

Shellbrook Chronicle & Spiritwood Herald

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New Shellbrook school on the horizon



Provincial budget day brought good news for Shellbrook, with the announcement that a new K-12 school will finally move ahead.

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

More than a decade after it was pitched as a top capital priority for the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division (SRSD), a new school for Shellbrook is finally in the works for the Ministry of Education.

The commitment to build an amalgamated K-12 school came in last week's provincial budget, and the announcement was well-received by the school division.

"As the local school trustee and Board Chair, as well as having two children who attended Shellbrook Elementary and W.P. Sandin, I was well aware of the need in the community," said SRSD Board Chair Cher Bloom.

"The announcement could not have been more timely, as I have received

photos this week of the roof leaks and buckets in hallways and classrooms at the high school," she added, noting that Shellbrook Elementary School has also been over-capacity for the past few years.

W.P. Sandin Public High School was built in 1961. Since then, it has been renovated multiple times, with the last major renovations coming 41 years ago, in 1985, followed by some work that was done on the roof of the gym in 2018. Most recently, in 2020, a larger roof repair project was undertaken at a cost of nearly \$300,000.

Shellbrook Elementary, meanwhile, was built in 1956 and last received major renovations in 1980, when the gym was added on, and in 2001, when it received a facelift.

At 65 and 70 years of age, respectively, both the high school and the

elementary school are considered by the school division to have reached the end of their lifespans. Despite this, facilities that are newer than both schools have already been replaced by the province.

"Our facilities department at Sask. Rivers does a wonderful job of keeping our schools in great shape for their age," Bloom said. "However, the older construction of the roof has been something the Sask. Rivers Facility Department has repaired almost yearly to keep the school functioning, and this has come with a hefty price tag."

When the idea for a new K-12 school was first pitched in 2015, the SRSD expected it would take three to five years to receive government approval and capital funding, depending on the province's available funds. After

government approval was received, the projected timeline for construction was two to three years.

The new school for Shellbrook will be the first new school built in the division since the construction of Vincent Massey Public School in Prince Albert in 2004.

"It is very positive to see rural schools being recognized as important capital projects from the Ministry," Bloom said.

Though details are scant at this early juncture, Bloom says the existing schools will remain open once work on the new facility gets underway.

"Once the new school is completed, the older buildings are generally demolished," she said. "These are items to be considered when looking at each individual project and have yet to be discussed by the division."



SPIRITWOOD
PHARMACY GROCERY

*Down on the corner...
First & Main*

Spiritwood Open Bonspiel crowns repeat winner

By **BEVRA FEE**
Spiritwood Herald
Reporter

The Doug Horn rink out of North Battleford returned to their skip's hometown to battle for their third Spiritwood Open Bonspiel win over the weekend of March 20 to 22, as the Spiritwood Curling Club hosted 16 teams for its annual bonspiel, which also celebrates the end of curling season with a banquet and entertainment.

By Sunday afternoon, the match-ups were set and eight teams took to the pebbled ice to determine the winners in each of four events.

The D event was a contest of skips named Wayne, as the Wayne Shutra rink bested the

Wayne Pauls rink.

The C event saw the Garrett Reddekopp rink come out ahead of the Lloyd Fisher rink, while the B event was a sibling rivalry of Rory Booth rink (minus the ailing Rory Booth) versus the Karstin Booth rink. Skipped by the eldest of three generations of Shutra in the building and aided by the youngest Shutra, Team Rory Booth outlasted big brother Karstin's team for the B win.

In the A final, yet another Booth rink — Bohdan Booth — was up against the veteran team out of North Battleford, comprised of Doug Horn, John Prokopchuk, Tim Schultz, and Doug Fehr. Riveting the spectators with a close game,

Team Booth tied the game coming home.

In the 8th end, Team Booth planted a rock behind a string of guards just before the skip rocks, but then advanced one of the opposition rocks in for shot and Horn did not need to throw his final rock for the win.

The Saturday evening highlight was the catered banquet of traditional ribs by Ronnie Sawatsky, an event that was established several years ago as "Rocks, Ribs and Roars" and which serves as a fundraiser for the Curling Club. This year's event was still being talked about through to the end of Sunday, with hypnotist Corrie J having drawn unexpected characters out of unsus-

pecting participants.

The Curling Club's efforts in fundraising have enhanced the Rec Centre meaningfully over the years, with lounge furniture and decor for the mezzanine viewing area, and bar tables with stools and decor for the

curling lobby. Screens and overhead cameras allow for better viewing in the curling galleries and extra brooms and equipment is organized and stored at ice level.

With only two events left for the curling season, another successful

year was brought about by the efforts of the Rec Centre employees, the Curling Club, and the many volunteers who dedicated time to providing top notch ice and facilities for the curling enthusiasts of Spiritwood.



A Event Champions, from left to right: Doug Horn, John Prokopchuk, Tim Schultz, and Doug Fehr.



B Event Winners Team Rory Booth, from left to right: Van Slater, Liam Simonar, Walter Shutra (filling in for Rory Booth), and Ryland Shutra.

Uncertain Sask. budget projects \$819 million deficit

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle
Reporter

With U.S. tariffs and the ongoing conflict in the Middle East driving global economic uncertainty, the Sask Party government tabled its 2026-2027 budget on Wednesday, March 18.

Titled "Protecting Saskatchewan," the Sask. Party government says the budget reflects the difficult decisions it was forced to make to hold to its pre-budget promise.

"Every province in Canada has been im-

pacted, and while Saskatchewan's strong and diverse economy puts us in a better position than most, we are not immune," Finance Minister Jim Reiter said while introducing the budget.

Continued on page 3

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Councillor: Town of Shellbrook
Number to be elected: 1

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Nomination forms may be obtained in the following ways:

- From our website – www.townofshellbrook.ca
- In person @ 71 Main Street

A Criminal record check **must** accompany all nomination forms dated no earlier than March 16th, 2026.

Dated this 16th day of March, 2026
Sigourney O'Halligan, Returning Officer

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Uncertain Sask. budget projects \$819 million deficit

Continued from 2

“So, as we prepared this budget, we had a choice: raise taxes, cut services, or protect Saskatchewan. We chose to protect Saskatchewan.”

To this end, Reiter says the budget contains no new taxes or cuts to services. This, however, comes at the cost of an \$819 million deficit, and a budget that isn’t projected to be balanced until at least the 2029-2030 fiscal year.

The Sask. Party government’s deficit projection for 2026-2027 is based on anticipated revenues of \$21.4 billion, marking a \$361 million, or 1.7 per cent, increase from last year. The government says this is driven primarily by gains in provincial sales tax (PST) and federal transfers, reflecting Saskatchewan’s growing population and strong economic conditions.

Meanwhile, the budget pegs expenses at \$22.2 billion, up \$1.2 billion or 5.7 per cent from 2025-2026. This, the government says, reflects continued investment in priority programs and services, higher utilization costs associated with population growth, and demand driven pressures in key sectors.

Along with the deficit, the budget projects the province’s gross debt will climb to \$39.9 billion, and reach \$43.5 billion by Budget 2027. Annual debt financing costs will also increase, reaching \$1.2 billion.

“We have listened to Saskatchewan people, and the top two concerns we have heard are affordability and access to healthcare. This budget addresses both,” Reiter said.

“The new provincial budget is protecting Saskatchewan. We can do that because Saskatchewan has a strong and growing economy.”

Affordability once

again took top billing in this year’s budget, with the government highlighting the \$2.5 billion in annual affordability measures it provides through tax credits, and the \$200 million families are projected to save by no longer paying tax on their first \$65,000 of income.

Additionally, the personal, spousal, equivalent-to-spouse, and child tax exemptions, as well as the seniors’ supplement, will increase by \$500 each again this year, and the Saskatchewan Low-income Tax Credit will be increased by another 5 per cent, as part of the second year of the government’s four-year commitment in the Saskatchewan Affordability Act.

On healthcare, which is always the largest budget item, spending is projected at \$8.4 billion, an increase of \$416 million, or 5.2 per cent, from last year. Central to this year’s budget is a \$636 million invest-

ment in infrastructure improvements, including \$238 million for Prince Albert’s Victoria Hospital, continued work on expanding the province’s nurse practitioner ranks, and funding for 200 more addictions treatment spaces.

