



Witchekan Wildlife Fed. holds banquet



Eli Goller carefully delivers an egg to Mother Goose’s “nest” at the Witchekan Wildlife Federation Banquet.

By BEVRA FEE
Spiritwood Herald Reporter

The Witchekan Wildlife Federation held its annual banquet and awards ceremony at the Spiritwood Civic Centre on Saturday, Jan. 31. The gathering of local anglers, hunters, and outdoor enthusiasts provides an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the past season’s master achievers.

While the silent auction items, 50/50 draw, and mystery box draws were being perused by the guests, Ronnie Sawatsky and his catering crew were busy attending to the banquet side of the evening — with the very popular addition of fried pickerel (walleye, to the layperson) and jackfish (northern

pike, to the layperson) added to the spectacular spread. With 140 in attendance, the kitchen was hopping and the crew made the eager crowd happy with their fare.

The evening was a family-friendly event, with many children attending and enjoying the activities geared toward their enjoyment. Raffle tickets for the kids’ prize table were well-supported, and the excitement of the younger set when the many winners were drawn was a delight to witness. Lyla Millar, emcee and key organizer for the evening, hosted a game for the youth where they raced with an egg on a spoon to fill “Mother Goose’s nest.” All were treated to candy for their efforts, so everyone won.

Treyton Ledinski, a junior member of the Witchekan Wildlife Federation, presented an engaging slide show presentation to showcase his experience at Conservation Camp in the summer of 2025.

Sponsored by the WWF, Treyton was able to attend the camp at Han-nin Creek. Developed to offer young people the opportunity to learn and experience the great outdoors, the Sask Wildlife Federation Conservation Camp has been offered for over 30 years. At camp, youth from 12 to 14 are given hands-on learning in outdoor activities such as archery, canoeing, fire-arm shooting, trapping and wildlife identification, plant identification, survival skills, camp cooking,

fisheries, and all manner of outdoor skills.

The culmination of the camp stay includes the awarding of the Murray Doell Award, which is presented to the youth that is recognized by the camp counsellors for best exemplifying a solid conservation ethic, outstanding leadership, and the outdoor interests during the camp.

The award is named for former Conservation Officer Murray Doell, who was killed in a helicopter accident in 1990 while actively fighting a wildfire near Buffalo Narrows. Treyton reported that he was selected as the winner of the prestigious award by the camp counsellors for the 2025 camp year.

Continued on page 8



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Main Street, Shellbrook

Community gives big, wins big for Petten family

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle
Reporter

What started as a simple conversation around the kitchen table about helping a local family in need of support to cover medical expenses for a child, has turned into

yet another example of the amazing things that can happen when a community comes together. On Saturday, Jan. 31, after only a few short weeks of planning, Kennedy Quist and her fellow event organizers opened the doors of the Shellbrook Community Hall to invite guests in for the Give Big Win Big Banquet.

The banquet was held for Jayse Petten, a local young boy who has Muscular Duchenne Dystrophy and is booked for a stem cell transplant in Mexico at the end of February. As the banquet's

name implies, its organizers went big by pulling together a formal, black-tie affair, complete with a five-star, three-course meal, musical entertainment from Jaden Schutte, Levi Quist, Kiersten Goulet, and the Debruijn family, a live auction, and some big-ticket prizes.

"We wanted to see the community come together in supporting [Jayse] and his family as they proceed with the treatment," said

Kennedi Quist. "Although we were on a tight time crunch with only a few weeks to pull it all together, as we started to share the idea with others, we had such a large amount of support and volunteers that gladly joined in."

The evening began at 5:30 p.m., and Kennedy Quist says it didn't take long for the community to show up, fill the hall, and give big. At the outset, the fundraising goal was set at an ambitious



The Debruijn family was among the evening's talented performers.



(Right) The Shellbrook Community Hall was full of people who were eager to go big for the cause.



Event organizer Kennedy Quist visits with guest of honour Jayse Petten at the Give Big Win Big Banquet.

Senior Elks advance over Raiders

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle
Reporter

The Shellbrook Elks Senior Hockey Club and the Blaine Lake Raiders met for game two of their Senior D Provincials series in Blaine Lake on Saturday, Jan. 31, with the Raiders needing a win to force a third and deciding game in the series.

While the Raiders have run roughshod over their competition in the Saskatchewan Prairie Hockey League throughout the 2025-2026 hockey season, losing only one actual

game, the Elks have been a puzzle they can't quite solve.

However, through the first period of Saturday night's game, they did give themselves the best possible chance to figure it out, as they jumped out to an early lead on a goal from Colin Buban, assisted by Adam Horner. Just as importantly, the Raiders kept the Elks off the board for the first period, setting themselves up with a good chance to build upon their lead.

Unfortunately, the always dangerous Elks needed just one opening to get back in the game. And throughout the second period, the Raiders gave them four, starting with a goal from Dallas Galloway, assisted by Ethan Beaulac and Payton Kachur.

Later in the second period, Nathan Flodell put the Elks up 2-1 on an assist from Sam Miller, and, less than a minute later, Kachur made it 3-1 Elks on assists from Levi Logan and Kaiden Couture. Finally, with time winding down in the second period, Ashton Miller extended the Elks' lead to three goals, with assists from Galloway and Miller.

While the Raiders would go on to outshoot the Elks 44-40 by the end of the game, they remained unable to find the back of the net. Instead, the Elks were the only team to get on

the board in the third period, thanks to a goal from Rylan Moe, assisted by Cole Tanchuk and Matthew Flodell.

With the 5-1 win in game two, the Elks secured their ticket to the next round of the Senior D Provincials tournament, where they'll play the Lucky Lake/Beechy Lakers. Dates for the games in the series haven't been set.

Meanwhile, in play-off action in the Twin Rivers Hockey League, the Elks have drawn the Cudworth Tricky Maroons as their opponent for the first round and have home-ice advantage for the best-of-three series. Thus far, the only confirmed date and time for the series is for game two in Cudworth, which is scheduled to be played Sunday, Feb. 8, at 8 p.m.



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Shellbrook Mayor looks ahead to 2026

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

For many, a new year means a new beginning. But as he reflects upon 2025, Town of Shellbrook Mayor Amund Otterson feels the tone for the year was, in some ways, set by events that took place in the late fall of 2024, as the town was completing a project to upgrade water and sewer infrastructure on 1st Avenue East. The project, which was part of the Town of Shellbrook’s Risk Mitigation Strategy for municipal infrastructure, officially began just after the Labour Day long weekend and included the repair or replacement of existing water, sewer, and storm sewer lines, as well as a lift station. However, as the contractor was connecting the lift station on 2nd Avenue East, it was inadvertently tipped, compromising all the connecting lines and requiring it to be replaced

altogether. At the outset, the project was expected to cost about \$560,000. However, with the need to replace the lift station and dewater and monitor the work site 24/7, its price tag quickly exploded to \$2.68 million. Efforts to recoup some of the cost overruns remain in legal limbo. Meanwhile, residents of 1st Avenue East continue to deal with a road surface that Mayor Otterson concedes is a mess. Now, more than a month into 2026, the town is polling those residents about whether they’d prefer to have the road return to a similar condition prior to construction, or have new pavement with curb and gutter installed. Whatever they choose, the project will be done as a local improvement, with residents likely footing 80 per cent of the bill to the town’s 20 per cent. “The concept of connecting to the main lift station on 2nd Avenue

turned into a very expensive disaster. That’s really put a damper on any large-scale spending, as we had to fund a significant amount of money to recover the damage done to the lift station,” Mayor Otterson said, noting that this has put the town in “pay down the debt mode.” “As a result, it’s disappointing that we had to curtail some other projects, like replacing the bridge [on 2nd Avenue West], and things that are on the wish list that it looked like we’d have the chance to do.” With Town Council beginning deliberations on the 2026 municipal budget, Mayor Otterson says maintaining existing infrastructure is priority number one, but adds that council also recognizes that social programs and recreation facilities are “really important to the health and vibrancy of the community.” Though the 1st Avenue East project cast a

long shadow over 2025, and continues to loom over 2026, Mayor Otterson says 2025 also saw some important progress made on other high level projects. Through a pilot project that ran in 2024, the town concluded that bio-filtration, coupled with reverse osmosis, will be a viable treatment option for the municipal water supply, when the town finally begins work on its long-awaited water treatment plant project. “We’re effectively shovel ready in that sense, as we have a process that will work,” Mayor Otterson said. “Of course, design has to be done for the water treatment plant.” One major hurdle the town has faced in moving forward on the project has been the inability to secure grant funding to ease the financial burden. Mayor Otterson says he’s confused by the town’s struggles, because it’s been told it’s “high up” on the needs list. In the absence of grant funding, Town Council

will have to find an alternative path forward for the project, and Mayor Otterson suggests going it alone would mean “really scaling back” the original vision to improve both water quality and storage — both things the town has been told it needs to address. And, like with the 1st Avenue East project, going it alone will mean more difficult priority setting. “There’s definitely going to be some things put on hold, as we focus on water,” Mayor Otterson said. Returning to the positives from 2025 into 2026, Mayor Otterson says it’s been good to see the Richardson Pioneer Recreation Centre so busy this season, as it’s an indicator of Shellbrook’s continued growth. He’s also pleased with the town’s Community Safety Officer (CSO) program, which in 2025 grew to include a second officer and vehicle — a move that allows the town to provide services

to other communities in the area. Mayor Otterson also looks forward to work continuing on the former Knox United Church building, which is being renovated to become the new home of the Shellbrook Public Library and the town office. Though the town was also turned down for grant funding for this project, he expects the roof will be replaced this year. Finally, in consultation with the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure, a design has been drafted to add a pedestrian-controlled crosswalk at the intersection of Main Street and Highways 3 and 55. The recommended option for the crosswalk includes a speed reduction to 60 km/h, a pedestrian-operated cross walk, a median along the highway, and an island for turning right from Highway 3 onto Highway 55. While there’s a chance the project will be completed in 2026, Mayor Otterson expects it will likely happen in 2027.

