

Rat Creek Press

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BY THE COMMUNITY—FOR THE COMMUNITY

SPRING 2026

Fire risk at neglected commercial sites

Two fires in under a month indicate a growing issue



Left: A thin wall is all that separates a thriving arts venue from a problem property. **Right:** Fire crews douse the 111 Avenue blaze on January 4, 2026. | Photos The Aviary

JACOB ULICKIJ

“It was a wake-up call,” says **Phillip Muz**, owner and operator of Norwood music venue **The Aviary**.

Firstly — and literally — he could mean the alarm call. Around 8 am on January 4, fire teams had broken down the door of the venue to determine if the blaze from next door had spread. Shaking off sleep and checking the cameras, he saw only plumes of black and yellow smoke.

Secondly, it was a wake-up call for him as a business owner in the arts. Just six days short of their eighth anniversary, it’s a painful reminder of how close Edmonton comes to losing those last few independent venues.

Thirdly, and most importantly, it’s a wake-up call for the city to apply the problem properties initiative to commercial buildings.

“It’s unreal how many abandoned

buildings we have while still approving new builds outside of the Anthony Henday,” Muz says. “It’s a glaring problem, and it’s staring us right in the face.”

The risks associated with abandoned buildings were highlighted by a similar fire that broke out on 95 Street — just two blocks away — less than a month ago. For two derelict buildings in the neighbourhood to be lost to flames, the risk couldn’t be plainer. Yet, as Muz explains, property owners are more reluctant to rent out their buildings than they are to safeguard them against vandalism, squatting, and arson.

“There have been increasing warnings for the past two years,” explains Muz. “Bylaw was aware of the multiple break-ins, and I called the city monthly. Each time, they were surprised to hear of any incidents and promised to

follow up. Nothing came of it.”

Businesses including cafes and a charcuterie business have approached the owner of the problem property hoping to rent it and turn it into a thriving spot, with no success. “For 10 years, it’s been a strained relationship between us,” Muz admits. “I’ve reached out to rent his building, either for a prep kitchen or a patio. Musicians have wanted to rent the space as a recording studio. He refused everyone, and now what do we have to show for it?”

Muz recalls initiatives from 2017 that sought to improve the curb appeal and functionality of Norwood. They were eventually abandoned, much like the property that nearly destroyed his business, his livelihood, and his efforts to honour Edmonton’s resilient arts community.

“I’m starting 2026 with the motto

‘let’s do it while we can.’ Do the crazy thing. Make art, make it happen, and go big with it. Because really, we don’t know what will be there for us the morning after.”

Having been forced to move locations in the past, Muz and his brother (co-owner) are no strangers to everything changing in an instant. With insurance refusing to cover the smoke and roof damage, the brothers are personally fundraising and paying out of pocket to restore their space and continue putting on shows. They are living advocates for both city involvement to address tenancy rates and grassroots efforts for those who want to put in the work to preserve local spaces.

Support local wherever you can. After all, this is a wake-up call for our neighbourhoods too.



We all have stories big and small.

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ELLA turns 25

Lifelong learning gives knowledge and inspiration to students over 50



Audra Jones | Photo from ELLA

SUPPLIED BY EDMONTON LIFELONG LEARNERS ASSOCIATION (ELLA)

Audra Jones could hardly wait to be old enough to go to school. The school in this case was ELLA, the **Edmonton Lifelong Learners Association**, which offers a huge variety of courses both in person and online for students over 50. Jones first heard of ELLA from members of her book club. “They kept talking about all of the exciting courses they were taking. I was quite jealous because I wasn’t yet of an age that I was eligible to take

the courses, nor was I retired so I didn’t have the time to enjoy them. “I was really looking forward to retirement and being old enough to go to ELLA.” The civil engineer could finally attend the courses when she retired, taking classes from photography to meteorology, archaeology to forensic anthropology. Now 59, Jones is a four-year veteran of the program. ELLA was created by a determined group of lifelong learners 25 years ago. Since then, the association has presented in-person classes every spring at the University of Alberta and online courses in winter.

This year, ELLA celebrates its quarter-century anniversary with a variety of events during the spring course session from April 27 to May 15. Registrants can choose from more than 30 courses, which run from Monday to Friday during the day. One evening course will be offered on Understanding Wine. ELLA participants learn from instructors who are nationally and internationally renowned in their field. There are no precursor requirements, no exams, no homework. But there is plenty of inspiration, mind-sharpening knowledge and the camaraderie of fellow lovers of learning.

There are a surprising number of current ELLA vmembers who have attended courses since the beginning of the organization, or close to it, returning each year because there is always more to learn and friends to reconnect with. **Jan McGregor** first came to ELLA in 2007. She jumped into courses in disciplines she knew little about. And she also quickly jumped into volunteering and ELLA board work. McGregor says courses she has taken changed her world view and opened new doors. Her professional background was as a biologist, but there has been lots to explore beyond that discipline.