The budget also earmarks: \$98 million for hospital and acute system capacity and EMS initiatives; \$29 million for the Health Human Resources Action Plan; \$12 million for primary and preventative care initiatives; and \$9 million for seniors and continuing care.

Education is the second biggest piece of the budget pie. This year, the government is projecting \$4.6 billion in spending, an increase of \$221 million or 5 per cent over last year. Of this, \$3.6 billion goes to the Kindergarten to Grade 12 system, libraries, and childcare.

On the capital side, the government has committed \$124 million to school infra-

structure. As part of this, after years of being at the top of the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division’s priority list, Shellbrook is on the list to receive a new school. There’s also \$19 million set aside for minor capital renewal projects to allow school divisions to address structural repairs and renovations.

Other education expenditures include: an additional 50 specialized support classrooms across the province again this year, bringing the total up to 108; \$9 million to enhance school food programs; \$426 million for early learning and childcare; \$12 million to support the provincial library system; and \$1 million to support literacy initiatives.

Elsewhere, social services spending is pegged at \$1.9 billion, an increase of \$87 million or 4.7 per cent over last year.

This includes a \$20

million increase to meet government commitments of the Provincial Approach to Homelessness and increase the Saskatchewan Housing Benefit; \$19 million for programming targeted at children and youth with complex needs; \$12 million to increase monthly income assistance benefits by two per cent for Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS) and Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) starting in May 2026; and an \$8 million increase to support over 500 more seniors who are already accessing the Personal Care Home Benefit.

For the province’s highways, this year’s budget commits to \$417 million of capital projects, which will improve more than 850 kilometres of highways. This includes 260 kilometres of paving, 490 km of combined medium and light pavement preservation, 50 kilo-

metres of Thin Membrane Surface and rural highway upgrades, and 20 kilometres of gravel rehabilitation.

Other assorted budget highlights include the small business tax rate remaining at 1 per cent, \$310 million to support RCMP operations and First Nations policing, and nearly \$400 million being delivered to municipalities through the Municipal Revenue Sharing Program.

Despite the spending increases across most portfolios, the Sask NDP called the budget a “bad news budget.”

“Everything your family needs is more expensive and there’s no new cost of living relief in this budget,” said Sask. NDP Leader Carla Beck in a statement. “There isn’t a dime of gas tax relief. There are new taxes and fees on hunting, fishing and driving — even after Scott Moe promised not to raise taxes.”

Holy Week Schedule 2026

MAUNDY (HOLY) THURSDAY

Thursday, April 2nd, 2026

St. Agatha’s Roman Catholic Church, SHELLBROOK
Mass at 7:00 PM

GOOD FRIDAY

Friday, April 3rd, 2026

St. Agatha’s Roman Catholic Church, Shellbrook
Stations of the Cross at 2PM, Service at 3PM.
Special collection for the Holy Land.

Leask Gospel Tabernacle (PAOC), Leask
Service at 11:00 AM

Shellbrook Pentecostal Assembly (PAOC), Shellbrook
Service at 11:00 AM

Immanuel Lutheran Church (CALC), Parkside/
Parkside Pentecostal Church (PAOC), Parkside
Joint Service at Immanuel Lutheran Church 11AM
Speaker: Pastor Lorne Valuck

Zion Lutheran Church (NALC), Canwood
Service at 10:00 AM

HOLY SATURDAY/EASTER VIGIL

Saturday, April 4th, 2026

St. Agatha’s Roman Catholic Church, Shellbrook
Service at 7:00 PM

EASTER SUNDAY

Sunday, April 5th, 2026

St. Henry’s Roman Catholic Church, Leask
Mass at 9:00 AM

St. Agatha’s Roman Catholic Church, Shellbrook
Mass at 11:00 AM

Leask Gospel Tabernacle (PAOC), Leask
Pancake Breakfast 10AM, Resurrection Service 11AM

Shellbrook Pentecostal Assembly (PAOC), Shellbrook
Resurrection Sunday 10:30 AM (Water Baptism Service)

Parkside Pentecostal Church (PAOC), Parkside
Easter Service 10:30 AM

Immanuel Lutheran Church (CALC), Parkside
Easter Service 8AM, followed by Pancake Breakfast

Zion Lutheran Church (NALC), Canwood
Easter Divine Service 9AM, followed by Pancake Breakfast

St. John’s Lutheran Church (NALC), Shellbrook
Easter Breakfast 10AM, followed by
Easter Divine Service 11AM

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Provincial Budget | 2026-27

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Sask. budget barely moves the dial

With another provincial budget season in the rear-view mirror, we've effectively reached the halfway point of the Sask. Party government's current four-year mandate.

As such, it seems only fitting to reflect on the beginning of the government's term.

In 2024, after winning the closest election since 2003 — when Lorne Calvert's NDP beat Elwin Hermanson's fledgling Saskatchewan Party by just two seats — a chastened Premier Scott Moe said the people of Saskatchewan had sent his government a clear message.

"When you look at the results tonight, there are many people who voted for the Sask Party in the past but chose not to in this election. We have lost your support, whether it be due to our management of healthcare, or education, or the cost-of-living pressures we're all feeling," he said on election night.

"All of us in government, and it starts with myself, are going to take a bit of time and reflect on the message that was sent here this evening and what exactly it means. And we will strive to win back your support."

Reflection, accountability, change. These were lofty promises from a government.

Governments — especially those with majority mandates — rarely have any desire or incentive to change.

It's understandable; political parties are built upon clear sets of beliefs, and policy is crafted based on those same beliefs. Asking a government to change, then, is tantamount to asking it to change its core values.

To be certain, there has been some change from Mr. Moe himself, most notably in his tone when dealing with the federal government.

During the nine-year reign of former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, it often felt like Mr. Moe was both the premier of Saskatchewan and the leader of Mr. Trudeau's official oppo-



JORDAN
TWISS
~
News Editor

sition.

But then voters in the United States re-elected Donald Trump, who began threatening Canada's economy and sovereignty, and Mr. Trudeau tendered his long overdue resignation.

At last, Mr. Moe and Ottawa had a common adversary to focus on. And by the time Mark Carney became Mr. Trudeau's replacement, and won his first election, Mr. Moe had gone from leader of the unofficial op-

position to hopeful optimist about the prospects of working with the federal government.

Thus far, that hope has borne fruit, as Mr. Moe and Mr. Carney have become frequent travel companions on global trade missions. So drastic is the change, in fact, that last week's budget even makes note of the improved relationship between Saskatchewan and Ottawa.

This change can only be a boon for both Saskatchewan and Canada (assuming Mr. Carney makes good on at least some of his ambitious long-term commitments).

This, however, is where the changes from Mr. Moe's government seem to begin and end.

Last spring, the Sask Party government continued to do pretty much nothing to address the concerns of the voters it lost because of its "management of healthcare, or education, or the cost-of-living pressures we're all feeling," tabling a budget with a bogus \$12.2 million surplus that included nothing to account for Mr. Trump's tariffs.

What's more, even as the Sask Party government boasted about increased funding for healthcare and education, its own documents showed it had budgeted less than it spent in the prior fiscal year.

As we learned on budget day last week, the government's supposed \$12.2 million surplus is now projected to be a \$1.2 billion deficit by the end of the fiscal year (and this isn't the first time in recent history that



the government has been way off the mark where its finances were concerned).

Keen to avoid a similar mistake to last year, the government didn't try to pretend that the ongoing global instability caused by Mr. Trump doesn't exist.

Instead, it used this instability to cast itself rather heroically.

"Every province in Canada has been impacted, and while Saskatchewan's strong and diverse economy puts us in a better position than most, we are not immune," Finance Minister Jim Reiter said while introducing the budget.

"So, as we prepared this Budget, we had a choice: raise taxes, cut services, or protect Saskatchewan. We chose to protect Saskatchewan."

The result of this choice is a projected \$819 million deficit, and a budget that isn't projected to be balanced until at least the 2029-2030 fiscal year.

