

Shellbrook Chronicle & Spiritwood Herald



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Christmas comes early at Shellbrook schools



Santa took time to visit and snap photos with kids.

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

The holiday season is a time of good fellowship, good food, and good fun. And all this — and much more — was on offer, when Christmas arrived early at WP Sandin High School and Shellbrook Elementary School.

Christmas Banquet

A long-standing tradition of more than 25 years at WP Sandin High School, the Christmas Banquet returned to the school's gymnasium on Thursday, Dec. 14. This year, however, brought a change that was also a return to an old tradition, as the festive, masquerade-themed feast was held in the afternoon rather than in the evening.

“Moving the Christmas Banquet back to the afternoon promoted a more inclusive activity where all students had the opportunity to have a festive meal together with their friends, as well as to participate in a number of fun activities,” Student Leadership Council (SLC) advisor Rhonda Berezowski said of the change.

Catered by Debden's Lamplight Cuisine, the banquet offered a traditional Christmas meal with turkey and all the trimmings. As for refreshments, Berezowski says a highlight of the afternoon was the DIY hot chocolate bar, which allowed students and staff to create their own custom drinks with a variety of toppings.

Once bellies were full, SLC members led the students and staff through an afternoon of activities aimed at promoting school spirit and a sense of community.

Planning and organization for Thursday afternoon's festivities started in November, with SLC students forming various committees and taking on tasks. Due to the rising cost of food, Berezowski says students were asked to reach out to local and area businesses to seek monetary donations.

Aside from Lamplight Cuisine's culinary contributions, support came from Broston Enterprises, MNP, Richardson Pioneer, and Shellbrook Sales & Service. This help offset the cost of banquet tickets, so that every student in the school had the opportunity to attend the banquet.

Winter Carnival

Over at Shellbrook Elementary School, a new Christmas tradition was made when the school played host to a Winter Carnival from 5:30 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 14.

Offering bouncy castles, Christmas arts and crafts, cookie decorating (and eating), and a free supper of hot dogs, chips, and a drink, the carnival replaced the school's annual Christmas concert, which, for as long as anyone can remember, has been filling the Shellbrook Theatre with the sounds of the holiday season — and lots of proud parents and grandparents.

Chezanne Shewchuk, the school's secretary, says the school was just looking to switch things up and try something new. But while some may miss having the traditional Christmas concert, the Winter Carnival received a warm and enthusiastic celebration from the school community.

The school was packed throughout the evening, more than 400 hot dogs were served up to guests, and Shewchuk says she's heard nothing but positive feedback.

“It was an incredible turnout,” she said. “It was busy, but that's what we wanted.”

The Winter Carnival was funded, in part, by money raised through the school's annual Walkathon. Meanwhile, Shellbrook Bigway offered the school a discount on food, Shewchuk and one of the school's educational assistants volunteered their time by baking cookies, and Santa even found time in his busy schedule to pop-in for photos.

With all this help, every part of the evening was offered free of charge, making it accessible to the entire school community.

“That's why we did this... to be able to have that outing for families, and for it to be child friendly throughout,” Shewchuk said. “With everything being so expensive... there's not many things a family can do [without cost].”

Though the Winter Carnival won't replace the school's Christmas concert, Shewchuk says the positive reception of the inaugural event means it will more than likely make a comeback. Going forward, she says, the hope will be to alternate the carnival and the concert from year to year.

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Christmas comes early at Shellbrook schools



SLC member Alison Lamotte serves students at the DIY hot chocolate bar during WP Sandin's Christmas Banquet.



A cookie decorating station provided kids with a sweet treat.



Carnivalgoers make some Christmas art at Shellbrook Elementary School's Winter Carnival.

SARCS Turkey and Ham Bingo a hit

By **BEVRA FEE**
Spiritwood Herald Reporter

The monthly Spiritwood Area Recreation, Culture & Sport (SARCS) bingo had the added prizes of turkeys and hams on Dec. 12.

Sponsorship from local businesses — Hu-

blers Market on Main, Northern Meats, and Spiritwood Pharmacy — added to the Christmas spirit, meaning a larger than usual crowd turned up to try their luck at winning.

Bingo is a popular event at the Rec Centre mezzanine, having grown its regular audi-

ence year over year.

The hams and turkeys were added to the typical prize payouts over the two hours of games, with volunteer bingo caller Rosanne Franson outlining the prizes at the start of each round. Around 50 players were vying for the coveted add-ons.



Carnivalgoers make some Christmas-themed pasta crafts.



Turkey and Ham Bingo winners, from left to right: Roberta Wasden, Brittany Sundby, Stacey Gaboury, and Colette Bussiere.



Students load up their plates with food prepared by Debden's Lamplight Cuisine.



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Leask at 5PM; Shellbrook at 7PM

Christmas Eve Mass – Sun., Dec. 24
Leask at 7PM; Shellbrook at 9PM; Mistawasis at 11PM

Christmas Day Mass – Mon., Dec. 25
Shellbrook at 11AM

New Year's Eve Mass – Sun., Dec. 31
Shellbrook at 9AM; Leask at 11AM

New Year's Day Mass – Mon., Jan. 1
Holy Day of Obligation
Shellbrook at 9AM; Leask at 11AM

May your holiday season be blessed with great joy, love & laughter

Nadine Wilson
Saskatchewan Rivers
MLA

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Nadine Wilson MLA Saskatchewan Rivers

Highlights of a Shellbrook Town Council meeting

BY JORDAN TWISS
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

(The following council highlights are not the approved minutes of council for Dec. 11)

Shellbrook's Town Council met for its regular meeting in person and via teleconference on Monday, Dec. 11.

In attendance were Mayor Amund Otterson, Councillors Bruce Anderson, Larry Batten, Peter Halayka, Cheryl Ledding, Brent Miller, and Kathleen Nording, and the town's CAO, Kelly Hoare.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Otterson, and council began with its customary Treaty 6 land acknowledgement in recognition of Truth and Reconciliation. Then, it approved the meeting's agenda, adopted the minutes of its Nov. 20 meeting, and welcomed Andrew Exelby from the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association, who was in attendance to present the town with its Communities in Bloom award.

This year, the Town of Shellbrook earned a score of three blooms out of five for its overall appearance and won in the 1,001 to 2,000 population category. It also received special recognition for its tree planting partnership at the Hidden Hills of Shellbrook Golf Course.

"It's a community development program. It's more than planting flowers," Exelby said of Communities in Bloom.

Calling Shellbrook a "very attractive, nice community" Exelby advised the town to make use of the boulevards on

Main Street, as they are a feature that not many communities have.

