, traffic on the hill, and the skill of the people around you.
- Watch for dangers such as trees, rocks, and ice patches.
- Choose runs that are right for your ability and will help you build your skills.
- Start on an easier slope to practice turning and stopping.
- Check the landing area before you go over a jump to make sure it's safe. Or have another person (a spotter) check the area for you.
- Stop and rest when you're tired.

- Go inside if you get cold.
- Do not drink alcohol or use other drugs when you drive to and from the hill, or while you're skiing or snowboarding. Using alcohol and other drugs, like cannabis, can put you at higher risk of getting hurt or hurting someone else when you ski or snowboard.

**Protective gear**

Using the right gear that fits well can protect you from getting hurt. Go to a trusted ski and snowboard shop for help with your gear, and have it checked regularly.

The Canadian Paediatric Society recommends that children and families wear gear such as:

- a certified helmet to lower the risk of head injuries (make sure your helmet has side vents so you can hear)
  - ski goggles or sunglasses with UV protection
  - wrist guards while snowboarding (sprained or broken wrists are common snowboarding injuries)
- Check the weather before you dress for the day. It's also important to wear:
- sunscreen to protect from sunburn (your can get sunburned in the winter because the snow and ice can reflect UV rays from the sun)
  - waterproof and windproof layers.



Continued from page 1

afternoon.

The Family Fun Skate served to promote Mushroom Park's outdoor rink, reminding residents that this space is available for community use through the winter. Jenn Trider, a newly elected member of the village council, highlighted the importance of such gatherings, stating, "Having community events is a priority for me, wanting more going on in our little Village."

About 30 people attended the first skate, an amazing turnout for a first-time event in chilly conditions. The positive response has inspired organizers to consider holding another Family Fun Skate around Family Day in February, giving those who missed out another chance to join. With plenty of hot dogs left and even more enthusiasm, the community of Vilna is already looking forward to the next gathering.

Events like the Family Fun Skate are

vital for small towns, especially during long winters. They offer residents a sense of belonging and a chance to create memories together, ensuring that even the coldest days are warmed by the spirit of community. A special thank you goes out to Fire Chief, Ray Soch, for going out as soon as possible to clear the ice and make the rink possible for the Village, often late at night to ensure it was ready for the local children when the weekend arrived.



H.A. Kostach grade 6 students recently held an election for their local government unit. Students ran for the role of "Mayor of Grade 6," earning the opportunity to lead the classroom for five minutes. To qualify as a candidate, each student was required to collect 10 signatures from students outside the classroom and deliver a campaign speech outlining their party's plans for that time. Voting took place at the polling stations, and best wishes were extended to all nominees. **H.A Kostach School photo**



# Ochre Park School Kindergarten & Pre-Kindergarten **OPEN HOUSE**

**Details:**

**Ochre Park School  
Thursday  
January 22nd  
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# Legal Public School Review

## Community Conversation & Meal

We are reviewing the future of Legal Public School (LPS) beyond the 2025–2026 school year. This review does not mean a decision has been made to close the school. We are seeking public input to understand the community impacts of either closing the school or keeping it open past this school year. Public feedback, along with research and data review, will help inform the Board of Trustees' decision at the March Board Meeting.

Join Sturgeon Public Schools for a community meal and conversation about the future of **Legal Public School**.

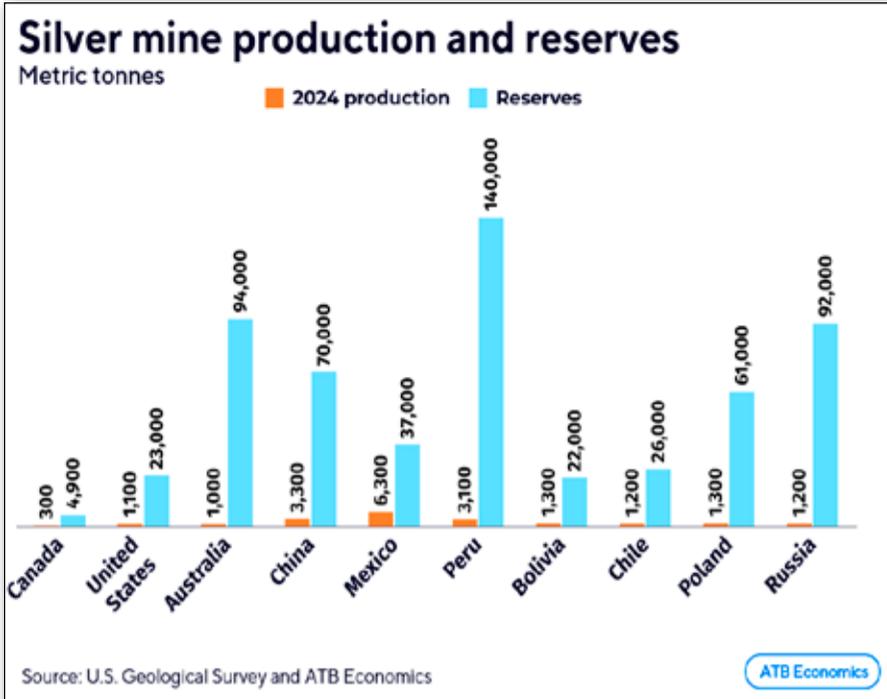
This event is one of multiple opportunities for families and community members to ask questions, share concerns and provide input.

