



# STEPPINGSTONES

*Special edition of Milestones*

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VANESSA FIELD, WINNER  
2024 MD MOMENTS PHOTO CONTEST



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When we combine our efforts in Chambers with our industry partners and other levels of government, everybody wins. *Our case for planning and funding infrastructure projects is strengthened through the inclusion of local industry stakeholders.* In this regard, we've begun to engage local business leaders to understand their perspectives and plans for growth—particularly, how and where these plans intersect with critical infrastructure like roads and bridges.

Thus far, industry stakeholders have responded positively to our requests for assistance with infrastructure planning and advocacy. Across the board, there is particular industry interest in helping the MD move the Smith Bridge rebuild project forward.

Council continues to work with the Province to move the needle on other key issues such as **rural crime abatement, pre-flood mitigation,** and resourceful approaches to **infrastructure planning.** I encourage you to read more about all of Council's strategic priorities inside this issue of *Steppingstones!*

I'm proud of all we accomplished together last year—both as an organization, and as a collective of close-knit communities. I'd like to extend my gratitude to our hard-working staff for their dedication to serving our citizens!

Reeve Murray Kerik  
Municipal District of Lesser Slave River

## Message from your Reeve

Through this year-end publication, I'm grateful for the opportunity to reflect upon the past twelve months of activities and outcomes, take stock of operational highlights, and give folks a sense of our strategic objectives for the year ahead.

From Council's perspective, **we had some real wins in 2024** as we lobbied the Government of Alberta to *prioritize critical infrastructure projects* within our borders—the most important of which is the Smith Bridge. Over the course of countless meetings, stacks of correspondence, and site visits by our ministerial partners, we've been successful in driving home to provincial decision-makers the importance of this bridge to **industry growth, community sustainability,** and of course **public safety.** Our heavy industry producers have growth plans that span decades. By prioritizing the replacement of the Smith Bridge, we can support this growth. In doing so, we will sustain our municipality's hefty contribution to Alberta's gross domestic product for generations to come.

Regarding **Highway 88** and the **Smith Bridge**, the connection between our economic corridors and the province's bottom line could not be more evident. I'm pleased to report that we are maintaining the momentum of this project, **backed by more than \$3.6 million in provincial grant funding** over the past four years. As we make progress in the months and years ahead, you can read all about it by visiting [smithbridgematters.ca](http://smithbridgematters.ca).

It's worth noting that grant dollars from the different levels of government do not just fall from the sky. Critical projects like replacing the Smith Bridge and re-engineering Highway 88 are moving forward due to the foresight and leadership of our ministerial partners, combined with the dogged persistence of MD Council and Administration.



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## Message from your CAO

So much happens in the MD every year. *Steppingstones* helps us showcase some of the progress we've made. It can also make us ponder what the future may hold—especially given that 2025 is an election year!

*Steppingstones* highlights the programs and projects we were proud to tackle in 2024 under the guidance and support of Council. As always, **our focus is on delivering accurate, efficient, and effective services to our residents.** This is a tall order that can only be fulfilled through the skill, passion and dedication of staff at **every** level. As we embark upon a new year in the service of the MD and its citizens, I extend my enduring gratitude to each of our team members for the essential work they perform each day!

Operational highlights in 2024 included **modernization of our truck fill stations, upgrades to our water and wastewater infrastructure,** and **streamlining our gravelling program** to allow for more efficient resource allocation and planning. We're also **upgrading our recycling infrastructure,** with the goal of making the Slave Lake Landfill a **regional recycling hub.**

Administratively, we've been working on an **asset management strategy** to help deliver a consistent and sustainable level of service to ratepayers. We've also begun to take stock of our **land use planning documents** to ensure they are well-aligned, reflective of landowner needs; and inclusive of both existing challenges and future opportunities.

Throughout the past year, MD administrators placed a great deal of emphasis on **building a service-forward corporate culture** within the MD. Our website was completely redesigned in 2024, providing a solid platform for the provision of

many of these services, from powerful geospatial and digital permitting tools to our **Voyent Alert! public notification system.** We are working on adding even more features to the new website in the coming months to help meet the evolving needs of our municipality and its citizens.

*This fall, MD Council will have reached the end of its term. It's important to recognize this Council for its efforts to steward our municipality through the opportunities, setbacks and milestones not even contemplated at the start of their term. I extend my heartfelt thanks to them.*

Thanks also to the tireless MD employees who get out each morning (*and after hours*) to provide the essential services upon which our region depends. This is only possible through the application of skill, passion and dedication at every level of our organization.

I'm excited to continue the momentum with my colleagues, Councillors, and the wider community in the year ahead, as we work together to make

Barry Kolenosky, CAO  
Municipal District of Lesser Slave River

# Council & Administration



## 24/7 Live Reception

Most MD staff work regular office hours, but issues like an animal at large or utility disruption don't keep a schedule. To help residents access the departments and resources they need during evenings, weekends, and holidays, the MD provides a **24/7** live reception service.

Need to get in touch with the MD outside of regular hours? No problem—simply call the MD's main office at **780.849.4888** (toll-free **1.866.449.4888**) and you'll be connected to an agent who will promptly triage your concern and engage the appropriate team to respond on a priority basis. *Please bear in mind* that the after-hours call-in service is designed to help the MD respond to resident requests that are critical or time-sensitive in nature.

To reduce the strain on this service, please submit any non-urgent questions, concerns or complaints to the MD during regular business hours (8:15am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday). For non-urgent matters, consider visiting [mdlsr.ca/report](https://mdlsr.ca/report) and using our Report-a-Concern Form. Fun fact: this online form can also be used to share compliments about our team members! As always, dial 9-1-1 for fire, police, or medical emergencies.

## Flag an Important Issue With the MD

The MD team works hard to keep our municipality running smoothly, but they can't be everywhere at once.

Often, residents' observations are the first indication that something may need our attention. If you see something that's not quite right, please visit [mdlsr.ca/report](https://mdlsr.ca/report) and submit a Report-a-Concern notification. Your concern will be triaged based on its severity and the resources available.

*When submitting, remember:* respect garners respect. MD staff are expected to behave in a respectful manner in all interactions. We ask for the same courtesy in return.

## Receive Critical Alerts via Text, Email, or Voice

The MD is committed to providing residents with the **important information** they need, when they need it. Stay safe and informed.

**Voyent Alert!** is a multi-channel public notification system that delivers targeted alerts for emergencies and day-to-day municipal matters directly to your smart phone (Apple or Android) or email inbox. This made-in-Alberta solution is gaining popularity among municipalities looking to keep citizens informed and engaged. Please visit [mdlsr.ca/alerts](https://mdlsr.ca/alerts) to complete your **free** Voyent Alert! registration.

Once registered, you can customize your alert preferences. Choose the types of MD information you want to know about, and how you want to receive it (automated voice message, text, email, or a combination thereof). That's all there is to it. Depending on your preferences, you'll be notified about normal MD activities like road closures or water line upgrades, plus alerts about wildfires and other critical events. These alerts can even display maps and turn-by-turn directions to ensure you can navigate safely.

## MD Launches New and Improved Municipal Website

The MD's new user-friendly website is designed to meet the evolving needs of residents and employees alike.

May 2024 marked the launch of an entirely redesigned municipal website that provides fast, user-friendly access to essential MD news, information, services, and a growing list of digital tools. As you browse around the updated MD website, you may appreciate the clean, contemporary look with thousands of home-grown photos of our beautiful communities. You may also notice the smart navigation menu that makes it easy to accomplish tasks and find answers, or the responsive design that works on all screen sizes—from large monitors to tablets and mobile phones.

The previous version of [mdlsr.ca](https://mdlsr.ca) was launched way back in 2016—which is an eternity in the rapidly-evolving digital age. It was becoming increasingly difficult for the MD to meet the standards of usability, design, and service delivery that are expected by staff, citizens and other stakeholders. The time had come to modernize the site's technology, improve the user experience, and add useful features like secure online transactions and permit applications.

The website redesign project broke ground in early 2023. We began by gathering input from staff, Councillors and the community at large on what they wanted to see on the new website. We also asked them to critique the existing site. Common complaints were that information was hard to find, even when using the search function, and that the old site emphasized MD departments over the services it provided. It was also mentioned that pages took too long to load—especially in communities with limited internet access.

We used every bit of feedback we received to build things better from the ground up, with a focus on making the site simpler to use and more focused on customer service. We also worked hard to build a website that's considerably faster than its predecessor, meaning a better experience for residents who may not yet have the best connectivity.

BECKY PEIFFER, WINNER  
2024 MD MOMENTS PHOTO CONTEST



## Highlights of the New MD Website

The website is designed with an unwavering commitment to **speed**, ensuring it's as fast as technically possible. It features user-friendly navigation focused on service delivery and ease of use, along with a critical notification bar that MD administrators can update in mere minutes.

The clean, new design is both functional and visually appealing, offering intuitive usability. Online forms allow users to report concerns, submit feedback, and request services, while powerful search capabilities make it easy to locate news, events, documents, and other resources. News subscription and **sharing options** keep you informed of all municipal updates.

In addition, our **Voyent Alert!** service delivers critical updates via text, email, or voice. It also includes more than **4,000 locally-sourced images** that highlight the beauty of our boreal region. Finally, there is a renewed emphasis on leveraging our **economic development potential**, ensuring the website serves as a comprehensive tool to connect and engage with the community, visitors, and industry alike.

## New Features and Planned Upgrades

The website project has many moving parts, yet they all lead back to two key objectives: improving residents' access to essential services; and empowering MD staff to easily manage the website internally. Since launch, we've worked on **integrating new features like public-access tools, an online payment gateway, and a central platform to manage permit applications and fees**. We're enthusiastic about introducing these new features to the public in the months ahead, with the goal of providing the MD and its residents with the finest online experience possible.

*Fun fact:* this is only the fourth generation of [mdlsr.ca](http://mdlsr.ca) in the history of the municipality. The very first instance of our municipal website was launched in 2003, followed by upgrades in 2011, 2016, and the version you see today.

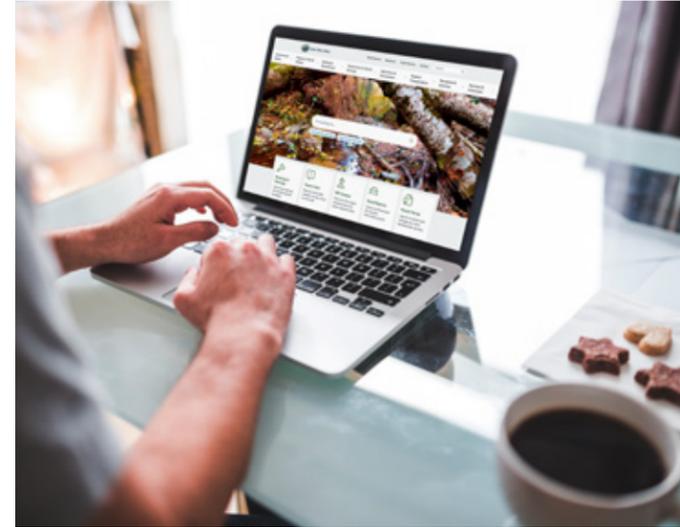
## Public-Access Community Calendar

Last fall, an exciting new feature was added to the MD website: a **community calendar to help locals and visitors** alike discover and share events happening across our communities. A standout feature of this new calendar is its ability to **accept public event submissions**. In the tech world this is referred to as "user-generated content," or



UGC for short. If your event is local—either hosted within one of the communities of Lesser Slave River or supporting a regional initiative of public interest—and meets our criteria for posting, you can promote it for **free** via the community calendar. To add your event, visit [mdlsr.ca/calendar](http://mdlsr.ca/calendar) and click the "Submit an Event" button to get started.

Use the simple online form to create your local event posting. Once you click "Submit," site administrators will review it for compliance with our submission guidelines. We want to ensure the new community calendar reflects the diverse festivities, webinars, workshops, and other local happenings in our region. Whether you've got an event to promote or you're just curious about what's going on in the MD, check out the [mdlsr.ca/calendar](http://mdlsr.ca/calendar).



## MD Adopts Asset Management Strategy

The overarching goal of asset management is to deliver a **consistent and sustainable level of service** to ratepayers.

In 2022, Council was introduced to the concept of asset management and the importance of communities developing a strategy to make informed decisions, manage risks, and maximize the value of public funds. While there are currently no federal or provincial mandates requiring municipalities to create long-term asset management plans beyond the Ten-Year Capital Plan, **proactive development** of a plan can provide the MD with a significant advantage when it comes to applying for and securing grant dollars from other levels of government.

Asset management goes beyond merely maintaining a list of infrastructure and equipment with replacement dates; it involves a **thorough decision-making process** that evaluates the use and upkeep of these assets to ensure that services effectively meet both current and future needs. This approach considers managing risks, optimizing resource allocation, assessing service sustainability, controlling costs, and prioritizing the responsible infrastructure and services that our residents rely on daily.

This initiative entails the creation of a formal policy, well-defined procedures, and a detailed roadmap, all of which were developed in late 2023. Implementation is underway, with asset data being collected from the Southshore communities, Marten Beach, Smith, Flatbush, and Chisholm.