In other presentations and recognitions, council accepted a \$2,000 donation from Red's Cannabis, which will go towards the swimming pool project, and it also received the final disbursement of \$1,461.31 from the estate of Velma Ell (\$487.10 for the pool and \$974.21 for the golf course).

Up next, council acknowledged received correspondence, including a petition presented at its Dec. 7 public meeting in opposition to proposed water rate increases, and moved on to the reports portion of the evening.

In discussion of the PARWU Board, Brent Miller suggested council should be communicating with PARWU about the feedback it received from ratepayers at its public meeting. Mayor Otterson agreed, and said he had already shared some of that information with PARWU.

Councillor Miller also suggested council should be considering its exit strategy for getting off the PARWU Board, regardless of whether it chooses to pursue the pipeline option, as its participation puts it in a conflict of interest. Mayor Otterson suggested this can (and will have to be) handled once council's decision on the project has been finalized.

In an update on the Shellbrook and District Health Services Foundation, Councillor Batten reported that the foundation recently funded a gym at Parkland Integrated Health Centre. Though primarily for staff, it is also open to be used by patients.

Councillor Batten also said the foundation has put together its capital wish list for 2024, and is awaiting approval for funding.

In the policing and Community Safety Officer (CSO) report, councillors said they were pleased to see the CSO at Moonlight Madness on Saturday, Dec. 2. Meanwhile, Hoare said she's heard from seniors that they appreciate the CSO performing wellness checks.

Moving into new business, council unanimously defeated the third reading of Bylaw 2023-12, which set out the town's water and sewer rate increases from 2024 through 2028 and also introduced a new \$50 monthly capital project fee.

Though the bylaw was defeated in response to backlash from the community, council will be reconsidering its rate changes and drafting a new bylaw.

Up next, council gave third reading to Bylaw 2023-13, a Bylaw to provide for a Waterworks Capital Investment Strategy, which formalizes the town's practice of setting water rates that cover its present day costs and setting aside any extra funds for future waterworks projects.

After another lengthy, but fruitless, debate about recreation funding, and the lack of financial support from rural municipalities with populations who benefit from town facilities, council also gave third reading to Bylaw 2023-14, the fines and fees bylaw.

Moving on, council carried a motion to have the town pay for eight additional hours for the Shellbrook Public

Library in 2024 at a cost of \$9,861.92. This will allow the library to maintain its current 35 hours per week, including Saturdays.

In some housekeeping items, council carried a motion to approve regular monthly spending for 2024, prior to the budget being set, and approved a revision to Policy #7000, the Cross Connection of Water System policy, as recommended by Public Works.

Closing out the meeting, council tabled a decision to give municipal employees the \$1 minimum wage increase, plus a 4.5 per cent overall wage increase, as recommended by the Urban Municipal Administrators Association of Saskatchewan and the Rural Municipal Administrators' Association.

Questioned about the practice of giving employees the \$1 minimum wage increase, Hoare explained that it became common practice because the town had previously failed to keep up with minimum wage increases and it reached a point where it wasn't offering competitive salaries.

Councillor Batten voiced strong opposition to the proposed wage increases, calling them too much, while Councillor Miller suggested they aren't out of line and are helping the town retain good employees.

Closing out the meeting, council set Jan. 22 as the date for its first meeting of 2024. The meeting will be held at 5 p.m. Residents are welcome to attend in person or via Zoom (the Zoom link will be posted online at townofshellbrook.ca a few days prior to the meeting).



Shellbrook Mayor Amund Otterson (left) accepts the town's Communities in Bloom plaque from Andrew Exelby.

RM OF SPIRITWOOD NO. 496 PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice is hereby given that the Council of the Rural Municipality of Spiritwood No. 496 is considering the alteration of the division boundaries within the RM of Spiritwood No. 496.

REASON

The reason for the alteration of the division boundaries within the RM of Spiritwood No. 496 is to provide an equitable representation of population & voters within each division as per the map below.

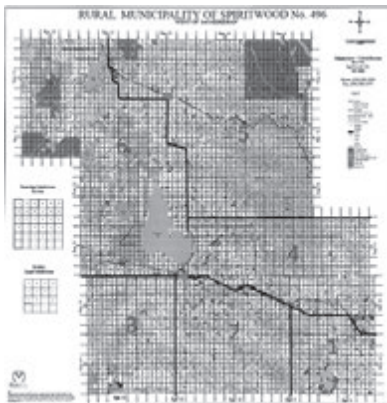
PUBLIC INSPECTION

Any person may request a copy of the proposed Division Boundary Alteration during regular office hours by calling or emailing the municipal office. Printed copies are available at cost of \$10.00.

PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing is scheduled for Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 11:00 am in Council Chambers located at 218 Main Street in Spiritwood, SK to hear comments on the proposed division boundary alteration. Written comments or questions can also be submitted to the RM of Spiritwood No. 496 municipal office at Box 340, Spiritwood, SK, S0J 2M0 or emailed to rm496@sasktel.net.

Colette Bussiere
Chief Administrative Officer



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Sask. Party ignores own numbers on net-zero grid

As the end of another year approaches, it's inevitable that we'll begin looking toward the future – likely with the hope of 2024 being a better year than 2023 was.

These days, however, it seems one can't look toward the future without considering the future of power generation in the country.

This year has seen the federal government square off with the governments of Saskatchewan and Alberta over its Clean Electricity Regulations, which were released in draft form in August and chart Canada's path towards a net-zero emissions power grid by 2035.

Proving the federal government is capable of being nuanced if it chooses, the regulations allow for some exemptions, including for northern communities that aren't connected to larger power grids and therefore rely heavily on diesel generators.

The regulations also don't mean that fossil fuel power sources will simply be switched off in 2035. Rather, any plants built before the regulations are finalized (likely in 2025) will be permitted to operate for 20 years, so long as they adhere to certain emissions standards, meaning they can continue to operate into the 2040s.

What's more, the federal government says the regulations allow for the continued use of fossil fuels, including natural gas, to generate power at peak demand times or as a backup to non-emitting power sources.

"What we're talking about is not a fossil fuel-free grid by 2035. It's a net zero grid by 2035," federal Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault said.

"We understand there will be some fossil fuels remaining... but we're working to minimize those, and the fossil fuels that will be used post-2035 will have to comply with rigorous environmental and emission standards."

According to the regulations, the "rigorous environmental and emission standards" Mr. Guilbeault referenced mean fossil fuel-generated power sources will need to emit the equivalent of 30 tonnes of carbon dioxide per gigawatt hour or less annually.

Per the federal government's calculations, natural gas power plants could conceivably meet this standard with the help of carbon capture and storage



JORDAN TWISS

~
News Editor

systems, so long as said systems can capture 95 per cent of emissions (a feat that has thus far been impossible for Saskatchewan's costly failed experiment with carbon capture and storage at Boundary Dam Unit #3).