### Event Details

-  Dinner, childcare and counselling support will be provided.
-  Date: Tuesday, January 20, 2026
-  Time: Dinner at 5:30 p.m. | Conversation begins at 6:00 p.m.
-  Location: Chauvet Room, Legal Public School – 5109 46 St., Legal, AB
-  Please RSVP by Thursday, January 15 using the QR Code below



Or visit:  
[www.sturgeon.ab.ca/division/lpsreview](http://www.sturgeon.ab.ca/division/lpsreview)



## Silver linings: A look into what's driving silver's outperformance

**Carol Kamel, ATB ECONOMICS**

A few months back, I highlighted gold's ascent amid a year defined by volatility. I want to pivot to the asset that has arguably stolen the show. In this edition of the Twenty-Four, we examine what's behind silver's remarkable run.

Silver is often dismissed as the cheaper, more volatile relative of gold, but at US\$77 an ounce (as of this morning) and a record rally of ~140% in 2025, it demands more attention. Although down from its December high of US\$84, the precious metal has received a boost from the latest whirlwind of geopolitical events that have unfolded - most recently, the capture of Venezuelan President Maduro and Greenland annexation headlines. For context, an ounce of silver now costs more than a barrel of oil, a rarity we haven't seen since 1980.

### A safe haven asset

Like gold, silver is a safe haven asset, meaning it tends to attract investors in times of uncertainty and concern surrounding fiscal sustainability. It also benefits from lower interest rates (which reduces the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding assets) and a weaker U.S. dollar (silver is priced in

U.S. dollars, a weaker greenback makes the metal cheaper for international buyers). Silver has also attracted investors who are increasingly reluctant to chase gold at its current record highs, leading to spillover demand into other precious metals.

### A conductor - enabling electrification

But, perhaps most importantly, silver's price is also determined by what happens on factory floors where it is used to make a wide variety of products including circuit boards, solar panels and medical supplies.

As such, silver occupies a unique position in global markets, straddling the line between monetary assets and industrial inputs. It is treated like a safe haven in periods of uncertainty, and it is simultaneously a critical physical resource for the modern economy. As the most conductive metal on Earth, silver is extensively utilized in electric vehicles, solar panels, and the infrastructure that underpins AI data centres.

### A shortage of this critical metal

One of the main price drivers of silver is the narrative that there is a global shortage. According to the 2025 World Silver Survey, the market is now in its fifth consecutive year of structural supply

deficits, with inventories at multi-decade lows. This imbalance is difficult to resolve, in large part because more than 70% of silver mining supply is a result of byproduct mining, meaning it is extracted as a byproduct of mining other metals like copper, gold, zinc, and lead. Currently Peru leads the world in silver reserves, but Mexico leads in production with China coming in second.

### A strategic asset

Concurrently, governments are increasingly viewing key industrial metals through a strategic lens. Most recently, China, the world's second largest exporter of the metal, has tightened controls on silver exports in 2026, citing national security. This recent action draws comparisons to the country's earlier restrictions on rare earth minerals.

### The bottom line

What sets silver apart in this cycle is that its strength is not purely speculative. It reflects a convergence of declining confidence in fiat currencies, structural supply constraints, and rising industrial demand. As we move into 2026, silver will be worth watching not only for what it says about investor sentiment but also what it reveals about where strategic resource policy is headed next.

## Smoky Lake launches Community Snow Help initiative

By Brandie Majeau

The Town of Smoky Lake residents are reminded...clearing sidewalks is essential for safety and accessibility. As winter weather brings snow and ice to the streets of town, local officials are gently urging residents and business owners to keep sidewalks free of snow for the safety and well-being of the community. Slippery sidewalks can lead to slips, trips, and falls, posing a risk for injuries, especially among older adults, people with disabilities, and parents with strollers.