This data is uploaded into a geographic information system (GIS) web map that is accessible to both residents and MD staff by visiting [mdlsr.ca/maps](http://mdlsr.ca/maps) and clicking the "GIS Portal" button. It encompasses a variety of assets, including signage, culverts, water and sewer lines, and control valves. The MD utilizes this information to enhance decision-making and improve operational efficiency.

## Municipal Land Inventory Study Underway

Council and Administration are currently conducting a municipal land inventory study to identify and evaluate the **best uses for MD-owned land in the region**.

This comprehensive study seeks to foster a deeper understanding of the land within our borders, facilitating **informed decision-making** for its management and future development. The process includes a thorough examination of all land within the municipality, including detailed mapping of lots and an analysis of current zoning and relevant background information for each parcel.

Once completed, this study will provide valuable guidance for Council in determining the optimal use of these lands. This inventory will be **instrumental in shaping the decisions and strategies** that govern the development and implementation of recreational areas and open spaces within the municipality. It aims to ensure thoughtful and effective utilization of these spaces for the benefit of our communities while also enabling the MD to divest properties that could be developed for the region's advantage.

## Stewarding Regional Recreation and Open Spaces

Outdoor enthusiasts have reason to celebrate with Council’s approval of the Recreation & Open Spaces Master Plan—a ten-year strategy aimed at keeping parks, trails, and spaces vibrant and well-maintained for future generations.

As part of the 2023 capital budget, Council allocated funds to initiate the development of an all-encompassing Recreation & Open Spaces Master Plan. This pivotal initiative aims to strategically shape the trajectory of recreation and open spaces in Lesser Slave River over the next two decades.

The plan is crafted to meet community needs, promote inclusivity, foster capacity building, prioritize environmental stewardship, and help ensure fiscal responsibility. It will provide a cohesive and sustainable framework to optimize the development and management of recreational areas and open spaces in the region. This forward-thinking strategy aims to maximize resource use, encourage sustainable growth, and elevate the overall quality of recreational facilities and open spaces for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.

The primary goal of the master plan is to enrich the region’s recreational opportunities while safeguarding the natural environment that makes these opportunities so special. This will be achieved through a series of initiatives, including the development of walking, ATV, and equestrian trails, offering diverse outdoor activities. It also prioritizes the preservation and responsible management of parks, natural areas, and provincial crown lands.

Additionally, this multi-year initiative will focus on developing well-equipped campgrounds and day-use picnic areas, complete with amenities like picnic tables, fire pits, and garbage receptacles. It will also involve constructing boat launches along the picturesque Athabasca and Pembina rivers, providing easy access for boaters and water enthusiasts and encouraging the enjoyment and exploration of our beautiful waterways.

Ultimately, the goal of the new Recreation & Open Spaces Master Plan is to cultivate a vibrant and sustainable region by providing a wide range of recreational opportunities, protecting natural areas, and promoting responsible land use practices. With a steadfast commitment to environmental stewardship, the MD strives to preserve the magnificence and ecological richness of these resources, ensuring they are cherished for generations to come.



## MD and Town to Rework Airport Master Plan

The MD and the Town of Slave Lake have collaborated on an application for an Alberta Community Partnership Grant, for the purpose of revamping the Airport Commission’s legacy master plan.

The MD is happy to report that its application for \$80,000 was recently approved by provincial decision-makers. This grant funding will facilitate the redevelopment of a new airport master plan, with the primary goal of equipping the Airport Commission with a clear and well-defined roadmap for the future. This new plan will explore various avenues and approaches for diversifying sources of income, and will help steward adherence to regulatory requirements.

## Capital Projects Program

The MD manages an inventory of capital projects that are either new, contemplated, ongoing, and already underway.

These projects affect every community and locality of Lesser Slave River each year, and focus on improvement, expansion, maintenance, rehabilitation and renewal. Through its Capital Projects Program, Administration works to deliver new or improved tangible capital assets, as approved by Council, to meet current community needs and support future growth.

By visiting [mdlsr.ca/capital-projects](https://mdlsr.ca/capital-projects), you can explore an interactive map that shows the location, description, status and other details related to any major construction project underway in the MD. You’ll also notice an associated capital projects overview table that provides a summary of all capital projects, highlighting carryover projects from the previous year, plus new initiatives planned for the upcoming construction season.

Some of the key capital projects include upgrades to the Smith Water Treatment Plant’s pretreatment system; the rerouting of Old Smith Highway; the preliminary and detailed design of the Smith Bridge; drainage improvements in Southshore; and various strategic equipment purchases.



# Strategic Council Priorities

From aging infrastructure to inadequate highways, certain obstacles hinder the safety of our communities and the potential for sustained economic growth in the region. Council is working with the federal and provincial governments to address these critical issues.



## Lobbying Goals, Outcomes, and Next Steps

At every opportunity, Council engages with provincial and federal decision-makers, industry representatives, fellow municipal leaders, and other stakeholders to tackle key regional challenges. These efforts underscore Council's concerns about the province's management of specific issues and advocate for effective solutions.

Each spring and fall, MD Council and senior administrators attend the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) conventions in Edmonton. These events connect rural Alberta municipalities with provincial ministers, bureaucrats, subject matter experts, and colleagues from other local governments. The MD headed to the fall convention with a **plan to address several strategic priorities**, including: funding consideration for pre-flood mitigation strategies, addressing criminal activity in the region, and collaborative infrastructure planning.

Council's primary lobbying focus continues to be the **Smith Bridge rebuild** project. As the construction phase of the Smith Bridge nears, Council seeks to ensure its financing approach reflects the MD's means. Further, Council plans to underscore the strategic and economic value of the Smith Bridge to Alberta's bottom line.

To help drive the MD's lobbying efforts home, Council prepared media kits containing concise briefings and supporting data for each strategic priority. These media kits break down complex issues like infrastructure deficiencies and rural crime, and propose actions and approaches to resolving these issues with support from the Province and its ministries. **All current and legacy briefings are posted to Council's dedicated government relations website [mdmatters.ca](http://mdmatters.ca).** Residents are encouraged to explore this website to stay up to speed on Council's ongoing efforts to advocate for regional priorities.



## Smith Bridge Commitment

Council aims to initiate discussions with the Province to establish clear, **shared budget commitments** for the Smith Bridge rebuild project, ensuring accountability and effective resource allocation. As this critical project approaches its construction phase, the financing plan must align with the MD’s fiscal capacity while recognizing the strategic importance of the Smith Bridge as a critical asset to Alberta’s economy.

After three decades of lobbying, the MD has secured the required provincial funding to embark upon the replacement of an essential yet end-of-life bailey bridge over the Athabasca River in the Hamlet of Smith.

Our provincial partners grasp the strategic importance of the Smith Bridge and Highway 2A corridor in connecting several key sectors to global markets. Accordingly, Council is eager to engage decision-makers in a dialogue on maintaining the momentum of this critical venture.

To date, the Province has invested a total of **\$3,652,850** into this project, and the MD has invested and/or committed to **\$2,568,573** since 2020.

Working with Minister Dreeshen and our provincial partners, we have secured the necessary funding contributions for the replacement process studies of the bridge structure and completed essential pre-planning and design work. We are sincerely grateful to Minister Dreeshen and his ministry team for the leadership role they have played in achieving these milestones. We look forward to their continued commitment to this project as it moves to the next phase.

With the preliminary and detailed design phases either complete or in progress, we are **now focused on getting this bridge built**. Construction is scheduled to be tendered in 2026, with work commencing in 2026 and concluding by 2027. This timeline hinges on the continued financial backing of the Province, coupled with the MD’s ability to sustainably meet its own obligations.

Council is hopeful that, by negotiating—and committing to—a workable funding formula and/or process, all parties will be better equipped to plan, uphold accountabilities, and align resources with fiscal and temporal constraints.

### A Binding and Proportionate Commitment

Pre-engineering studies estimate replacement costs at \$88 million. The present Short-Term Incentive Plan (STIP) formula dictates that the MD would absorb 25% of this cost (\$22 million). This is simply a non-starter for a rural municipality with a residential tax base of just 2,800.

It would place disproportionate pressure on the MD to reallocate revenue from other operational areas to meet this obligation—at the cost of other infrastructure maintenance and replacement priorities.

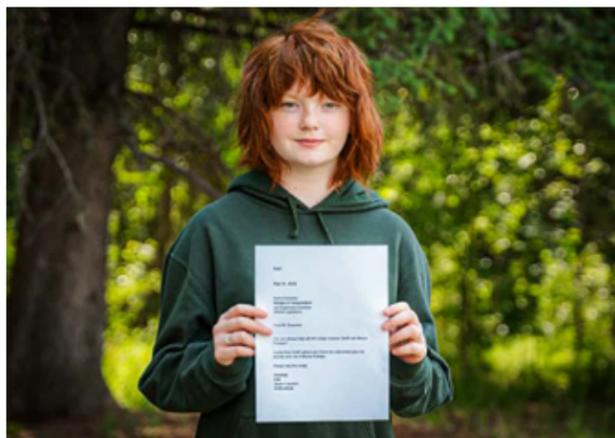
All options should be on the negotiating table, from staggering provincial funding over several years to reducing the MD’s cost obligation. In this spirit, Council urges Minister Dreeshen to view this matter under a different lens.

The Smith Bridge is integral to supporting key industrial sectors that drive Alberta’s economy. Lesser Slave River is home to the most lucrative heavy oil play in North America, in addition to one of the most profitable and sustained forestry plays in the world. Our key forestry producers Tolko, West Fraser and Vanderwell paid the Province over

\$157 million in stumpage fees over the past five years. Oil & gas royalties are harder to calculate by region; however, oil production in the Lesser Slave River region ranked fifth in the province last year, yielding approximately five million cubic meters. Given that oil & gas provides more than a quarter of Alberta's annual revenue, the contribution of our producers to Alberta's bottom line is significant.

Heavy industry in our municipality injects hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes, stumpage fees and royalties into the provincial coffers each year. One could argue that these producers help fund many critical infrastructure projects across Alberta each year. The absence of these provincial revenues would certainly be felt with even a moderate reduction in output.

By these measures, the Smith Bridge rebuild project merits consideration as a **special case for provincial grant funding**. If undertaken now, this would represent an investment in significant cost savings, risk reduction and economic growth—both at the local and provincial level over the long term. By working with the Province to arrive at a fair and proportionate funding arrangement, we can **safeguard a critical linchpin in our economic corridor** and ensure the sustained output of our heavy industry producers.



## Effective Infrastructure Planning

Council is advocating for a **stronger alignment** between provincial highway improvements and local community and industry needs. To support this effort, Council aims to update provincial partners on how the MD is strategically utilizing the Local Municipal Initiatives grant, ensuring that infrastructure projects reflect industry priorities and drive regional growth.

Our transportation network fuels key industry sectors, supports and sustains the local workforce, fosters community growth, and impacts quality of life both locally and provincially. By finding **resourceful ways to steward this infrastructure**, we will remain a viable region and a heavy contributor to the Province's bottom line.

Industry leaders such as Cenovus, Suncor, Vanderwell Contractors, and West Fraser Timber entrench Lesser Slave River's status as one of the top contributors to Alberta's economy. The corollary to this industry output is the toll it takes on the aging economic corridors that support it. Recognizing these interconnected needs, opportunities and weak links in the transportation chain, the MD is actively involving industry stakeholders in planning infrastructure that is resilient, adaptable, and responsive to the evolving needs of both citizens and businesses. Such a partnership is the very essence of the Province's *Building Forward Plan*.

### Leveraging Local Industry Perspectives

Our case for funding infrastructure projects in and around the Mitsue Industrial subdivision is strengthened by understanding how our **plans and perspectives align with those of our local industry leaders**, and by engaging these entities to help us find—and fund—resourceful solutions. These industry stakeholders bring firsthand knowledge of the region's logistical challenges, transportation needs, and growth potential, which are essential in crafting grant applications that are relevant, comprehensive and impactful. This helps ensure that our 10-Year Capital Plan aligns with the actual goals and priorities of local industry.

In late October, Council hosted an industry leadership roundtable focused on exploring economic development opportunities that can drive growth, innovation and sustainability in the region. The main opportunity being discussed that evening was the MD's near-term opportunity for infrastructure funding via the Province's Local Municipal Initiatives (LMI) funding stream. During the roundtable, there was considerable industry interest in, and support for, contributing to our present LMI application, and in collaborating with the MD on similar initiatives in the future.

Through our engagements with local business stakeholders, we invite them to help us find—and fund—resourceful infrastructure solutions. A common response is that local industry already helps fund critical infrastructure projects across Alberta each year by way of taxes, stumpage fees and royalties. Regardless, industry leaders have responded positively to our requests for assistance with grant funding applications and participation in strategic sessions on infrastructure planning—with particular interest in helping the MD move the Smith Bridge rebuild project forward.

### Provincial Collaboration

Council values its beneficial ministry partnerships and the resultant infrastructure milestones achieved in recent years. As these projects move forward, a **continued collaborative relationship** will help ensure their efficient execution and alignment with parallel MD-funded initiatives. For example, by knowing when the **Province plans to tender the engineering and upgrade phases of the Highway 88 rehabilitation project**, the MD will be better equipped to schedule its own maintenance activities. Furthermore, the MD can **share local insights** on accident-prone intersection curves, seasonal flooding zones, and routes with high freight or commercial traffic.

**Council is planning for the future of Lesser Slave River.** These plans are made more impactful through the responsive and reciprocal partnership between the MD, its ministry partners, and industry stakeholders.