In both its initial comments after the draft regulations were unveiled, and in its formal response during the consultation period in November, the Sask. Party government has been consistent in its opinion.

"The federal government's approach, in an attempt to regulate Saskatchewan's electricity system, is unaffordable, unconstitutional, and technologically and logistically unattainable," Crown Investments Corporation Minister Dustin Duncan said. "The proposed Clean Electricity Regulations will jeopardize the reliability of Saskatchewan's power grid, and increase power rates to an unaffordable level."

SaskPower shares this opinion, estimating that "families, communities, businesses, and industries will see electricity rates more than double by 2035 to cover the costs associated with the CER and federal coal regulations."

SaskPower pegs these costs at about \$40 billion, as it says it would need to "expand, replace, and rebuild more than 100 per cent of its current power generating capacity," while also "significantly expanding its transmission infrastructure."

For this reason, both SaskPower and the Sask. Party government are targeting 2050 as the deadline for a net-zero power grid, allowing for more time to explore the viability of small modular nuclear reactors as part of its projected energy mix of solar, wind, biomass, natural gas generation, and increased hydro imports.

It seems, however, that neither SaskPower, nor the Sask. Party government, are paying much attention to their own numbers.

As it looks to the future, SaskPower has been seeking input from Saskatchewan residents on power generation beyond 2030 through an online survey (with the bonus incentive of a \$250 VISA gift card draw).

While answering the Crown corporation's questions, one will eventually come to a screen which lays out four hypothetical net-zero scenarios.



The first sees the province reach a net-zero power grid by its goal of 2050, while the second uses the federal government's net-zero goal of 2035.

Finally, the remaining two offer variations on the 2035 net-zero scenario (one with a larger proportion of renewable energy options, and the other with less reliance on imported power).

If one takes a closer look at the infographics depicting these four scenarios, one will spot something curious.

Remember how SaskPower said that reaching the 2035 net-zero target would more than double power bills?

Well, it seems to have neglected to mention that getting to a net-zero grid by its own goal of 2050 will yield the same result.

Per the infographic, reaching net-zero by 2050 would cost the province about \$53 billion. Power bills would predictably increase to cover these costs, with a \$200 monthly bill becoming a \$547 bill (an increase of 173 per cent).

Comparatively, the base net-zero 2035 scenario would cost the province \$56 billion. But power bills would actually increase by a smaller amount in the end (to \$521 from \$200, or by 160 per cent).

Both scenarios would yield the same emissions reductions – roughly 200,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions in 2050.

Though moderately more costly than the base 2035 net-zero option, the remaining two scenarios would also re-

sult in slightly lower power bills than the province's desired net-zero 2050 scenario.

In other words, contrary to the rhetoric coming from both SaskPower and the Sask. Party government, delaying the provincial power grid's transition until 2050 is actually the most expensive option for Saskatchewan residents.

Now, one could certainly argue that these are only hypothetical scenarios – and SaskPower itself says the scenarios are meant to be "educational tools to highlight the dynamics between power rates, emissions, power supply options, and other future supply considerations."

But, unless SaskPower has decided to fudge the numbers in a way that looks unflattering for the Sask. Party government's preferred position, the numbers have to have some basis in reality.

The only logical conclusion, then, is that the Sask. Party's push for a net-zero power grid by 2050 isn't about protecting the best interests of Saskatchewan residents; it's an excuse for it to pick yet another fight with the federal government in a cynical bid to score some easy political points with its supporters.

Will the transition to a net-zero power grid be painless? Certainly not. But the Sask. Party's foot dragging will only prolong the pain of the transition.

It's time for it to look beyond rhetoric and start seriously thinking about how to power Saskatchewan's future.

Shellbrook Chronicle

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Shell Lake Fifty Plus Club celebrates Christmas

By **DAVID JENSEN**
Shell Lake Fifty Plus Club

After a pandemic hiatus of three years, the Shell Lake Fifty Plus Club once again held its Christmas supper. In past years this gathering has always been a much-anticipated event for members of the club. However, as the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic lessened in 2022, at that time the club had not quite regained its enthusiasm.

But in 2023, the club felt it was time to again have the Christmas supper. A couple of catering options were approached, and the club settled with Partners in Worship, which provided a very tasty traditional meal of turkey with all the fixings... and of course Christmas pudding. The meal was enjoyed by the 100 guests.

Supper was followed by entertainment. After this three-year pause, it was determined that it would be good to have some entertainment. As it happened, Elvis moved into the village recently, and he agreed to put on a short show.

For the first set, Elvis wore his black jumpsuit trimmed in yellow and red with sparkling shoulder and sleeve fringes. For the second set, he wore his white and blue suit, loaded with multi-coloured sparkles.

The evening was a roaring success, with excellent, and more than excellent, entertainment. Elvis sang many favourites, and the crowd sang along. And when he sang Winter Wonderland, Elvis was joined on stage by a little lady who had already danced her heart out for most of the evening.



Cathy Stradeski receives a gift of a cut flower arrangement in recognition of her volunteer service to the club. Stradeski volunteers her time cleaning the seniors' hall.



Elvis donned his sparkly white and blue suit for his second set at the Shell Lake Fifty Plus Club's Christmas supper.

Senior Shellbrook Elks conquer Warriors

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

In its penultimate game of the 2023 leg of its 2023-2024 regular season, the Shellbrook Elks senior hockey club continued its winning ways as it hosted the Waldheim Warriors at the Richardson Pioneer Recreation Centre on Friday, Dec. 15.

When the teams met in Waldheim the weekend prior to Friday night's game, the Elks fought to a 7-4 win. This time, the Elks battled to a more decisive win, besting the Warriors by a score of 10-5 in what was essen-

tially an offensive highlight reel for Shellbrook hockey fans.

In an opening period in which six goals were scored, the goals came early and often. It was the Warriors' Colten Adair who got things started, drawing first blood with an assist from Nate Daku and triggering a flurry of four goals in the span of three minutes.

Next, Nathaniel Martin pulled the Elks even on assists from Parker Turner and Braidon Turner, and Sam Miller put the Elks up 2-1 with helpers from Rylan Moe and Matthew Flodell, only for Adair to knot

things right back up at 2-2 on assists from Andrew Spence and Tanner Baht.

Late in the frame, Adair went on to clinch a first period hat trick, scoring shorthanded with a solo helper from Daku. Then, Matthew Kutnikoff redeemed the Elks' power play just over a minute later, with assists from Brendon Beaulac and Cole Duperreault, sending the action to the second period with the score all tied a 3-3.