Municipal regulations require property owners to promptly clear snow from sidewalks in front of their premises. Failure to do so may result in fines or potential legal

liability if someone is injured. Clear paths are also vital for emergency crews, who rely on accessible walkways to reach those in need quickly. Clean sidewalks not only prevent accidents but also promote walking and outdoor activity.

The Town of Smoky Lake, in collaboration with Smoky Lake Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), has launched a new initiative to help residents tackle this winter's heavy snowfall. The program, designed to keep sidewalks clear and community members safe, encourages residents needing assistance with snow removal to reach out for support.

Through the initiative, Smoky Lake FCSS is compiling a list of individuals who

may require help and those willing to offer it. Community-minded volunteers can contact FCSS to be added to the roster of helpers, fostering a spirit of neighborly cooperation during the challenging winter months.

All arrangements, including any pricing, will be made directly between participants, as neither the Town of Smoky Lake nor FCSS will be involved in the financial aspects. The program highlights the community's commitment to safety and mutual support as residents band together to face the season's snowy challenges.

Please reach out to FCSS at 780-656-3674 or [communitycoordinator@smokylake.ca](mailto:communitycoordinator@smokylake.ca) to request assistance or sign up to be a helping (shoveling) hand.

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**780-222-2016**  
[redwaterreview@gmail.com](mailto:redwaterreview@gmail.com)

## MOUNTIE MINUTE Smoky Lake RCMP Detachment



Across the County, property crime was down 36%, but mental health files have increased by 48%. The RCMP has focused on apprehending habitual offenders, which resulted in convictions and jail time. Sgt. Doktor still recognizes that many people feel unsafe, and there is much work to do moving forward in 2026.

- RCMP received a call of a panic alarm at a rural residence; member attended and determined it was a false alarm.
- Received a call on Monday that a person had trespassed on a rural property to plow snow.
- Received a call regarding a tenant/landlord issue about an eviction that might take place.
- Report of a vehicle in the bypass lane on Hwy 28 at the intersection of RR 183, blocking the lane; vehicle was towed.
- Member dispatched to assist with a vehicle stuck in the ditch on TWP Rd 584 near Hwy 859 at 2:30 a.m. Member attended. The vehicle was not insured or registered. The driver was issued two tickets. Vehicle was towed by member.
- Reports of very slow-moving traffic struggling to get up the hill near Smoky Lake. Members attended and noted traffic was still moving safely; no police involvement required. EMCON was advised so the area could be sand-ed further.
- Report of a pickup driving erratically on Hwy 28 during very poor road conditions. Member was unable to intercept.
- During a rainstorm, a Peace Officer stopped a vehicle travelling 137 km/h; ticket issued.
- RCMP entered into a domestic violence investigation; suspect was arrested and held for a judicial release hearing.
- Homeowner reported hiring a person to remove snow from his roof. The person asked for more than the agreed-upon price and refused to leave the property until he received the payment he wanted. Member

attended. Police advised he could accept what was being offered or pursue the matter through small claims court. The individual agreed to take the payment.

- Report of a frozen, dead deer in the middle of the westbound lane on Hwy 28 west of Vilna. Member attended and removed the deer.
- Two-vehicle MVC: semi was sideswiped by a car due to snow and icy roads. The car crashed into the ditch. No injuries. Fire and EMS attended. Vehicle was towed.
- Suspicious males approached a residence stating they were having vehicle issues at 3:45 a.m. Members attended and located two males who were non-suspicious and having vehicle issues.
- RCMP responded to an uttering threats file in the Village of Vilna.
- RCMP responded to a domestic disturbance in the Village of Waskatenau.
- RCMP and Fire Department attended a jack-knifed semi on Hwy 831 to assist with traffic control until it could be towed on January 2; highway conditions were a factor.
- Well-being check conducted on a female in the rural county.
- Assisted Redwater Detachment in locating a stolen vehicle that was freshly stolen from a motor vehicle collision. Suspect was arrested and lodged. Charges were laid by Redwater Detachment. Suspect had numerous outstanding warrants from Lac La Biche (Saturday, Jan. 3).
- Received a call of an impaired driver near Stry; members attended and patrolled the area but were unable to locate the vehicle.
- RCMP members attended a rural residence to complete a curfew check; subject was not home. A warrant is being sought for arrest.
- RCMP responded to numerous vehicles in the ditch over the holidays.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON A CRIME CONTACT THE SMOKY LAKE RCMP AT 780-656-3550 or CRIMESTOPPERS 1-800-222-TIPS(8477)**

# Preparing for a mental health crisis: Why planning ahead can save lives

Mental health professionals say emotional crises can escalate quickly, particularly for people living with mental illness or ongoing mental health concerns. During these moments, judgment may be impaired and the risk of self-harm or other dangerous outcomes can increase. Experts emphasize that preparation and early intervention are key to staying safe.