Along with the deficit, the budget projects the province's gross debt will climb to \$39.9 billion and reach \$43.5 billion by Budget 2027. Annual debt financing costs will also increase, reaching \$1.2 billion.

While it's true that this year's budget doesn't contain any new taxes or service cuts (debatable, in instances where spending doesn't keep pace with inflation), it doesn't mean it

does anything to make life more affordable.

Prior to the budget, SaskPower and SGI announced rate increases (about 8 per cent for SaskPower over the next year, and 7.5 per cent for SGI).

SGI also increased deductibles for basic plate insurance (up to \$950 from \$700) and added administrative fees to new vehicle registrations and new or renewed driver's licenses (\$15), vehicle registration renewals (\$5), and driver's license payment transactions (\$2).

Hunters and fishers will also face added fees this year, and so, too, will skilled workers who go through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program.

Moreover, while the government boasts about making life more affordable with tax credits and income tax cuts, it's actually expecting to take in \$217 million more in PST this year, and \$50 million more in income taxes.

As far as affordability goes, this seems like a far cry from the change that voters asked for.

Indeed, even the Conservative-leaning Fraser Institute is calling for change from the Sask Party government. More shockingly, it's advising the government to follow the example of Roy Romanow's NDP government of the early 90s.

Shellbrook Chronicle

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Spiritwood Herald

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Doug Panter receives outstanding service award

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

Doug Panter has lived in the Big River area his whole life, and still resides on the property where his grandfather settled in the 1930s.

Like most people who live in or near small communities, he learned early on the importance of being involved in the community. So in 1985, when he was asked if he'd serve as a councillor for the Rural Municipality of Big River, he agreed to put his name forward.

That was 41 years ago. And though his role changed from councillor, to deputy reeve, to reeve, and then back to councillor, Panter continues to serve the R.M. of Big River as a source of experience and wisdom.

"We've had a lot of challenges. In the lake divisions, when I originally started, we had four subdivisions. Now, we have 24 in the municipality. Each one has its own challenges, and each one you learn from," he said. "Just in support of council and administration, I've stayed there to be the block."

On March 10, at the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) Convention, Saskatchewan's Lieutenant Governor, Bernadette McIntyre, honoured Panter's four decades of service by presenting him with the 2026 Lieutenant Gov-

ernor's Award for Outstanding Service to Rural Saskatchewan.

The Lieutenant Governor's Award for Outstanding Service to Rural Saskatchewan was established in 1995 by the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM).

The award honours reeves, councillors, or administrators for contributions to rural Saskatchewan, and is presented by the Lieutenant Gov-

ernor at the annual Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Convention.

Nominations are submitted to the SARM office. A selection committee reviews the nominations to select one individual for his or her achievements in making rural Saskatchewan a better place to live.

"There are no words. I was very honoured and humbled to get the

award. I'm very proud of it," Panter said of the recognition.

Reflecting on his decades of service, Panter says what sticks with him most is the progress that's been made with Big River & District Fire & Rescue.

When Panter first joined council, the fire department didn't have much and was in the midst of acquiring a fire truck from Saskatoon. During this time, Panter decided to join the fire committee, and has remained involved ever since.

Over the decades, the department built a new fire hall, and acquired a fleet of equipment, including a water tanker, another truck, and a side-by-side (in 2025). Just two weeks ago, the department added another fire truck to its fleet.

"We're very well equipped," he said, noting that the key to this was strengthening the relationship between the R.M. of Big River and the Town of Big River.

"You have to be that way in the community. That's what we've worked towards all the time."

Apart from Panter's work on the fire department committee, he's also served in varying capacities in search and rescue, recreation, cultural development, the water shed authority, health services. He is currently president of Ladder Valley Community Centre.



Doug Panter, joined by his wife, Kathy, accepts his award from Lieutenant Governor Bernadette McIntyre (left).

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Senior Elks surge ahead in league final

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle
Reporter

The Shellbrook Elks Senior Hockey Club hit the ice at the Richardson Pioneer Recreation Centre on Friday, March 20, looking to even up their Twin Rivers Hockey League finals series against the Rosthern Wheatkings.

With a boisterous hometown crowd backing them, the Elks jumped out to the start they needed on an aggressive forecheck that ended with a blast from the point tipped into the back of the Rosthern net. Ashton Miller was credited with the goal, while Brendon Beaulac and Nathan Flodell earned assists on the play.

Despite a promising start, penalty troubles were once again a thorn in the Elks' side, allowing Rosthern's Ben Zultok to tie the game at 1-1 on assists from Brayden Anderson and Marek Schneider. And less than a minute later, Rosthern surged ahead 2-1 on a fakeout shot that tricked Elks goalie Alex Bell. Sam Chitenden scored the goal, with an assist from Brett Weiman.

After getting a momentum boost from a power play of their own, the Elks got back into the game on a doorstep one-timer from Levi Logan, assisted by Payton Kachur and Kaiden Couture. The Elks kept the pressure on after this, taking a 3-2 lead on a late pow-

er play goal from Cole Duperreault, assisted by Jody Blais and Cole Tanchuk.

Though the Elks came out flatfooted to start the second period, and were saved at one point by an early whistle that negated a Rosthern goal, they weathered the storm and held onto their 3-2 lead.

Keeping the Wheatkings off the board as they tallied 26 shots on goal, the Elks had the only offensive highlight of the period, when Cole Duperreault took a loose puck from end to end and blasted it to the back of the goal.

Taking a 4-2 lead into the third period, the Elks played a solid defensive game to keep the Wheatkings from narrowing the gap. And with a late power play, they pounded the nail in the Wheatkings' coffin thanks to a hat trick goal from Cole Duperreault, assisted by Jody Blais and Cole Tanchuk.

Elks (4) vs Kings (3) OT

Heading to Rosthern the following night, the Elks stumbled out of the opening faceoff and found themselves down 1-0 on an early goal from Rosthern's Brayden Anderson, assisted by Aaron Campbell and Ryan Redekopp.

A penalty just after the midway point of

the period didn't do the Elks any favours, allowing the Wheatkings to go up 2-0 on a goal from Ben Zultok, assisted by Redekopp. However, the Elks rallied with an unassisted goal from Cole Duperreault to go into the second period down by a score of 2-1.

In a slow-going second period, the Wheatkings extended their lead to 3-1 on Brayden Anderson's second goal of the game, assisted by Aaron Campbell. But, with the help of a late power play and another goal from Cole Duperreault, the Elks once again pulled within one goal. Jody Blais and Kaiden Couture assisted on the play.

In a third period that saw the Elks and Wheatkings combine for just 14 shots on net, it was the Elks who made their matter by tying the game at 3-3 on a goal from Kamden Logan, assisted by Sam Miller and Cole Tanchuk. The Elks held on after this, forcing the game into overtime.

The Elks outlasted the Wheatkings in the extra period, claiming a 4-3 win on a goal from Cole Tanchuk, and taking a 2-1 lead in the best-of-five finals series.

The action returns to Shellbrook on Friday, March 27, where

the Elks have a chance to win their first Twin Rivers Hockey League championship in front of their home crowd. Puck drop is set for 8

p.m. Should they lose, the series will return to Rosthern for the final game on Saturday, March 28.

Spiritwood Library activity highlights



The library's March Early Dismissal Program was Perler Beads. The kit was borrowed from the Wapiti Head Office. Each child made a creation using templates from the kit, including a snake, a bulldog wearing eyeglasses, and a stand up Santa.



The lucky winner of the Spiritwood Public Library's Dessert of the Month for March was Shirley Kajner. Her spice chiffon cake was made by board member Ruth French.

By **HEATHER GATZKE**, Branch Librarian



Elks forward Levi Logan tries to corral a loose puck in front of a wide-open Wheatkings goal.