Jan McGregor | ELLA

A course in Islam was eye-opening, she says. Classes in improv theatre and creative writing led her to gain confidence in public speaking and expressing herself. And a course called **Beyond the Barn Door**, which explored the research happening at the U of A farm, led to a position as the public representative on the **Animal Use and Care Committee**. That committee reviews animal research at the university, ensuring the animal subjects are well treated and the research merits the involvement of live animals.

McGregor stresses it’s great to jump into courses with unfamiliar topics. “They’re so well taught. The instructors are just amazing. They’re so willing to talk if you want to stay afterwards...They’ll explain things and give you extra resources.”

Information on joining ELLA and how to register for classes is available at my-ella.com.

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Our writers vary from trained journalists to community residents with varying backgrounds. We strive to be a place where individuals can learn new skills and acquire experience—whether in writing, editing, photography, or illustration. We welcome letters, unsolicited submissions, and story ideas.

Spring 2026

Alexander Dowsey is a historian and archaeologist based in Alberta Avenue with a passion for politics and a penchant for gardening!

Constance Brissenden is an experienced presenter, writer, editor, and historian living in Cromdale. She is co-author of nine award-winning books by Cree author Larry Loyie (1933-2016), in addition to more than 20 books of history and travel.

whose life spans pioneer prairie beginnings and the digital studio.

Gail Silvius recently moved back to McCauley after living in Delton.

Jacob Ulickij is a writer and craft beer professional living on Alberta Avenue with his three talkative chickens.

Kathryn Dutchak is an artist and illustrator based out of the Edmonton area, you can find her work at kakkystickstudio

Derek Quittenton, a former financial planner, retired, sold his practice, bought a big honking touring motorcycle, and hit the road! Six years and 160,000 km later, all in Canada and a snippet in Alaska.

Dustin D. Covey known artistically as Dook, is a western Canadian artist, illustrator, and author

Maryan Ali works and volunteers in Norwood and surrounding neighbourhoods.

Sherridon Routley is a friend of the community who enjoys urban exploring every corner of the city by bicycle.

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ABOUT US
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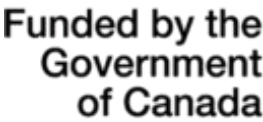
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The paper is delivered by Canada Post to all houses, apartments, and businesses in the seven neighbourhoods listed above including those with no unaddressed mail notices. For the most part, delivery begins on the last Wednesday of the month.

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Triple happiness for arts collective

Celebrating its 2026 Artist of the Year, a 23rd anniversary, and a huge donation



The Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts is a major feature on 118 Avenue. | provided.



Wendy Hollo, co-founder of the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts, poses with artist Tim Crnkovic's intricate lino prints. | Constance Brissenden

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

Wendy Hollo stood at the back of the Stollery Gallery at the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts. She smiled like a proud mom as Tim Crnkovic, the centre's 2026 Artist of the Year, stood to be introduced at the opening of his solo show. The retired co-founder of The Nina looked back 23 years to the centre's launch. "We wanted to create something that would lift up the area," she recalled.

And so it has. The 23rd anniversary marks another event: a major donation for art supplies and materials from the Edmonton Civic Employees Charitable Assistance Fund (ECECAF).

Tim Crnkovic's powerful, whimsical, and lovely art reflects the supportive collective that The Nina has created for artists with developmental and other disabilities. It's a pleasure to view Crnkovic's versatile work that fills three walls.

When Crnkovic joined the centre's art collective in 2014, he focused on abstract linocuts with complex line-work. He was featured in art shows and received commissions for his prints. For most of us, this would be a big enough creative accomplishment.

Then, COVID-19 struck. Unable to continue his linocuts at The Nina's print studio, the young man did not miss a beat. He took up art at home, creating figurative paintings and drawings. He proved to the world that he is a multi-faceted professional artist with a Picasso-like talent for varied genres.

The crowd gathered at the centre on February 19 cheered the opening of Crnkovic's solo show. Red spots, showing sales, popped up beside his works. Some buyers chose lovely female nudes, others chose urban landscapes. With more than 40 works on display, there was plenty to admire. Several of the artist's prints, a jigsaw puzzle of his popular Lazy Leopard, and an enamel pin of a giraffe with a rose in its mouth, were also available.