A mental health crisis does not always arrive without warning. Changes in behavior, mood, or coping ability often appear first. By recognizing these signs and knowing where to turn, individuals and families can reduce harm and improve outcomes.

## Building a Support Network

Health authorities recommend identifying sources of support before a crisis occurs. This may include trusted friends or family members, healthcare providers, mental health professionals, faith leaders, or community elders. Keeping contact information easily accessible can be critical when stress levels are high.

In Canada, additional support is available through services such as Health Link at 811, which provides health advice and referrals, as well as regional mental health

support lines.

## Recognizing Risk and Warning Signs

Reflecting on previous crises can help individuals recognize patterns. Triggers, early symptoms, and past coping strategies can provide valuable insight when similar feelings return.

Warning signs that may indicate a crisis include increased isolation, substance use, aggressive behavior, or talking or writing about death. Giving away personal belongings or expressing feelings of hopelessness may also signal heightened risk. Mental health experts advise taking these signs seriously and seeking help promptly.

## Getting Help Early

Clinicians stress that reaching out for help should not be delayed due to fear or stigma. Early support can prevent a situation from becoming

more severe.

If someone believes they may harm themselves or others, emergency services should be contacted immediately by calling 911 or going to the nearest emergency department and stating that a mental health crisis is occurring.

For those who are struggling but not in immediate danger, contacting a trusted person, a healthcare provider, or a crisis support service can provide guidance and reassurance. Medical professionals may recommend additional treatment or changes to existing care plans.

## 24-Hour Crisis Support in Canada

Support is available around the clock for people experiencing emotional distress, suicidal thoughts, or substance-related crises:

- Canada's Suicide and Crisis Helpline: Call or text 988

- Talk Suicide Canada: 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645 (4 p.m. to midnight ET)

- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868

Mental health advocates encourage Canadians to save these numbers in their phones for quick access.

## When to Seek Emergency Care

Emergency assistance should be sought if a person feels unable to control urges to harm themselves or others, or if warning signs of suicide are present. Any sudden or concerning change in mental health warrants prompt medical attention.

Experts agree that while mental health crises can be frightening, they are manageable with preparation, awareness, and timely support. Knowing when and how to seek help can save lives.



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Members of the Puck Boyz set up a merchandise booth at the Redwater Rush tournament last week, helping raise funds to support hockey fees and gear costs so more players can get on the ice. **Puck Boyz photo**

## Thinking of planting a shelterbelt?

Sign up for Sturgeon County's

## Shelterbelt Workshop

Date: January 22, 2026 from 5 PM - 7 PM

Location: Morinville Rendez-vous Centre

Cost: FREE!

What will you learn?

- Planting and establishing a shelterbelt
- Customizing a shelterbelt that works for you
- Problem solving

Sign-up online today

**Eventbrite.ca**, search *Shelterbelt*



## PUBLIC NOTICE INVITATION TO COMMENT ON Sturgeon River Pedestrian Bridge

Transport Canada's Navigation Protection Program administers the *Canadian Navigable Waters Act*.

In accordance with requirements of the Canadian Navigable Waters Act, Stephen Hinton hereby gives notice that an application has been submitted to the Minister of Transport for the following works.

Common Project Registry Number	Navigation Protection Program File Number	Project Description <i>(Please describe the type of work, activity and status of work, for example: wharf, dam, etc.)</i>	Worksite location <i>(Please include the name of the waterway, geographic coordinates, lot # if applicable, etc.)</i>
13654	2025-615640	Bridge	Sturgeon River, 53° 41' 4.34" N, 113° 34' 15.78" W

### How to send comments:

Comments about the potential effect of this work must be received within 30 days of this posting.

We invite you to submit comments online through the Common Project Search site at: Common Project Search (<https://common-project-search.canada.ca/>). To do so, enter the registry number indicated above in the search box, and follow the instructions. Alternatively, comments can be mailed or emailed to:

Navigation Protection Program – Transport Canada  
344 Edmonton Street Winnipeg MB R3C 0P6  
NPP File number: 2025-615640  
TC.NPPPNR-PPNRPN.TC@tc.gc.ca

### Note:

- Comments will only be considered if they are in writing (electronic or mail) and received by the deadline. Transport Canada's Navigation Protection Program may communicate with you to obtain additional information on your comments.
- Transport Canada does not publish comments submitted through the Common Project Search site or mailed to the Navigation Protection Program (see Common Project Search - Navigation Protection Program Registry). However, comments submitted online or by mail are considered public record. As such, they are subject to the Privacy Act and the Access to Information Act and are accessible through access to information and privacy (ATIP) requests. This means the information you provide should not contain confidential or sensitive information since it could be disclosed (see Make an access to information or personal information request).