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF ASSESSMENT ROLL

Pursuant to subsection 214 of *The Municipalities Act*, Notice is hereby given that the Assessment Roll for the Resort Village of Pebble Baye for the year 2026 has been prepared and is open to inspection by calling (306)468-3104 or emailing resortpebblebaye@gmail.com for an appointment between March 27th and April 28th, 2026. Any person who wishes to appeal against his or her assessment is required to file his or her notice of appeal along with a fee of \$200.00, refundable upon a successful appeal, with: The Secretary for the Board of Revision of Nor Sask. Board Services, Box 459, Aberdeen, Sask. S0K 0A0 or phone 1-306-314-5418.

Appeals to be submitted by the 28th day of April, 2026.

Dated at Canwood, Saskatchewan, this 27th day of March, 2026.

Terry Lofstrom, Assessor
Resort Village of Pebble Baye

TOWN OF BLAINE LAKE 2026 NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF ASSESSMENT ROLL

Notice is hereby given that the assessment roll for the Town of Blaine Lake for the year 2026 has been prepared and is open to inspection in the office of the assessor from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Friday from March 24, 2026 to April 24, 2026.

A bylaw pursuant to section 214 of *The Municipalities Act* has been passed and the assessment notices have been sent as required.

Any person who wishes to discuss the notice of assessment or potential appeal, may contact the assessor at the Town of Blaine Lake, Box 10, Blaine Lake, Sask. S0J 0J0.

Appeals are to be mailed with the required fees to the Secretary of the Board of Revision, Western Municipal Consulting, PO Box 149, Meota, Sask. S0M 1X0. You have 30 days from this date of notice to appeal the assessment. Assessment Appeal fees are \$250.00.

If you have any questions regarding your assessment notice changes, please call SAMA at 1-800-667-7262.

Jim Puffalt, Assessor

TOWN OF SHELLBROOK

www.townofshellbrook.ca



The Town of Shellbrook currently has an opportunity for a
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

If you are enthusiastic, enjoy a challenge and love working with the public in a fast-paced office environment; then we want you on our team!

In this full-time permanent position, you will need the ability to multi-task & pay close attention to detail. Excellent communication and problem-solving skills will be required. The applicant must possess a minimum Grade 12/GED, is bondable, hold a standard certificate in Local Government Administration or a minimum 5 years related Municipal accounting experience and willing to work towards a certificate in Local Government Administration. This role requires strong communication, and problem-solving skills to support the administration of Town policies and programs effectively.

How to Apply:

Interested applicants are invited to submit their resume and cover letter outlining their qualifications and experience to the Town of Shellbrook no later than

April 2nd, 2026 at 4:00pm.

Please send applications to:

Town of Shellbrook

71 Main Street, or by

mail: Box 40, Shellbrook, SK S0J 2E0

email: cao@townofshellbrook.ca

We are committed to workplace diversity. We thank all applicants for their interest; however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

VILLAGE OF SHELL LAKE NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF ASSESSMENT ROLL

Notice is hereby given that the Assessment Roll for the Village of Shell Lake for the year 2026 has been prepared and is open for inspection at the Office of the Administrator from 9:00 a.m. to noon and 12:30 to 4:00 p.m. on the following days: Wednesday to Friday from March 30, 2026, until April 30, 2026.

A bylaw pursuant to section 214 of *The Municipalities Act* has been passed and the assessment notices have been sent as required. All fees must be submitted to the local assessor at the Village of Shell Lake. All appeals must be filed with the Secretary of the Board of Revision, Nicole Hoskins, which can be sent electronically to: secretary@westernmunicipal.ca, or via post/mail to VILLAGE OF SHELL LAKE, Box 280, Shell Lake, SK S0J 2G0, and forwarded to the Secretary of the Board of Revision.

Any person wishing to discuss the notice of assessment or potential appeal may contact the assessor at the VILLAGE OF SHELL LAKE, Box 280, Shell Lake, SK S0J 2G0. A notice of appeal, accompanied by a \$200.00 appeal fee, which will be returned if the appeal is successful, must be submitted by April 30, 2026.

Dated at Shell Lake, Saskatchewan, this 30th day of March, 2026
Tammy MacSymetz, Assessor

Farmers, wildlife struggle to find balance

The agriculture sector generally likes to suggest it is pro wildlife conservation, but that support really seems restricted to wildlife relegated to locales as far away from farm and ranch land as possible.

A moose, or elk roaming among the tamarack and muskeg of the province's north is great.

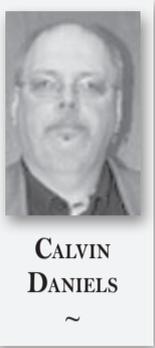
And, a few critters on fringe farmland are tolerated — at least to some degree.

But if wild populations show the adaptability to successfully grow numbers to suddenly impeach upon general farm operations in a negative way, agriculture is ready

to draw the line in the sand and bring out the traps, rifles, and poisons.

We see gophers spotting a pasture and worry about injuries to livestock stepping in the holes, or damage to equipment — the gopher homes being like street potholes to navigate.

It is why many producers were less than pleased when Health Canada denied the 2026 request from Saskatchewan and Alberta to use two per cent liquid strychnine for Richardson's ground squirrel control. The federal ban, implemented in 2024 following a 2023 provincial



CALVIN DANIELS

phase-out, prohibits the toxin due to risks to non-target species.

The sound of geese flying south can be enjoyed, but farmers hope scare cannons will keep them away from dining on the crops. If not, maybe more hunting is needed.

Antelope are nearly a poster critter for the Prairies, but no one

wants them climbing on stacks of feed bales.

Seeing elk and moose in non-traditional areas as they realize crops make good feed might have been a cool thing at one point, but as numbers grow they are not as appreciated today.

That is particularly the case currently with elk, which are finding life in a number of farm areas to their liking.

In response to producer concerns the Ministry of Environment and Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC) are partnering to help producers address ongoing issues with gathering herds of elk where pre-

vention methods have not been successful. For 2027, the Ministry of Environment will be offering eight depredation permits to producers who have a demonstrated history of significant damage from congregating elk.

"As a government, we are working to find the right balance for the people of our province," Environment Minister Darlene Rowden said in a release. "We are continuing to explore a variety of options to help reduce damage and the impact on producers' livelihoods, while ensuring elk populations remain healthy."

In a case like this,

we want to blame the elk for encroaching into the realm of farmers, but of course it is farmers who have taken over wildlife habitat and in some cases pushed wildlife out (or, with hay land and crops, invited them in with a veritable smorgasbord).

The thought of up to eight head from a wild herd of elk being killed because they are doing what they need to survive is frankly off-putting, even if the rationale is understood.

It is an unfortunate truth that farming and wildlife only co-exist if the wildlife stay where producers can tolerate them.

Sask. unveils AgriStability changes

By **MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**
Submitted

Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister David Marit has announced changes to the 2026 AgriStability Program, administered by the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC). This follows through on the province's ongoing commitment to ensure its business risk management programs remain relevant and further support Saskatchewan livestock producers.

"These AgriStability Program enhancements better recognize feed costs and pasture use, providing more meaningful and responsive support for our livestock producers," Marit said. "Our government has been responsive to the sector's requests, ensuring producers have access to relevant programs they need to manage risk and remain resilient."

Starting in the 2026 Program Year, for operations that rent pastureland for grazing, the costs associated with the rent or lease will be considered as allowable expenses for AgriStability. The expense must be reflective of a reasonable feed volume for the animals grazed. The producer needs to demonstrate that the transaction is for access to livestock feed, not for crop or forage production.

As previously announced, also starting in the 2026 Program Year, AgriStability is adjusting the feed inventory pricing for livestock producers. This accounts for feed destined to be used on the farm and not sold. When feed prices rise, the value of ending inventories can increase, potentially offsetting losses of actual feed production. This modified calculation will use the end of year price along with opening and ending feed quantities to calculate the value of the inventory change.

"The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) appreciates the province's continued commitment to strengthening AgriStability and ensuring business risk management

programs meet the practical needs of Saskatchewan producers," said Bill Huber, SARM President. "The inclusion of pasture rental costs and the feed inventory adjustment are meaningful first steps that better reflect the realities faced by our livestock producers, particularly during dry years."

"The Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association (SSGA) welcomes the 2026 AgriStability program changes that better reflect how livestock producers manage their operations," SSGA President Jeff Yorga said. "Starting to capture on-farm feed inventories and rented pasture expenses is a great first step toward strengthening the program's ability to support producers through dry years, rising costs and market uncertainty."