## Pre-Flood Mitigation Strategies

Council is advocating for a dedicated provincial funding stream for proactive flood mitigation, enhancing the capacity of rural municipalities to address known flood risks and protect communities and infrastructure. A focused mitigation program would provide municipalities with critical planning tools, helping to **prevent the costly and disruptive effects** of recurrent overland flooding.

Overland flooding poses a recurring and increasingly harmful threat to communities across Alberta, with climate change boosting the frequency and severity of these events. Climate modeling predicts significantly fewer cold days, higher maximum temperatures and heavier rainfall events in Alberta's future.

Flooding events invariably lead to costly recovery efforts, significant infrastructure damage, and cascading community-level impacts; all of which could be **mitigated through strategic investments** that redirect the focus on more proactive solutions.

Municipalities bear major financial and operational burdens after each flooding event, shouldering not only the costs of infrastructure repair but also the long-term impacts on local economies, public health, and safety. The lack of a proactive, dedicated funding stream for flood mitigation limits the capacity of municipal leaders to address known flood risks, leaving communities cyclically exposed to preventable damages.

Despite the availability of post-disaster resources such as the Disaster Recovery Program, there is currently **limited provincial support for municipalities** to proactively invest in flood mitigation measures that would minimize future damages and associated costs. A dedicated, accessible pre-flood mitigation grant stream would allow municipalities to invest in preventive infrastructure enhancements, thus reducing the overall burden on provincial emergency funds and safeguarding vulnerable regions.

The Government of Alberta's Budget 2024-2025 earmarks \$722 million for municipal infrastructure, and \$2 billion to address unanticipated costs related to disasters and emergencies. Council is pressing the Province to consider some level of funding within these budgeted amounts for pre-flood mitigation strategies.

### A Real-World Scenario

One practical example of proactive flood mitigation can be found in bridge infrastructure. By clearing seasonal drift accumulations upstream, the MD could prevent logjams and mitigate debris-related infrastructure damage during high-water events. This is a **practical, cost-effective approach** on its face, yet no provincial funding stream presently allows for it. Temporary Field Authorizations (TFAs) do accommodate activities such as debris removal, but on a time-limited case-by-case basis rather than as part of a longer-term maintenance plan. This relegates the usefulness of the TFA mechanism to post-event cleanup activities that invariably come at a higher cost than mitigation.

Council recognizes the role municipal leaders must play in developing a robust flood mitigation strategy. The MD is confident in the potential of its close collaboration with the Province to **increase our resiliency and reduce the impact of flood events**. To be truly effective, however, this partnership must consider broader environmental and climatic factors, in addition to the niche expertise of local governments dealing with flooding events year over year.

An accessible pre-flood mitigation grant stream would provide municipalities across Alberta with the necessary resources to invest in infrastructure improvements and flood mitigation measures *before* disasters strike. This **proactive approach** offers significant advantages over traditional recovery models in the following ways:

**Cost efficiency through prevention:** Preventive flood mitigation reduces long-term costs associated with emergency response, recovery, and reconstruction. Public Safety Canada states that every dollar invested in mitigation efforts saves \$7 to \$10 in post-disaster recovery costs.

**Infrastructure resilience and longevity:** By strengthening flood resilience, municipalities can extend the lifespan of critical infrastructure like roads, bridges, water treatment



MARTEN BEACH FLOOD 2019



## Rural Crime Abatement

Council is committed to collaborating with provincial agencies to address the rising criminal activity in the Mitsue Industrial Subdivision and across the MD. Enhanced provincial support, coupled with increased local policing resources and community programs, will help us achieve lasting reductions in rural crime and ensure the safety and security of our communities.

Spanning 600 hectares, Mitsue Industrial Park serves sectors spanning oil & gas, forestry, and manufacturing. Rising criminal activity in this subdivision has outpaced regional policing and crime reduction resources. Council has earmarked \$250,000 for crime abatement over the next two years. These funds will be used to enhance local MD asset security measures, such as increased lighting, security camera installations, and programs aimed at fostering a proactive crime prevention culture. Additionally, MD peace officers have initiated staggered work shifts to elevate our protective services presence in response to area-specific crime prevention needs.

Despite these efforts, Council acknowledges that local resources alone are insufficient to combat the rising tide of criminal activities effectively. There is an urgent need for additional support from the RCMP and our ministerial partners to implement a coordinated response.

### A Heightened Local Presence

Several years ago, the Slave Lake Alberta Sheriffs detachment was relocated to Westlock; a drive of roughly two hours under good conditions. Council is exploring the possibility of bringing this resource back into the community. The MD has identified a turnkey opportunity to house an Alberta Sheriffs detachment within the Station 5 Fire Hall located in Mitsue Industrial Park. Aside from the clear strategic advantage of establishing a physical policing presence in an epicenter of rising criminal activity, this move would enhance local surveillance and investigation capabilities, vastly improve incident response times, and provide essential support to local businesses.

facilities, and public buildings. Investments in resilience reduce wear and tear from repeated flooding, improving overall infrastructure performance and reliability.

**Community safety and well-being:** Proactive mitigation reduces the frequency and scale of evacuations, minimizes community displacement, and lessens the emotional toll of flood events. In turn, a more stable community fosters long-term economic and social well-being, making it a safer, more attractive place to live and work.

**Environmental and economic stability:** Floods disrupt local economies by impacting businesses, agriculture, and public services. Flood mitigation efforts, such as wetland restoration and stormwater retention basins, can also deliver ecological benefits, improve local water quality, and support biodiversity. These projects offer economic benefits by reducing flood risk to valuable assets and improving the appeal of Alberta's municipalities to potential investors.

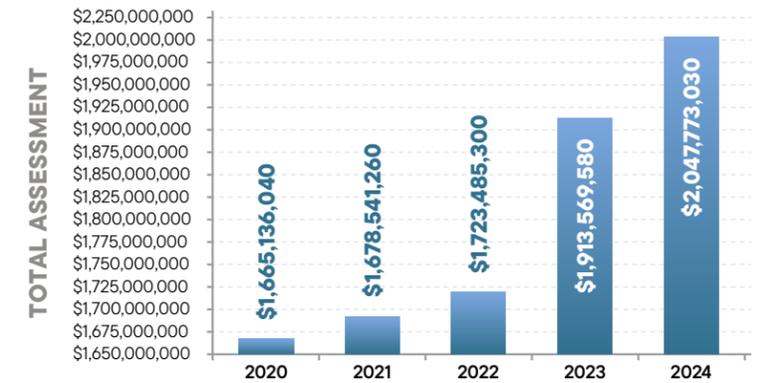
As Alberta faces increasingly severe and frequent flooding due to climate change, municipalities must adapt to manage these risks proactively. Currently, municipalities have limited access to dedicated funding for preventive flood mitigation, leaving many communities vulnerable to recurring flood damage. Implementing a sustainable, accessible pre-flood mitigation grant stream would empower Alberta's municipalities to safeguard essential infrastructure, reduce economic impacts, and enhance community resilience by addressing known flood risks in advance.

# Budget & Assessment

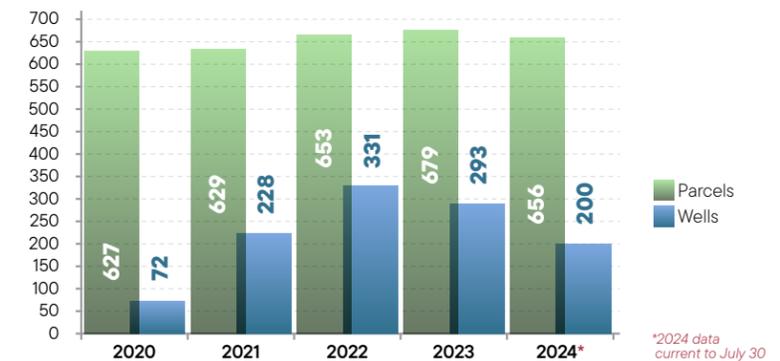
Guided by the priorities of Council and Administration, in addition to long-range road maintenance and capital equipment replacement plans, the MD's budget provides for the maintenance of existing service levels while managing spending in a manner that's reflective of the current economic situation.

The MD is committed to maintaining high quality accounting standards and a transparent financial reporting system that meets the needs of all stakeholders. Our comprehensive statements of financial position and results of operations provide an account of the stewardship of our financial activities in support of delivering programs and services to its residents, businesses, and industry.

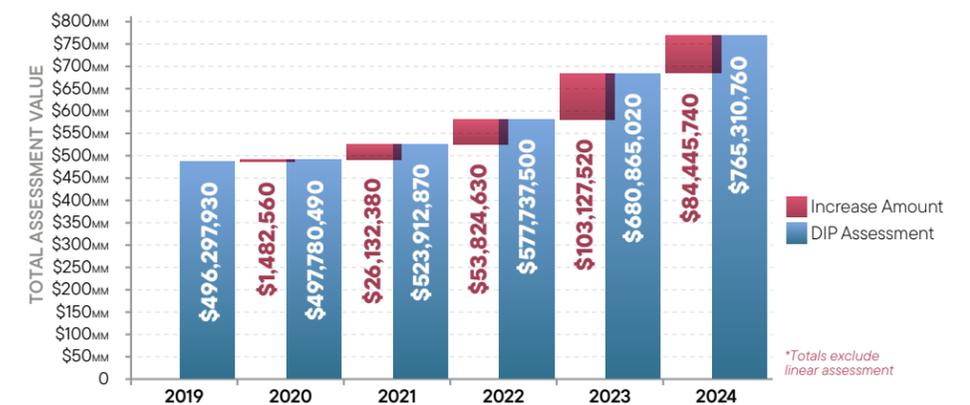
**Have questions?** Reach out to our Finance team at 780.849.4888 (toll-free 1.866.449.4888) or email [info@mdlsr.ca](mailto:info@mdlsr.ca). You can also check out the Budget & Finance section of the MD website for more information.



TOTAL DIP PARCELS VS. NEW WELLS DRILLED



HISTORICAL DIP ASSESSMENT COMPARISON



SHARLENE BARON, WINNER  
2024 MD MOMENTS PHOTO CONTEST



# Protective Services

The Protective Services team is essential to maintaining quality of life in the MD by enforcing local bylaws related to noise, property upkeep, animal control, traffic, and more, ensuring community standards are upheld.



MD peace officers cultivate community goodwill and ensure regulatory compliance through regular patrols, public engagement, swift responses to service calls, periodic inspections, educating the public, collaborating with local law enforcement and fire services, and the issuance of warnings and citations as necessary. Overall, they provide an essential bridge between local law enforcement and ratepayers.

The Protective Services department provides a spectrum of municipal enforcement services that focus on public safety and well-being while preserving community standards. Last year's addition of a second peace officer has resulted in improved response times and faster resolution of issues. Through their steadfast commitment and vigilance, the team fosters a harmonious and secure environment, enriching the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

**Have questions?** Get in touch with our Protective Services team by calling 780.849.4888 (toll-free 1.866.449.4888), or emailing [peaceofficer@mdlsr.ca](mailto:peaceofficer@mdlsr.ca). Learn about the MD's community standards, pet ownership and OHV regulations by visiting [mdlsr.ca/enforcement](https://mdlsr.ca/enforcement). This section of the website also posts answers to commonly-asked questions about bylaws, compliance, public safety, and the general duties of our community peace officers.



## Police Officers vs. MD Peace Officers

The MD's community peace officers work closely with RCMP officers and other agencies to tackle complex issues and promote effective law enforcement. While both enforce important legislation, their roles and responsibilities differ.

RCMP officers are responsible for investigating and enforcing federal, provincial, and municipal laws—including Criminal Code offenses—throughout the province, serving both urban and rural communities. By contrast, peace officers focus on enforcing municipal bylaws and provincial laws within their specific municipalities, ensuring community standards are upheld. Our peace officers are available Monday to Friday from 8:15am to 4:30pm.

## Community Standards

The MD's *Open Spaces Regulations Bylaw* provides a set of guidelines aimed at creating safe, attractive, healthy, and enjoyable communities for residents and visitors alike. It also equips our peace officers with a mechanism for enforcing those standards.

Enacted in 2023, this bylaw is designed to help regulate issues related to noise, light infiltration, unsightly properties, water and sewer, graffiti, public vaping and cannabis use, and public nuisances. It also addresses problems such as overgrown grass, weeds, abandoned or damaged vehicles, discarded appliances, or a general accumulation of refuse. These issues not only detract from the aesthetics of our communities; they can also have a negative impact on neighbouring property values and homeowner well-being.

The new *Open Spaces Regulations Bylaw #2023-03* has been implemented to deter certain behaviours by imposing fines of up to \$5,000 for non-compliance. These fines are intended to discourage actions such as discharging raw

sewage onto public or private property, engaging in open fires during a provincial fire ban, and improperly dumping waste or debris on highways or public or private property.

The enactment of this bylaw highlights the importance of maintaining well-kept and visually appealing communities. It represents a significant step in preserving the beauty and desirability of our region, ensuring that all residents can take pride in their surroundings. Note: *Bylaw #2023-03* has replaced the outdated *Noise Bylaw 2006-06* and *Nuisance Bylaw 2007-05*. The *Open Spaces Regulations Bylaw 2023-03* can be viewed at [mdlsr.ca/bylaws](https://mdlsr.ca/bylaws).