Posted at Morinville/Redwater, Alberta on January 14, 2026.



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## NOTICE TO CREDITORS AND CLAIMANTS

Estate of Laurie Howard Nordquist, who died on October 31, 2025.

If you have a claim against this Estate, you must file your claim by February 21, 2026.

with **Graeme T. Harrington, PT Law LLP**  
at **9831 - 107 Street, Westlock, AB, T7P 1R9**

If you do not file by the date set out above, the Estate property can lawfully be distributed without regard to any claim you may have.

# Roy Douglas Trotter



Roy Douglas Trotter was born March 11, 1944, and passed away January 7, 2026.

He was the beloved son of Harry and Frances Trotter.

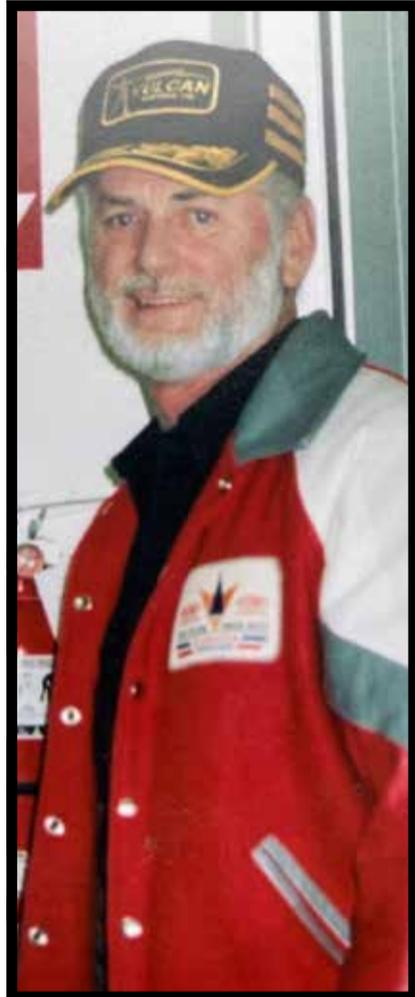
Roy is survived by his sister Cheryl (Kelly Micetich); his brother Fred (Melissa, Grant); his loving partner Noreen (Amanda, Kenny, Carolyn); his daughter Kim (Leah, Deanna); and his son Clinton (Brooke).

He is also survived by four great-grandchildren, whom he adored, as well as many nieces and nephews.

Roy will surely be missed by his family, friends, and community.

A celebration of life will be held at the Redwater Legion on January 25, 2026, from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Donations to the Legion are always welcome.



## New internet or phone plan? Three smart checks

(NC) New phone, internet or TV plan on your wish list this holiday? Before you unwrap, take three quick steps to make sure you're set up safely to avoid surprises, protect your data, and know your rights if something goes wrong:

**Use your trial period if you need it.** Always test any phone, TV or internet service purchased to make sure they meet your needs during any available trial period. For example, if you bought a new wireless service, you have 15 days to cancel your contract and return your device without penalty if you're unhappy with what you received. Check with your provider for the terms of your trial period—it may have usage restrictions.

**Change your default settings for safety.** If you bought home internet service that has Wi-Fi, your router will come

with preset settings for the network name and password. Leaving those settings as is makes it possible for bad actors to gain access to your home network.

Change the network name to something unique, but that doesn't give out any of your information—don't include any parts of your address. Change the network password to something memorable but hard to guess. If you're unsure how to change your settings, you can search online or contact your service provider.

**Always review what you bought.** Look over the contracts and bills for all of your services to make sure they match what your provider promised. Most contracts include a short plain-language summary of the key contract terms and main points. If you find an issue, you should contact your provider to try and fix the

problem.

If the provider doesn't resolve the issue to your satisfaction, you can take the complaint to the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-Television Services (CCTS). They're the independent agency that can help find a solution that works for both customer and provider, with the authority to direct providers to correct problems when needed.

Thousands of Canadians each year resolve their complaints with wireless, TV and internet services issues through the agency. Most of those are resolved at the early stages of the complaint handling process.