"Strong risk management programs are essential for Saskatchewan cattle producers to remain competitive and resilient," Saskatchewan Cattle Association (SCA) Chair Chad Ross said. "SCA has worked hard to ensure producers have responsive and practical programs available to them. We appreciate the announced enhancements to the 2026

AgriStability Program. These improvements will help Saskatchewan producers more effectively manage their risks."

Enrolling in AgriStability is simple. To request a new participant package, call the SCIC AgriStability Call Centre at 1-866-270-8450 or email agristability@scic.ca. The deadline to enroll in the 2026 AgriStability Program Year is April 30, 2026.

AgriStability protects Canadian producers against large declines in farming income for reasons such as production loss, increased costs and market conditions. It is one of the Business Risk Management programs under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

TOWN OF SHELLBROOK

www.townofshellbrook.ca



Request for Tender Sports Coordinator (Contracted Service)

The Town of Shellbrook is seeking proposals from qualified individuals or firms for a one-year contracted Sports Coordinator position, with potential for renewal. The Coordinator will act as a liaison between the Town and local sporting groups, supporting communication, scheduling, community engagement, and recreation program coordination for the Pool, Rink, and Sportsgrounds.

Key Responsibilities:

- Engage with user groups and assess community needs
- Coordinate facility and field scheduling by working with community schedulers
- Support community sporting and recreational events
- Foster positive relationships with volunteers and organizations
- Attend meetings and provide monthly reports to Council
- Provide on-call evening and weekend availability

Applicant Requirements:

Experience in recreation or sports administration, strong communication and organizational skills, and the ability to work independently.

Proposal Must Include:

Cover letter, resume or profile, fee structure, two references, and any supporting information.

Submission Deadline: April 17th, 2026

Submit to:

Town of Shellbrook – Chief Administrative Officer
PO Box 40, 71 Main St., Shellbrook, SK S0J 2E0
Email: cao@townofshellbrook.ca



TOWN OF SHELLBROOK NOTICE

ASSESSMENT ROLL

Notice is hereby given that the assessment roll for the Town of Shellbrook for the year of 2026 has been prepared and is open to inspection in the office of the Assessor from 8:30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday from March 23rd, 2026 to April 23rd, 2026.

A bylaw pursuant to section 214 of the *Municipalities Act* has been passed and the assessment notices have been sent as required.

Any person who wishes to appeal against his or her assessment is required to file his or her notice of appeal with: The Assessor, Town of Shellbrook, Box 40, Shellbrook, SK., S0J 2E0 by 4pm on April 23rd, 2026.

Dated this 23rd day of March, 2026.

Sigourney O'Halligan, Assessor

**ADVERTISING DEADLINE IS
FRIDAY 4 PM**

Spiritwood Skate Show a fairytale performance

By **BEVRA FEE**
Spiritwood Herald
 Reporter

Wicked Wolves. Groovy Gnomes. Noble Knights. The Enchanted Forest had them all and then some! Performing to a packed arena, the skating students of Spiritwood Skating Club celebrated their season of skating with an astounding show of colour and magic on Sunday, March 22.

From large group numbers of first-year skaters to solos by graduating skaters, the Enchanted Forest presentation truly did enchant with delightful costumes and intricate skating combined.

Admission to the show was by donation, but the widely publicized event drew a large

audience with its offering of prize draws, an enhanced kitchen menu of pulled pork and other delicacies not ordinarily found in the rink, as well as the large membership of skaters that comprise the Spiritwood Skating Club.

Led by NCCP-trained Coach Sherryl Britton, the Club boasts 61 members, with 17 program assistants (also members). Programs offered are CanSkate to StarSkate, with all levels from pre to advanced.

With 18 numbers showcasing the skating club's hard work, the full afternoon was a beautiful spectacle that was appreciated by the supportive audience.

"It takes a lot of planning to execute what has now become one of the



The Fireflies and Dragons routine lit up the rink.

biggest events of the rink season in Spiritwood," noted Spiritwood Skating Club board member Heather Sarrazin. "The SSC Board of Directors is a small group with big ideas, and we all pour a lot of ourselves into the club — not only throughout the year but especially at Carnival time."

Of the many beautiful performances, the most dynamic was the final performance of "Fireflies & Dragons," a dark number lit up by yellow sparklers (fireflies) and flashlights (dragon tamers). The number included a mix of age groups in the story of catching and taming dragons.

While the show brought amusement at the beginner skaters and

delight at the beauty of the costumes, the skill and grace that are the ultimate goal of figure skating were demonstrated by graduating skater Emeri Simonar. Her final skate was one of grace and emotion, as she demonstrated what all young skaters aspire to be.

Simonar, along with fellow graduating skater, Brock Fry, gave evidence of their dedication and growth over their years in Spiritwood Skating Club.

"The SSC Carnival brings a lot of joy to our community," Sarrazin said. "The packed arena yesterday just goes to show how significant it is to have such an active skating club for all these children in our community."



Brock Fry and Emeri Simonar are this year's graduating skaters.



Kylie Sarrazin and Hallie Pomedli perform a pairs routine.



An enchanted tea party was a delight for all.



Noble Knights skate to the rescue.



The Spiritwood Skating Club put on an enchanting performance during its year-end ice show.



Whimsical witches cast a spell on the audience.

Big River welcomes new fire truck

By **CHAD DUNN**
Big River Fire Chief

The Town of Big River and the R.M. of Big River No. 555 have made a major investment in public safety with the arrival of a new fire pumper truck for the Big River and District Fire Department.

A 2024 Acres Prestige Series top-mount enclosed pumper fire apparatus, built on a Freightliner M2-106 chassis, was officially delivered on Friday, March 13. The purchase was jointly approved by

both councils following a recommendation from the Big River and District Fire Committee, representing more than

three years of planning and cooperation. The truck was manufactured by Acres Industries Inc. of Wawanesa, Manito-

ba, with coordination through Seahawk Fire.

Members of council and volunteer firefighters were on hand to re-

ceive the new apparatus. Representatives from Seahawk Fire also provided hands-on training to ensure firefighters are fully prepared to operate the equipment safely and effectively.

With the arrival of the new pumper, the department's 1978 International fire truck has been officially retired from service after decades of use. The department will continue to operate its 1998 American LaFrance truck, which was purchased in 2018.

The Big River and District Fire Department is a volunteer service made up of 21 firefighters. While three

members reside within the Town of Big River, the majority live in the surrounding rural municipality and nearby areas. With 39 years of service, I am proud to serve alongside a dedicated team whose experience and leadership continue to strengthen our department.

The Town and R.M. of Big River continue to work together to fund and support essential services, demonstrating a strong local partnership. This shared investment is expected to improve emergency response capabilities and enhance safety for residents throughout the area.



Members of the Big River and District Fire Department welcome the department's new fire truck.

Shellbrook Grade 5s showcase science smarts

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

From lemon and potato batteries to popping balloons with orange peels to classics like erupting volcanoes, some of science's

most interesting concepts were on display at Shellbrook Elementary School on Thursday, March 12, as Grade 5 students took part in a science fair.

Students, teachers, and parents were all invited to attend and take in

the many displays, learn about science, and ask questions of the presenters. Meanwhile, volunteers Cher Bloom (Sask. Rivers School Board Chair), Garette Tebay (Sask. Rivers Superintendent of Schools), and Jordyn Pillar (Biology 30 Teacher at W.P. Sandin High School) served as judges, helping decide which three projects will advance to a larger Regional Science Fair, which takes place Tuesday, March 31, at the Science Centre at Prince Albert's Northgate Mall.

The science fair was put together by Grade 5 teacher Kalli Pederson, with help from Mrs. Winsor and Mrs. Moore. Pederson says she got the idea to organize it because she has fond memories of participating in science fairs when she was in elementary school and wanted her students to make similar memories of their own.

"The science fair is such a valuable experience because it gives students a chance to be curious, creative, and proud of their learning," Pederson said. "Watching them work so hard, solve problems, and then confidently share their projects with others is incredibly special. It helps them see that their ideas matter and that they are capable of amazing things."