U18 Elks win in battle against Timberwolves

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

The U18 AA Parkland Elks ended January with a trip down the road to Prince Albert to face the Prince Albert Timberwolves on Wednesday, Jan. 28. In what has been the team’s best month of the 2025-2026 regular season, the Elks wasted no time jumping out to an early lead on a goal from Brady Hujber, assisted by Aiden Tait, just 39 seconds into the action. The lead held for the lion’s share of the opening period, until the Elks got themselves in some hot water on the power play and surrendered a short-handed goal to the Timberwolves’ Carter Martin. Josh Charko and Ethan Campbell assisted on the play. After ending the period with a 1-1 draw, it was the Timberwolves who got the jump on the Elks in the opening of the second period, as Carter once again got assists from Charko and Campbell to score. The Elks had an almost immediate answer, courtesy of an unassisted goal from Davin Hart, but the Timberwolves were more than happy to trade goals with the Elks, jumping ahead 3-2 on a goal from Kaleb Cournoyer, assisted by Cohen Galloway and Dawson Graas. And a couple minutes later, with the help of a power play, the Timberwolves went up 4-2 on a goal from Jodan Probert, assisted by Zarryn Thomas and Cohen Toporowski.

After a flurry of four goals in the first five minutes of the second period, the action settled down. Then, earning some redemption, the Elks’ power play cut the Timberwolves’ lead to one goal on Brady Hujber’s second goal of the night, assisted by Hart. Once again, the Timberwolves had an answer, reclaiming a two-goal lead on a power play goal from Lennon Fetterly, assisted by Martin and Toporowski. The power play continued to play a vital role as the action moved to the third period, allowing the Elks to score back-to-back goals and tie the game at 5-5 within the first five minutes. Boston Gagnon netted the first goal, with assists from Cohen Ball and Owen Hansen, while Aiden Tait netted the second on an assist from Hart. Following a brief lull, the Elks reclaimed their first lead since the first period on a goal from Camden Olsen, assisted by Hujber. But the Timberwolves fired right back just 22 seconds later on Carter Martin’s hat trick goal, assisted by Ryan Ward and Josh Charko. As time wound down in the third period, and overtime seemed inevitable, it was the Elks who got the last word on a hat trick goal from Hujber, assisted by Olsen, to seize a hard-fought 7-6 victory. With the win, the Elks now sit at 6-14-1 on the season. This Friday and Saturday, the team travels to Saskatoon for games against the Saskatoon Sabercats and the Saskatoon Screaming Eagles.

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Shellbrook Chronicle & Spiritwood Herald



Cuts to ag research threaten food security

Saskatchewan producers – and Canadian producers, more broadly – just can't seem to catch a break.

A little over a year ago, canola and pea producers unjustly became the victims in a game of tariff tit for tat with China, after the federal government chose to follow the lead of the United States and the European Union and impose a 100 per cent tariff on Chinese EVs and a 25 per cent tariff on aluminum and steel.

The Chinese government's response was swift, but not at all unpredictable given how it's responded to previous diplomatic and economic disputes with the federal government. For nearly a year, canola and pea producers were punished by 100 per cent tariffs of canola oil, canola meal, and peas, as well as 76 per cent tariffs on canola seed, effectively locking them out of one of their largest markets.

If allowed to continue for another growing season, the Chinese tariffs could have spelled ruin for some Canadian producers.

But in a surprising move from a Liberal federal government that has often seemed indifferent to the impacts its actions have on producers, Prime Minister Mark Carney took action, travelling to China alongside Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe to reopen trade talks with the Chinese government.

While Mr. Carney's decision was rooted more in the perceived necessity to diversify Canada's trade relationships away from a dependence on the unpredictable United States, the motivation behind it doesn't change the positive outcome for producers.

With the announcement that China's tariffs on canola seed, canola meal, and peas would be either greatly reduced or eliminated entirely, Chinese importers began buying Canadian canola almost immediately. As of last week, more than 650,000 metric tonnes had been purchased, about 10 per cent of what was sold to



JORDAN
TWISS

~
News Editor

China in 2024.

And in an added boon for Canadian producers, China announced that it was dropping its ban on Canadian beef. The ban had been in place since 2021, after an atypical case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) was found on an Alberta farm.

Coupled with Mr. Carney's plans to deepen trade ties with India, which is a large market for Canadian pulse crops, the movement

on canola, peas, and beef had to have producers feeling pretty optimistic about their prospects for a change.

But there's always a second shoe. And last week, the federal government dropped it.

In a bid to find savings, it was announced that three Agriculture Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) research and development centres and four satellite research farms will be closed, including those in Scott, Sask., and Indian Head, Sask.

"AAFC will remain Canada's largest agricultural research organization, with 17 research centres nationwide and research farmland in every province," AAFC said in a statement.

"There are no imminent site closures, and any wind-down of scientific operations would follow a careful decision process that could take up to 12 months. Many employees may be retained, reassigned, or relocated. It is too early to determine final workforce impacts."

The response to the closures has been mixed, leaning more towards the negative.

Premier Moe questioned the decision to cut funding to agriculture, which is one of the few portfolios that hasn't seen dramatic spending increases under the Liberals.

"This is a historical research farm that has been operating in our province for literally decades and doing tremendous work when it comes to some of the developmental research or crop research or in the grasslands and ranching spaces as well," he said



of the closure of the Indian Head Research Farm, which has operated since 1887.

Meanwhile, the Saskatchewan NDP pointed out the harms of cutting funding for agriculture research, noting that crop research has been proven to "deliver a 35-to-1 return on investment," and that funding cuts reduce "future agricultural gains, productivity, and yields."

For its part, the National Farmers' Union called the closures "disastrous for Canada," and said the federal government should be finding ways to increase funding for agriculture research in the current global climate.

Though he called the cuts a "necessary evil," Canadian Federation of Agriculture president Keith Currie echoed this sentiment, noting that public sector agriculture research funding has been lagging for the past 10 to 15 years.

While the short-term and long-term impacts of the closures won't be clear until they happen, there's no denying that the rationale behind the decision, and the timing of it, don't make a whole lot of sense.

In rectifying the issue of canola tariffs, Mr. Carney handed Canadian producers an important victory – something that has been almost unheard of for producers, no matter who's running the show in Ottawa.

Why squander that good will so soon after mending fences with producers?

Where things get really confusing, though, is when you factor in the context of Mr. Carney's recent speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in which he said, "A country that cannot feed itself, fuel itself, or defend itself has few options."

Mr. Carney was right. In even the most stable and predictable global climate, food security should be a top priority for Canada (and for any country, really).

The prairie provinces are often called the breadbasket of Canada – and even of the world – and they have earned this title because of the advancements made possible by public and private research.

But feeding the world doesn't mean much if we can't feed ourselves.

The best way to ensure Canadians are able to put food on the table, is to invest heavily, but prudently, in the research that has allowed Canada to become the world's breadbasket.

If it's truly concerned about food security (as it should be), Mr. Carney's government should look elsewhere for savings. Or better yet, it should follow the lead of Bayer, which just last Friday announced plans to invest \$45 million in a canola research and development facility in Winnipeg.

Shellbrook Chronicle

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Yuk Yuk’s brings laughs to Shellbrook Theatre

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

In small towns like Shellbrook, people long ago learned that there are many different ways to raise money for the causes they care about most.

For the Shellbrook Theatre Committee, which continues to raise funds for general maintenance of the facility, as well as a stage renovation and upgrades to the sound and lighting, one of the most effective ways is to make people laugh.

On Saturday, Jan. 31, the committee welcomed Yuk Yuk’s back to Shellbrook for its second annual Comedy Night event, treating a crowd of about 125 people to the humorous stylings of Lori Ferguson-Ford (the night’s host), Troo Knot, and Johnny Pogo (the night’s headliner).