By knowing your rights and taking some simple safety steps, you can enjoy your new services with confidence and peace of mind. Learn more about resolving your telecom issues at [letsstayconnected.ca](http://letsstayconnected.ca).

## PUBLIC HEARING – BYLAW 1668/24 - CHADI PIT REDISTRICTING

Amendment to Land Use Bylaw 1385/17

**Sturgeon County Council requests public input on proposed Bylaw 1668/24 (Chadi Pit Redistricting).** This Bylaw would redistrict a portion of NW-17-54-26-4 (roughly 500m north of Villeneuve) from Agriculture and Direct Control District 1 to Resource Extraction Direct Control District 3.

Villeneuve Gravel JV Ltd. is seeking to develop a natural resource extraction operation. This land is currently designated for 'Agriculture' and 'Heavy Equipment Operator Business,' which does not allow this type of activity. Redistricting is being proposed to allow for the associated uses. This district allows Sturgeon County Council to establish site-specific criteria and regulations that the operator must follow.

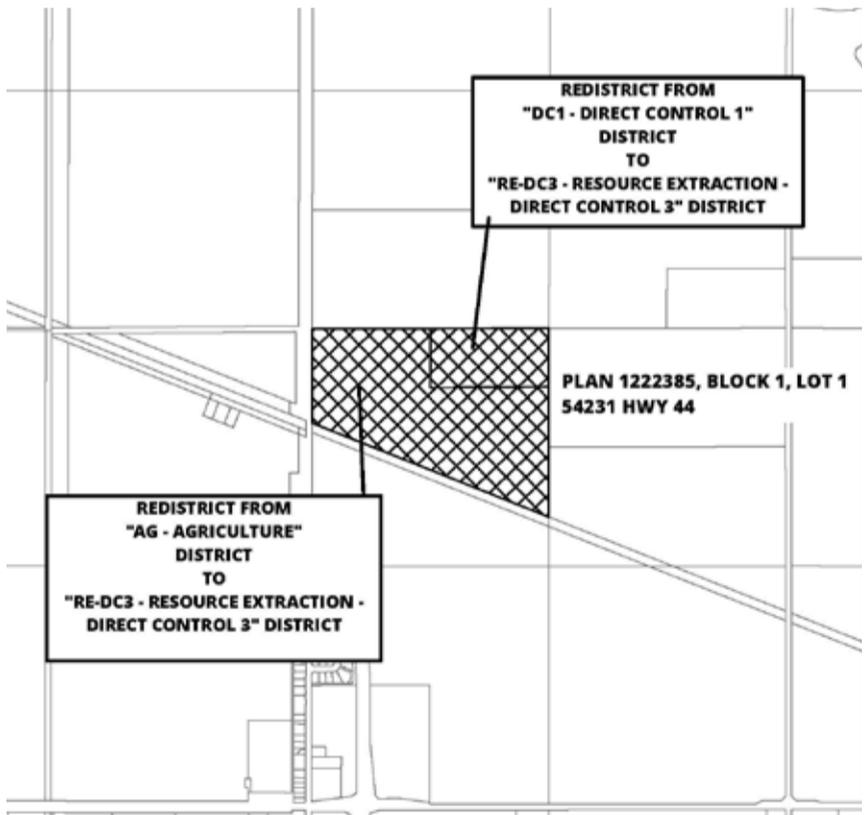
Each time land is redistricted, a bylaw is needed to amend the Land Use Bylaw, and a Public Hearing must be held. View the proposed bylaw at [sturgeoncounty.ca/public-hearing-bylaw-1668-24](http://sturgeoncounty.ca/public-hearing-bylaw-1668-24).

### Public Hearing details

The Public Hearing will be held in person and via videoconference on: **Tuesday, January 27, 2026 at 1:30 p.m.** (or as soon as practical thereafter) Sturgeon County Council Chambers (9613 100 St. in Morinville) [sturgeoncounty.ca/CouncilMeetings](http://sturgeoncounty.ca/CouncilMeetings)

### Questions? Contact us!

**Jonathan Heemskerk**, Planner, Current Planning  
780-939-1398; [jheemskerk@sturgeoncounty.ca](mailto:jheemskerk@sturgeoncounty.ca)



### IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT PUBLIC HEARINGS

#### Requirements for speakers

All speakers have five minutes to speak and are encouraged to provide a written copy of their submission before the Public Hearing.

#### Speaking in person

To speak at the Public Hearing in person, contact Legislative Services at **780-939-0620** to pre-register.