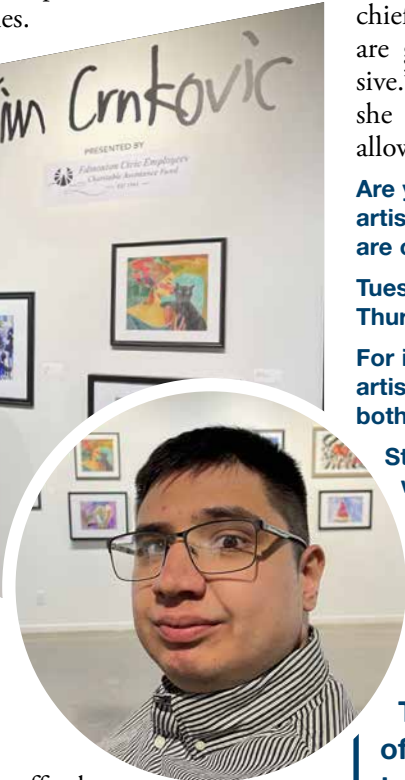
Left to right: Nina's CEO Anne Harvey, Artistic Staff Tatyana Semenova, and 2026 Artist of the Year Tim Crnkovic at Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts exhibit launch. Showing up to April 18. | Constance Brissenden

"Tim excels at very different styles of art," notes Janice Easton, director of communications and artistic outreach at The Nina. "He has developed a recognizable style. His use of colour and shadows capture the way that light falls. He is focussed, and he is meticulous."

In 2020, Crnkovic received Dentons CREATE Award, and in

2025, the Breycon Construction Artist of the Year Award. At the time, he said, "When I show my art, I feel proud... The Nina has changed my life."

Tim Crnkovic is one of more than 225 members of the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts' collective of artists with developmental and other disabilities.



Charitable Assistance Fund (ECECAF). For more than 80 years, ECECAF has contributed financial support to promote healthy communities. Their generous donation will buy much-needed art supplies and materials.

"We are extremely grateful for this," says Anne Harvey, The Nina's chief executive officer. "Art supplies are getting more and more expensive." Every donation, of any amount, she adds, supports the artists and allows their work to continue.

Are you a want-to-be or existing artist? Free community art nights are open to all.

Tuesday nights focus on adults; Thursdays are for family art making.

For instruction and inspiration, artist Lorraine Shulba is on hand both nights, 6:30-8:30 pm.

Stop by the centre's gift shop for works of dozens of artists. It's the place to go for unique and affordable gifts.

For information and opening hours:
Tim Crnkovic, Artist of the Year exhibit, runs to April 18.
The Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts
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Winter bike lane cycle and social

Bike Edmonton meetup brings those who ride and those who clear together



Most of the bike lanes in the Rat Creek area and beyond were impassable this winter. | Sherridon Routley

SHERRIDON ROUTLEY

This winter I can personally attest that all except the most central lanes were largely unrideable for most of December and January. By contrast, it was a mild February evening when I cycled to meet with the folks who try to keep our bike lanes clear and who followed 20 members of **Bike Edmonton** as they toured a popular commuting route throughout the downtown and southside.

I talked to **Val Dacyk**, general supervisor for the Snow and Ice Control program for the city at our destination's end:

Have you found this year to be extra challenging because of the weather cycle?

Yes, specifically the last two months from the beginning of December to mid January have been rough. Not only did we receive a whole bunch of snow right off the beginning, mixed in with some rain, it also fluctuated 30 degrees in a couple of days and that just creates a really hard time, no matter what you do. Very small areas with heavy packed snow. When we're trying to get it clear, it makes for challenging times.

Do you have one set of tools that you use, or do you need multiple clearing solutions?

For the standard, which would be the double-wide lanes that are bordered on either side, we have the **CAT (Caterpillar Inc. vehicle)** with blades or **MTs (Municipal Tractors)**, in particular the Trackless MT7 tractor), which are the yellow machines. If we're looking at a skinny lane like at 76 Avenue or the ones that are above or below grade, we have different tools that we can use on it. Additionally, for the priority lanes like the loop, we use calcium chloride on them to try and get it down to fair ground, but that's only in the bike lane.

Do you find certain designs of bike lanes allow you to clear better or do you have a preference that the city should look at?

So all designs have their pros and cons, and each have their own specific challenges. More importantly, we would like to have an area to put the snow.

Is there anything you would say to the designers of the bike lanes that you think is not working?

There's always places for improvement on all sides. But we're developing and getting to that point where it'll be best for all of us.

I also talked to **Keith Heslinga**, president of Bike Edmonton, a volunteer-run community bike work-

shop and commuter advocacy group that provides cycling education for all ages, hosts events with community partners year-round, and represents cyclists at City Hall:

Is there anything you would immediately like to see done better in regard to clearing?

They've done a reasonable job based on the conditions that they were handed. I think the thing that the city could do best is provide a better feedback mechanism. If you drive a five-ton clearing truck that throws sand and gravel, chances are you drive to work and back, and so you're driving on the roads that you've just cleared so you can tell what effect your plow has on the road.