Together, the three Alberta-based

comedians had the audience in stitches for nearly two hours — mostly at their own expense, but occasionally at the expense of the poor local elementary school janitor who happened to be sitting closest to the stage.

“Live comedy is something that one usually wouldn’t expect to see in a town the size of Shellbrook, especially the professional calibre of comedy that Yuk Yuk’s provides,” said Theatre Committee president Myron Wall, noting that last year’s inaugural show was very well received.

“So we see it as a great opportunity to bring a diverse range of entertainment into our theatre.”

While it was too early for Wall to share the final fundraising tally from the evening, he says he expects it to be “an appreciable sum for our excellent theatre facility.” Meanwhile, in the coming weeks, he says the 14 members of the Shellbrook Theatre Committee will be back at the draw-

ing board brainstorming ways to make next year’s show an even bigger success.

“There is a lot of work that goes into putting on events like this, and to see the community turn out to support our facility, and to see and hear them have a great time, it truly does make it all worthwhile,” he said.

“And on a personal level, it is not only very gratifying, but also makes me proud to call this community home.”

All funds raised through shows like these remain in the community and go right back into the theatre. Currently, the committee is focused on making the theatre more accessible to people with disabilities, and maintaining the roof and ceiling.

The Theatre Committee is also in what Wall calls the “feasibility” study phase of plans to renovate the theatre stage, in hopes of making it larger and more useful for performers of all sorts. Given the size and scope of the project, Wall says it will take a lot of planning to ensure the committee doesn’t get in over its head.

While comedy nights

are one way to bring something new to the Shellbrook Theatre and raise funds for the facility, Wall says the Shellbrook and District Arts Council is working on bringing even more diversity to the facility, with plans to host live theatre, music, and a magic show throughout late 2026 and 2027.

“We would also like to see events like dance competitions, weddings, birthday parties, and training events come to our theatre,” Wall said. “We are dedicated to welcoming any event that fits into the building.”



Lori Ferguson Ford shows an audience member her best cougar impression.



Comedian Troo Knot tells a joke about distracted drivers.



Headliner Johnny Pogo brought plenty of laughter to the crowd.

YOUR TWO CENTS

R.M. of Shellbrook should reverse unfair tax bill

Dear editor,

For decades, I have been a law-abiding, tax-paying resident of the R.M. of Shellbrook, always paying my taxes as early as possible to receive the maximum discount.

But now, the R.M. of Shellbrook has turned me into a squatter on my own land.

In 2019, a fire started in a ditch owned by the R.M. of Shellbrook and burned across my property north of Deer Ridge, as well as another property. The fire burned through my garden, my apple trees, part of my fence, my shop, my bunk house, and a couple other buildings on my property.

Though the local fire department came and put it out, the fire started burning again a couple hours later and did even more

damage to my property. To add insult to injury, the R.M. of Shellbrook sent me an \$8,000 bill for each of the fires, when the second fire only occurred because the first one wasn’t put out properly.

To my knowledge, I’m the only one who was billed for the fires.

While I was able to negotiate the bill for the second fire down to the minimum charge, I still believe it’s unfair that I was the only one who received a bill and that I was charged for the second fire at all.

Because of legal fees, interest, and other expenses, my unpaid property tax bill is back up to \$16,000, and the R.M. of Shellbrook wants to take my land, as well as my lakefront property at Sturgeon Lake, which will prevent me from set-

ting up a legacy to leave to Habitat for Humanity and Ronald McDonald House when I die.

If the R.M. had just charged me my share of the first fire, I would have considered paying the bill, or at least talked to the R.M. about negotiating it down to something I could afford at the time. But because this happened during COVID, I wasn’t given a chance to do that.

After meeting with the R.M. council in January, I hope it will make things right, reverse my taxes owing, and let me keep my properties. If it does, I’ll happily walk into the R.M. office to pay my taxes in August and receive the maximum discount, like I always do.

Larry Kerr,
R.M. of Shellbrook

Infrastructure

Cowan Lake Dam Replacement Project

Public Information Session

Join us to learn about the Cowan Lake Dam Replacement Project and explore the business opportunities it will create.

Representatives from the Water Security Agency will be on hand to provide updates and answer your questions.

Date: February 6, 2026
Time: Noon-4pm
Location: Big River Community Centre

If you have questions, please contact: 1-866-727-5420.

Minutes of an RM of Spiritwood meeting

(Where necessary, the following minutes may have been edited for brevity or clarity.)

The Regular Meeting of the Council of the Rural Municipality of Spiritwood No. 496 was held on Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2025, in Council Chambers located at 218 Main Street in Spiritwood, Sask.

Present: Reeve — Shirley Dauvin, Division 2 — Dale Wasden, Division 3 — Terry Wingerter, Division 4 — Steve Buban, Division 5 — Heather Warkentin, Division 6 — Dennis Laventure, CAO — Colette Bussiere, and Foreman — Darcy Laventure.

Absent: Division 1 — Vacant.

A quorum being present the meeting was called to order at 8:40 a.m. Reeve Shirley Dauvin.

Laventure: That the minutes of the Nov. 13 Regular Meeting of Council be approved as presented. Carried

Wasden: That the Administrator’s report having been read now be filed. Carried

Warkentin: That the

Foreman’s report having been read now be filed. Carried

Wingerter: That the council meeting be closed to the public at 9:40 a.m. under the authority of Part III of The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, to go in camera to discuss Human Resources. Carried

The regular meeting of council was out of camera and resumed at 11:39 a.m.

Foreman, Darcy Laventure left the council meeting at 11:40 a.m.

Warkentin: Whereas, the employment agreement between the RM of Spiritwood No. 496 and Michael Heisler has been terminated, that we enter into a full-time employment agreement with Carly Shields. Carried

Wingerter: That the CSO reports having been read now be filed. Carried

Laventure: That the verbal reports of council be accepted as presented. Carried

Laventure: That the

bank reconciliation for the month ending Nov. 30, 2025, be accepted as presented. Carried

Buban: That the “List of Accounts” as listed on the attached Schedule “A” forming part of these minutes be passed for payment: Cheque No. 15386-15414 (\$604,868.40), EFT No. 2025-0189 - 2025-0215 (\$121,3085.76), Payroll File No. 0045, 0047 (\$39,106.43). Carried

Warkentin: That the Statement of Financial Activities for the month ending Nov. 30, 2025 be approved as presented. Carried

Wingerter: That we make a pre-payment in the amount of \$80,000 toward the Gravel Pit Loan at Prairie Centre Credit Union. Carried

Warkentin: That the custom work rates for the following equipment be set as follows with a minimum 1/2 hour charge: Grader - \$300 per hour, Tractor & Mower - \$200 per hour. Carried

Wingerter: The Council of the Rural Municipality of Spiritwood No. 496 confirms the

municipality meets the eligibility requirements to receive the Municipal Revenue Sharing grant. And that, we authorize the Administrator to sign the Declaration of Eligibility and submit it to the Ministry of Government Relations. Carried

Buban: That we renew the SARM Liability Insurance Plan for 2026; and that we also renew the Excess Liability Insurance in the amount of \$3,000,000.00 and Administrative Errors & Omissions Coverage in the amount of \$1,000,000.00. Carried

Warkentin: That the SARM Property Insurance Schedule for 2026 be approved as revised and presented to Council. Carried

Wingerter: That the RM of Spiritwood No. 496 provides approval to Leoville Snowdrifters Snowmobile Club to develop, sign and maintain a snowmobile trail on rights-of-way under the control & administration of the municipality. Permission is given to legally enter and use the identified trail in accordance with snowmobile laws and legislation of Saskatchewan. This approval shall be valid from Jan. 1, 2026, to Dec. 31, 2030. Carried

Wasden: That we approve the use of a Spiritwood Fire Dept. (SFD) fire truck for the purposes of flooding the outdoor arena located in the Town of Spiritwood. Only SFD members have the authority to operate or deploy SFD equipment for this flooding operation. SFD leadership is responsible for ensuring proper readiness,

ing proper readiness, maintenance, and safe operation of the equipment and ensure safety protocols are followed during operation and to return equipment to normal readiness after use. Carried

Warkentin: Council for the RM of Spiritwood No. 496 has reviewed the incident reports provided by 911 Dispatch and the Spiritwood Fire Dept., relating to a fire call on SE 28-49-10-W3 on May 24, 2025, and declines any abatement of the fire call fees or interest associated with this event. Carried

Laventure: That we enter into lease agreements with Spiritwood Pharmacy & Papa Rene’s Pizzeria for parking spaces located behind the Spiritwood Public Library. Carried

Laventure: That the RM of Spiritwood No. 496 hereby agrees to the sale of lease land described as SW 112-54-12-W3 under the condition that an easement for access to SE 11-54-12-W3 be registered on title and that the applicant is responsible for all costs of same. Carried

Laventure: That the request to purchase the right of way located adjacent to W 1/2 31-50-12-W3 be declined. Carried

Councillor Dennis Laventure declared a conflict of interest & left council chambers at 2:35 p.m.