After a thrilling, back-and-forth opening frame, the second period was all Elks. The team exploded for four un-

answered goals to take full control of the game, starting with a shorthanded goal from Duperreault within the first minute of action. Flodell earned the lone assist on the goal.

The Elks' power play continued its redemption arc, as Parker Turner scored just a few minutes later on assists from Braidon Turner and Martin. Then Martin tallied his second of the night later on, with assists from the Turners.

After a brief lull in the scoring, Rylan Moe put the Elks up 7-4 to round

out the team's second period score card, earning assists from Tyler Rock and Ethan Beaulac on the play.

In a more evenly matched third period, Adair continued to be a thorn in the Elks' side, scoring his fourth goal of the night on the power play with an assist from Austin Wieler. Only 37 seconds later, the Elks' penalty kill team struck again, with Duperreault scoring his second shorthanded goal of the game on assists from Moe and Kutnikoff.

As the period wore

on, Daku tallied for the Warriors with an assist from Parker Block, and Jody Blais scored just 23 seconds later on a helper from Devin Dicus, putting the Elks up 9-5.

Putting a final exclamation point on the game, Dicus would score late on an assist from Miller, giving the Elks their 10-5 win.

With the decisive victory, the Elks have climbed to a 5-4-0-1 record. This Friday, Dec. 22, they close out 2023 with a home game against the Hague Royals. Puck drop for the match is 8 p.m.

Renz receives Seniors' Walkathon certificate

By **LORRAINE THIBEAULT**
Shellbrook Seniors' Club

Liz Renz of Shellbrook, and a member of the Shellbrook Seniors' Club, attained the second highest level in Saskatchewan for the Saskatchewan Seniors Association Incorporated (SSAI) 2023 Walkathon.

The Walkathon is held to encourage seniors in Saskatchewan to become more active. The competition includes all seniors in Saskatchewan and is more of an "exercise-a-thon" than a walkathon. Activities such as walking, running, gardening, bowling, house cleaning, etc. are given distance equivalency.

Liz was presented with her second place certificate at a monthly meeting of the Shellbrook Seniors Co-operative Club.



Liz Renz receives her 2023 Walkathon certificate from Shellbrook Seniors' Club president Brian Hagel.

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Big River boxer scores well at Rumble in Regina

By MAISIE KRIENKE

The Prince Albert Red Wolf Boxing Club was well represented at the third Annual Rumble in Regina on Saturday, Dec. 2.

In the 61kg weight class, Big River's Cruze Watier faced Bronson Nabess of Winnipeg, coming out the winner via referee stoppage in the second round.

Cruze expressed, "I had a good feeling I would get the job done. Cole Ahenakew and I have been putting in lots of hard work, which has really paid off. I have also been sparring with Stuart Twardzik, which has improved my

skills immensely."

This win makes Watier's amateur record 4-0.

In other highlights from the Rumble in Regina, Evander Masuskapoe, originally from Debden, faced off against Regina's Charlie Ibachache and emerged victorious via judge's decision, and Devon Masuskapoe, also out of Debden, triumphed over Winnipeg's Wren Peters via referee stoppage in the third round.

Finally, in the main event, Cole Ahenakew from the Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation lost a tough fight to Winnipeg's Ethan Ruttle by judge's decision.

Shellbrook nurses receive settling assistance cheques



RN Chandler Ericson-Lemaigre (right) accepts his \$3,000 settling assistance cheque from Shellbrook Mayor Amund Otterson on behalf of the Parkland Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee.

Photos by KELLY HOARE, CAO



LPN Monica Svendsen accepts her \$3,000 settling assistance cheque from Shellbrook Mayor Amund Otterson on behalf of the Parkland Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee.

The problem with Trudeau's fiscal responsibility message

By FRANCO TERRAZZANO
CTF Federal Director

There's only one problem with the federal government's messaging about saving money: the feds aren't actually saving money.

"The foundation of our Fall Economic Statement is our responsible fiscal plan," said Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland.

The mid-year budget update shows the government increasing spending by \$15 billion this year. A far cry from Freeland's March promise to find "savings of \$15.4 billion over the next five years."

Next year, the government will increase spending by \$30 billion. And that comes on top of an already ballooned baseline.

The feds spent all-time highs before the pandemic. That means Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was spending more before the pandemic than the feds did during any single year during World War II, even after accounting for inflation and population growth.

Freeland is trying to put Canadians' minds at ease by claiming her deficits are "modest." Canadians have heard this before.

When running for prime minister in 2015, Trudeau promised to run a few "modest" deficits of less than \$10 billion before balancing the budget in 2019. Trudeau blew that balanced budget promise by a "modest" \$20 billion.

This year's deficit is projected to hit \$40 billion. Deficits in 2024 and 2025 are both projected to be \$38 billion.

Is this the new modest? Four times larger than the "modest" deficits Trudeau first promised?

The mid-year budget update proves this government has no idea how to balance a budget.

In fact, the only mention of a balanced budget in Ottawa comes from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who forecasts the next balanced budget will happen in 2035. But that relies on the economy growing every year, relatively low interest rates and no new spending.

A government too incompetent to balance the budget means Canadians are paying dearly just to service the debt.

This year's interest charges will cost taxpayers more than \$46 billion. That's almost \$4 billion every month that's not going to improve services

or lower taxes. It's also a cost of more than \$1,000 for every Canadian.

Next year, debt interest charges will surpass federal health transfers to the provinces. Soon, every penny collected from the GST will go toward servicing the debt.

As bad as the budget is, the government could keep the ship from sinking with modest spending restraint.

The government could balance the budget next year by using its own projected program spending from two budget updates ago. Instead of running a \$38-billion deficit next year, taxpayers would have a \$1-billion surplus if Freeland just stuck to the spending plan she created in 2021.

This highlights the root of Trudeau's spending problem – the ratchet effect. Almost every budget document released by this government drastically increases spending.

The mid-year budget update in 2019 first projected spending in 2024 to be \$421 billion. This year's budget update shows the government will spend \$519 billion in 2024.

This government's muscle for fiscal responsibility has atrophied.

MPs from all political parties can't help themselves from taking a pay raise every year – regardless of the struggles their constituents endure. The prime minister can't help but spend \$61,000 on Manhattan hotel rooms during a two-day anti-poverty summit.

No one in government is willing to end the hundreds of millions in bureaucratic bonuses, despite departments consistently meeting less than half of their own performance targets.

The Liberals are also unwilling to take the air out of the ballooning bureaucracy, which increased by 98,000 employees since they took power. That's almost 40 per cent more federal employees. The bureaucracy currently consumes half of every tax dollar used in day-to-day spending.

No party in the House of Commons is willing to oppose the more than \$43 billion taxpayers are being forced to give multinational corporations to build battery plants.