## Municipal Traffic Strategy

The MD has introduced an important update to its municipal traffic strategy. This much-needed revision addresses several key aspects of traffic regulations within our region, promoting greater safety and efficiency for the travelling public.

The newly-revised *Traffic Bylaw #2022-12* tackles several important issues, including regulations for overweight vehicles, designated routes for transporting hazardous materials, measures to combat speeding, guidelines for off-highway vehicles, and restrictions on airbrake usage within the MD. By thoroughly addressing these key concerns, the MD aims to create an even safer and more organized traffic environment, benefiting both residents and visitors.

This updated bylaw underscores Council's commitment to prioritizing the safety, well-being, and convenience of all who live, work and play in Lesser Slave River. The *Traffic Bylaw #2022-12* can be viewed at [mdlsr.ca/bylaws](https://mdlsr.ca/bylaws).

## Reported Incidents in Lesser Slave River

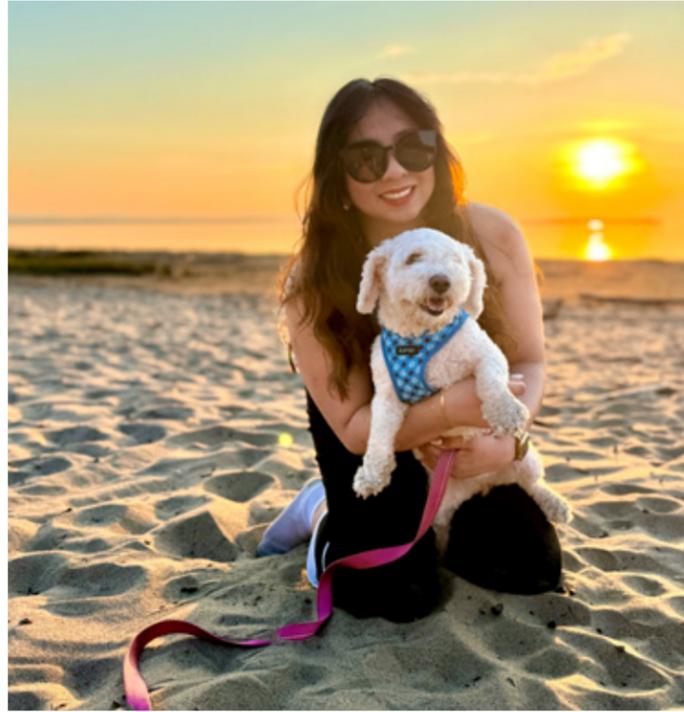
Crime prevention goes *beyond mere statistics*; it's also about knowing where crime is happening close to home.

The MD is committed to promoting neighbourhood development through innovative and responsive community policing. In support of this goal, the RCMP has developed a crime map that offers a detailed overview of reported incidents in the Lesser Slave River region. Stay informed by visiting [mdlsr.ca/crime-map](https://mdlsr.ca/crime-map) to see where incidents like break and enters, motor vehicle thefts, and mischief to property are occurring in our communities.

Understanding the complete picture is the first step toward making a positive change. Residents are encouraged to remain vigilant and serve as an extra set of eyes and ears in the community by reporting any suspicious activities to the RCMP. For non-emergencies, phone 780.849.3045. In an emergency, always dial 9-1-1.

### RCMP Community Reports

The RCMP, in partnership with the MD and its Protective Services team, works to maximize the impact of regional law enforcement and public safety. In this spirit of collaboration, the Slave Lake RCMP detachment releases periodic community reports on arrests, investigations, local crime statistics, and other items of interest to residents. These reports are available at [mdlsr.ca/rcmp-reports](https://mdlsr.ca/rcmp-reports).



## Online Crime Reporting

Help protect your property, family, and community by registering your security cameras with the RCMP.

The RCMP's Crime CAPTURE Program, now being adopted by municipalities across Alberta—including ours—lets residents and businesses register their security cameras with the RCMP. This initiative is designed to assist RCMP investigators by streamlining the process of locating potential video evidence during criminal investigations.

This program provides investigators with a map of registered security cameras in the vicinity of crime scenes, enabling them to quickly reach out to camera owners. The system not only maps registered cameras and provides contact details, but also enables investigators to view and upload security camera footage.

### Register Your Camera

To get started, visit [mdlsr.ca/capture](https://mdlsr.ca/capture) and register your security cameras. During registration, you'll need to provide your contact details and camera locations through the RCMP's secure website. Please note that a civic or blue

sign address (*rural address*) is required, as the system cannot accept legal land descriptions. Once registered, if an investigator believes your camera may have captured evidence of a crime, they will reach out to you using the contact information you provided.

## Refresher for OHV Users

In Alberta, it's mandatory to wear a helmet while operating an off-highway vehicle.

An integral part of Alberta's *Traffic Safety Act*, the Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Helmet Law, stipulates that helmets must be worn by individuals operating off-highway vehicles on public land, unless otherwise exempt. Under the act, an OHV is defined as any motorized vehicle designed for cross-country travel on various terrains, including land, water, snow, ice, marsh, swamp, or any other natural terrain. Visit [mdlsr.ca/ohv](https://mdlsr.ca/ohv) to view rules and safety tips that will help you enjoy your OHV while keeping everyone safe.

### OHV-Restricted Areas

As an OHV user, you're prohibited from riding within any "open space" areas; in other words, any public land or property under the MD's control. This means boat launches, day-use sites, viewpoints, campgrounds, community complexes, parks, playgrounds, trails, walking trails, staging areas, vacant land, municipal reserves and environmental reserves are all strictly off limits.

### Unleash Your OHV Adventure

You can ride your OHV on a highway, roadway, trail, or in an area set aside and clearly marked as a designated trail or area for OHV use. That's it. By adhering to the provisions of the *Traffic Safety Act* and municipal bylaws, you can safely and responsibly enjoy the great outdoors on your OHV.

### Mandatory OHV Documents

If requested by a peace officer, you are required to present certain documents, including a valid driver's licence (minimum Class 7), proof of insurance, and a registration certificate. It's important to always have these documents readily available at all times.

If you plan to ride an OHV on public land, including Crown land, make sure it's registered, insured, and equipped with a licence plate, headlight, taillight, muffler, and spark arrester. If you intend to ride on a highway, you must have the appropriate valid driver's licence (Class 1-5 or 7) and written permission from either Alberta Transportation or an MD peace officer for that specific road.

## Responsible Pet Ownership

MD pet tags are the easiest way to ensure your pet's safe return if it ever wanders off—and they're free for residents.

*Animal Control Bylaw #2021-11* is one of the MD's most commonly enforced regulations, addressing a variety of common issues. Frequent violations include dogs roaming freely, excessive barking that disturbs neighbours, and dogs approaching or chasing individuals. While your dog may be a beloved and friendly member of your family, it's important to recognize that *others might view them as intimidating or potentially aggressive*.

Help maintain a harmonious environment by keeping your dogs securely confined to your property. When taking them for a walk, please always use a leash. By adhering to these guidelines, we can foster a safer and more enjoyable community for everyone. The MD's bylaw imposes fines of \$500 for violations, and repeat offenses may result in fines up to \$1,000. Familiarize yourself with the current penalties for bylaw infractions by visiting [mdlsr.ca/pets](https://mdlsr.ca/pets). Get your free pet tag by calling 780.849.4888 (toll-free 1.866.449.4888).





# Planning & Development

The Planning & Development team guides responsible, sustainable growth in Lesser Slave River, balancing community interests with compliance under the *Municipal Government Act*.

The department is responsible for developing and implementing land use plans and zoning bylaws, determining suitable land uses—residential, agricultural, commercial, or industrial—and designating specific areas accordingly. Each development application is meticulously reviewed to ensure compliance with zoning regulations, building codes, environmental impacts, infrastructure capacity, and community compatibility.

Additionally, the department develops and oversees long-term planning documents, such as the *Land Use Bylaw* (LUB) and *Municipal Development Plan* (MDP). In carrying out its responsibilities, the team actively engages the

community, gathering input from residents, property owners, and stakeholders to incorporate their vision into planning decisions. Their primary objective is to promote sustainable development within the MD while preserving the unique character and natural beauty of our rugged region.

**Have questions?** Call our Planning & Development team at 780.849.4888 (toll-free 1.866.449.4888) or email [planning@mdlsr.ca](mailto:planning@mdlsr.ca). You can also check out the **Building & Development** section of the website for more information.

## Proposed Land Use Planning amendments

The MD is making amendments to its land use regulations; specifically the *Land Use Bylaw* and *Municipal Development Plan*.

Acting within the bounds and obligations of the *Municipal Government Act*, the MD is tasked with ensuring its guiding land use documents are well-aligned; reflective of all landowner priorities; and inclusive of both existing challenges and future opportunities related to land use planning and growth management. This is a challenging balancing act that requires the MD to consider existing bylaws, landowner rights and the enjoyment of personal property while adhering to current legislation across different levels of government; in particular, the Province.

To help ensure a meaningful, community-influenced outcome, MD leadership is leveraging the insights and expertise of diverse stakeholders—from land use planning experts and elected officials to landowners, small business owners, commercial/industry entities, and the public.

### Ongoing Public Engagement

The MD hosted three well-attended open house events in September, where residents had an opportunity to provide feedback regarding proposed MDP/LUB amendments. Prior to these events, the MD circulated two online public surveys between July 20 and September 1 to gauge public input into the key changes being proposed. To maximize community engagement, attendees at the open house events were given an additional opportunity to share their perspectives via these surveys.

The twin goals of the public engagement activities were to gather constructive community feedback on the key updates being proposed, and share this data with Council prior to any final decisions being made.

The public consultation process to date has elicited a substantial amount of feedback on the contemplated amendments. The MD thanks everyone who has taken the time to provide their input thus far, and will continue to ensure that voices are heard on this important initiative.



### Overview of Proposed LUB/MDP Amendments

Roughly a third of the amendments under consideration focus on aligning the two guiding documents with one another, trimming redundant or irrelevant language, updating geographic and legislative data points, and broadening references to third-party documents and governing bodies historically prone to frequent name changes. Other proposed amendments are aimed at evolving the LUB/MDP documents to align with present-day growth management realities.

Some key recommended amendments include: reviewing setbacks and variances on small lot sizes; adopting proactive flood mitigation approaches to new development; making broader/more inclusive references to commercial areas and activities; addressing RVs, sea cans, modular homes and shop/dwelling hybrids; and keeping present legislation regarding animal-related issues in the existing *Land Use Bylaw*. Visit [mdlsr.ca/land-use](http://mdlsr.ca/land-use) to explore the proposed LUB and MDP amendments under consideration.



### Status Quo for Livestock Amendments

At the Council meeting on October 23, 2024, the following motion was presented and carried: Keep present legislation regarding animal-related issues in the existing *Land Use Bylaw #2021-17*. Further research is to be completed to ensure alignment with current government legislation.

### Next Steps and Tentative Timelines

A series of meetings has been tentatively scheduled for early this year to further discuss and debate the proposed amendments and further gauge the perspectives of landowners and other affected parties. **Most meetings will be open to the public.** Notices will be posted at [mdlsr.ca/meetings](https://mdlsr.ca/meetings) and shared via MD channels.

### About the Public Hearing Process

Decisions made by MD Council can affect long-term plans for the entire MD, its communities, and individual properties. Council is required by the *Municipal Government Act* to

provide the opportunity for the public to share their views on important topics such as the LUB/MDP update project. A public hearing provides an ideal forum for this dialogue to occur. In this instance, the MD holds public hearings to **listen to the public's support or concerns about issues** before Council votes and listen to public opinion on issues with large impacts on the community or property owners.

Whether you attend, present, or submit a comment, **participating in a public hearing is a valuable opportunity to share your views** with Council members. Your input can offer new perspectives and help clarify the issues being considered. Conversely, listening to the discussion, questions, and debate from Councillors and other stakeholders may help residents understand how public input was considered in the decision-making process.

## Land Use Zoning Rationale

Zoning serves as a vital planning control tool that regulates the built environment to ensure **harmonious and compatible land uses**. Its primary objective is to separate incompatible uses, such as residential and heavy industrial areas.

Let's use one hypothetical example and plan a residential subdivision in Mitsue. Mitsue Industrial Park is designated as a heavy industrial zone, which necessitates specific air space or setback distances to be maintained between industrial and residential uses. Establishing a residential subdivision in close proximity to this locale would not be recommended for two key reasons.

First and foremost: residents would experience significant drawbacks, including exposure to excessive noise, potential air quality issues, and safety concerns due to the industrial activities. Secondly, such a development would jeopardize the existing operations within the industrial park, as these legacy uses were approved without considering the potential impact of a nearby residential development.

The *Land Use Bylaw* serves as a vital tool for effectively implementing Council's goals and plans. By establishing land use districts (zoning), it ensures appropriate density and proper drainage. Zoning decisions can have a major impact on economic development, either driving progress or creating obstacles. A recent example of land rezoning for business development is a property near Highway 2, converting from commercial to light industrial zoning to attract new businesses. This change will be integrated

into the *Inter-municipal Development Plan* with the Town of Slave Lake and reflected in the MD's *Land Use Bylaw*, setting the stage for future growth.