Buban: That we enter into a road maintenance agreement with Laventure Backhoe and Trucking to haul aggregate from the following land locations to be stockpiled on NE 17-

52-11-W3; NW 08-53-11-W3, SE 18-53-11-W3, SW 03-53-12-W3, NE 08-53-10-W3, NE 06-53-11-W3, SW 10-53-11-W3. Carried

Councillor Dennis Laventure returned to the council meeting at 2:37 p.m. Carried

Warkentin: Upon receipt of a signed application, that we consent to the request to clear trees, brush & debris from the right of way described as Rge Rd 3130, between Twp Rd 510 (Hwy No. 3) and Twp Rd 505 be approved as per the road allowance brushing policy. No compensation will be provided to the applicant, as the brush clearing is only beneficial to the applicant & does not provide a benefit to the municipality. Carried

Warkentin: That the council meeting be closed to the public at 3:30 p.m. under the authority of Part III of The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, to go in camera to discuss Human Resources. Carried

CAO Colette Bussiere left the council meeting at 3:51 p.m.

CAO Colette Bussiere returned to the council meeting at 5:12 p.m.

The regular meeting of council was out of camera and resumed at 5:12 p.m.

Warkentin: That the employee salary schedule for 2026 be approved and attached. Carried

Wingerter: That the correspondence, having been read, now be filed. Carried

Wasden: That the meeting be adjourned.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPIRITWOOD: Wapiti Regional Library - Tuesday 10am - 5pm; Wednesday 10am - 5pm; Thursday 1pm to 5pm; Friday 10am - 5pm
LEOVILLE: Wapiti Regional Library - Wednesday 10am - 4pm; Thursday 10am - 4pm
SHELL LAKE: Wapiti Regional Library - Tuesday 11am - 4pm; Wednesday 12 pm -5 pm

BLAINE LAKE: Wapiti Library - Wednesday 1pm - 6pm; Thursday 1pm - 6pm; Friday 1pm - 6pm; Saturday 10am - 3pm. 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 Hours: Tuesday 9:30am - 4pm; Wednesday 10:30am - 5pm; Phone: 306-468-2501
DEBDEN: Wapiti Library hours: Tuesday 10am - 4pm; Wednesday 12pm - 6pm. Librarian: Aline Hannon
LEASK: Wapiti Library & Legacy Gallery Hours - Tuesday 9am - 2pm; Wednesday 2pm - 8pm; Friday 9am - 12pm
MARCELIN: Wapiti Library - Saturday 10am - 2pm; Thursday 2pm - 8pm. 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.

BIG RIVER: Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting – Every Wednesday, 7:30 pm @ Train Station in Big River (Railway Avenue)

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U.S. dietary guide raises important questions

The 2025-30 Dietary Guidelines for Americans was released recently, and as one might suspect, given its release comes at a time the United States is under the rule of President Donald Trump — meaning a general deluge of questionable data rolling out — it has ag groups working hard to determine what exactly it may mean.

The guidelines are prepared jointly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, but the Trump administration has not been shy to meddle and bully to get what should be

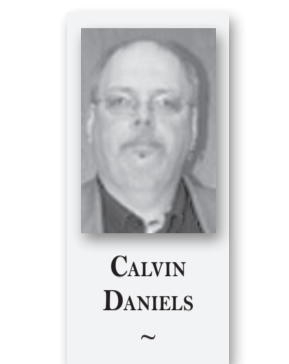
independent reports to conform to its vision.

And frankly, when it comes to health, current U.S. health secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. does not instill the greatest confidence from afar.

So this is one of those things, when living in a world of immediate access thanks to the Internet like we are, that really requires a deeper dive before simply switching eating habits.

That said, one can cherry pick a thing or two that makes rather obvious sense, starting with a suggestion that we should consume less highly processed foods.

It seems rather com-



CALVIN DANIELS

mon sense that if you need to mix a bunch of unpronounceable chemicals into the food so that it can sit on a store shelf for weeks without going bad, it might not be something to consume in large quantities.

Certainly, I've wondered how microwaveable bacon lasts without

refrigeration.

That doesn't mean various smoked sausages and canned goods are not tasty and safe. But they do seem to be something best consumed in some moderation.

In that regard, I recall my grandmother extolling that philosophy when I was a youngster more than half a century ago. She made sure bread was on the table for every meal. You couldn't have more meatloaf until you ate your veggies, and there was dessert but only if you ate all the food on your plate.

Now she was no dietitian, but she must have

done something right living as she did into her 80s. And her husband of more than 50 years lived even longer.

Of course, it was a different lifestyle for them, too. To begin with, much of their food was home-grown.

No matter what guidelines a government puts out in the U.S. and Canada, most people are not suddenly gardening to fill a larder with pickles, a freezer with home-grown veggies, and a cellar bin with garden spuds.

And meat isn't from the family farm anymore either.

My grandparents also lived a very different life

than most of us today. They farmed, and it was not farming in a world of GPS-guided, computer driven tractors.

And even in retirement, the day was rare that they did not do something in the garden unless it was covered with snow.

Meanwhile, today, I sit too much at the computer or the TV.

Again, somehow they achieved moderation better than I.

That all said, maybe the best bit to take from the American release is that we are each responsible for what we eat and do, and we likely to need to take that responsibility more seriously.

Op-ed: Ag cuts disastrous for Canada

By NFU
Submitted

During his speech in Davos, Prime Minister Carney said "A country that cannot feed itself, fuel itself or defend itself has few options." On Friday, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada announced 12% of its workforce — 665 positions — and 7 agriculture research facilities are to be cut. Over the weekend we also witnessed the USA, our largest trading partner and source of much of our processed and fresh foods, lurch even further into violence and unrest. By closing the doors on agricultural research centres and research farms, and ejecting people who represent upwards of 10,000 years' worth of experience from the public service, Canada will be foreclosing on the discovery, problem-solving, and knowledge-base that would have been created by these institutions, leaving us more vulnerable with fewer options.

"We are facing multiple crises that affect our capacity to produce the food and agricultural products that Canadians need," said Phil Mount, NFU Vice President, Policy. "We need more investment, not less, in our public research institutions and personnel. The planned cuts would remove about \$154 million from AAFC's annual budget, but this is a

false economy. Cutting our capacity to address known and emerging agriculture problems will be far more costly. For just one example, agricultural economist Dr. Richard Gray has shown that there is a \$35 return to farmers and the public for every dollar invested in public plant breeding."

"AAFC researchers working in the public interest can tackle large, difficult questions and freely share their findings, helping farmers succeed in the long term. Farmers have partnered with AAFC by putting tens of millions of check-off dollars into these research projects, as has the Western Grains Research Foundation (WGRF) which allocates money indirectly contributed by farmers. Closing these AAFC facilities will make it that much harder to find institutions with the capacity to utilize these funds," said Terry Boehm, NFU representative on the WGRF.

"Cutting the Organic and Regenerative Research Program at the Swift Current Research Centre, the sustainable livestock programs at Lacombe and the Nappan Research Farm, along with the agro-ecosystem resilience research at Quebec City, weakens Canada's ability to deal with climate change impacts and biodiversity loss," said Jenn Pfenning, NFU President. "Farmers

in every part of Canada are affected. Research is needed to develop the best kinds of solutions that will be cost-effective for farmers and help us strengthen our food sovereignty."

Several targeted research facilities support public plant breeding. Field plots allow breeders to compare and assess varieties. "Public plant breeding is the cornerstone of Canada's agriculture sector," said Jennifer Seward, Manitoba farmer and Executive Director of Manitoba Seed Growers Association. "Our public breeders have a deep commitment to quality and public benefit. These cuts undermine the dollars that taxpayers and farmers have invested into variety research for decades, and the seed industry is first and foremost, concerned with the loss of this investment."

Dave Gehl, retired Indian Head Research Farm manager said. "The loss of funding under the Harper government in the 2012 budget caused great harm to AAFC. What we need is a reversal, not an intensification of such austerity measures. Our research farm, as well as the others slated for closure, make huge contributions locally by providing good jobs to hundreds of people, to all rural communities through the results of their work, and to all Canadians by ensuring our agriculture

system remains productive, sustainable and economically viable."

The research institutions on the chopping block are key components of Canada's original nation-building infrastructure. Nova Scotia's Nappan Research Farm and Indian Head Research Farm in Saskatchewan were established in 1887, while Alberta's Lacombe Research Centre dates back to 1907, and Scott Research Farm in Saskatchewan to 1911. The Portage la Prairie Manitoba research farm was set up in 1944 towards the end of World War II, Quebec City Research Center opened in Canada's centennial year 1967 and Ontario's Guelph Research and Development Centre in 1997. By closing them, we will also lose their lands (including plots with scientific data going back a century), buildings - from historic sites to brand new purpose-built facilities, equipment ranging from specially adapted farm machinery to sophisticated laboratory instruments.