If you're clearing the active transportation pathways, chances are you're not biking so you don't get that feedback automatically. So users of the infrastructure, the cyclists, have to get that feedback into the city themselves somehow, and that's pretty challenging. In Finland that's part of the contract, that the cleaners regularly ride what they've cleared.

Some lane clearers have expressed that it is tough dealing with so many different types of lanes. Do you get a sense of that at all?

You have to remember that the bike lane infrastructure is typically about 10 years old, especially the on-street portions. In the last 10 years, we've had a lot of iteration of different designs, there's a lot of different types of infrastructure in the city and different equipment that works better in each type, so it makes it a challenge.

As we continue to build, we're gonna end up picking infrastructure that's easier to clear. And we'll start converging on a type of infrastructure that works with the type of equipment, and on the equipment that works in those bike lanes, right?

We've done some learning, and that learning comes from the experience of trying different things.

In general, how happy are you with all the recent expansions of the bike lanes?

In general, I'm quite happy. There are some differences between the different groups within the city with how they deliver bike lanes. So there's **Neighbourhood Renewal**, plus **Building Great Neighbourhoods**, and the **Active Transportation Network Expansion** team. Because it's not a "one-stop shop," some teams have had more success than others.

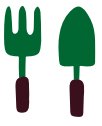
I would like to see more separated bike lanes, basically bike lanes that are separated from pedestrians and car traffic.

As an example of poorly designed bike lanes, the lanes that connect 106 Street going south and 76 Avenue going east and west I find particularly dangerous. They are quite narrow and trap ice and I end up riding in traffic.

We talked about 106 directly, and 106 is challenging to ride on. It's also challenging for the snow and ice team to clear. Probably what's going to be the right answer at the end of the day is to take those bike lanes and redo them ... that's going to be a matter of building the political will to take some of our active transportation money and use it to fix a bike lane rather than expand out the network.



Bike enthusiasts and city reps enjoyed some outdoors and ice cream together | Sherridon Routley



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Alberta Avenue Community Garden



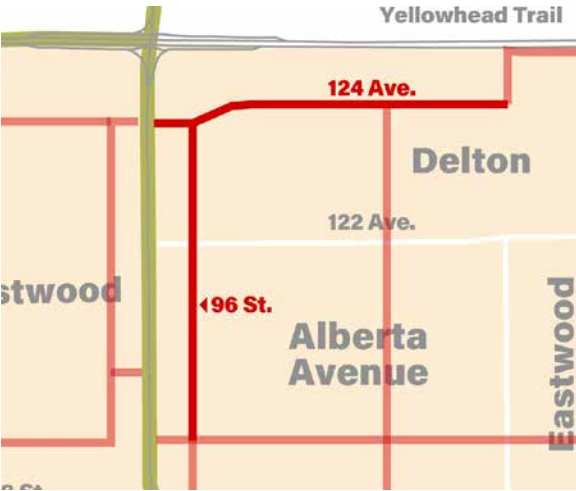
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Bike lane chaos

Residents speak out about the recent changes to their streets



Map of lanes in question at 96 St and 124 Ave. | Illustration Sherridon Routley

SHERRIDON ROUTLEY

Several members of the community affected by the recent installation of protected lanes along the **96 Street corridor** voiced their concerns in letters to city representatives and Rat Creek Press. I have summarized a few of those letters:

Local resident **Ed Sperling**, is speaking out against the city's bike lane policy after receiving a parking ticket for parking in an ice-covered lane that he described as "a surface I hesitate to even walk on, much less ride on." Sperling, who lives along one of the city's newly constructed bike routes, says the situation has become both costly and dangerous, noting that he has yet to see a cyclist use the route.

He notes the alternative parking options offered by the city are unworkable. In attempting to use his backyard last week, he damaged his vehicle after hardened snow and



Ed Sperling questions why they need to ticket when bike lanes are unfit for cycling. | Ed Sperling



Confusing construction barriers cause frustration for motorists. | Photo Karen Mykietka

ice made it impossible to open his gate. "While backing my car into this mess, the side mirror hit the fence, cracking the housing — an expensive way to park." Keeping the gate open to avoid the situation is also not an option: "The last time my house was broken into, the police told me it would be asking for trouble to keep the backyard unlocked."

Road safety is another concern. Driving on 96 Street, Sperling says his winter-capable vehicle nearly collided with parked cars on multiple occasions. He argues the concrete barriers dividing the bike lane are making snow removal impossible. "Even the skid steers I saw on my street are more than enough to damage the small barriers, posing a catch-22 to operators: leave a hazard or risk damaging infrastructure." Meanwhile, the bike lane itself has been blocked by ice for days. "Large chunks of ice have been blocking the bike section of the roadway," he said.