This government hasn't shown one iota of fiscal restraint. In fact, the government appears to be trying its best to run up the red ink. Fortunately for taxpayers, it would only take modest spending restraint for a serious government to bring the books back into black.

ADVERTISING DEADLINE IS FRIDAY 4 P.M.



Hon. Jeremy Harrison
MLA for Meadow Lake
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Merry Christmas

Wishing you and your loved ones a wonderful holiday season filled with warmth and joy.



Hon. Scott Moe, Premier
MLA for Rosthern-Shellbrook
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Senate meddling on Bill C-234 harms producers

Bill C-234 has passed in the Senate which should have agriculture producers celebrating.

But alas, the Senate in its collective wisdom as a duly elected – oh waited they are not elected are they – had to make changes.

Now to be fair, the Senate is supposed to be a mechanism of sober second thought on bills, but that role has increasingly rung hollow as those sitting in the Senate are appointed to well-paying positions of surprising power, free of the scrutiny of an unhappy electorate. It's highly unsatisfying that the Senate can monkey with legislation put for-

ward by the representatives elected by the people.

So with Bill C-234, farmers will find a significantly watered down creation – one that also sets out some definite losers too.

Bill C-234, an Act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, was put forward to exempt natural gas and propane used on farms from the federal carbon tax.

Now as has been written here, exemptions to things such as government bills will always be applauded by some and questioned by others – generally those who are not gaining the



CALVIN DANIELS

advantage of the exemption.

In this case, if the carbon tax has value – and yes, that is a matter of great debate – it stands to reason all should pay.

But then again, in the case of agriculture, we are looking at the primary business which feeds the populace, so ensuring farms remain

viable is crucial.

So, let's accept in this case that the exemption proposed had merit.

Unfortunately, Senate has significantly weakened the advantage Bill-234 will provide.

In the Senate, it was amended twice to remove barns and greenhouses from a carbon pricing exemption clause and to shorten the sunset period of the exemption for propane and natural gas used in grain drying from eight years to three.

Both changes are massive.

Three years instead of eight dramatically changes the planning a producer will need

to undertake, and of course the time to adjust budgets to implement any changes they wish to make in response to the sooner to arrive carbon tax costs.

If you raise livestock in a barn – pigs and poultry – or run a greenhouse it's immediate crunch time.

Now, there are scenarios here which may well impact not just the producers, but consumers too.

Those producers who have some control of the sale price of what is produced in their barn or greenhouse will pass the carbon tax on. That means the consumer pays, and food prices

are already high.

Of course, rare is the producer who controls the price he receives.

So, the carbon tax will be another cost that has to be worked into budget sans a corresponding increase in returns. It may well mean shuttering some barns and greenhouses, and that would mean an increased reliance on food imports, which means lost jobs and a loss of some of our food security as a nation, too.

Ultimately, this one feels like meddling by unelected Senators, content to leave some farmers as losers and the rest as slightly better off losers.

Governments announce supports for beekeepers

Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Lawrence MacAulay and Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit have announced \$1 million in support for commercial beekeepers in the province who were impacted by abnormally high colony losses in 2022.

"Bees play a vital role in pollinating so many of our crops and are integral to the success of our Canadian agricultural system," said MacAulay in a statement. "We want to ensure this industry remains strong, and this funding through AgriRecovery will help offset some of the challenges the honey bee sector in Saskatchewan has faced recently."

The funding, provided through the AgriRecovery program, addresses losses exceeding 30 per cent in honeybee colonies across Saskatchewan in 2022 due to widespread dry conditions, colder than normal overwinter temperatures, and higher incidences

of varroa mite activity. Saskatchewan joins Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario in providing assistance to beekeepers who lost stock and colonies.

"Commercial beekeeping operations have a critical role in our ecosystem and are also integral to Saskatchewan's agriculture industry, pollinating crops while being responsible for roughly one-fifth of Canada's honey production," Marit said in a statement. "This assistance covers up to 70 per cent of the costs related to replacing lost stock and colonies and is the most efficient option for helping restore commercial production."

On average, Saskatchewan is home to about 100,000 colonies, which produce almost 20 million pounds of honey each year.

"Beyond their obvious economic contributions through honey production and crop pollination, bees have a unique natural role as the unsung he-

roes of not only the agriculture industry but the ecosystems in which we live and work," Saskatchewan Beekeepers Development Commission President Nathan Wendell said in a statement. "This support is greatly appreciated, and will assist impacted provincial beekeepers as they continue to rebuild their operations, restore the viability of their colonies and resume their important contributions to a balanced and thriving environment."

AgriRecovery is a federal-provincial-territorial disaster relief framework to help agricultural producers with the extraordinary costs associated with recovering from disaster situations. AgriRecovery initiatives are cost-shared on a 60:40 basis between the federal government and participating provinces or territories, as outlined under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP).

Christmas message from Premier Scott Moe

Joy to the world! The Lord is come...
Let earth receive her King...
Let every heart prepare Him room...
The story of Christmas is well known... A child born in humble beginnings.

A child sent to bring a message of peace... of salvation... of joy...

And to bring a message that joy is not found in possessions but in our family... in our friends... in the freedom that we have.

Christmas can be a very busy time... As we get on the road to travel to spend time with family...

Or prepare to have family and friends share the holidays with you...

There is the inevitable rushing to find the perfect gift...the perfect tree... rushing to make the perfect meal...

It is easy to get caught up in the busyness of the season.

Let us not forget that...
The message of joy at Christmas remains unchanged.

And so, as you gather this Christmas season, I hope you will find joy in fellowship with family and friends.

As you open presents on Christmas morning, you will find joy in the excited eyes of your children and grandchildren.

And as you look on the blessings in your life, that you might find joy in being a blessing to those around you.

Joy to the world... the Lord is come...
On behalf of my colleagues, my wife Krista, and our family...

I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a joyful New Year.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPIRITWOOD: Wapiti Regional Library - Tuesday 9am - 5pm; Wednesday 9am - 5pm; Friday 9am - 5pm

LEOVILLE: Wapiti Regional Library - Wednesday 10am - 4pm; Thursday 10am - 3pm

SHELL LAKE: Wapiti Regional Library - Tuesday 11am - 4pm; Wednesday 12pm - 5pm

BLAINE LAKE: Wapiti Library - Wednesday 11am - 6pm; Friday 11am - 5pm; Saturday 10am - 4pm. Contact us for more info 306-497-3130, www.wapitilibrary.ca.