The National Farmers Union is calling for not only a reversal of these cuts, but re-investment in public agricultural research. In a world increasingly fraught with uncertainty, rebuilding our capacity for public-interest agricultural research will provide Canada with the strategic autonomy to deliver security and confidence into the future.

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Witchekan Wildlife Fed. holds banquet

Continued from 1

The award entries were down somewhat this year, but the entries that \ won were mostly from junior members. Chance Goller, a junior member, won the plaque for his 162 4/8 moose. The moose also garnered Goller the Top Overall Big Game award.

Another junior member, Mina Baynes, took away the award for Typ-

ical Whitetail (148 7/8) and Ladies Big Game. Treyton Ledinski, yet another junior member, cleaned up on the night with awards for Junior Angler, Youngest Sportsman, and Junior Walleye.

The Master Angler award went to Kelly Millar for his 6lb 4 oz walleye, which also netted (pun intended) him the Oldest Sportsman Award.

To the raffles, the 50/50 winner of \$470 was Geraldine Crosston. The mystery boxes, which were assembled by the WWF to the tune of over \$1,800 in value, were won by Emily Goller and Brent Smith. Goller's prize consisted of a deluxe package at Shell Lake (Little Shell, to the locals) for 10 people for three days, with cabin rental and boat included. Smith's prize was a \$250 gift

certificate to Northern Meats.

Closing out the program, Darcy Gatzke took the opportunity to encourage everyone to enter their 2026 hunting and fishing achievements by simply taking a photo of the conquest alongside the scale or other measurement, purchasing a membership (very reasonably priced at \$20), and submitting it for entry.



Mina Baynes was awarded for Typical Whitetail and received the Alain Millar award from Fern Millar.



Treyton Ledinski received several awards, here presented his Youngest Sportsman award from Darcy Gatzke.



Chance Goller accepts his award for the 162 4/8 moose.



Committee members Karstin Booth and Connie Gatzke with help from Shelley van de Velde hosting the raffle and 50/50 draws.



Eager children await instruction from Lyla Millar to begin the egg race.



The catered banquet included walleye and northern pike, a big hit among the guests.



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Bohdan Booth considers silent auction offerings.



The kids' raffle table was a highlight for the younger crowd.

Shell Lake seniors activity highlights

By **DAVID JENSEN**
Shell Lake 50+ Club

On Monday, Jan. 26, the Shell Lake Fifty Plus Club gathered to celebrate birthdays and

anniversaries for the months of November, December, January, and February. Before the candles were lit, the coffee and cake were served, then

gathered members were entertained by Dale and Laura Budd, who hail from Belbutte, Sask. Dale does an amazing job of playing rhythm guitar, and also shares

his talent teaching others to play. Laura plays bass guitar. They invite musicians to attend and perform regularly at jam sessions held in the Belbutte Hall.

Together, Dale and Laura love to play and sing the golden oldies pop music songs of the 1950s, 60s, 70s, and even the 80s, and they treated guests to hits from the likes of Hank Williams, Elvis, Chuck Berry, Patsy Cline, Johnny Cash, and more. Before the birthday and anniversary guests gathered at the birthday table for pictures, Dale and Laura led everyone

in singing Happy Birthday. Even though she was one of the celebrating members, Anita Weiers once again outdid herself by baking two cakes to offer for the occasion. Guests had a choice of a dark chocolate cake with white icing, or angel food cake with whipped cream and strawberry topping (or both). No one went home hungry.



Birthday and anniversary celebrants. Back row, left to right: Larry Vaagen, Roger Lafond, Kathleen Dube, Ken Grandberg, Tony Bunz, Don Weiers, Christine Wollms, and David Jensen. Front row: Marilyn McGown, Darlene Wilms, Peggy Grandberg, Ann Bunz, Anita Weiers, and Sylvia Jensen.



Dale and Laura Budd provided the evening's musical entertainment.

All America Selections 2026 winners: Part II

BY **PATRICIA HANBIDGE**
Orchid Horticulture

All America Selections (AAS) is a non-profit trialing organization that tests new, never-before-sold varieties of plants for the home gardener. Read on for the results after a full season of anonymous trialing by volunteer horticultural professionals. Only the top garden performers are given the AAS Winner award designation for their superior performance. The AAS Winner label is like a stamp of approval as their mission is to promote new garden varieties with superior garden performance. Their tagline “Tested Nationally and Proven Locally®” most definitely says it all!

The 2026 winners will

be available for purchase for the gardening season as supply becomes available. It is sometimes difficult to get the seed or the plants desired when the winners are just announced but if you go to the All America Selections website, they list the seed houses that sell the seed of the winning plants. Check out the following link for more information <https://all-america-selections.org/buy-winners/> Last week, we covered some of the All America Selections 2026 edible winners and now we move onto the ornamental winners. Coreopsis Sunglobe brings brilliant, season-long colour to all the sunspots in your garden. Producing tons of fluffy, golden yellow, semi-double flowers on sturdy stems,

this tidy plant will deliver multiple flushes of vibrant gold from spring through fall. Dianthus Supra Cherry Picotee F1 will give your garden an unparalleled display of colour. This interspecific hybrid delivers eye-catching blooms on a compact but bushy plant. It is heat and drought resistant and takes little care for the colour it delivers - including deadheading. Heliopsis Sole Giatto will bring sunshine to your garden in containers or borders. It is approximately 20 inches (50 centimetres) in height and spread and throughout the season will effortlessly attract beneficial pollinators while resisting deer and rabbits. It is rated zone 3 to 8 so in a sheltered location or with some snow will be perennial in nature. Rudbeckia Claire Orange F1 is the first pollen-free F1 hybrid Rudbeckia! It is exceptionally vigorous, has impressive floriferousness and great heat and disease tolerance. It literally transforms your garden with effortless cheer. Sedum Spectacular grown from seed delivers rock-solid garden performance. These sturdy, full and non-flopping plants will give your garden excellent vigor and uniformity in both height and spread. It produces bright light

light green foliage ensuring it is a focal point in your garden. Zinnia Profusion Double White features impressive, large, double flowers that create a lush, almost tropical look. No deadheading

is necessary for this fourteen-inch-high (one third of a metre) plant that spreads to about 20 inches in width (about a half metre). Season long beauty will grace your garden with this Zinnia.

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



Heliopsis Sole Giatto is a 2026 All American Selection winner.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

2026 Junior Citizen of the Year Scholarship

JUNIOR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD

Over the past four decades, the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association, in partnership with SaskPower and the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, has recognized the youth of Saskatchewan through the Junior Citizen of the Year Award.

These prestigious awards are given to youths who:

- Have a positive lifestyle
- Volunteer within their community and school
- Has overcome a personal life challenge (physical, emotional or environmental)
- Have a strong sense of caring and responsibility
- Are between the ages of 8 and 18

This year, four deserving youths will receive a **\$3,000 bursary**, provided by SaskPower, to use towards their post-secondary education.

JUNIOR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR STEM AWARD

Introduced in 2025, The Junior Citizen of the Year STEM Award will recognize a Saskatchewan youth who contains all the same qualities of a Junior Citizen of the Year but **has an aptitude for science, technology, engineering, or mathematics.** This award is eligible for all students, including but not limited to, young women, and underrepresented communities.

This year, one deserving youth will receive a **\$3,000 bursary**, provided by Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan, to use towards their post-secondary education.

Building a Strong Saskatchewan through the Crown Sector

Visit www.swna.com for further information and nomination forms
Nominations close March 31, 2026

Minutes of a Shell Lake Council meeting

(Where necessary, the following minutes may have been edited for clarity or brevity.)

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Council held in Council Chambers on Tuesday, Dec. 16, 2025 commencing at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Mayor Wendy Penner, Councillors Greg Ardagh, Louise Fisher, Al Sulymka, and Wayne Reddekopp, Administrator Tara Bueckert, and Foreman Jim Mayo.

The meeting was called to order at 6:24 p.m. by Mayor Penner.

Ardagh: That the agenda for this meeting be adopted as presented. Carried

Reddekopp: That the minutes of the regular council meeting of November 18, 2025 be adopted with the correction noted for Resolution number 263-25. Carried

DELEGATIONS

6:28 p.m. to 6:32 p.m.: Stafan Cornelissen

6:32 p.m. to 6:34 p.m.: Greg Miller

6:34 p.m. to 6:48 p.m.: Kim Fusick and Lorne

Ardagh: That the Village of Shell Lake Council refunds KF one (1) base tax for the 2024 and 2025 year for the amount of \$1,700. Carried (Councillor Fisher abstained from voting.)