Zoning regulations also define key specifications such as lot size, density, height, and floor area ratio. In areas served by public water and sewer infrastructure, higher population densities can be accommodated thanks to efficient waste management. Conversely, areas that rely on onsite sewage treatment must allocate adequate land for waste processing. These regulations are vital for effective land management, as larger lots generally lead to lower density, while smaller lots facilitate higher-density development.

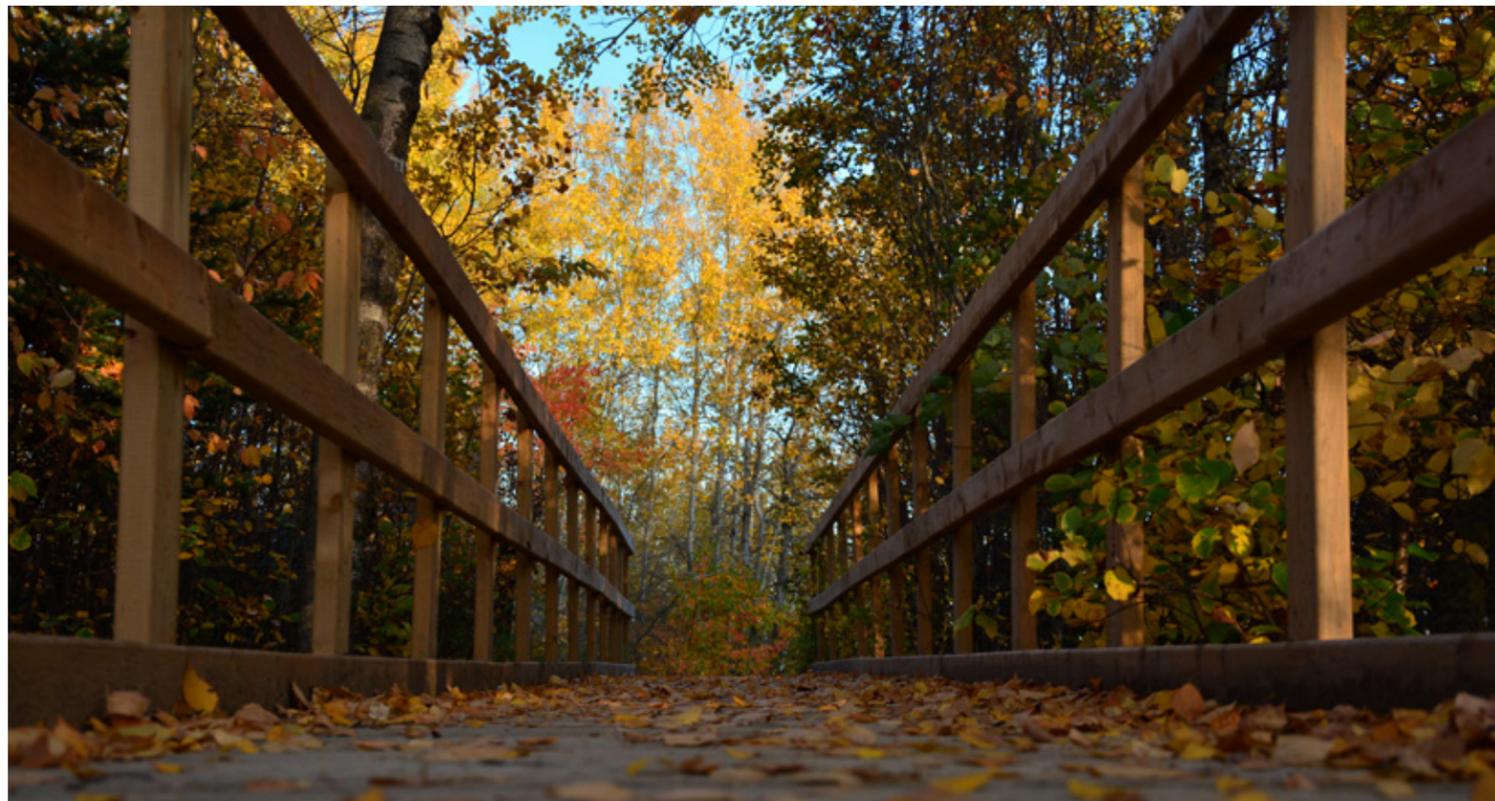
Safety is another fundamental aspect of zoning regulations, with building height determined by factors such as fire engine capabilities. This approach ensures that buildings are constructed in accordance with fire safety standards and support effective firefighting operations.

Aesthetic considerations are equally important in zoning regulations. By setting maximum building heights, these regulations preserve scenic views and prevent shadows from obstructing neighbouring properties, enriching the visual appeal of the area and fostering a harmonious relationship between buildings and their surroundings. Furthermore, the size requirements for dwellings within a land use district can either encourage or impede growth. If the minimum house size is set too large, it may deter individuals, such as singles and retirees, who may be seeking smaller, more affordable living options.

### Simplified Land Use Districts and Zoning

To streamline development, the MD has reduced the number of land use districts, consolidating residential districts from six to two to better align with appropriate density. Similarly, recreational districts have been merged from four to one. This adjustment is designed to improve the efficiency of development initiatives within the MD. Stringent zoning regulations, particularly those based on single-use zoning, can lead to inflexible planning practices.

Zoning should provide enough flexibility to allow residents to actively engage in shaping development and enable neighbourhoods to evolve over time. To support this, zoning regulations and planning decisions should



prioritize mitigating nuisances. Land uses that generate fewer nuisances than the maximum allowed for a zone should generally be permitted. This promotes a balanced, adaptable zoning strategy that considers the environmental impact of activities.

The *Land Use Bylaw* embodies this philosophy by designating discretionary uses—subject to appeal by neighbouring parties—allowing specific uses in a zone if the land parcel is adequately sized or features natural landscape or vegetation that offer screening from public view. This approach ensures careful consideration of the compatibility of proposed land uses within designated zones.

Moreover, the *Land Use Bylaw* establishes clear criteria for each discretionary use, ensuring clarity, consistency, and transparency in the decision-making process. It is recommended to limit the application of single-use zoning—except in instances where it is essential, such as hazardous industrial zones. Rather, our default strategy supports mixed-use developments that seek to promote vibrant and diverse communities. This reflects a forward-thinking perspective that embraces the benefits of flexibility.

## Development Permits

Development permits are required for various activities such as constructing, replacing, relocating, or demolishing a building; altering the land through grading, excavating, or stockpiling; operating a business; or changing land use intensity for a building.

The Planning & Development team meticulously reviews development permit applications to ensure compliance with the *Land Use Bylaw* and related statutory plans. The bylaw specifies the types of development permitted within each land use district, along with the rules and regulations governing those specific uses.

Several factors must be considered to determine when a development permit is necessary, including changes in land use, construction or modification of a building, and alterations in the intensity of use. Properties may have either permitted or discretionary uses. Permitted uses must adhere to all regulations outlined in the *Land Use Bylaw* and statutory documents and require approval from the MD.

In contrast, discretionary uses are reviewed by the Municipal Planning Commission, which is a Council sub-committee that evaluates the potential impact of the proposed uses or construction activities on a surrounding neighbourhood. Throughout the review process, adjacent landowners are encouraged to share their feedback on the proposed development, and attend or participate in the meeting where the final decision will be reached. The key steps below are designed to guide you in preparing your proposed development.

**Consult the *Land Use Bylaw*:** Review the *Land Use Bylaw* at [mdlsr.ca/bylaws](https://mdlsr.ca/bylaws) to understand the specific regulations and guidelines for your proposed development and ensure it aligns with the relevant zoning and district requirements.

**Prepare your site plan:** Prepare a detailed site plan that accurately represents your proposed development, including both site and building plans. Illustrate all key components of your project, such as infrastructure and accessibility features.

**Submit your application early:** Complete your application with care and precision, noting that it may come with specific conditions that must be met before you can proceed. You must begin your project within twelve months of permit approval, and for building projects, construction must be completed within three years.

By following these steps, you'll be well-equipped to move forward with your development plans. It's important to note that the review and approval process may take several weeks to complete due to the high volume of applications received. The MD strongly encourages you to plan ahead and submit your application well in advance.

**Need some help?** Call our Planning & Development team at 780.849.4888 (toll-free 1.866.449.4888), or email [planning@mdlsr.ca](mailto:planning@mdlsr.ca). You can also visit [mdlsr.ca/planning](https://mdlsr.ca/planning) to access the MD's development application forms, policies and related documentation.

The Roads & Transportation department maintains nearly 700 kilometers of MD-owned roads, ensuring year-round safety, accessibility, and durability of infrastructure for the travelling public. The team works diligently to inspect and maintain the MD's vast network of bridges, culverts, and Lesser Slave River roadways.

# Roads & Transportation

From pothole repairs to strategic infrastructure planning, this team's mandate focuses on ensuring the safety and drivability of road surfaces, providing a smooth travel experience for all on Lesser Slave River roads. The annual maintenance schedule includes cold-mix overlays, cold-mix patching, gravel placement, dust control, culvert upkeep, hydrant flushing, and snow removal.

In addition to carrying out seasonal maintenance and repairs, the Transportation team plays a key role in developing transportation plans and policies for the MD. They assess transportation needs, identify areas for improvement, and formulate long-term strategies to better improve local infrastructure and services. Through their knowledge, expertise and commitment, they work collaboratively to steward a trusted transportation system that meets the community's needs and fosters community growth and development.

**Have questions?** Get in touch with our Roads & Transportation team by calling 780.849.4888 (toll-free 1.866.449.4888), or emailing [transportation@mdlsr.ca](mailto:transportation@mdlsr.ca). You can also explore [mdlsr.ca/transportation](https://mdlsr.ca/transportation).

## Road Use Agreements

Road use agreements help the MD effectively monitor heavy vehicle traffic, manage wear and tear on its roadways, and plan for future maintenance.

With nearly 700 kilometers of roadways to maintain—costing ratepayers hundreds of thousands of dollars each year—these agreements help ensure that damages from commercial activities do not unfairly burden taxpayers.

Agreements are mandatory year-round, and remain in effect even after the road ban season ends. They are required in specific situations, such as exceeding five trips to the same destination within a 24-hour period, or more than twelve trips over three or more days. Such agreements are also necessary for industry activities like gravel truck operations and infilling hauls of clay, topsoil, or marginal soil, as well as for oil & gas operations involving drilling and rig movements.

Under the *Traffic Safety Bylaw*, the MD has the authority to mandate companies to enter into an agreement that establishes the terms for managing additional maintenance and addressing roadway damage between the involved parties. In some cases, the MD may also require a security deposit. These agreements generally apply to heavy hauls related to activities such as logging, gravel transportation, and substantial industrial projects.

## Back-Sloping Program

The MD has recently launched a cooperative Back-Sloping Program aimed at improving drainage along municipal roadways.

This program benefits both the roads and adjacent properties. It allows landowners to collaborate by sharing costs and resources, ultimately improving drainage and sight lines, and preventing erosion in municipal right-of-ways. The MD invites residents to submit back-sloping applications until the end of June each year for projects intended for completion within that same calendar year..



## Landslide Risk on Old Smith Highway

A critical section of the Old Smith Highway (located around kilometer 40) lies in a historically unstable area prone to landslides.

This section of road is at risk of sliding or being washed out, posing a significant threat of severing a vital thoroughfare for both residents and local industries. Responding to this critical issue, the MD applied for, and successfully secured, a grant from the Province’s Resource Road Program.

Leveraging these grant funds, the MD contracted AVID Energy Services to install two creek crossings and construct 1.8 kilometers of road. The east end of the problem roadway was relocated away from the river to prevent washouts, and is now situated on stable ground. Unfortunately, the west end lacked a sufficiently wide right-of-way to move away from the slide area. To mitigate future sliding, a gravel key was installed. This term refers to the method of adding or compacting gravel along the edges of the road to create a defined edge or “key” that helps prevent the gravel from washing away or spreading.

Throughout the project, one lane of the road has remained open, although there have been delays due to one-way traffic. The crossings and the road are expected to be completed this year; however, the contractor will return in the spring to finalize landscaping and ensure the road meets compaction specifications.

## Brushing Program

Each year, the MD conducts a Roadside Vegetation Management Program, which entails trimming and clearing bushes, trees, and weeds along roadways.

This program serves two main purposes. First and foremost, it maintains clear sight lines to improve safety for motorists. Secondly, it protects the roadbed from moisture retention caused by unchecked vegetation, which can undermine road integrity and lead to unstable areas and frost boils on the driving surface. This program is also essential for preventing culvert deterioration and ensuring proper drainage.

The Brushing Program opens for bidding by local contractors each year, following the lifting of restrictions imposed by the *Migratory Bird Act*. For 2025, Council has awarded contracts to two companies for brushing and clearing roadside areas on both the north and south sides of the MD. Detailed information about specific locations and any potential traffic interruptions will be shared via the MD’s website and social media channels.

## Widewater Drainage Ditch

For several years, the drainage from Southshore Estates has been an ongoing issue, flowing through the yards of some residents on Southshore Drive East.

Last spring, a number of residents in Widewater encountered ponding in their yards and, in some cases, small streams running through their properties after heavy rains. To mitigate this concern, the MD dug a drainage



ditch along the right-of-way south of the affected properties to redirect water to the Southshore Drive ditch. This solution proved effective during the heavy rains at the end of July, and will be reassessed this spring.

## Culvert Maintenance

Culverts are vital for diverting groundwater and stormwater away from roads and properties, but can deteriorate over time due to beaver activity, traffic weight, and environmental factors.