Forty-three students participated in this year's science fair, putting together 22 projects of their choosing.

Following a day filled with science, Zayden Parsons was crowned the science fair winner for his hydraulic claw. Zayden built the claw out of cardboard and used water, tubing,

and syringes to make it move.

Meanwhile, Hudson Johnson and Jaxson Stene with The Five Second Rule, where they answered the age-old question by showing that, yes, germs do grow in those five seconds after food is dropped.

And in third place were Aubryn Olson and Shaelyn McAleese, who explored wind power by building wind turbines to power an entire cardboard box village.

"More than anything, I hope students walked away feeling proud of themselves," Pederson said. "I hope they learned that asking questions, making mistakes, trying again, and sticking with something can lead to wonderful results. I also hope they discovered that learning can be exciting, meaningful, and something they can truly enjoy."



Zayden Parsons claimed first place with his hydraulic claw.



Hudson Johnson and Jaxson Stene placed second with their project about the Five Second Rule.



Aubryn Olson and Shaelyn McAleese placed third with their wind turbine project.



COMMISSIONAIRES
TRUSTED · EVERYDAY · EVERYWHERE

WE ARE HIRING!

Who are the Commissionaires?
We are the only not-for-profit security company in Canada. We have the social mandate of the re-employment of Veterans (whether they are Military or RCMP), as well as anyone else interested in serving their community.

RCMP Guard responsibilities are:
Monitor all prisoners to ensure their security and well being. Observe and check prisoners frequently and irregularly. Assist RCMP member, when required, to search prisoners. Organize meals, record prisoner activity and maintain a prisoner activity logbook. Maintain cleanliness and tidiness of cells when vacated or arrange janitorial assistance. Ensure all personal effects removed from prisoners are properly secured. Monitor fire safety and be fully conversant with fire orders. Handle and dispense laundry items. Other duties as assigned by the detachment Officers. This is an on-call position with no set days or hours.

Payrate: \$20.68 per hour

To apply, please go to the **Shellbrook** or **Ahtahkakoop RCMP detachment** for further instruction and information. *Only those selected for an interview will be contacted.*
We are an equal opportunity employer.

PUBLIC NOTICE – Village of Canwood

Public notice is hereby given that the Village of Canwood intends to adopt a bylaw under *The Planning and Development Act, 2007*, to amend Bylaw No. 2023/02, known as the Zoning Bylaw.

INTENT: The proposed zoning bylaw amendment is to amend the Zoning District Map referred to in Section 6.2 of Bylaw 2023/02 to rezone from R – Residential District to CS – Community Services District that a portion of R on the PT N 68PA05443 as shown within the bold blue line on the map which appears as part of this notice.

AFFECTED LAND: The affected lands are those zoned in the Residential District.

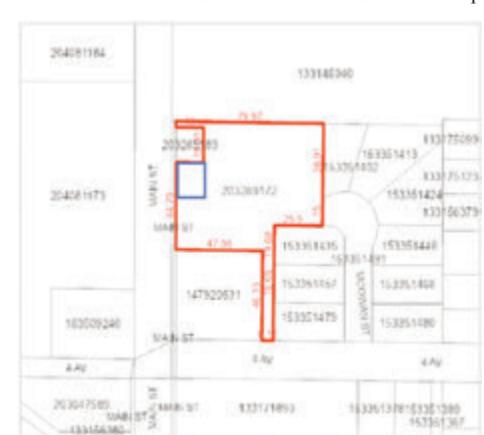
REASON: The reason for the amendment is to provide community service development in an area currently zoned as residential.

PUBLIC INSPECTION: Any person may inspect the bylaw by contacting the Village of Canwood office during regular office hours. Copies of the bylaw will be made available by regular mail or electronically.

PUBLIC HEARING: Council will hold a public hearing on April 21, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at the Village of Canwood Office in Canwood. Alternatively, any person or group that wants to comment on the proposed bylaw is encouraged to submit written comments prior to the meeting. Written submissions may be sent by email to canwood.town@sasktel.net, by Canada Post a minimum of 4 business days in advance of the hearing, or dropped off at the Village office during regular office hours.

Issued at the Village of Canwood on March 26, 2026.

Heather Sten
Administrator



Fishing derby catches funds for fire department

By SYLVIA JENSEN
Shell Lake Fire Funders

The Shell Lake Fire Funders held their annual Fish Derby on March 7. It was great to see all the people out there fishing and enjoying the great weather.

They started out with a pancake & sausage breakfast. Fishing took place from noon to 3 p.m. After fishing, everyone gathered at the Lion's Hall for pork on a bun with all the fixings, and the cash and merchandise prizes were handed out.

There were 22 fish caught through-

out the day, and the winners were as follows:

First fish caught (\$100): Mike Wald, Saskatoon;

Largest fish caught (\$5,000): Donald Doell, Warman;

2nd largest (\$2,000): John Martin, Saskatoon;

3rd largest fish (\$1,000): Ken Schaan, Saskatoon; and

First fish caught by a junior fisherperson (\$50): no fish caught by a junior; name picked out of the draw drum was Corbin Patrick, Debden.

Congratulations to all of the winners!



Donald Doell (left) accepts the \$5,000 prize for catching the largest fish of the day from Greg Ardagh.



John Martin (left) won \$2,000 for catching the second largest fish.



Ken Schaan (middle) won \$1,000 for catching the third largest fish.



Mike Wald (left) won \$100 for catching the first fish of the day.



Junior fisherperson Corbin Patrick (left) has his name drawn for a \$50 prize.

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)

TRIPLE YOUR ADVERTISING

We'll advertise your important community event in our Community Calendar **FREE** for two weeks prior to the event with purchase of a 2 column x 2" Display ad for only:

\$60.00 plus G.S.T. - A savings of over 30%

Available to Non-Profit & Community Organizations Only

Call Now For Further Details

"Don't miss out on letting your Community and others know of your event!"

Shellbrook Chronicle & Spiritwood Herald

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APAS welcomes provincial budget

By APAS
Submitted

The Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS) welcomes the 2026-27 Saskatchewan Provincial Budget, recognizing the government's significant investment in farm income stabilization while expressing concerns about funding reductions for agriculture infrastructure.

The Ministry of Agriculture's budget for 2026-27 has been set at \$660.8 million, marking an increase from the previous year's \$623.1 million. APAS recognizes the province's efforts to enhance Business Risk Management (BRM) programming with a budget of \$524.3 million, reflecting a \$40.5 million increase.

Notably, the AgriStability program funding has doubled to \$116.3 million, with AgriInvest

seeing a rise to \$46.9 million, providing crucial financial support to producers during challenging times.

"The agriculture budget notably focuses on reinforcing our safety nets in times of uncertainty," said Bill Prybylski, APAS President. "These investments are vital to support farm and ranch families who are contending with narrow margins and market volatility."

In addition to agriculture-specific support, APAS notes important commitments to agricultural infrastructure and innovation:

- Rural Integrated Roads for Growth program funding increased to \$20.35 million to maintain vital transportation corridors.

- Saskatchewan Chemical Fertilizer Incentive program extended to 2031 to encourage regional fertil-

izer production.

- R&D tax credit doubled to \$2 million, enabling more investment in agricultural innovation that strengthens Saskatchewan's global competitiveness.

However, APAS is concerned about reductions to the Water Security Agency's funding, including a \$12 million cut to dam and water infrastructure rehabilitation.

"Safe, reliable water infrastructure is the backbone of rural communities and agriculture," added Prybylski. "Deferring maintenance creates long-term risks for producers who rely on these systems. APAS remains committed to working with the government to prioritize investments in risk management and critical rural infrastructure that safeguards the future of Saskatchewan agriculture."

Sports mascots are big business

Sports fans may consider team mascots to be: a) entertaining; b) annoying; c) hilarious; d) adding to the game experience. Whatever your view, their existence in sports today is no laughing matter. Mascots are big business.