Sperling also questioned the city's spending priorities, "I'm quite confused by the priority structure. Roadways are in hazardous condition, even after this result was predicted by residents and their concerns summarily dismissed. Money is spent on bike lanes in the fall,

but in the winter there is not enough budget to clear snow. And no bicyclists use these lanes, but still residents are pushed out of these spaces," Sperling concludes.

Lora Maygard writes about the concrete diverters and bike lanes installed between 82 Street and 97 Street along 124 Avenue, which she calls "reckless and dangerous," saying her concerns have so far gone unanswered. In a follow-up letter, Maygard wrote: "I am absolutely disgusted by the City of Edmonton's silence, neglect, and lack of basic accountability on an issue that so clearly affects

public safety and emergency response access." The only reply she received came from MP **Kerry Diotte**'s office — something she says "should embarrass every City official responsible for this project."

"The so-called 'traffic improvements' have made our neighbourhood more dangerous, not safer," she wrote, adding that the changes have "cut off critical emergency routes, confused drivers, and frustrated first responders who now have to waste precious seconds figuring out how to navigate your maze of barriers."

Maygard says the consequences could be deadly. "When firefighters are openly stating that these designs delay their response times, you have crossed from poor planning into public endangerment." She issued a direct ultimatum to city officials. "I am demanding — not requesting — an immediate investigation and corrective action on this matter... in consultation with Edmonton Fire

Rescue Services and EMS."

The City of Edmonton has not responded publicly to her complaints.

Margherita Gosselin, who describes herself as a concerned resident of Alberta Avenue and Delton, also raises concerns about the 96 Street bike lane, saying it has caused "significant confusion for drivers who were unaware of this sudden shift." Beyond road safety, Gosselin is concerned about the impact on residents with disabilities who relied on parking being available on both sides of the road, not just on 96 Street but on other streets affected by the changes.

"The city's prioritization of bike lanes over accessibility needs is deeply troubling. It adds undue stress to homeowners and caregivers who are already managing significant responsibilities," said Gosselin, who called the city's minimum 17-business-day response time embarrassing.

This follow-up letter was sent before the recent municipal election and addressed to all candidates following a visit to the area by the **Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors, Devin Dreeshen**, prior to October 2025. In an earlier letter to Dreeshen, Gosselin expressed frustration that the project had been approved by former mayor **Amarjeet Sohi** with no opportunity for amendment once affected residents understood its impact. She says she speaks on behalf of neighbours who "support active transportation in principle," but not when plans are deeply flawed. Anticipating the same snow-clearing problems that Sperling is now experiencing, she credited Dreeshen for at least giving voice to community concerns in what she described as an environment of dismissal.

"The so-called 'traffic improvements' have made our neighbourhood more dangerous, not safer"
-Lora Maygard



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Ashley Salvador talks Exhibition Lands

The councillor's thoughts on this exciting development

SHERRIDON ROUTLEY

Demolition is underway on the 220-acre land that was the former **Northlands Racetrack and Casino**, which is part of the new **Exhibition Lands** residential community to be developed. Plans for demolition of the **Coliseum** are also in motion, with development of those lands falling farther into the future.

I talked to **Councillor Ashley Salvador** about concerns and benefits of the project to our community:

Regarding the Exhibition Lands, I've heard concerns that it may turn out like the Blatchford development, where they had a lot of constraints to meet the green energy requirements that have slowed construction and it was not aimed at an affordable demographic. Are you concerned about that?