Neglecting to replace aging culverts significantly increases the risk of roadway washouts or collapses, posing serious safety hazards. To circumvent possible infrastructure issues, the department conducts annual inspections to evaluate the condition of culverts and prioritize necessary replacements before any potential failures occur. Under this program, a total of seven culverts were scheduled for replacement in various MD localities in 2024.

The MD is committed to maintaining roadway accessibility during culvert replacement projects; however, temporary closures are sometimes necessary. To keep residents and commuters well-informed prior to the start of any work, the MD shares details on specific locations and potential traffic disruptions via the website and social media channels, as well as the **Voyent Alert!** notification system.

The MD maintains a stockpile of commonly-used culvert sizes, helping ensure speedy responses to unexpected failures. This level of readiness helps minimize disruptions and enables the swift restoration of roadways and drainage systems. The MD also collaborates with local trappers to manage beaver populations that threaten infrastructure, reducing related risks. **If you notice any issues with a culvert—whether related to an approach or one situated beneath a roadway—contact our Roads & Transportation team at 780.849.4888 (toll-free 1.866.449.4888).**



## Gravel Supply

By crushing a three-to-five-year inventory, the MD has saved ratepayers roughly **\$150,000** in mobilization costs alone.

The MD owns and operates four gravel pits within its borders. Each year, contractors are hired to manage the mining, crushing, and stockpiling of gravel at these pits to maintain a steady supply. It's important to recognize that this work tends to be costly, primarily due to the high expenses associated with mobilization and demobilization. Transporting and handling large, heavy equipment also contribute significantly to these costs.

In 2023, Council decided to implement annual inventory crushing at all four gravel pits. This approach eliminates the need to transport a crusher from distant locations like Edmonton, Fort McMurray, or Grande Prairie to one or two pits each year. Instead, the MD will only incur costs

for moving the equipment between the pits. This decision significantly reduces expenses and promotes more cost-effective operations for the MD.

Moreover, this approach ensures an ample supply of gravel for the next several years, eliminating the need to rely on contractor availability for crushing operations. As a result, the MD can avoid project delays caused by the unavailability of a crusher contractor.

## Re-Gravelling Program

The department is responsible for re-gravelling every MD-managed roadway over a three-year cycle.

Launched in 2016, the Re-Gravelling Program is designed to improve the quality of the MD's road network. Annual investments in road maintenance have allowed for more efficient resource allocation and planning, leading to significant improvements in road infrastructure and a streamlined budgeting process.

In 2024, 69,000 tonnes of gravel were applied to approximately 207 kilometers of MD-managed roadways. Graveling efforts were concentrated in different localities, including 17 roads in Smith and surrounding communities; 68 roads in Flatbush; 10 roads in Chisholm/Lawrence Lake; and 34 roads in the Slave Lake area. This program commenced in mid-May and concluded by late September. To facilitate the project, local contractors were hired at an hourly rate for gravel hauling.

## Priorities for Snow Clearing

The MD maintains range roads, township roads, and subdivision roads, while **Alberta Transportation is responsible for clearing and maintaining provincial highways.**

MD-managed roads are categorized into seven priority levels for effective management. *Priority 1* roads are major arterial routes that handle the highest volumes of traffic. These roads are vital for accessing business areas and

allow for entry and exit to the MD. *Priority 2* roads include industrial routes, access to fire halls, and connections to water treatment and sewer facilities. *Priority 3* roads are major collector roads. Together, these three priority levels are typically cleared within two working days after a snowfall and cover most school bus routes.

*Priority 4* roads include minor collector roads and those within hamlets. *Priority 5* covers local roads and farm access routes. *Priority 6* is designated for snowplow flags. *Priority 7* is designated for community complexes.

**Important note:** If another snowfall event occurs before all seven priority areas have been cleared, crews will return to the Priority 1 roads and continue sequentially. For example, if a snow event occurs on a Monday and the plows clear Priority 1, 2, and 3 roads by Wednesday, but an additional ten centimeters of snow falls Wednesday evening, the MD will return to Priority 1 roads on Thursday to ensure all major routes remain accessible.

**Respectful interactions are appreciated.** Our team endeavours to maintain a positive environment, and expects the same consideration in return. Please refrain from calling the MD on the first day of a snow event, as our crews follow established plans and routes for snow removal. For FAQs, visit [mdlsr.ca/snow-removal](https://mdlsr.ca/snow-removal). You can also submit a service request via the Report-a-Concern Form at [mdlsr.ca/report](https://mdlsr.ca/report).

### Watch for Windrows

Windrows form when snow spills over the edge of the plow blade while passing driveways. While inconvenient, clearing each approach as it's passed would significantly increase overall snow removal time. MD policy does not require operators to clear windrows unless they exceed 75 centimeters in height; however, we do aim to address them when possible, after higher priorities are met.

### Fire Hydrants and Mailboxes

A reminder not to pile snow in a way that blocks fire hydrants. Keeping hydrants clear is a shared responsibility, and property owners must ensure easy access for Fire Services during emergencies. Additionally, Canada Post is responsible for clearing snow and ice around community mailboxes. If you're unable to access your mailbox, request clearance through their website at [canadapost.ca](https://canadapost.ca).



ROSE VERCHOLUK, WINNER  
2024 MD MOMENTS PHOTO CONTEST

## Snowplow Flag Program

The MD offers an opt-in snowplow flag service to clear driveways after snowfall. Flags can be purchased in Slave Lake, Flatbush, and Smith.

Snowplow flags are available for purchase during regular business hours at the Main Administration Office in Slave Lake, the sub-office in Flatbush, and the Smith Library. Each MD-branded flag costs \$42.50 (\$21.25 for seniors) plus GST, and is good for one clearing. Payment can be made by cheque, Interac, or cash.

In addition to your flag purchase, you must complete our Private Driveway Snowplowing Agreement confirming that you understand the program parameters. The agreement and office/library hours are available at [mdlsr.ca/snowplow-flags](https://mdlsr.ca/snowplow-flags). Simply plant your flag at the end of your driveway to indicate that the service is requested. Under normal conditions, the service will be provided within 3 to 4 days after a snowfall.

### Coming Soon: Online Snow Clearing Requests

We're nearing the launch of our digital Snowplow Flag Program that will allow residents to securely purchase private snow clearing services via the MD website. Once it's up and running, the MD will promote the new digital program via the regular media channels.

# Water & Utilities



The Water & Utilities department provides essential engineering, operations, and maintenance services that support residents' daily needs and facilitate the smooth operation of businesses across the Lesser Slave River region.

This department's broad scope of services covers water supply and distribution, wastewater treatment and disposal, solid waste management, and energy distribution. By managing the MD's water infrastructure—including treatment plants, reservoirs, and distribution networks—they ensure a safe and reliable water supply for residents and businesses in the region. This team is also responsible for the collection, treatment, and proper disposal of wastewater generated by homes, businesses, and industrial facilities. The scope of their responsibilities includes the operation and maintenance of sewage treatment plants, sewer networks, and pumping stations to protect public health and safeguard the environment. Management of the distribution of energy resources, including electricity and natural gas, also falls under their purview.

**Have questions?** Call our Water & Utilities team at 780.849.4888 (toll-free 1.866.449.4888), or email [utilities@mdlsr.ca](mailto:utilities@mdlsr.ca). You can also visit [mdlsr.ca/utilities](https://mdlsr.ca/utilities) to learn more about the MD's water, sewer, and waste management utilities.



BECCA BORRIS, WINNER  
2024 MD MOMENTS PHOTO CONTEST

## Modernizing the MD's Truck Fill Stations

Upgraded stations feature larger storage, modern systems, and new payment options, reducing costs and improving efficiency.

The **Marten Beach Truck Fill Station** has been upgraded to a new facility with increased storage capacity, officially opening in May of 2024. The replacement aims to **reduce trucking costs** by providing ample water storage to meet community demands. By accommodating larger loads, the number of delivery trips will decrease, leading to **significant cost savings**. This upgrade was needed as the previous system often ran out of water due to its limited capacity.

The new station also **features a payment terminal** that accepts Visa, MasterCard, debit, and tap-to-pay options at the pump. This convenient option allows seasonal visitors and non-account holders to access the MD's bulk water services. Additional MD truck fill stations are set to adopt similar upgrades in the coming weeks and months.

Opening late last year, a **new potable water truck fill station has been integrated into the existing Widewater Booster Station**. Residents of Canyon Creek, Widewater, and Wagner are now required to use this new facility. This transition ensures a **reliable water supply while reducing service costs** by consolidating operations into a single, modern station, eliminating the need to maintain two older facilities. The water fill stations at Canyon Creek and Wagner have been *permanently closed* and are being removed.

Similarly, the **Flatbush Potable Water Truck Fill Station has been upgraded** with a new meter system to improve account tracking and efficiency. The upgrade will allow for more accurate monitoring and management of water usage. The station officially opened in October 2024.

Additionally, **feasibility studies are currently underway** to evaluate the potential for **raw water truck fill stations in both Flatbush and Smith**. These studies will assess the practicality and viability of such facilities, considering factors like location, infrastructure needs, and potential community



benefits. The findings will provide valuable insights to inform decision-making regarding the implementation of raw water truck fill stations in these areas.

After removing the old potable water fill station at Marten Beach, the MD repurposed the pump and metering equipment to establish a raw water filling station at the existing Flatbush Water Plant. By utilizing the existing raw water well and unused equipment from the Flatbush plant, along with metering equipment from Marten Beach, the MD successfully fabricated a new raw water truck fill system in Flatbush. This low-cost “**pilot project**” aims to assess community demand for a raw water filling station, which was completed and open for use in September.

## PLC Equipment Upgrades

The programmable logic controller systems at all four of the MD's water treatment plants have reached the end of their supported lifespans, and are now obsolete.

To ensure a continuous supply of potable water to our communities, upgrading this equipment is necessary. A programmable logic controller (PLC) serves as the central computer processor that controls the automation systems

within a water treatment plant, enabling smooth and autonomous operation that consistently produces on-spec potable water around-the-clock, without the need for constant human supervision.

The upgrade of the two PLC systems at the Smith Water Treatment Plant was successfully completed in July 2023, marking the first phase of the four-plant upgrade project. Early 2024, the Mitsue and Flatbush plants also underwent successful smaller-scale upgrades. Currently, efforts are focused on the Canyon Creek Water Treatment Plant, where the upgrade of three PLC systems is expected to be completed in the coming months. The work was postponed to resolve other process issues in the water plant before proceeding with the PLC upgrade.

Simultaneously, the IT network for the plant automation systems is also being upgraded, with completion expected around the same time as the Canyon Creek PLC upgrades. This **phased approach ensures a systematic and efficient upgrade process for all four plants, minimizing potential disruptions to the water supply**. By upgrading the PLC equipment, the MD can maintain a reliable and uninterrupted flow of potable water to the community.

## Replacement of Canyon Creek Intake Chamber

To ensure long-term reliability, the aging raw water intake chamber at the Canyon Creek Water Treatment Plant needed replacement. Upgrading this chamber improved the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the water treatment process, providing a **consistent supply of high-quality water** for the community for years to come. This project was successfully completed in mid-November of 2023.

## Redesign of the Smith Intake Chamber

Located along the Athabasca River, the current intake chamber at the Smith Water Treatment Plant poses a significant challenge due to its low positioning near the riverbank. In instances of elevated water levels—such as spring 2023, when the Athabasca River surged

and submerged the intake chamber under 2.5 meters of water—the chamber would be rendered inaccessible in the event of a pump failure.

The MD recognizes the importance of tackling the accessibility and functionality challenges posed by the existing intake chamber, and is actively pursuing a holistic solution. This involves the redesign and elevation of the intake chamber to a more secure location, **ensuring its resilience during extreme water events**. The chamber is currently in the construction phase and nearing completion.

## Pretreatment Upgrade to Smith Water Treatment Plant

Installed in 2002, the membrane filtration system at the Smith Water Treatment Plant was considered to be a state-of-the-art water treatment solution. However, the system has grown outdated after two decades of service, and the membrane filters have become increasingly costly and difficult to procure. The original setup included two pressure filters for pre-treatment before the membrane plant. However, as the volume processed through the plant increased, these filters became inadequate. After requiring major maintenance, they were decommissioned in 2018.

The absence of pretreatment filters, combined with an obsolete membrane filtration system, has prompted a review to identify the best solution for upgrading or replacing the current water treatment process at the plant. Additionally, the existing membrane filtration system requires imminent repairs, which will incur significant costs.

A study of various upgrade options was conducted and presented in November 2022, leading to a **grant application that was approved last year**. The pre-engineering phase has recently begun, with engineering completion expected in this spring. **Construction is projected to start in the fall** and will take approximately six months. These upgrades are crucial for **ensuring a reliable, long-term water supply for**



# Ag Services

The Agricultural Services department provides local producers with the latest resources, expert advice, and educational programs to encourage sustainable practices and strengthen collaboration, fostering a resilient agricultural community.



The Ag Services team works in tandem with the Agriculture Service Board to deliver programming, information, and stewardship to our local producers.