Sulymka: That we purchase the Budget extension from MuniSoft for a cost of \$1,125. Carried

Fisher: That the bank reconciliation for the month of November be accepted as presented. Carried

Sulymka: That the Financial Report for the month of November be accepted as presented. Carried

Ardagh: That the list of accounts totaling \$58,008.12 cheques numbered 391 to 403, EFT payments and online payments numbered 2025246 to 2025263, be approved. Carried

Reddekopp: That the verbal Maintenance, Administrator, Councillors, Mayor and Fire Chief reports be filed as presented. Carried

Ardagh: That the verbal Water/Sewer reports be filed as presented. Carried

Sulymka: That the property located at 312 Simm Street contains a white garage situated in a manner that does not conform to the setback requirements established under the Village of Shell Lake Zoning Bylaw and that Council has reviewed the circumstances surrounding the location of the garage and determined that its continued existence does not pose a risk or interfere with municipal interests;

And that Council recognizes the garage as a non-conforming structure under the provisions of the Zoning Bylaw;

That the Village of Shell Lake hereby permits the white garage located 312 Simm Street to remain in its current location, notwithstanding the setback requirements of the Zoning Bylaw, and recognizes the structure as legally non-conforming. Carried

Sulymka: That the correspondence, having been read, now be filed. Carried

Sulymka: That VD has to submit a site plan, development permit and building permit by January 31st, 2026 for Lot 2 Block 10 Plan #1020493. Carried

Reddekopp: That we pay Lake Country Co-op the change orders for the curling rink in the amount of \$33,476.75. Carried

Fisher: That the Administrator sends a letter to JD advising of the cost to install the street light, and further advising that Council will not be proceeding with the installation of the street light. Carried

Ardagh: That Bylaw 10-2025, being a Bylaw to Repeal Bylaws, be read a first time. Carried (*Editor's note: the bylaw was unanimously given three readings and approved.*)

Sulymka: That the Council of the Village of Shell Lake meets the eligibility requirements to receive the Municipal Revenue Sharing Grant. Carried

Reddekopp: That the Village of Shell Lake Council Meetings will be set every second Tuesday of each month. Carried

Reddekopp: That Councillor Al Sulymka be appointed as the Deputy Mayor. Carried

Sulymka: That the Village of Shell Lake appoints Parchomchuk Sherdahl Hunter as the legal advisor. Carried

Reddekopp: That the Regional Fire Department #2 oversee the Village of Shell Lake and that Councillor Greg Ardagh is the Fire Chief for the department. Carried

Sulymka: That Councillor Greg Ardagh and Councillor Wayne Reddekopp be appointed to oversee the Public Works. Carried

Council went in camera at 8:49 p.m.

Council came out of camera at 9:07 p.m.

Sulymka: That this meeting be adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Executive bonuses cost taxpayers \$201 million last year

By FRANCO TERRAZZANO
CTF Director

About 98 per cent of government executives took a bonus last year even though departments missed nearly half of their performance targets, according to access-to-information records obtained by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

“Why are most government executives rewarding themselves with bonus cheques when their departments can barely pass their own tests?” said Franco Terrazzano, CTF Federal Director. “Bonuses are supposed to be for doing a good job, but bureaucrats are handing them out like participation ribbons.

“And what does a government executive have to do to miss a bonus?”

Government executives took about \$201 million in bonuses in 2024-25, which is the government’s last full budget year.

About 98 per cent of all government executives took a bonus last year.

Meanwhile, federal departments met just 54 per cent of their performance targets, according to the government’s own data.

The government hands out multiple different bonuses to executives each year, including a “bilingual bonus,” a “performance award,” “at risk pay,” “performance pay,” among others, according to the records.

The federal government has continued to shower its employees with taxpayer-funded bonuses despite

poor performance.

Federal bonuses have cost taxpayers about \$2 billion since 2015. The government has continued to rubberstamp annual bonuses even though “less than 50 per cent of [performance] targets are consistently met within the same year,” according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

“We end up in a situation where it is public servants responsible for delivering programs that set their own targets and they usually set the bar not too high so it doesn’t look too easy, but neither too low so it’s fairly easy to achieve most of the time,” said former PBO Yves Giroux. “Yet by their own assessment they fail to deliver on many of these.”

The federal government publishes

its own data summarizing department performance results for the past five years. In two of those years, departments failed to meet half of their own targets. Their best year was 2024-25, when departments met less than 54 per cent of their own targets.

“The government is broke and taxpayers can’t afford to bankroll big bonus cheques each and every year for highly paid government executives,” Terrazzano said. “The government needs to stop rewarding failure with taxpayers’ money.”

The government has continued to rubberstamp bonuses despite soaring federal spending and debt.

The federal government is borrowing about \$78 billion this year.

The government must shrink its ballooning bureaucracy to fix its finances. That’s because the federal bureaucracy consumes about 54 per cent of the government’s day-to-day operating spending.

The federal government added 99,000 employees and increased the cost of the bureaucracy 80 per cent over the decade.

The bigger bills haven’t improved performance.

Half of Canadians say federal services have gotten worse since 2016 even with the massive increase in the federal bureaucracy, according to a Leger poll. The poll also found that 54 per cent of Canadians want the government to cut the size and cost of its bureaucracy.

“More government bureaucrats taking more money from taxpayers hasn’t resulted in better services for Canadians,” Terrazzano said. “Taxpayers need Prime Minister Mark Carney to take urgent action and significantly cut the size and cost of the bureaucracy now.”

Sask. simplifies disability program

By MINISTRY OF
SOCIAL SERVICES
Submitted

The Ministry of Social Services is simplifying the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disabilities (SAID) benefit structure to make the program easier to navigate and simpler to understand.

“Through conversations with clients and community partners, we have heard that SAID is too complicated,” Social Services Minister Terry Jenson said. “This complexity makes it difficult for clients to know what they are eligible for, and limits ministry flexibility

to adapt to individual circumstances that also slows down support for clients. Changes beginning April 1, 2026, will better address client needs and support them to receive all the benefits they are eligible for in the simplest and quickest way possible.”

Effective April 1, 2026, changes will:

- Combine highly specific policies and benefits into broader categories which allows more flexible and timely responses to client needs;
- Add flat-rate benefits to replace some actual-cost benefits which reduces client report-

ing requirements and speeds up access to supports;

- Modernize the program to remove benefits that are outdated, not currently being used by clients, or being provided in other programs; and
- Ensure individuals in need are supported to transition onto SAID by raising the amount of money individuals can have in the bank to apply for the program by \$500 - from \$1,500 to \$2,000 per household member.

Social Services began reviewing SAID in 2025, with the goal to make the

program easier for over 18,000 clients to navigate and simpler to understand. The changes being implemented were developed using feedback from SAID clients and community-based organizations. The ministry will be contacting the small number of individuals that will be affected (about 100) to explain that their benefits will not see a reduction after the implementation on April 1, 2026.

The ministry is continuing its review of SAID to make it more client friendly and ensure the program is sustainable and best supports clients for years to come.

Koepka alone in return to PGA Tour

What could have been a mad dash by some of the greatest golfers in the world from the upstart LIV tour back to the PGA Tour turned out to be hardly a trickle. Does one even count as a trickle?

Brooks Koepka, a five-time major champion who is one of a handful of big names who took the Saudi Arabian money and fled the PGA Tour a couple of years ago, had buyer's remorse in December and announced to the world he was leaving LIV.

Paul Simon wrote in the 1970s that there are 50 ways to leave your lover, but would there be a few more ways for the LIVers to leave the LIV? The PGA Tour brass wanted to find out, so they hastily established what they called the "Returning Member Program," which specifically targeted the cream of the LIV crop — Koepka, Bryson DeChambeau, Jon Rahm and Cam Smith. Criteria set out by the PGA said the program was open only

to major champions or Players' champs who won their titles between the years of 2022 and 2025. Those four aforementioned players all fit the criteria while everyone else — Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson, Patrick Reed, Sergio Garcia, and others — didn't fit the qualifying terms, nor did they have the star power sought by the PGA Tour. They therefore didn't qualify for return to the bright lights of what is indisputably the best pro tour in the world.

Given a deadline of Feb. 2 to accept the PGA Tour's offer, DeChambeau, Rahm and Smith all immediately pledged their fealty to LIV and left Koepka as the lone returnee. *SI.com* said Smith was committed to his all-Australian team on LIV while Rahm's contract with the breakaway tour runs through 2027. DeChambeau is a superstar in the YouTube golf world and has earning power from that source potentially greater than what he could



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PENTON

accumulate playing on regular tours.

New PGA Tour commissioner Brian Rolapp said there was no guarantee the Tour would leave the return window open forever. "Once the door closes, there is no promise that this path will be available again," said Rolapp.