#### Speak via video conference (phone or video call-in)

To speak at the Public Hearing via videoconference, you must register by **January 26, 2026 at 1:30 p.m.** by calling Legislative Services at **780-939-0620**. This ensures you receive instructions to access the videoconference.

#### Written submissions

Email your written submission to Legislative Services at [legislativeservices@sturgeoncounty.ca](mailto:legislativeservices@sturgeoncounty.ca).

Written submissions are accepted up to the close of the Public Hearing. If making a written submission, you must include your name, state your interest in the matter (such as a County resident directly impacted by the proposed bylaw), and indicate if you are in favour of or opposed to the proposed bylaw.

#### Watching the Public Hearing

You can view the Public Hearing in person or online at [sturgeoncounty.ca/CouncilMeetings](http://sturgeoncounty.ca/CouncilMeetings).

To view the livestream, click on the meeting date on the calendar, then click on the video link.

*By submitting comments on this bylaw, either orally or in writing, the personal information you provide may be recorded in the minutes of the public hearing or otherwise made public. This information is collected under section 4(c) of the Protection of Privacy Act (POPA). If you have any questions about the collection, use or disclosure of your personal information, please contact the Sturgeon County Access and Privacy Advisor at 780-939-1306 or [accessandprivacy@sturgeoncounty.ca](mailto:accessandprivacy@sturgeoncounty.ca).*



# Bullying can affect anyone: How to recognize it and take action

By Haylee Winger

Bullying is more than just mean words or teasing. It is a pattern of repeated aggressive behavior used by one person to gain power or control over another, and it can have lasting emotional, social, and physical effects. While children are often the focus of discussions about bullying, adults can also be targets in workplaces, social settings, and other areas of life. Anyone who experiences bullying can feel trapped, powerless, and unsure how to protect themselves.

Recognizing bullying is the first step in addressing it. It usually involves an imbalance of power, harmful behavior, and repeated

incidents. The actions may be physical, such as hitting, pushing, or kicking, or emotional, including name-calling, teasing, threats, or insults. Bullying can happen directly, face-to-face, or indirectly behind someone's back through gossip, exclusion, or spreading rumors. Repetition is key; harmful behavior that continues over

time makes it harder for the victim to escape or recover.

Parents and caregivers play a critical role in helping children navigate bullying. Open communication, observing changes in behavior, and stepping in early can prevent harm from escalating. Discussing bullying openly, encouraging children to share their

experiences, and maintaining regular contact with teachers or school counselors are practical ways adults can provide support. Quick intervention can be very effective: research shows that when other children step in, bullying stops more than half the time within just 10 seconds.

Bullying continues to be a serious

problem in Canada, according to research from Children First Canada, a charitable organization that advocates for the rights and well-being of children across the country. According to the report, 71 percent of youth aged 12-17 reported experiencing bullying in the past year. While 71 percent of teachers say they act to prevent bullying, only 25 percent of students feel supported by adults at school. About one in four teens has experienced cyberbullying in the last year. More than half of youth have witnessed racially motivated bullying at school, and 14 percent have experienced it themselves. These statistics show

the ongoing need for awareness, intervention, and peer support. Bullying is not just a childhood problem; adults may encounter similar challenges, making prevention and understanding important for all ages.

If you, your child, a friend, or someone you know has experienced or witnessed bullying and would like to share their story anonymously, we'd love to hear from you. Your story can help raise awareness and make a difference. Please send submissions to [freepress-review@gmail.com](mailto:freepress-review@gmail.com), Attn: Haylee Winger. Together, we can help others understand the impact of bullying and take action to stop it.



# Beat the ice: indoor walking provides a safe way to stay active this winter

By Shelley Winger

As winter temperatures drop and sidewalks become icy, many Redwater residents find it challenging to stay active outdoors. Indoor walking at Pembina Place is offering a safe, warm alternative that allows people to keep moving throughout the colder months without the risk of slips, falls, or extreme weather exposure.

Running from

January 5 to April 2, the indoor walking program is available Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., excluding statutory holidays. Participants can walk at their own pace in a controlled indoor environment, making the program accessible to people of all fitness levels.

Regular walking is one of the simplest ways to support overall health. It helps improve balance and mobility, supports heart

health, strengthens muscles and joints, and can play an important role in maintaining independence as people age. Walking is also known to reduce stress and improve mood — benefits that can be especially valuable during long winter months when people tend to be less active and spend more time indoors.

Maintaining regular physical activity during winter can also help reduce stiffness

and soreness caused by prolonged inactivity. Health professionals often encourage consistent movement during colder months to prevent the loss of strength and endurance that can occur when exercise routines are interrupted by weather conditions.