Ag Services is mandated with promoting sustainable agricultural practices while ensuring compliance with provincial legislation including the *Agricultural Service Board Act*, *Weed Control Act*, *Soil Conservation Act*, *Agricultural Pests Act*, and *Livestock Diseases Act*. From providing guidance on best practices in crop production, livestock management, soil health, pest control, and disease prevention to hosting educational programs and workshops, the Ag Services team applies multiple strategies to help local producers prosper. Their active cultivation of partnerships with government agencies, industry associations, and other key stakeholders helps ensure that our ag sector receives the support it deserves.

**Have questions?** Contact our Ag Services team by calling 780.681.3929 (toll-free 1.866.681.3929) or emailing [agriculture@mdlsr.ca](mailto:agriculture@mdlsr.ca). Visit [mdlsr.ca/agriculture](https://mdlsr.ca/agriculture) to explore the Agriculture & Environment section of the website.

### Ag-Focused Supports and Funding Sources

Promoting the growth and long-term sustainability of our region's ag sector is a fundamental mandate of the MD. Our Agricultural Services team members work closely with the Agricultural Service Board (ASB) to research and assess various federal, provincial, and regional programs

that support local producers in maintaining environmentally and fiscally sustainable operations. To learn more about available funding and resources, including the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (offering eight distinct programs), as well as the Accelerating Agricultural Innovations 2.0, and the On-Farm Climate Action Fund, please visit [mdlsr.ca/agriculture](https://mdlsr.ca/agriculture).

## Shared Tractor

In 2023, the MD made a strategic investment in a versatile tractor that serves both the Agricultural Services and Roads & Transportation teams.

This shared asset has generated cost savings for ratepayers by efficiently addressing the needs of multiple departments. The tractor is used for various tasks, including operating the MD's beach groomer at Devonshire Beach and Jean Luc Deba Park, supporting the Roadside Mowing Program, and aiding with winter snow removal.

Additionally, the MD, the Town of Slave Lake, and Alberta Environment & Parks (AEP) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU for short) to collaboratively maintain Devonshire Beach. Utilizing the MD's new tractor, the three governing bodies are dedicated to thorough debris removal, efficient garbage collection, and regular upkeep of the beautiful sandy beach. Devonshire is groomed bi-weekly, considering weather conditions, to ensure a pristine and enjoyable beach experience for residents and visitors alike.

The MD has established a separate MOU with AEP for the ongoing maintenance of Lawrence Lake, Chain Lakes, and Fawcett Lake provincial recreation areas. Under the terms of this agreement, the MD works in tandem with designated contractors to maintain these special sites through a regular schedule of groundskeeping, garbage disposal, and washroom cleaning. 2024 marked the third year of this MOU.

## Veterinary Services Incorporated

Veterinary Services Incorporated is a nonprofit organization committed to helping eligible MD residents access professional veterinary services at reduced rates.

Veterinary Services Incorporated (VSI) forms strategic partnerships with licensed veterinarians to offer a variety of services, with fees offset by funding contributions from the MD. If you spend more than \$100 through the VSI Program, you'll receive a statement of farm support payments each spring. This statement can be claimed at tax time (at 100% for you or your business). Any livestock producer within the MD boundaries can participate in this cost-share program. Learn more at [mdlsr.ca/vsi](https://mdlsr.ca/vsi).

## Vegetation Management Program

Each year, the Ag Services team conducts its Vegetation Management Program, aimed at controlling the growth of brush, weeds, and grass throughout the MD.

The program includes regular inspections to proactively identify and address any weed-related issues. From June through September, roadside spraying and mowing activities are carried out to maintain the aesthetics and safety of the targeted areas in the MD. It's important to highlight that the roadside spraying process specifically targets broadleaf plants, while grasses remain unharmed and undisturbed. The MD fully complies with provincial regulations mandating the control and eradication of noxious weeds and the destruction of prohibited ones.

The Ag Services team successfully completed the 2024 spray zone project in the Flatbush area. This comprehensive initiative included spraying operations at several MD-owned sites, such as the Regional Landfill and transfer stations. Following a three-year rotation, this year's focus was on the Flatbush zone, which spans the southern end of the municipality and extends toward Smith.

## Ongoing Commitment to Eradicating Weeds

The Ag Services team helps tackle weed infestations by engaging private landowners, and by collaborating with other government entities on effective control measures.

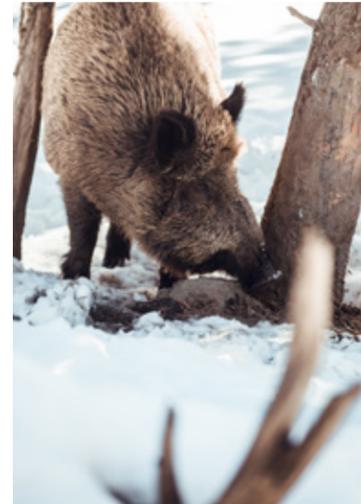
In 2024, the most frequently encountered weed species were *Tall Buttercup*, *Oxeye Daisy*, *Common Tansy*, and *Canada Thistle*. There has also been a rise in *Himalayan Balsam*, which is classified as a prohibited noxious weed. Reach out to the Ag Services team with questions about dealing with noxious and prohibited noxious weeds.

## Pest Control

The MD and the ASB recognize the significance of pest control, particularly for regulated threats like wild boar and clubroot of canola under the *Alberta Pests Act*, which mandates their control or eradication.

Ag Services is meticulous in its pest inspections, where the Agricultural Fieldman and Vegetation Lead Hand thoroughly examine all canola fields within the municipality for clubroot. In 2024, approximately 63 fields were inspected, with four testing positive for clubroot, raising concerns for both the MD and its producers. The MD urges area producers to contact the Agricultural Fieldman to discuss the best options for reducing the risk of their land being infected.

Given the rising infection rates of clubroot over the last two years, the Ag Services team has adopted a new *Clubroot of Canola Policy*. This updated policy revises the notification process for confirmed cases. For further details, please visit [mdlsr.ca/agriculture](https://mdlsr.ca/agriculture).



# Community Services

The Community Services department enriches rural quality of life by preserving our region's natural beauty and stewarding essential programs and services that promote social engagement, sustainability, and overall well-being.





Among a multitude of duties, this department manages MD-owned community complexes and open spaces, regularly organizing events to **promote public engagement and enjoyment**.

This department also conducts outreach to ensure programs and services meet residents' needs, fosters partnerships with local nonprofits, and helps secure funding from various agencies. By **prioritizing community needs, inclusivity, environmental stewardship, and fiscal responsibility**, the team works to create a vibrant, supportive environment for all.

**Have questions?** Reach out to our Community Services team by calling 780.681.3929 (toll-free 1.866.681.3929), or emailing [community@mdlsr.ca](mailto:community@mdlsr.ca). We also encourage you to visit [mdlsr.ca/community](https://mdlsr.ca/community) to further explore this key department and the many services it provides.

## Historical Points of Interest

In 2023, the MD began installing interpretive signage near viewpoints, heritage sites, and other places of interest.

These new interpretive signs point out **unique natural features and historic landmarks**, paying tribute to the First Nations, intrepid explorers, industry leaders, and community builders who have contributed to the rich tapestry of our rugged-and-real region. Signs have been installed at Canyon Creek Beach, Slave Lake Boat Launch, Widewater Campsite, and Wagner Lookout.

Each sign features a unique QR code at the bottom center. Scanning the code with your phone will take you to a **hidden page on the MD website**, which describes the location in greater detail. Exploring these scenic spots in the MD



and uncovering their historic significance is definitely worth the trip! When you spot one of these signs, give it a try! In the meantime, visit [mdlsr.ca/history](https://mdlsr.ca/history) to uncover more treasures in our beautiful boreal backyard.

## Canyon Creek Harbour Revitalization

MD crews have remediated the hazardous remnants of a provincial fisheries dock that had succumbed to the ravages of time.

Nearly every trace of Canyon Creek's industrial heyday has vanished, with the exception of an iconic gambrel-roofed structure standing tall by the shoreline. This building began its life as a Government of Alberta fish hatchery in the late 1920s. When commercial fishing dwindled, it was converted into a hotel. Though now a private residence, locals still refer to this landmark as the Canyon Creek Hotel.

Another relic of the past lurked offshore of the Canyon Creek Hotel just below the waterline. It was the original dock for the fish hatchery that had succumbed to the ravages of time, nature, and neglect. What remained submerged were a pile of rock, half-rotten pilings, and corroded iron spikes—less than ideal for a public-access shoreline.

Citing clear public safety risks, plus the ecological concerns of the creosote-soaked pilings, the MD made a **successful claim to the federal government for remediation dollars**. Leveraging grant funding from Alberta Environment &

Protected Areas, MD crews initiated a cleanup strategy to oversee the removal of debris and remediation of the area.

This project involved the removal of 137 truckloads of rocks, along with 35 loads of deteriorated wooden beams and pilings. To **minimize the risk of environmental damage**, a protective curtain was installed around the work site in the water, and fish within the enclosed area were safely relocated. The rocks that were removed were repurposed as the foundation for a new camping area in Widewater. After being cleaned, they were arranged along the lakeshore at the Widewater recreation area, which was subsequently developed into a campground.

After years of planning, and the collaboration of our federal counterparts, the MD has closed a chapter of its history responsibly while helping make the old Canyon Creek Harbour a safer and more purposeful recreation spot for generations to come.

## Lesser Slave River Weir

The area alongside the Lesser Slave River weir has been a go-to spot for years for local anglers in the know.

This hidden gem holds even greater potential as a **picturesque public space for all to enjoy**, but first it needs a little more love. For this spot to become more than a secret fishing hole, it required basic amenities like washrooms and trash containers, as well as consistent care and maintenance. Recognizing the public-use potential of the weir recreation area, the MD established a collaborative partnership with the property's owner, the Government of Alberta.

Under this partnership, our team took the lead in maintaining the area, handling tasks such as cleaning, groundskeeping, and waste management. The MD also installed washrooms, picnic tables, and benches. Looking ahead, the MD is **actively pursuing provincial grant funding for additional site improvements**, including a fishing platform.



## Community Sustainability Initiative

The CSI strengthens collaboration between the MD and community partners to promote shared tourism, recreation, and programming opportunities.

In 2022, Council introduced and approved the Community Sustainability Initiative (CSI) Program Policy, marking a major advance in promoting sustainable community development. The program aims to build formalized partnerships with local nonprofits, empowering them to manage MD-owned facilities and open spaces while also providing valuable community programming.

This collaboration seeks to boost community engagement and ensure the long-term sustainability of these vital shared spaces. It also aims to foster a more coordinated approach to promoting tourism, recreational activities, and a unified vision for the community. In early 2023, the MD entered into a four-year agreement with the Canyon Creek Recreation Association to manage, operate, and maintain the Canyon Creek Campground and Harbour. The MD has also partnered with SHARA to oversee the operation, programming, and maintenance of the Smith Equine Arena.

Through the CSI program, the department works with local groups to unlock funding opportunities from various agencies. For instance, the MD can help a community group in applying for a trail upgrade grant, which would benefit the entire region. No matter the group's objectives, the MD is dedicated to offering the support necessary to help secure funding for projects that promote community well-being and development.

Community groups often approach the MD when a grant funding opportunity requires a municipal partner. Following this, an application is submitted for consideration under the CSI program. The Community Services team prioritizes its role as a supportive municipal partner, carefully evaluating each application to ensure it aligns with community goals and objectives. Ultimately, the decision to support any application lies with Council.

Additionally, some groups contact the MD to request letters of support to strengthen their grant applications. For instance, the MD often provides letters of support to Gentle Ben; an organization dedicated to offering assistance to local seniors. In many cases, these groups tend to seek out grants independently. However, if the team identifies a suitable grant for a community group, they will proactively reach out to offer support.

## Bench & Tree Dedication Program

The program provides tranquil places for reflection, and pays homage to memories, while beautifying our rural landscape.

This program allows individuals and community groups to adopt a wooden bench featuring a custom-cast bronze plaque with a message of their choosing. These benches are then installed near contemplative and picturesque locations across the MD. Alternatively, a tree can be adopted and planted in a location that works for both the MD and participant. Mark the memory of a loved one, celebrate a birthday, or recognize any event of significance to you and your family. Visit [mdlsr.ca/dedication](https://mdlsr.ca/dedication).

## Financial Opportunities for Local Learners

The MD promotes scholarships and bursaries to encourage local students to pursue post-secondary educational opportunities, empowering them to make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Recent graduates and mature students are encouraged to apply for a variety of annual scholarships and bursaries, such as the \$1,000 Rugged & Real Scholarship from the MD, the \$1,000 Lesser Slave Watershed Council Elliott & Rosche Memorial Bursary, the \$6,000 Northern Alberta Development Council Bursary, the RMA Post-Secondary Scholarship, and the Alberta Health Services & Northern Alberta Development Council Bursary, with awards ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000. Check out [mdlsr.ca/scholarships](https://mdlsr.ca/scholarships) to learn about this post-secondary opportunity.

**2024 Rugged & Real Scholarship Recipients**  
Council and Administration congratulate **Katarina Holden, Ashton Larson, and Sarah Ramer** for claiming this year's Rugged & Real Scholarships.

Katarina hails from Widewater, and plans to pursue her Pre-Employment Carpenter certificate at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. Ashton leaves Marten Beach for the University of Calgary where he will study for his Bachelor of Communications. Sarah, from Smith, will work on her Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies, specializing in Structured Literacy and Reading Science at the University of Alberta. The MD wishes every success to these three students as they embark on their academic journeys.