Koepka's return to the PGA Tour didn't come without some financial pain. He will have to make a \$5 million charitable donation; he won't be eligible for the 2026 FedEx Cup \$100 million bonus program; he will not be able to play in the Tour's big-money signature events in

2026; and he will not be able to earn any money from the Player Equity Program for five years. That last condition could reportedly be worth up to \$80 million.

"The penalty is significant, but I understand why they've done it. It hurts but it's supposed to," Koepka told Golfweek. "I've got a lot of work to do with the players and I want to do that one-on-one. I want to have those conversations, but behind closed doors."

Initial reports said the majority of PGA Tour players are glad, to have Koepka back but while LIV will survive, it's more irrelevant than ever without Koepka.

Cathal Kelly of the *Globe and Mail*, on Brooks Koepka's return to the PGA Tour: "You almost feel sorry for the Saudis. They made Koepka monstrously rich, and in return he shanked them. But when you pay mercenary money, you get mercenaries."

Comedy guy Torben Rolfson of Vancouver:

"Senators' captain Brady Tkachuk says he's giving up fighting after undergoing thumb surgery. Oh well, he'll always have his stick."

Snipped from Jack Finarelli's *sportscurmudgeon.com*: "Jake Gaither, longtime head coach at Florida A & M, on his ideal defensive player: 'He should be agile, mobile and hostile.'"

David Aldridge of *The Athletic*, on AI challenges facing sports journalism: "You don't get rich being a reporter, but you can make a decent buck. In contrast, ChatGPT can write a decent paragraph or two, for free, and never complains about having to fly Southwest to get to Cleveland."

Columnist Norman Chad: "Enough with Joey Chestnut. Now he's going for the world bagel eating championship. He's just stuffing wieners and bagels down his throat while the world burns."

Steve Simmons of the *Toronto Sun*, about Flames' Jonathan Hu-

berdeau, who had 21 points in 45 games with the Flames through Jan. 24: "Hard to believe, but just four years ago, Huberdeau had 115 points in a season. Honest."

Steve Simmons again: "Without Bo Bichette, the Blue Jays still need one solid bat, one starting pitcher, one high-leverage relief pitcher and more affordable tickets."

Headline at *theonion.com*: "Groundskeeper Unsure What To Do With Unconscious Player Left In Medical Tent"

From Fox 29 in Philadelphia: "Flyers' mascot Gritty paid \$250,000 per year, only \$3,000 less than the Pennsylvania governor."

Another one from Torben Rolfson: "TV networks are courting former Steelers coach Mike Tomlin. Fox would like him for their NFL studio show while NBC is considering him for a reboot of *Different Strokes*."

Care to comment? Email brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca

U15 Elks best Bandits in Provincial opener

By JORDAN TWISS
*Shellbrook Chronicle
Reporter*

The U15A Parkland Elks capped off the first round of their Provincial B tournament on Thursday, Jan. 29, playing host to the Dalmeny Valley Bandits in front of a large home-ice crowd at the Richardson Pioneer Recreation Centre.

The Elks skated away with a razor-thin 5-4 win in game one in Waldheim on Jan. 22, so the Bandits needed to steal a win in game two to force a third and deciding mini game.

As the game got under way, neither team jumped out to any clear advantage. Both teams were fighting the puck in the early going, and the Elks, in particular, were struggling to get pucks to the net — even on the power play.

Eventually finding their rhythm, the Elks managed to put some pressure on the Bandits, culminating in a goal on a sharp-angled shot from Carson Nordin, assisted by Dominic Chatlain. The Elks

nearly scored again shortly after this, but the goal was quickly waved off.

Giving nearly as good as they got, the Bandits trapped the Elks in their own end late in the first period. However, they were kept off the board by strong goaltending from the Elks' Brody Moe.

The Elks came out with

renewed energy to start the second period and translated their momentum into extended time in the offensive zone. This soon paid off, allowing the Elks to wear down the Bandits until Tanner Mason slipped a puck through Bandits goalie Campbell Funk. Tyson Hrechka and Easton Mitsuing assisted on the goal.

And the Elks kept the pressure on the Bandits for some time after this, forcing a turnover in the Bandits' end that allowed Nordin to score his second goal of the game on an assist from Cole Hauber.

Down 3-0 and needing anything to get them back in the game, the Bandits got just what they needed on a two-

on-one rush that ended in a goal from Lextyn Walkinbear, assisted by Oakley Gjerde and Eli Rempel.

However, this was quickly undone by a penalty, which ended with the Elks' Jelani Dreaver taking the puck from end to end and scoring, unassisted, on a wraparound.

Once again, the Elks returned to keeping the pressure on the bandits, winding down the second period clock to end it with a comfortable 4-1.

In a comparatively quiet third period, the Elks had their share of penalty trouble, and had to rely heavily on their penalty kill to hold on to their three-goal lead. The penalty killers proved more than capable, and Moe continued his strong play between the pipes, allowing the Elks to maintain their lead and clinch the series win.

The Elks now advance to face the Biggar National Outlaws. Game one will be played in Biggar on Sunday, Feb. 8, with game two in Shellbrook to follow on Sunday, Feb. 15, at 5:15 p.m.



U15A Elks forward Carson Nordin fires a sharp-angled shot on the Bandits net, beating the goalie up high.

OBITUARY

Stanley Prosser



PROSSER – Stanley
June 10, 1942 – January 30, 2026
Stanley Cyril Prosser, late of Shellbrook, SK, beloved husband of Lois, passed away on

January 30, 2026, at the age of 83 years. Stanley is lovingly survived by, his wife, Lois Prosser; his children, Garry (Laura) Prosser; Val (Lorne) Thompson; his grandchildren, Amanda (Collin) Chrabaszc, Adam (Corrina) Prosser, Lily Prosser, Vanessa (Len) Balicki, Blake (Leanza) Thompson; his great grandchildren, Grace, Avigail, Isaiah, Sophia, Logan, Emma, Jaxon, Addison, Caden, and Bennett. There will be a Memorial Service held for Stanley at a later date to be announced. Memorial donations may be made in memory of Stanley to the Shellbrook & District Health Services Foundation – Palliative Care (Box 33 Shellbrook, SK S0J 2E0). Family and friends wishing to send condolences online are welcome to visit www.beaulacfuneralhome.com. Arrangements have been entrusted to the care of Beau “Lac” Funeral Home & Crematorium, Tammy Smart, Funeral Director, Shellbrook, SK. 306-747-2828.

Sask. to review hospital security, safety

By **MINISTRY OF HEALTH**
Submitted

The Government of Saskatchewan is launching an independent, third-party review of hospital safety and security at the request of the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA). The Ministry of Health will lead the work to select a qualified expert capable of undertaking it as quickly as possible. The review will examine current practices and provide recommendations to help improve safety for patients, visitors and staff across all SHA facilities. “Patients, visitors, and staff must be safe in health care facilities in Saskatchewan,” Health Minister Jeremy Cockrill said. “The safety enhancements underway starting this week at several facilities will help ensure that goal is met so that we can put patients first. The independent review will give us an assessment of security currently in place at facilities and help identify improvements to support safer environments where people are providing and receiving care.” Concerns raised by staff and patients and increasing volume and complexity of Protective Services interventions has highlighted the need for a system-wide comprehensive review. The independent review will examine how Protective Services are delivered across hospitals and identify evidence-based options to enhance safety. It will consider both physical security measures and the importance of culturally safe care environ-

ments, reflecting the evolving and complex nature of safety challenges in hospital settings. The review will assess:

- Current Protective Services’ standards, best practices and delivery models;
- Opportunities to improve training, competencies, tools and infrastructure;
- Ways to strengthen partnerships with Indigenous organizations and other health system partners; and
- Lessons learned from past incidents to identify common themes and system-wide improvements.

Immediate actions to strengthen hospital safety are already underway, including the implementation of metal detectors at emergency department entrances in Saskatoon, Regina, North Battleford and Prince Albert. In addition, there is also currently a Request for Proposals for third-party security services for facilities in La Loche, Shellbrook, Swift Current, Moose Jaw, Weyburn, Nipawin, Melfort and Kamsack. These measures are being advanced while the independent review will inform longer-term, system-wide improvements. “Safety in our hospitals is essential to delivering quality care,” SHA CEO Andrew Will said. “This independent review will ensure our security approaches continue to evolve to meet the needs of patients, families and staff, while reflecting best practices and cultural respect. We remain committed to accountability and to ensuring a safe care environment in SHA facilities.” The findings and recommendations from the independent review will guide future policy, service delivery, and system improvements to hospital safety and security across Saskatchewan.