BIG RIVER: Wapiti Library - Tuesday 11:30am - 4:30pm; Wednesday 11:30am - 4:30pm; Thursday 11:30am - 4:30pm. Phone # 306-469-2152

CANWOOD: Canwood Branch of Wapiti Regional Library. Tuesday 10am - 3:30pm; Thursday 2pm - 6pm; Friday 1:30pm - 5pm. Kids Club is Fridays 3:30pm - 4:30pm, Crafter's Choice is the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month.

DEBDEN: Wapiti Library hours: Tuesday 10am - 4pm; Wednesday 1pm - 7pm. Librarian: Aline Hannon

LEASK: Wapiti Library & Legacy Gallery Hours - Tuesday 9am - 2pm; Wednesday 3pm - 6pm; Friday 1pm - 5pm

MARCELIN: Wapiti Library - Thursday 2pm - 7pm; Saturday 9am - 2pm. For information on all your library needs, please contact 306-226-2110.

SHELLBROOK: Shellbrook Branch of the Wapiti Library located at 105 Railway Ave., West (Provincial building). Library Hours: Monday 2pm - 6pm; Tuesday 2pm - 8pm; Wednesday 2pm - 8pm; Thursday 12pm - 6pm; Friday 10 am - 5pm (Story Time 10:30am - 11:30am); Saturday 10am - 4pm.

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Fitting celebration to end of Sinclair's career

The best aspect of the send-off to Christine Sinclair's glorious career as a soccer superstar in Canada is that it didn't open with a minister telling the gathering that hers was a life well lived.

So many athletic, entertainment, and political icons are lionized after death, but the Sinclair celebration came when she was fully alive, engaged and still able to play — although not at the highest international level to which she has been accustomed.

The Canadian soccer world paid tribute to the retiring Sinclair Dec. 5 in Vancouver, renaming B.C. Place as "Christine Sinclair Place" for one night while the Canadian women's national team defeated Australia 2-0 in a friendly that was dominated by tributes to the greatest female soccer player in the world.

And she's Canadian. A B.C. girl who is now 40 years old and will continue to perform, for one more year, anyway, on the pitch as a member

of the Portland Thorn in the National Women's Soccer League.

Humble and self-deprecating, like any good Canadian, Sinclair's retirement from the international game drew the appropriate celebration. The 48,000 people in attendance roared when her name was announced as part of the starting lineup. When the game clock hit '12' minutes, a full stadium standing ovation took place in deference to Sinclair's jersey number. A video tribute drew cheers from the crowd and tears from Sinclair, who was accompanied pre-game on the field by her two nieces.

Sinclair, who grew up in Burnaby, was but a child of 16 when she made her debut with Canada's national team. She has since won 14 player of the year awards for Canadian soccer and has helped Canada win gold, silver, and bronze medals at the Olympics. Internationally, she scored goals in five of six World Cups in which



BRUCE
PENTON

she competed and is No. 1 when it comes to goals scored in international play, with 190. American legends Amy Waumbach and Mia Hamm are second and third, respectively, with 184 and 158.

Overwhelmed with the tributes pouring in from all over the world — messages came from Prime Minister Trudeau, actor Ryan Reynolds, American soccer star Megan Rapinoe, and others — she did only a couple of TV interviews following the match with Australia and said the overriding emotion was "Honestly, just joy."

"I've done everything I can on this national

team," she was quoted as saying in a Canadian Press story. "I'm 100 per cent satisfied and content. And to go out with a win in front of my friends, in front of my family, honestly, it's been the perfect night."

Our Gretzky retired, our Ronnie Lancaster retired, and our Fergie Jenkins retired. All athletes' careers have to eventually end and now our Christine Sinclair has retired. What a great run she had and all Canadians can be proud of her storied career.

• From Jack Finarelli, at his sportscrumdudgeon.com site, quoting a long retired NFL player, Alex Karras: "I never graduated from Iowa, but I was only there for two terms — Truman's and Eisenhower's."

• Headline from fark.com: "Ex-Clemson, Oregon State QB DJ Uiagalele to enter the transfer portal (again) in his unending quest to find more vowels."

• Charles McDonald of Yahoo Sports, on the New England Patriots'

6-0 homefield loss to Los Angeles Chargers: "The Patriots play(ed) with the same urgency as a hibernating bear."

• PGA Tour player Rickie Fowler, an opponent of the plan to 'roll back' the golf ball about five to 10 per cent, with a mock conversation to a new golfer: "Oh, you love the game? Yeah. Hey, thanks for joining us over COVID. Now we're going to make you hit it 20 yards shorter."

• Mike Bianchi of the Orlando Sentinel: "And you wonder why college football is considered a cesspool of corruption? What's it tell you about the soul of a sport in which a player being injured is part of the CFB Playoff criteria, but a coaching staff that cheats (see Michigan) is not part of the selection process?"

• Janice Hough of leftcoastsportsbabe.com: "Well, of course the baseball world is 100 per cent focused on where Shohei Ohtani signs, especially since playing with Mike Trout he

brought the Los Angeles Angels so many World Series championships."

• Jack Finarelli again, on quarterback Brett Rypien signed by four different NFL teams within an 11-month period: "He is more likely to be named 'Man of the Year' by United Van Lines than he is by any NFL fanbase."

• From fark.com: "Two-time world darts champion reveals drinking four pints before final helped him win his first title and beat Dan 'Fat Belly' Gutbucket."

• Another one from fark.com: "Tiger Woods' marriage to Nike, which most thought would be eternal, is dissolving. TaylorMade could be the new Perkins."

• Doug Molitor, on X: "Sports Illustrated comes under fire for running erroneous articles written by AI. Suspicions were first raised when SI's Swimsuit Issue featured nothing but swimsuits."

Care to comment?
Email brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca

U18 AA action takes over Shellbrook rink

By JORDAN TWISS

Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

In a busy weekend of hockey at the Richardson Pioneer Recreation Centre, U18 AA action was among the highlights, as the Prince Albert Foxes and the Northwest Sharks brought U18 AA girl's action to the arena, and the Parkland U18 AA Elks played back-to-back games on Saturday and Sunday.

Foxes (2) vs Sharks (1) OT

Separated by just one spot in their conference rankings, the Prince Albert Foxes and the Northwest Sharks brought competitive hockey to the Richardson Pioneer Recreation Centre on Saturday evening.

As the game wore on, though, it was the Foxes who gradually took control of the tempo and generated the most

scoring opportunities.

Yet, after playing through a scoreless first period, it was the Sharks who drew first blood in the second frame, when Danae Hritzuk scored on assists from Jayce Brown and Sadie Taves.

The Sharks held onto their 1-0 lead for much of the rest of the period, weathering a storm of shots from the Foxes until a power play allowed Sarah Johns to tie the game with assists from Caitlyn Richmond and Tayen Sumlic.