It's almost mandated that every professional sports team must have a mascot to fire up the fans. Their efforts help to get the "Go Team Go" chants going, to help start the wave around the seating area, to tussle some youngster's hair so Mom and Dad can get a picture, and in some cases, bang a drum so loudly that some fans go home with a headache.

There are endless mascot stories, but my favourite is when Harvey the Hound, the Calgary Flames' mascot, got too close to the Edmonton Oilers bench in a 2003 game at the Saddledome and had his tongue ripped out by Oilers' assistant coach Craig MacTavish, who then waved the piece of red felt in the air before tossing it into the crowd

behind him. No penalty was called by the officials, who didn't even give him a tongue-lashing.

As mentioned earlier, sports mascots are big business. The person who answers to Gritty, the smiling, scary, big-eyed, orange Philadelphia Flyers monster, recently signed a contract that pays him/her an annual stipend of \$250,000 U.S. Pretty good dough, but not sure how the job description would look on a resumé.

Grey Cup champion Saskatchewan Roughriders recently announced they are on the lookout for a new Gainer the Gopher. While most gophers in Saskatchewan meet their maker from a shotgun blast from an angry farmer, Gainer is the most beloved critter in the Wheat Province. "A Rider Fan's Dream Job," said radio station CKRM on its website. "Think you can gopher it?" headlined CKOM Radio. Job requirements state that the winning Gainer must be "young, energetic



BRUCE
PENTON

and willing to dress like a football-obsessed rodent." The team's online job posting, according to a Canadian Press story, says the Riders are "looking for someone who can dance, hug, give high fives, and also improvise — all while staying in character."

Canada's best baseball mascot was Youppi from the Montreal Expos. He was thought to be out of work when the Expos moved to Washington in 2005, but the Canadiens decided to hire Youppi as the NHL team's first mascot. He remains on the job at the Bell Centre today. Youppi is one of only three mascots with glass-encased displays at the Baseball Hall of

Fame in Cooperstown. The San Diego Chicken and the Phillie Phanatic are the others. Youppi remains the only Canadian entry in the Mascot Hall of Fame.

Former Dodgers' manager Tommy Lasorda had his issues with mascots. He once got into an on-field fight with the Phillie Phanatic, and had Youppi ejected from a game in Montreal after the mascot continuously jumped on the roof of the Dodger dugout.

Meanwhile, you can go online to apply to be the new Gainer. It's only part-time, but it beats living in a hole in the ground.

Author Paul Myers, whose book on John Candy devotes a full chapter to Candy's Canadian Football League excursion, in which he, Wayne Gretzky and Bruce McNall bought the Toronto Argonauts: "One wonders how well that part of the comedian's life translates to American readers who wouldn't know a Rough Rider from a Roughrider."

• Cathal Kelly of the

Globe and Mail, on the popularity of football at the U of Alabama with 17-year-olds across America: "Almost 60,000 of them apply each year to go the University of Alabama, and it isn't because it has a hot environmental sciences program."

• Super 70s Sports: "Scientists now believe Topps gum from the '80s will outlast all animal and plant life on the planet."

• A piece of wisdom from the late Lou Holtz, snipped from sportscurmudgeon.com: "Coaching is nothing more than eliminating mistakes before you get fired."

• Cathal Kelly of the Globe and Mail, after an uninspiring Leafs' effort against Tampa Bay: "After an initial burst of enthusiasm, the only way they could have been worse is if they'd gone back to the dressing room and reappeared in their bathrobes."

• Kelly again, mocking the Fraser Minten for Brandon Carlo trade that also gave the Bruins Toronto's first-

round draft pick: "That they thought (Minten) was disposable explains why the Leafs should hire a responsible adult to be present during all future negotiations."

• Golf great Jack Nicklaus, asked if he liked the TPC Sawgrass course when it opened in 1982: "No, I've never been very good at stopping a 5-iron on the hood of a car."

• European pro golfer Darren Clarke: "The 17th at Sawgrass is like waking up at 6:30 in the morning knowing you have root canal work at 3:30."

• Mike Bianchi of the Orlando Sentinel: "The Tampa Bay Buccaneers should not have let franchise legend Mike Evans sign a contract elsewhere. The Buccaneers without Mike Evans is like their pirate ship without its cannons."

• fark.com headline: "Las Vegas Raiders forgot to say 'no takebacksies' before Maxx Crsoby fails physical and Baltimore nixes trade."

Care to comment? Email brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca

Shell Lake hosts senior's bonspiel

By DAVID JENSEN
Shell Lake 50+ Club

The Shell Lake Fifty Plus Club hosted its annual Senior Curling Bonspiel on March 9 through 11.

Enough seniors signed up to have 10 teams competing for the ultimate prize and privilege to be called champions. As usual, Guy Cyr and his team of Raoul Granger, Urgel Bilodeau, and Nile Cyr came in as a complete team from Debden. The remaining 9 teams were drawn by the Curling selection committee from those who signed up for the bonspiel.

The bonspiel commenced at 10 a.m. on March

9, with both sheets of ice active. Two more draws were played during the rest of the day, and by the end of the day all the teams had played at least one game.

Games continued on Tuesday. By day's end, both the A Event and the B Event were down to the final game.

In the A Event, Lloyd Fisher's team had defeated Team Laurie Mayo and Team Glen Caffet on his road to the final. Meanwhile, Team David Jensen earned their birth by defeating Team Guy Cyr in their first game and Team Jim Koetse in their second game. In the final, Team Lloyd Fisher took the win.

The B Event finalists were represented by Team Guy Cyr and Team Al Sulymka/Bruce Mansell. Both teams lost their first game but then won their way to the B Final.

The C Event teams played their way to the C Event final on Wednesday. C Event finalists were Team Dennis Petryshyn and Team Glen Harbaruk.

The lunch counter was outstanding as always. The soups were tasty, with just the right amount of flavour and spice. Egg Salad and ham and cheese sandwiches accompanied the soup. But the pie and ice cream were especially good, and all of it was served up with a friendly smile.



A Event winners, from left to right: Chris Lindsay, Deb Steinhilber, Greg Rickert, and Lloyd Fisher.



B Event winners, from left to right: Guy Cyr, Raoul Granger, Nile Cyr, Urgel Bilodeau.



C Event winners, from left to right: Glen Harbaruk, Don Garand, Wayne Henry, and Anita Weiers.

Blaine Lake celebrates Hockeyville campaign

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

Despite a massive social media push by the whole province of Saskatchewan, including Premier Scott Moe, the Town of Blaine Lake's Kraft Hockeyville campaign came to a premature end on Saturday, March 21.

With a huge hometown crowd packed into the lobby of the Blaine Lake Skating Rink, where burgers, hot dogs, and, fittingly, Kraft Dinner, were being served up as part of a community celebration in anticipation of Hockeyville's Top 2 announcement, all eyes turned to the lone TV in the lobby as 5 p.m. neared.

However, hopes were abruptly



Blaine Lake Raiders captain Adam Horner thanks the community for its support following the Top 2 announcement.

dashed when Tumbler Ridge, B.C., and Taber, Alta., were named the two Hockeyville finalists.

While it wasn't the good news the community had hoped for, being the provincial Hockeyville finalist for Saskatchewan means the community will receive \$50,000 for rink upgrades and \$10,000 of hockey equipment courtesy of the NHLPA Goals & Dreams Fund and the NHL/NHLPA Industry Growth Fund.

Even after the announcement, as kids took to the ice for some shinny with the Blaine Lake Raiders, the mood at the rink remained celebratory.

"The most amazing thing has been watching the way that the Hockeyville experience brought so many people, organizations, and community members to rallying for our rink," the Blaine Lake Community Association (BLCA) noted following the Hockeyville celebration.

"And it has reminded us that the work we have put into the rink over the past many years and the work we will continue to do is so much more than just maintenance and upkeep, it's keeping a critical community gathering space alive for generations to come!"

With support from the BLCA, the Blaine Lake Raiders Senior Hockey Club, and the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, the Town of Blaine Lake entered

Hockeyville in hopes of securing funds to retrofit the Blaine Lake Skating Rink so that artificial ice can be installed. The retrofit is something the town is exploring as part of its 2025 to 2030 Strategic Plan, as the switch to artificial ice will allow for a longer season that isn't so dependent upon the weather.