Each year, the MD proudly offers the Rugged & Real Scholarship to empower the next generation of local leaders in their academic pursuits. This \$1,000 scholarship may be awarded to up to three exceptional students within the municipal boundaries who are preparing to attend post-secondary institutions in the coming year. Council evaluates applications based on merit, encouraging both recent graduates and mature students to apply. Seasonal MD staff residing outside Lesser Slave River are also eligible.

**Elliott & Rosche Memorial Bursary Recipients**  
MD Council and Administration congratulate the 2024 recipients of the Elliott & Rosche Memorial Bursaries, Julia Knutson and Amara Drefs. The MD wishes you both the very best of luck in your pursuits this year.



SARAH RAMER  
SMITH



ASHTON LARSON  
MARTEN BEACH



KATARINA HOLDEN  
WIDEWATER



NICOLE KENNEY, WINNER  
2024 MD MOMENTS PHOTO CONTEST

This annual bursary honours Brian Rosche and Brian Elliott, co-founders of the Lesser Slave Watershed Council. Brian Rosche served as an MD Councillor from 2005 until his untimely passing in 2020. The award is designed to support local students pursuing education in environmental and watershed-related fields. The \$1,000 bursary is available to watershed residents studying environmental sciences, biology, earth sciences, or related water-focused fields.

## Cemetery Grant Funding

The Lesser Slave River region is home to a multitude of active and inactive cemeteries, all of which require ongoing care and maintenance to preserve their solemn beauty and historical significance.

Typically, these cemeteries are maintained by our dedicated residents and/or our local not-for-profit groups. Embracing this community-driven ethos, the MD has introduced a new policy that aims to establish a clear framework for the allocation of funds from the MD to these compassionate groups. This financial support is intended to assist with the capital and operational expenses associated with the maintenance of cemeteries within the MD's boundaries and, in turn, foster a culture of volunteerism within the community.

Please take a moment to review *Cemetery Grant Funding Policy 111* at [mdlsr.ca/policies](https://mdlsr.ca/policies), which outlines the policy's core principles, eligibility criteria, funding opportunities, and the accompanying procedure. The program operates on an annual intake cycle, with applications due by January 31 each year. The Community Assistance Board is responsible for reviewing and approving applications. For 2024, Council allocated a budget of \$10,000 for the initiative.

## Addressing Social Needs

The MD's CAB and FCSS programs offer quarterly grant funding opportunities to support local initiatives.

Community Assistance Board (CAB) funding supports recreational, social, cultural, educational, and athletic programs in the region. Family & Community Support Services (FCSS) is a partnership between local municipal governments, Metis settlements, and the Province. This partnership provides provincial funding that is matched with local tax dollars on an 80/20 share basis. The grant funding is then used to support and develop locally-driven, preventive social services initiatives.



ANGELIE DELA CRUZ, WINNER  
2024 MD MOMENTS PHOTO CONTEST



Application intake periods for both funding streams take place at the end of January, April, July, and October each year. Visit [mdlsr.ca/community](https://mdlsr.ca/community) for further information on application criteria, eligibility, and reporting requirements for these MD-managed grant programs.

### CAB Quarterly Grant Opportunity

The CAB plays an important role in the MD by thoughtfully evaluating and allocating annual funding for eligible local programs and initiatives. As part of its budgeting process, the board submits funding requests to Council for the upcoming year, reflecting the community's identified needs.

This collaborative approach allows for effective resource allocation. Funding is open to not-for-profit societies, local groups, and individuals committed to improving well-being. Eligible initiatives must align with the MD's values, such as youth engagement, senior support, and community spirit.

### FCSS Quarterly Grant Opportunity

The FCSS program is integral to the social fabric of municipalities throughout Alberta. Its funding initiatives adopt a preventive approach, encouraging programs

that identify and address gaps in community social needs. FCSS functions as a collaborative effort, with the Government of Alberta's funding 80% of the annual budget while the MD covers the remaining 20%.

## Multi-Use Venues

Public-access facilities are the **heartbeat of any community**. They foster inclusiveness, facilitate cultural programs and sporting activities, and **draw families, friends, and newcomers together**.

These municipally-owned venues, located in the hamlets of Widewater, Flatbush, and Smith, can be reserved at affordable rates, making them ideal for meetings, recreation programs, fundraising events, social gatherings, and nearly any type of occasion you can envision. Recently, Council allocated funds to equip the kitchens with stoneware and utensils, offering an eco-friendly option for special occasions and elevating the community cooking



experience. Plus, MD residents are granted a standing 25% discount when renting any MD-owned facility. Explore the Recreation & Activities section of the website at [mdlsr.ca/facilities](https://mdlsr.ca/facilities), or get in touch with our Community Services team at 780.681.3929 (toll-free 1.866.681.3929).

### Widewater Community Complex

Set amid tranquil trees, this impeccably maintained facility is primed to host year-round gatherings of up to 300 people. The sought-after complex offers tons of features to enrich get-togethers large and small. It includes a versatile auditorium/gymnasium with convenient under-stage access to tables and chairs, well-appointed meeting rooms, and a fully-equipped kitchen and bar stocked with commercial-grade cookware. Outdoor enthusiasts will appreciate the ball diamonds, equipped with bleachers and dugouts, along with inviting picnic areas with BBQs and fire pits amid expansive, well-maintained grounds.

For those wanting to extend their stay, a new lakeside camping area was developed this spring along the lakeshore near the complex, offering six RV pull-in spots right by the water. Constructed from recycled, cleaned rock sourced from the Canyon Creek Harbour cleanup project, this campsite provides a peaceful retreat for anyone looking to relax and enjoy the lake's natural beauty.

### Flatbush Community Complex

As you near the hamlet of Flatbush on Highway 44, you can't help but notice this striking facility: a spacious metal building adorned with a distinctive curved roof and bold vertical stripes. Inside, you'll discover an open-concept layout featuring a fully-equipped professional kitchen, convenient shower facilities, and a versatile multi-use space that accommodates up to 350 people. The beautifully maintained grounds offer ball diamonds, inviting picnic areas, and a modern playground designed to keep the little ones active and entertained.

## Smith Community Complex

Nestled among the trees along Smith's charming main street, this well-appointed facility serves as a vibrant year-round community hub for central Lesser Slave River. It features a spacious dance hall, convenient shower facilities, private meeting rooms, and a fully-equipped professional kitchen. The complex includes ample tables and chairs that can be discreetly stored, comfortably accommodating gatherings of up to 300 people.

Set in a picturesque park-like setting, the venue boasts a well-maintained picnic and BBQ area, a firepit, and a camping area, making it perfect for seasonal events. Nearby, you'll find an indoor equine center, extensive rodeo grounds, and an outdoor multi-use ice surface for activities like public skating in the winter.

## 2024 MD Moments Photo Contest Winners

Congratulations to the recent winners of the MD Moments Photo Contest! 13 entrants rose to the top of more than 100 submissions based on the online vote tally.

The photos featured at [mdlsr.ca/moments](https://mdlsr.ca/moments) rose to the top of more than 100 submissions based on public upvotes and compliance with contest rules. Below are the top-voted photos, ranked in descending order of popularity. The top-voted photo of 2024 was *Serious Fella* with 263 votes, submitted by Sam Giroux. Following closely were:

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*Little Wren* with 202 votes, submitted by Vanessa Field; *Canyon Creek Cohorts* with 194 votes, submitted by Kurtis Morton; *Shoreline Silhouette* with 169 votes, submitted by Sharlene Baron; *Skijoring* with 166 votes, submitted by Becky Peiffer; *First Snow* with 165 votes, submitted by Angelie Dela Cruz; *Oh Deer* with 157 votes, submitted by Rose Vercholuk; *Hunter Brothers* with 153 votes, submitted by Jasper Fornoles; *Timbit & Cookie* with 150 votes, submitted by Jessica Zuberbier; *Garden Guest* with 149 votes, submitted by Becca Borris; *Lacey Loves the Lake*



LINDSEY ORR-ANDERSON, WINNER  
2024 MD MOMENTS PHOTO CONTEST



JASPER FORNOLES, WINNER  
2024 MD MOMENTS PHOTO CONTEST



NIKKI ST. MARTIN, WINNER  
2024 MD MOMENTS PHOTO CONTEST

with 116 votes, submitted by Nicole Kenney; *Halloween Wedding* with 110 votes, submitted by Nikki St. Martin; and *Truth Day* with 101 votes, by Lindsey Orr Anderson.

The MD awarded \$100 to each of the winners. Per tradition, their photos are displayed prominently in the MD's 2025 wall calendar. The MD sincerely thanks all those who took the time and effort to participate in this year's contest! How did the top 13 get chosen? Browse the answers to some common questions about submitting, voting, and the selection process at [mdlsr.ca/moments](https://mdlsr.ca/moments).



JESSICA ZUBERBIER, WINNER  
2024 MD MOMENTS PHOTO CONTEST

SAM GIROUX, WINNER  
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# Landfill & Recycling

The MD and the Town of Slave Lake collaborate through the Waste Commission to deliver comprehensive solid waste management and recycling services to both commercial and residential customers in the Lesser Slave River region.

The Lesser Slave Lake Regional Waste Management Services Commission (LSLRWMSC for short) operates a regional landfill 13 kilometres east of Slave Lake, and works in tandem with other landfills, transfer stations, recycling facilities, and related stakeholders. Their goal is to ensure regional waste and recycling activities are well-planned, and socially sustainable in Lesser Slave Lake.

Founded on a commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable development, the LSLRWMSC was honoured with the Collection Site Award of Excellence from the Alberta Recycling Management Authority in 2023, setting new benchmarks in the recycling industry.

**Have questions?** Call our Landfill & Recycling team at 780.849.4888 (toll-free 1.866.449.4888), or email [LSLRWMSC@mdlsr.ca](mailto:LSLRWMSC@mdlsr.ca). For Scale House inquiries, call 780.369.2590. You can also find information on the Waste Commission website at [LesserSlaveLandfill.ca](http://LesserSlaveLandfill.ca).

## Collection Site Award of Excellence

The MD was the proud recipient of the Collection Site Award of Excellence from Alberta Recycling Management Authority.

This coveted award recognizes Alberta-based recycling facilities that meet rigorous standards in areas such as organization, convenience and public safety. As part of its annual awards program, the Alberta Recycling Management Authority conducts regular inspections of recycling sites across the province, often multiple times a year, to gauge their alignment with over a dozen criteria, from safe handling and separation of items to registration and collaboration with municipal recycling programs. From a pool of 472 facilities vying for the award, three were shortlisted—LSLRWMSC being the first.

To qualify, several key steps were taken to ensure compliance with industry standards. First, all sites were registered with the recycling programs for electronics,



KURTIS MORTON, WINNER  
2024 MD MOMENTS PHOTO CONTEST

paint, tires, and used oil. ARMA-provided signage was displayed, and the safe handling and secure storage of materials were prioritized to prevent theft and vandalism. Efforts were made to maximize public convenience, with regular unit counts for electronics and proper segregation of materials. Paint bin capacity was optimized, and measures were implemented to prevent spills at used oil collection sites. Funding request reports were regularly submitted, and the site was kept clean and organized.

## New Regional Recycling Hub Envisioned

The Landfill is upgrading the operational capacity and efficiency of its recycling infrastructure to the net benefit of local communities and municipal neighbours.

In early 2024, the LSLRWMSA earmarked \$176,000 for the construction of a new recycling hub at the Slave Lake Regional Landfill. This project broke ground in spring of 2024 and is expected to be fully operational in 2025. The hub will feature a commercial-sized recycling baler housed within a larger, heated shelter with an offloading ramp. This represents a brand new asset to the landfill, and remedies long-standing limitations of the legacy baling system.

The overarching goal of developing an enhanced recycling facility was to address a number of deficiencies and operational concerns with the landfill's existing recycling system, which had outgrown its original intended use. A main concern centered around the tedious manual baling process that frequently resulted in the contamination of recycling product due to space limitations, insufficient baling capacity, and inadequate infrastructure to provide a protected work environment and storage space.

With the steady growth of regional industrial and agricultural activity, the volume of recycling material at the landfill increases in tandem, further underscoring the need for an enhanced system. Once in service, the new recycling infrastructure will greatly reduce contamination of the end product. This will represent greater recycling revenues, in addition to the cost-savings of maximizing the lifespan of



the landfill cell. The LSLRWMSA anticipates that it will realize a return on its investment in less than two years.

Once the facility is constructed and fully operational, MD Administration will focus on positioning the Slave Lake Landfill as a regional recycling hub. The goal is to attract additional recyclable materials from neighbouring communities, businesses, and First Nations groups, while generating increased product revenues.

## Extended Producer Responsibility Program

The Province's EPR Program continues to roll out in Alberta. The Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a policy approach in which a producer's physical and financial responsibility for a product extends to the post-consumer stage of a product's life cycle. The LSLRWMSA is registered under this program, and on track to receive EPR services beginning in April of 2025.

In essence, this program places a greater onus on producers to recover and recycle their products and/or packaging at end-of-life. Increased waste diversion through enhanced recycling remains a focal point of the EPR program, and aligns with the future plans of the Regional Landfill. Further, Producer Responsibility Organizations (entities designated by producers to act on their behalf to fulfill program requirements) must actively seek prime locations for processing sites. This equates to additional revenues for the landfill.



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