With the score knotted up at 1-1, and strong goaltending at both ends of the ice, the Foxes and Sharks played to a stalemate through a scoreless third period, sending the action into overtime.

There, it fell to Shellbrook's own Reese Galloway to net the game-winning goal in front of her hometown crowd, giving the Foxes a hard-fought 2-1 victory. Alexis Wawro earned the lone assist on the goal.

Elks (5) vs Kings (3)

Taking the ice after the nail-biting showdown between the Foxes and the Sharks, the Parkland U18 AA Elks welcomed the West Central Wheat Kings to town for the main event of the evening and treated hockey fans to another competitive game.

The Elks got off to a less than encouraging start against the Wheat Kings, as a misstep on the power play allowed Chase Weinkauff to score a shorthanded goal and put the visitors up 1-0 early on. Ethan Veller assisted on the goal.

Fortunately, the Elks rallied and re-focused, tying the game at 1-1 just a few minutes later on a goal from Jesse

Nyberg, assisted by Brody Anderson and Tyson Gagnon.

The score would remain tied until the dying minutes of the second period, when Aiden Tait found the back of the net on an assist from Corvan Stewart to put the Elks up 2-1.

The Elks' power play would then earn some much-needed redemption through the middle of the third period, producing two goals to put the Elks up 4-1. Anderson scored the first, with an assist from Lane Keyowski, and Kamden Shewchuk scored the second on a helper from Anderson.

More firmly in control of the game, the Elks had to hold on for dear life when the Wheat Kings attempted a late comeback and scored back-to-back goals just over a minute apart. Austin Schafer struck first, with an assist from Weinkauff, and Hudson Bretzer followed up with an assist from Ty Partington.

With time winding down, and the Wheat Kings' goal emptied to give them an extra skater, Aiden Tait dashed the visitors' comeback effort with seven seconds left on the clock, securing a 5-3 win for the Elks. Jake Boettcher and Cohen Tait earned assists on the play.

Elks (3) vs Eagles (3) OT

Welcoming the second-place Saskatoon Screaming Eagles to Shellbrook on Sunday evening, the Elks knew they were in for a fight and came prepared, enduring an early offensive push from the visitors and playing to a 0-0 draw through the first 20 minutes.

This perseverance paid off, allowing Jesse Nyberg to score early in the second period, on assists from Cohen Tait and Tyson Gagnon, and put the Elks up 1-0. Then, a power play just past the midway point of the period saw the Elks' take a 2-0 lead on a goal from Lane Keyowski, assisted by Jake Boettcher and Nyberg.

However, a blunder on the power play opened the door for the Eagles to get back in the game, and Drew Walters capitalized with a shorthanded goal, assisted by Reece Woods and Kaden Prosofsky. And minutes later, the Eagles' power play struck on a goal from Jacob Durdle, assisted by Liam Barzeale and Woods, completely shifting the momentum of the game.

With the Elks reeling, Woods tacked on a third Eagles' goal with 35 seconds remaining in the period, putting the visitors up 3-2. Tyson Carter and Jacob Ball assisted on the play.

In a comparatively quiet third period, the Elks managed to fight their way back into the game. Finally, with just under five minutes left, Kamden Shewchuk netted the game-tying goal on assists from Aiden Tait and Brendan Aug, forcing overtime.

In the extra period, both teams played to a stalemate, ending the game with a 3-3 tie as the final score.

With the win and the tie, the Elks now sit at 6-10-2-1 on the season. This Thursday (Dec. 21), the team closes out 2023 with a home game against the Humboldt Broncos. Puck drop is set for 7:30 p.m.



Shellbrook's Reese Galloway battles for a loose puck in U18 AA girl's action between the Prince Albert Foxes and the Northwest Sharks.

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Kelly Bartley,
Jean Person, and
Sheldon Duvall,

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A Christmas Note from
All of Your Loved Ones!

If we could ask Santa for one wish, it would be to have a single moment with you's to reminisce. To hug you and kiss you, and tell you all the things you've missed, to say we love you one more time would be Our Christmas wish. Our three Angels, we ask this of you, please continue to guide us, and watch over us each day, and send us all your love and heart to guide us on our way.

Please take care of one another, just like Angels do, and have a Merry Christmas together, the three of you.

Love, your Family
xoxoxo

Ode to the poinsettia – Part II

By **PATRICIA HANBIDGE**

Last week was the first in a series of three articles devoted to the poinsettia. A bit about the history and breeding of the poinsettia will shift this week to some of the folklore surrounding this plant and how to ensure your poinsettia survives well past the holiday season.

One of the most famous legends of the poinsettia originates in Mexico. A poor girl named Maria and her little brother Pablo were looking forward to the Christmas festival at their local church. The celebration always included a manger scene and it was customary to place gifts to the church around the manger. In spite of the children loving the days leading up to the festival, they had no money to give to the church.

On their way to church on Christmas Eve, they stopped to pick weeds growing by the roadside so they would not arrive empty-handed. The other children taunted them but Maria and Pablo continued to place the weeds they had picked around the manger scene. Miraculously, according to the legend, the green top leaves began to turn into bright red petals and soon the manger was surrounded by the beautiful star-like flowers of the poinsettia we recognize and know today.

Now that we all have smiles on our faces, here is some other good news about the poinsettia. As we learned from the article published last week, the poinsettia is a member of the Eu-

phorbia family. Many of the plants that are part of this family have a milky sap which is often quite toxic. However, in spite of having a milky sap, the poinsettia is not poisonous at all. Studies have shown that a small child would have to consume over 500 leaves before showing any harmful effect by consuming this plant. Read on to learn how to keep your poinsettia beautiful!

It seems that when we purchase plants, they look stunning but then we take them home and it is just a downhill slide! Well, the secret to success is beginning with a healthy plant to start. Ensure it has large well-coloured bracts and that the small true flowers in the middle of the coloured bracts are still present.

If the small yellow flowers are missing, the plant is not fresh. It should be properly wrapped and taken directly home to avoid excess chilling which can cause sudden leaf drop. If the temperature is more than a few degrees below 0° C, your plant will need to be wrapped in paper and then in plastic. If you take a poinsettia outside with just that thin film of plastic, you will end up with a plant that has no leaves! Keep the plant at normal room temperature, away from drafts in bright filtered light.

Direct sunlight from an east or west window is not too bright, but a sheer curtain should filter the light from a direct southern exposure. Water thoroughly when the potting soil has dried slightly. Most poinsettias are sold with a plastic sleeve to hide the pot and protect furniture from dripping water.

Within a half-hour after watering the sleeve should be removed and emptied so that the plant is not left standing in water.

There is little need for fertilizer during the Christmas season since most growers will have included a slow-release fertilizer in the growing medium. Provided with bright light and even moisture, most poinsettia plants should remain attractive for months.