GOOD NEWS

STUNNED BY GOD’S GRACE

By **PADRE DAVE BODVARSON**
Submitted

It was Max Lucado who said, “I’ve never been surprised by God’s judgement, but I’m still stunned by His grace.” I appreciate the observation of the one who wrote, “The two most important days of your life are the day you are born and day you find out why.” When I was boy, especially in my teens, my mom would remind me I was dedicated as a baby by Dr. Abby. He also named me David Paul. During my teen years, I confess I began to drift. It wasn’t till I went to work in the High Arctic at the age of 18 years old that I rededicated my life to Christ. An answer to my mother’s prayer. After the summer of working in the North, I headed to Red Deer College in hopes of pursuing a law degree. I spent the school year there. By the summer I was back to the High Arctic, this time as a sailor on the Canadian Coast Guard ship the Nahidik. That fall, I was back in Red Deer, but discovered my heart wasn’t into pursuing a law degree. I eventually ended up in Calgary, where I entered the University of Calgary and took a year and half towards Social Work. With the transfer of credits, I had a total of 2.5 years towards a Social Worker degree. But again, I discovered my heart wasn’t there. During my time in Calgary, I consistently attended First Assembly. I befriended Pastor Ken Bombay when I was about 19 years old, and he became a lifetime friend.

One evening, Pastor Ken announced though he was prepared to preach he felt led of the Holy Spirit to lay aside his message. He would call on people to say something. I was surprised when Pastor Ken asked me to come to the mic. He asked what would I like to thank Jesus for the most. I immediately said, “I would like to thank Jesus for a mother who prayed for me when I didn’t walk as close to Jesus as I should have.” As I sat down, a gentleman grabbed my hand and said God had showed him something about my life. After the service I called Pastor Ken and described the gentleman as best I could. I was told he had a valid ministry and I should meet with him. I think it was around Thanksgiving when Marlene and I sat down at a meal to hear him tell me God had given me one of offices of authority according to Ephesians 4:11: “...He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” It wasn’t too long after this that Marlene and I moved to Saskatoon. In 1981, I entered Central Pentecostal College. This time, I pursued my studies to the end, and was one of two to earn a Bachelor of Theology. After some 40 years of pastoring, I felt led to retire from full time ministry. I got a word a while ago, saying that God would send me to encourage churches. I am glad for the opportunities we have had so far. And like Max Lucado, I am still stunned by God’s grace.

Spiritwood Library activity highlights



Wednesday, Jan. 28, saw lots of favourite winter outside activities move inside for Lego Club at the Spiritwood Public Library. Lego Masters created their favourite outdoor activities with snowmobiles, snow forts, snow caves, ice castles, and beaver dams. One builder even made a penguin house. It’s a good thing that Lego won’t melt like snow.
By HEATHER GATZKE, Branch Librarian

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Sask. introduces early literacy supports

By MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Submitted

As part of its ongoing commitment to improving children’s reading skills, the Government of Saskatchewan has awarded a contract to Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation (STF) Professional Learning to offer literacy instruction training for Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers.

The Evidence Based Foundations for Literacy Instruction program will provide three days of professional development for teachers with the goal of increasing early

reading achievement levels for students.

“Student reading proficiency by the end of Grade 3 is one of the strongest predictors of future academic success and high school graduation,” Education Minister Everett Hindley said. “We are pleased to partner with the STF Professional Learning to provide high-quality reading instruction for educators, designed by Saskatchewan teachers, to help ensure that Saskatchewan’s youngest learners develop the foundational reading skills they need for lifelong success.”

STF Professional Learning

develops and delivers professional learning opportunities and resources for Saskatchewan teachers. The program will be available in English and French and will assist in embedding literacy instruction in daily teaching routines.

“We are proud to partner with the Government of Saskatchewan on this pilot program,” Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation President Samantha Becotte said. “This investment in evidence based literacy instruction demonstrates a shared commitment to supporting teachers and setting our youngest

learners up for success. By offering high-quality professional learning created for Saskatchewan teachers by Saskatchewan teachers, we are building on the strong expertise already in our classrooms and providing opportunities to deepen literacy practices across the province.”

The 2025 Speech from the Throne highlighted the Government of Saskatchewan’s focus on improving Kindergarten to Grade 3 reading outcomes and \$2 million has been allocated in 2025-26 to support ministry initiatives to increase reading skills in

Kindergarten to Grade 3.

In addition to the training to be delivered by STF Professional Learning, the Ministry of Education is providing school divisions and First Nations education authorities with provincially approved literacy screening tools and resources for the 2026-27 school year. These tools will help identify students who require additional support so appropriate interventions can be put in place. Screening students in the early years provides essential information to educators, schools, parents and government about student learning needs.

Sask. government ignored hospital safety warnings

By NDP
Submitted

Scott Moe and the Sask. Party knew about the safety crisis in Saskatchewan hospitals for years — and did nothing.

The 2024/25 annual report from the Ministry of Health found that there were more than 300 critical incidents in Saskatchewan hospitals between 2023 and 2025. Of those, 17 incidents involved criminal acts being committed towards a patient, and in one instance a patient was even abducted. It was also reported that violence doubled in hos-

pitals between 2022-23 and 2023-24 — and that violent incidents are underreported.

Last week, Moe’s incompetent Health Minister Jeremy Cockrill finally announced a “review” of hospital security. However, there was no timeline, no details on the scope of the review and no commitment to consult frontline healthcare workers. Those workers have been speaking about the healthcare safety crisis for years — 200 recently signed a letter demanding emergency action at St. Paul’s Hospital in Saskatoon after a patient

was found in possession of a firearm and three knives.

“Healthcare workers have been speaking out for years about the threats to them and their patients — and Scott Moe and Jeremy Cockrill ignored them at every turn,” said Meara Conway, Saskatchewan NDP Shadow Health Minister.

“Even one of these incidents is unacceptable. Moe and his loyalists in the Saskatchewan Health Authority’s senior ranks have let patient safety reach crisis levels. This was avoidable and preventable

had they listened to the warnings and recommendations. coming from the provincial auditor, from healthcare workers, from members of the public.

“The Sask. Party has spent more time setting up snitch lines than throwing frontline healthcare workers a lifeline.”

In 2024, a Provincial Auditor report found that 17 of 20 safety incidents investigated had “weak planned corrective action”. The report found that the Ministry’s own Critical Incident Review Committee suggested pat downs of

patients and the installation of metal detectors as stronger measures to prevent weapons from entering emergency rooms. Critically, the committee did not require SHA to revise its planned actions — it would be another 415 days before the Sask. Party finally announced a metal detector at St. Paul’s last week.

Last week, the Official Opposition exposed images of four tables full of weapons at a single entrance at Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon.

“It took over a year between the auditor calling for metal detectors to

keep patients safe and the Sask. Party to act,” said Nathaniel Teed, Saskatchewan NDP Labour Shadow Minister. “In that time, weapons entered emergency rooms, healthcare workers faced violence and threats. Their inaction made hospitals less safe for patients and staff.”

“My message to Scott Moe, Jeremy Cockrill, and their cronies on the SHA board, stop cowering in the cabinet office, and do your job.”

“It’s time for a government that will fix healthcare and make our hospitals safer. It’s time for change.”

Sask. touts energy sector in B.C., Alberta

By MINISTRY OF ENERGY & RESOURCES
Submitted

Energy and Resources Minister Chris Beaudry is promoting Saskatchewan as a leading destination for mining and energy investment during a multi-day visit to British Columbia and Alberta focused on strengthening export access, infrastructure and interprovincial cooperation.

“Saskatchewan is a global leader in resource development, and our focus is on supporting growth, investment and good-paying jobs,” Beaudry said. “That means working with partners

to move our resources to market more efficiently.”

On Jan. 25, Beaudry met with western provincial and northern territorial counterparts at the Western Mining Ministers Summit in Vancouver. Saskatchewan helped lead discussions on economic corridors and shared infrastructure, including connections to ports on the northwest coast, Hudson Bay and Grays Bay. Ministers signed a memorandum of understanding committing to avoid unnecessary delays to major natural resource projects as they work toward a Western Canadian Critical Minerals Strategy.

“As Canada’s largest primary pro-

ducer of critical minerals, Saskatchewan has an important role to play in building reliable supply chains,” Beaudry said.

On Jan. 26, Beaudry attended AME Roundup, a leading mineral exploration conference, where he met with resource companies and toured a lithium processing facility operated by Saltworks Technologies Inc. Saltworks and EMP Metals Corp. are developing Project Aurora, a lithium refining demonstration plant in southeastern Saskatchewan supported through the province’s Critical Minerals Innovation Incentive.

The minister also visited the Port of Vancouver, a key gateway for Sas-

katchewan exports. As production grows across sectors including potash, energy products and critical minerals, reliable port capacity remains essential to reaching global markets.

Beaudry concluded the trip in Calgary on January 28 with meetings focused on Saskatchewan’s oil and gas sector and the province’s goal of increasing production to 600,000 barrels per day by 2030.

“Saskatchewan producers continue to invest and innovate responsibly,” Beaudry said. “Our government will keep working with industry to ensure the sector remains competitive for the long term.”

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