The program is designed to be both affordable and flexible. A \$20 season pass provides unlimited access from January through April, while a

\$2 drop-in fee is available for those who prefer to attend occasionally. Participants are asked to check in at reception and wear clean indoor shoes.

Beyond physical health, indoor walking can support social well-being. Having a designated place to walk encourages routine and connection, helping residents stay engaged with their community during a season when social isolation can increase.

Indoor walking is well-suited for seniors, early risers, and anyone looking for a low-impact way to stay active while avoiding winter hazards. It also offers a welcoming environment for those recovering from injury or looking to ease back into regular exercise.

More information on indoor walking and other recreation programs can be found at [redwater.ca/p/events-programs](http://redwater.ca/p/events-programs).

SATURDAY		
Time	Home	Away
9:00-10:30	Blackfalds Bulldogs	Spruce Grove Phantoms
10:30-12:00	Redwater Rush	Edmonton Hawks
Flood	Flood	Flood
12:15-1:45	St. Albert Sigma Bananas	Blackfalds Bulldogs
1:45-3:00	Spruce Grove Phantoms	Edmonton Hawks
Flood	Flood	Flood
3:15-4:30	Redwater Rush	St. Albert Sigma Bananas
SUNDAY		
Time	Home	Away
9:00-10:15	Edmonton Hawks	Blackfalds Bulldogs
10:15-11:30	St. Albert Sigma Bananas	Spruce Grove Phantoms
Flood	Flood	Flood
11:45-1:00	Blackfalds Bulldogs	Redwater Rush
1:00-2:15	Edmonton Hawks	St. Albert Sigma Bananas
Flood	Flood	Flood
2:30-3:45	Redwater Rush	Spruce Grove Phantoms



Mark your calendars! The Redwater Rush U9 Tournament takes place January 17-18, 2026, with plenty of fun on the ice and a big raffle with great prizes.

Shauna Krankowsky photos

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**Announcements**

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# Alberta RCMP provides intersection safety tips

A new year has begun, and the Alberta RCMP is providing intersection safety tips to help make our roads and highways safe for everyone. Intersections are high-traffic areas in which all motorists, cyclists and pedestrians must exercise caution and maintain right-of-way rules.

Collisions resulting in casualties are often attributed to motorists failing to obey stop

signs, failing to stop at red lights and making unsafe left turns.

Follow the below intersection safety tips to help stay safe:

**Motorists:**

- Slow down as you approach an intersection, stop and check all traffic before proceeding.
- Obey traffic signs and signals. Make a full stop at red lights and stop signs, even when you're turning right.

- At a four-way stop, remember right-of-way rule. You must yield to the vehicle on your right.
- Leave ample room between your vehicle and other vehicles. Vehicles in front of you may stop unexpectedly.
- Use your signal when making turns. Ensure it is safe to turn left before doing so.
- Pedestrians have right-of-way in all marked and

- unmarked crosswalks. Pay attention to pedestrians crossing when making any turns or stopping at any intersections.
- Be prepared for the unexpected. Always look for pedestrians, changing lights, slippery road conditions and other drivers before proceeding through an intersection.
- Don't speed up on a yellow light. A yellow light means slow

down and prepare to stop.

**Pedestrians:**

- Never jaywalk. Check traffic before crossing and only proceed when it is safe to do so.
- Always use crosswalks and pedestrian-activated signals when they are available.
- Don't be a distracted pedestrian. Remove headphones and put away cell phones or other electronic

devices when crossing the street.

- Make eye contact with drivers to ensure they see you. "Intersections can present challenges for drivers and pedestrians," says Sgt. Darrin Turnbull, Alberta RCMP Traffic. "Always be prepared for the unexpected. Pay attention to changing lights and each other before proceeding through an intersection. Traffic safety is everyone's responsibility."







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**Alberta RCMP urge caution after rise in fatal winter crashes**

By Haylee Winger

Alberta RCMP are advising motorists to take extra care on provincial highways following an increase in deadly collisions over the winter months. Early figures indicate that 20 fatal crashes occurred across K Division in December, exceeding the 10-year average of 16.7. Police say winter driving conditions, including snow and icy roads, are believed to have played a role in many of these incidents. The trend has continued into the start of

the new year. In the first four days of January, four fatal collisions were reported in Alberta, resulting in four deaths. Weather conditions are suspected to be a contributing factor in three of the crashes, although investigations are still underway. RCMP remind drivers to reduce speed, increase following distance, and allow extra time to reach their destinations during winter travel. Police also note that postponing travel until road conditions improve can help reduce the risk of serious collisions.

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