At 71 years old, the Blaine Lake Skating Rink continues to be the product of community fundraising and support, and is operated year-round by the BLCA. Over the past five years, the community group has invested

more than \$85,000 and 300 volunteer hours into renovations.

These include: new flooring and countertops in the kitchen, a complete renovation of the lobby, construction of a dedicated bar space, painting the dressing rooms, adding insulation, repairs to the boards, a new home team players' bench, and helping with the purchase of a Zamboni.

"We are so excited about the next phases of much-needed renovations in the rink... to make our ol' barn even better before the next season and beyond," the BLCA said.



A large crowd filled the lobby of the Blaine Lake Skating Rink to celebrate the community's Hockeyville campaign.

OBITUARY

Frederick James Grant



GRANT – Frederick James

February 2, 1927 –
March 4, 2026
99 years

Fred Grant was born in Notre Dame Hospital in North Battleford on February 2, 1927. He was the son of a Scottish farmer, James Grant, and an English city-raised school teacher, Jessie Moore.

Living conditions were sometimes difficult with almost no income on a tiny farm in the "dirty thirties". Fred remembers using a raw egg to make cooked lambs quarters (pigweed) slide down. There were over 40 children in the one-roomed Hyde

Park School, so his mom taught him first grade at home. He raised and shipped rabbits in crates made of wooden apple boxes, that he took to the train in Sandwith. Crow's eggs and gopher tails also provided a little income.

Since there was no Sunday School for Fred and his sister Lilian to attend, his mom made sure they knew about their Christian heritage. She read them Bible stories and they listened to a church program on the radio that suggested memorizing Bible verses. Fred received a small Bible, "The Radio Sunday School Prize", for memorizing the suggested verses every Sunday in the year 1940.

The following spring, when Fred was in grade 8, he tied a few clothes and a lunch on his CCM bicycle and rode 30 miles on May long weekend to go see his mom who had taken a teaching job near Edam. He was tired, but didn't miss school on Tuesday.

Fred's great auntie Fanny would send parcels from England at

Christmas time. New clothes, small toys, hobby magazines, and even sometimes some Christmas cake, were treasured by the children living with almost no income on a tiny farm in the dirty thirties.

Growing up, Fred loved being in the Boy Scouts, summer camps, and 4-H clubs.

Unlike most kids at the time, Fred boarded with an elderly widow in North Battleford in order to get his grades 11 and 12. He graduated from the School of Agriculture in 1949.

One of Fred's favourite memories was the trip to England in 1950 with his mom and sister Lil. It would be the first time his mom had been back in 29 years! They travelled by train to Montreal and then by ship to England. It was a trip of many adventures in great memories.

In 1950, Fred asked the pretty study supervisor of Bournemouth School, Olga Drieschner, to a dance. They were married on August 11, 1953 and moved to Saskatoon for 2 winters for

Fred to attend Teacher's College. Fred and Olga (who became known as Holly), raised 3 children Dale, Carol, and Laurie. Fred continued to upgrade until he received his Bachelors of Education, while also teaching, farming, and taking part in many community activities.

Fred and Holly lived a very full and happy life together, camping, dancing, socializing, attending church, etc. They travelled to the Yukon, Alaska, the World Fair in Vancouver, several countries in Europe, New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, and the Maritimes. They spent many weekends enjoying the cabin they built at Turtle Lake and many winter months at their mobile in Florida. They were married exactly 61 years when Holly passed away.

Time then dragged on for Fred, so he decided to attend dances at the Pioneer Hall in North Battleford. There, he met Connie Leask and they soon took a liking to each other. So, at the age of 90, Fred married

Connie and they had almost 9 years together.

Fred always mentioned that he was so blessed to have two wonderful wives. He held a deep belief in a creator God, a God of greatness beyond human concept, and in Jesus Christ who laid down his life for us, as a sacrifice, to give us eternal life. He was very involved in the church. Incredibly, as late as 2025, Fred took a live stream course offered to become a Communicate Elder which would allow him to give communion and also to baptize. The Presbytery of Northern Saskatchewan approved his position, and he was asked to conduct his one and only communion, and probably the last held in St. Andrews in North Battleford before it closed.

He had a lot of hobbies, like making things out of wood, coin collecting, photography, fishing, and gardening.

He was known for his wisdom, gentleness, kindness, patience, and thoughtfulness.

Fred left this earthly home on March 4, at

the age of 99 years, to be with his wife Holly, his parents James and Jessie Grant, his sister Lilian and husband Fred Luthje; in-laws Erma and Karl Kuchler, Emil and Kay Drieschner, and Bob Bonsan; nephews Gordon Kuchler and Keith Drieschner; and numerous relatives and friends.

Left to cherish his memory are his wife Connie and her children and families, his 3 children, 8 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren: son Dale (Minda) Grant and children, Nikki (Jun) Reyes and son Zach, Trixie, and Francine; daughter Carol (Alvin) Wiebe and children, Joni (Derek) Macnab and children Berkley, Kylie, and Piper, Joel (Kate) Wiebe and children Jase and Ellie, Jocelyn (Ross) Gadzella and daughter Evelyn; daughter Laurie (Clint) Anderson and children Cam (Kristy) Anderson and children Daxton and Macie, Brittany (Teagan) Folden.

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Farmer's Bonspiel 'one of the best yet'

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

The Blaine Lake Curling Rink played host to three busy days of competitive curling action from March 6 to 8, when the community hosted its 28th annual Farmer's Bonspiel.

This year's bonspiel brought out 18 teams from near and far, while helping to raise vital funds to keep the local curling rink operating.

"Without this bonspiel, we would not have a curling rink in Blaine Lake," said bonspiel organizer Karen Fiala, noting that the event helps bring the community together. "Our community takes pride in running this bonspiel."

"Proceeds from this event will go towards upkeep of the curling rink and monthly expenses to keep it in operation," she added. "I do know that we need repairs to be done to our brine lines for our artificial ice, as well as the catwalks."

As in previous years, the teams were guaranteed to play three games and separated into pools to play against each other. Depending on their performance within their respective pools, teams were relegated to the A, B, C, or D Events for playoffs, where a loss meant an end to their tournament.

After three days of fun and competition on the sheets, only one team could bring home the A-Event trophy, the bragging rights, and a prize from a large pool of goodies that was donated by local and area farmers, businesses, and community members.

This year, the A-Event glory went to the foursome of Brennan Stochmanski (skip), Alexis Geis (third), Craig Stochmanski (second), and Matt Dagenais (lead), who beat out Dale Horner's rink. The victory was made sweeter by the fact that the Stochmanski team lost to the Horner squad in last year's A-Event final.

Over in the B-Event, Dennis Simonar and his young team from Shell Lake claimed the top prize, while Gayle Draper's team from Shellbrook won the C-Event, and Luke Walker's Elevation Ag team won the D-Event.

Calling this one of the best years yet, and crediting the success to curling teams, sponsors, volunteers, and spectators who come out, Fiala says the action on the ice was bolstered by a successful silent auction, which included large items like 320 bushels of wheat seed, 160 acres of custom floating, and power tools.

The origins of the Blaine Lake Farmer's Bonspiel date back more than 28 years ago, when local crop input managers Ernie Neubauer (with Wendland Ag Services), Rodger Pederson (with Sask Wheat Pool), and Andy Teslia (with Cargill) organized the event.

In the early years, each team had to have at least two farmers, and the action would begin on a Tuesday at 5 p.m. and wrap up on Sunday afternoon. Back then, the bonspiel typically ran with a full complement of 32 teams, as well as a waiting list, and curlers were treated to a catered supper and entertainment at Blaine Lake Composite School on the Saturday night.



The Stochmanski team won the A-Event. From left to right: Brennan Stochmanski (skip), Alexis Geis (third), Craig Stochmanski (second), and Matt Dagenais (lead).



Dennis Simonar's team from Shell Lake won the B-Event.



Gayle Draper's team from Shellbrook won the C-Event.



Luke Walker's Elevation Ag team won the D-Event.

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