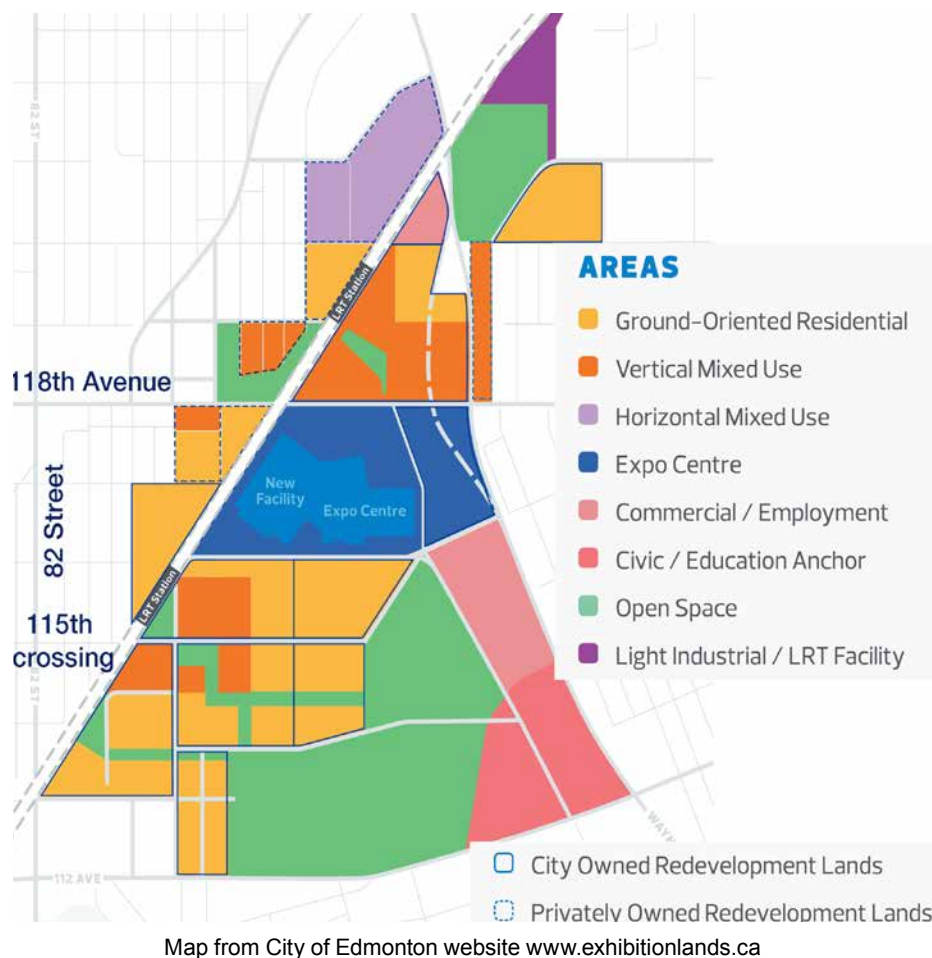
With Blatchford, it was a much more prescriptive approach, almost block by block. With Exhibition Lands, we still have priorities around energy, efficiency, affordability, and the shapes of homes that are going to get built, but there's more flexibility for the builder to come in and execute it. We're selling off larger parcels and the pace and movement that I've seen so far has been pretty quick. The city is already doing all the underground utility work as we speak on the west side of **Borden Park**.

As it relates to affordability, the city has a target of 16 per cent affordable housing in each neighbourhood, and that would be the expectation here, too.

How high can the developments go for that first phase?

It would be just around three stories. The first phase is more of that kind of lower-to-medium-scale development, but as we get closer to the LRT stations, that's where we start to see higher density projects and more mixed use. So, opportunities for some commercial and retail mixed in with housing.

For this first phase, I've seen numbers that say 2,500 units, and I've seen numbers that say 35 multi-family residential units. Which would be closer?



The one that I typically share is that it'll be home for about 6,000 new residents.

So is the main entrance to this area going to be 115 Avenue because there's an existing track crossing there?

That would be one of them. There's also access on the south side of the site, closer to Concordia. You'll see in the plans. It actually calls for a bit of a realignment of Wayne Gretzky as well, as you go up towards the 118 Avenue crossing, eventually not in the medium term, but as the project progresses realigning that road network to suit the site in a different manner.

Do you see any upsides for the 118 Avenue business area?

Absolutely! I think it's gonna have positive ripple effects throughout the entire community. I've had some excellent conversations about the potential of having more people in the area visiting local businesses, contributing to our local economy, and adding vibrancy to our main street. So much so, the **Alberta Avenue**

Business Association actually changed its boundaries to include Exhibition Lands, just to be future-focused about integrating that part of the district into the **BIA (Business Improvement Areas)**.

How far away are the final stages where they're going to develop the north section of the LRT lands? I see that the buildings can go up to 12 stories high, so we are looking at increasing density in that area?

Given the large scale of the project, it would be 20-25 years until full build out. When it comes to the phasing of the different areas of the Exhibition Lands, there's an active conversation happening. With the accelerated demolition of the Coliseum, it does provide an opportunity to activate that north parcel much sooner than expected. The report that's coming to council very shortly is also going to have a conversation about using that space for more of a festival space. So, looking at how Explore Edmonton and the Expo Center can make use of that land in the immediate term.

I heard that they're allocating \$55 million for the demolition. Is that just for the Coliseum? Or is that also for the exhibition grounds?

In the previous budget cycle, the city actually allocated \$35 million towards the demolition of the Coliseum and then, more recently, the provincial government came forward with the \$55 million towards the demolition. But that means that our \$35-million contribution also has to be used on site.

What is your role in this development as a councillor? Is it just the city making the decisions, or do you have a special interest because you're representing this area?

I would say for sure. As the ward councillor, I'm particularly interested in it.