Giving a poinsettia is truly a gift that grows and if your recipient is willing to take on the challenge of getting their poinsettia to rebloom then be sure you do not miss next week's article! All the best to you and yours throughout the holiday season.

Hanbidge is the Lead Horticulturist with Orchid Horticulture. Find us at www.orchidhort.com; by email at info@orchidhort.com; on facebook @orchidhort and on instagram at #orchidhort.



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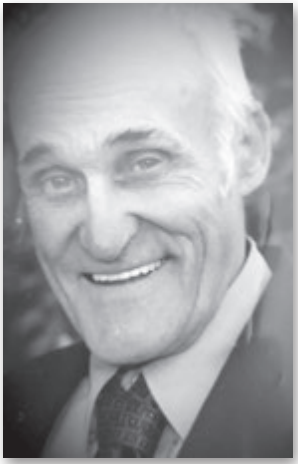
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OBITUARY

Rene Nicolas



Rene Nicolas, beloved husband, father, and grandfather passed away peacefully on December

4, 2023, at Shellbrook Hospital at the age of 85. Rene was born in Shell Lake on March 15, 1938.

He leaves to cherish his memory: His loving wife Pauline (Giesbrecht) of Shell Lake, SK, his daughters Carla (Russell) Vaagen and their children Nicolas, Ruth, and Sarah of Warman, SK, Delia (Dan) Marion and their children Brittany (Devan), Miranda, Declan, and Ashton of Spiritwood, SK, and Diana (Jared) Elias and their children Ethan and

Kayla of Prince Albert, SK, along with numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends. Left behind is his faithful dog, Teddy, who will miss him greatly. Rene was predeceased by his mother Florina Verreault, his father Louis Nicolas, his sister Cicelle Piche, and numerous aunts, uncles, and nephews.

Rene was known for his work ethic, generosity, teasing nature, and love of socializing. When not working, Rene enjoyed attending auctions

and rodeos. As Rene's health began to fail, he made the decision to retire. Rene continued life on the farm keeping busy with small projects like building and painting birdhouses. He also enjoyed camping, fishing, quadding, playing cards, and spending time with his grandchildren, family, and friends. An invitation from Rene automatically came with food and drink. Rene loved having the family together and was already planning this year's Christmas

meal. The holidays will be difficult without him, but his Christmas spirit will live on. Although, we cannot see him, he will forever be in our hearts.

The family would like to thank Spiritwood Home Care and the Shellbrook Hospital for their services. Thanks to Leanne Menke and Gisele Poirier for the music ministry and Father Maurice Fioleau and Father Ramel Macapala for celebrating the funeral mass. Thanks to the CWL for preparing the lunch as well as all

those who were able to attend and celebrate with the family.

The funeral mass was celebrated on Saturday, December 9, 2023, at Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church. Rene's final resting place is at the Mildred South Cemetery. Donations in his memory can be made to the Saskatchewan Lung Association. Funeral arrangements were entrusted to the care of Beau "Lac" Funeral Home and Crematorium in Spiritwood, SK.

GOOD NEWS

PEACE OF MIND

By LORNE VALUCK
Parkside Pentecostal Church

You know what! With all the challenges and behaviours in the times we live in, I'd like to give some people a "piece of my mind"!

No. I guess I'd actually like to give people "peace of mind", or more accurately, I'd like to point them to Someone who can give them peace of mind.

Let me share a few scriptures we'll be hearing as we approach and celebrate the Christmas season.

"For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

"Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God

is pleased." Luke 2:14

God isn't taken by surprise. He knew Adam would sin, resulting in a fallen world subject to evil and deterioration, and the resulting uncertainty and anxiety. God knew we would be in the situation we're in, and He's got a plan

The apostle Paul tells us that just as sin and confusion came into play through Adam's disobedience, reconciliation and peace came into play through Jesus' obedience

The Apostle Paul writes, *"Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us."* Romans 5:1.

So, we can have peace with God, the most important peace to have, and we can have peace even in life's difficult situations as the prophet Isaiah encourages:

"You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the LORD always, for the LORD GOD is the eternal Rock." Isaiah 26:3-4

And Paul adds more about peace in Philippians 4:6-7: *"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."*

And then, as God expects with other gifts He gives us, He wants us to demonstrate and share peace with those around us.

Romans 12:18 instructs us, *"Do all that*

you can to live in peace with everyone."

And Ephesians 4:3 reinforces, *"Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace."*

As believers, as followers of Jesus, we shouldn't be sharing or portraying the thought, "I want to give you a piece of my mind." Rather, our life and words should be communicating, "I want to share with you the source of 'Peace of mind' - Jesus."

No Jesus - No Peace.

Know Jesus - Know Peace

"Now may the Lord of peace himself give you His peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you all." 2 Thessalonians 3:16

Scripture quotations in italics are taken from the New Living Translation.

Christmas message from opposition leader Carla Beck

What does Christmas mean to me?

First off, for me, it means family. And community. Joining loved ones for a time of love and laughter while celebrating traditions and making new memories.

It's also a time to remember to reach out to those for whom this most wonderful time of the year can be profoundly difficult.

When I was a kid growing up in Lang, every Christmas Eve, on our way home from mass, we'd stop by to visit our neighbour Mildred.

Mildred had been widowed for many years and I know she always looked forward to our family visits.

My mom and dad would hide a stocking full of small gifts for her and in that stocking would be a goat, because Mildred and my dad would always tease each other about being old goats.

I know Mildred always loved those visits but when I look back, those visits are some of my fondest childhood memories because we were able to share the joy of the season with someone we all truly cherished.

When Guy and I started our family, we got to bring together our different Christmas traditions, and got to start a few of our own!

To say the least, our three kids give us a lot to celebrate. There is no greater joy

than celebrating the season through the eyes of a child.

And I have to say, one of the biggest gifts for me this year is that my eldest child, my daughter Hannah, who's been away at school for the better part of the past five years is now moving back to the province - and I couldn't be happier.

A Saskatchewan Christmas can certainly be cold, but it's by joining with our loved ones that we can find comfort and joy, warmth, and light. It's a time to hold our loved ones close, to count our blessings.

To know that it is better to give than to receive. To seek renewal.

To do our part to better the lives of those around us.

Think of the Hindu festival of lights, Diwali, or of Judaism's celebration of Hanukkah.

Like Christmas, both hold out the hope for the triumph of light over darkness, togetherness over isolation, love over hate.

Ultimately, hope, generosity, and love is what we're all celebrating this season, and it's what we should strive for... every day.

So, no matter where you live, who is at your table,

On behalf of my family, and on behalf of the extended Saskatchewan NDP family, I want to wish you a very Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

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