I think it represents a huge opportunity to add more homes, more commercial opportunities, and more people into this area of our city. It's not often you get large infill parcels of this size that are in such a great location next to the river valley, well connected to public transit, and well connected to existing business districts.

I'm watching it very closely and trying to stay on top of the reports that are coming, too. Because, as I mentioned earlier, in just a few months time we're going to be having another conversation about how to make sure we're optimizing all the space on site.

Anything else you would like to say about the project?

Some people might not know about the expanded Borden Park, it's such an important part of the plans, and being able to grow that is phenomenal. There's also going to be a new permanent Urban Farm. So, a beautiful opportunity for urban agriculture and growing great in the heart of the community. I think that's really special.

I'm just excited to see it roll out and to continue to see action on site!

I thank Ashley Salvador for her time, her responses have been edited down for brevity.

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Community perseveres against hopelessness

Different is possible... even in Alberta politics



Do our politics represent our values, or are we just creatures stuck in the past?
| Illustration Kathryn Dutchak, an artist and illustrator based out of the Edmonton area, you can find her work at kakkystickstudio.

ALEXANDER DOWSEY

Politics in Alberta has rarely been a dull and simple affair. For as long as I can remember, there has been a wide and varied cast of eccentric characters and scandals that have found their way into our province’s political history. Over the course of the last six years, I have

increasingly found myself wondering if my own reminiscence was simply a case of nostalgia stemming from the passage of time, or whether perhaps there has been a tangible shift in the sentiment and ethos of politics since those times. Recently, it feels like a great cloud of futility has descended upon the province, a sense of hopelessness that

accompanies any effort to try to urge those in power into action. The policies of recent years have shifted focus and care from the increasingly urgent issues in our communities — the tangible pressures of the cost of living, vanishing social supports, housing, healthcare, and education — leaving most of our vital services without direction. Instead, we have been presented with an escalating parade of policies that decrease our access to services, widen wealth disparities and focus government attention on dubious initiatives, prioritizing the voice of a select few within their own supporters. It feels as though even the semblance of care has disappeared, and so has the aspiration to anything greater. I often ask myself, is this really what we are? As I pass my 17th anniversary since my mother and I moved to the inner city, I look back on the myriad stories and experiences of so many people here and struggle to find the nihilism represented by the provincial government reflected in the people around us. Rather than pettiness, greed, and disdain for collective betterment, what I see every day in our communities is tenacity, generosity, and an unwavering perseverance in the face of the immense challenges so many of us have faced through our lives. Our city is full of those who fight for change, often at times when

the odds seem utterly against them, and they persist. That resilience and tenacity stem from our history, from the generations of Edmontonians who challenged the odds and changed them. I often find it a great comfort that our city carries such a rich (if frequently overlooked) legacy. Even then, it can feel futile to try to reach the ears of those who do not want to hear — a challenge for so many advocates and affected communities over the years. As we enter a new year, that challenge remains as present as ever. Holding onto the hope for change is difficult at the best of times and, in the seemingly endless waves of decisions that make us feel powerless, it becomes even more challenging to hold onto. Still, in these trying times, the most important reminder lies all around us: that different is possible, that the future is alive in our communities and brought to life by our actions. All of our communities carry this richness through the advocates, organizers, artists, small business owners, and all our neighbours who help in ways big and small to foster community spirit. As much as some in the provincial government may like to think that their outlook is shared by all Albertans, we persist as reminders that a different vision is not just possible, but real.



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Edmonton through the eyes of a newcomer

This student’s response to Edmonton may surprise you



A sleigh ride courtesy of Parkdale Cromdale Community League was an exciting first for Shaun (left). | Photo provided

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

Edmonton has a reputation. What that is depends on who tells the story. I wanted to find out what a newcomer, a graduate student at **Concordia University of Edmonton (CUE)**, thought of us. Is it positive or negative?

Shaun is from one of the largest cities in the world. Born and raised in **Lagos, Nigeria**, she is used to being surrounded by 22 million people.

Her first surprise on arrival at **Edmonton International Airport** was the emptiness of the lands adjacent to the highway. The prairie landscape of Alberta was new to her. What seems like busy traffic to us, looked like empty roads to her.

Very quickly, she came to like it. She also likes the **Alberta Avenue** area residential community. “It’s so calm here,” she says. “I am more relaxed than in Lagos. I can walk here easily without a lot of congestion, either people or vehicles.” She doesn’t miss the pace of life back home. “Everyone is always rushing somewhere,” she adds. “Edmonton is relaxed and peaceful. I prefer that.”

Shaun had never been outside of her home country before arriving in Edmonton. As a mature student of environmental public health, she had already completed a degree in the field in Lagos. Her worries about Canada included housing, transit,

banking, food, and friendships.

Starting with housing, she contacted me in April 2025 through WhatsApp. She saw my ad for a student roommate on the **CUE website**. Her arrival would be in mid-August, and her stay would last until she completed her post-graduate degree.

“I contacted three of the ads on the Concordia site. Only one responded, and I was lucky — it turned out to be a good choice,” she recalls. Shaun had heard that

Edmonton, pat yourself on the back. You know how to welcome students, and the appreciation is returned. It is something we can all praise.

finding housing was a difficult task. Landlords can ask exorbitant rents. They have been known to cheat incoming students.

Our Alberta Avenue area offered everything that a newcomer from Africa without a car would need. This was another “like” as she settled into Edmonton.

Feeding herself was important. Shaun admits, “I’m picky about

food.” She emptied her two suitcases and one was filled with many food items. She brought dry pepper and ground melon, as well as pepper soup powder to make soup, a staple of Nigerian daily food. She had even paid extra to bring the second suitcase.

One of her first shopping expeditions was to **Kasoa Tropical Food Market** at (9320 118 Ave). The store is a treasure house of African products, both fresh and packaged.

“When I walked into Kasoa, I felt that I had never left home,” Shaun happily remembers. “I can buy just about any African food I want. I like certain foods, and I stick to them. I don’t like to explore what I eat, so Canada will be a new food journey for me. I’m already trying some new things. I know that in time, I’ll adapt to Canadian foods.”

She also found a stylist familiar with African hairstyles at **Uptown Africa Hair Beauty Salon** (8258 118 Ave). It’s one of several hair-related businesses on the avenue.

CUE provided access to documents that ease the transition of a foreign student’s life in Edmonton. In an information seminar, Shaun learned how and where to pick up Alberta ID documents, as well as a SIN number, health coverage, and transit info. Step by step, she felt more at home.

In September, Shaun attended the garden party at **Alberta Avenue Community League**. The relaxed atmosphere and friendly people were “very welcoming.” It reminded her of Nigerian culture. “Back home, people get together a lot. They come to the house. I know how to adapt to being on my own, but I kind of miss that. The community leagues are good places to meet new people,” she says.

Life in Edmonton was coming together. School was in full swing and her course work piling up. Still, there was a big challenge ahead: a Canadian winter. The fall months helped her adjust mentally. Physically, it was another story.

Knowing that snow

would arrive soon was scary: “It’s a shock to me that when the sun is shining brightly, it’s still cold. The sun is out but my hands are still freezing. Where I come from, when the sun is out, it is hot. But here it’s not.”

Slowly, Shaun built a winter wardrobe. She now has jackets, coats, hats, gloves, boots, socks, scarves, and long johns. She’s learned how to layer. “I do two layers, sometimes three,” she explains. “Canada is cold. I’ve heard that Edmonton temperatures can fall to -40. I always asked myself, ‘Can I survive that?!’”

The first snow fell and she was ready. In December, wearing a blanket over a warm winter coat, she went for her first sleigh ride courtesy of **Parkdale Cromdale Community League**. “Moving around town, waving to people, was exciting,” she says.

Her advice to newcomers like herself? “Don’t be afraid to ask for help. Most times, if I don’t know what direction to go, I walk up to anybody and ask. I did some reading about Canada before I came here, and I knew that Canadians are welcoming. Edmonton has very welcoming people. You have a reputation as a very friendly place.”

Edmonton, pat yourself on the back. You know how to welcome students, and the appreciation is returned. It is something we can all praise.



Shaun on her first visit to Kasoa Tropical Food Market, a grocery store that made her feel at home. | Constance Brissenden

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Learning is a two-way street

A free English class brings satisfaction for everyone involved



Students surrounded by sports equipment in their rink shack classroom. Left to right: Mahom, Tigist, Gernay, Mehari, Samson. | Constance Brissenden

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

The warm-up shack for the **McCauley rink** may not be everyone’s idea of the perfect classroom. But for **Gail Silvius**, a retired community worker, the shack is a gift. Every Wednesday and Friday mornings since September 2025, five to eight immigrant students have joined her here. Free of charge, they are learning not only English but also about Canada, its history, and traditions. As for instructor Gail Silvius, teaching has become her favorite activity. “My students are terrific,” she says.

For one thing, they have never missed a class. For another, they are eagerly embracing a future here in Edmonton.

The group includes mom **Tigist** and son **Nahom**, who live in **Delton**. Back in Ethiopia, Tigist was a welder, with her own company. A mother of three, her focus is on working hard “to build a good life for my children.”

Nahom, a young man, is a proud son. He is developing his social media skills, creating his first cell phone video about skating on New Year’s Eve. We see a smiling Nahom on skates for the first time, with laughing neighborhood children in

the background. He plans to start his own company one day, inspired by his mom.

Joining the class are **Gernay**, **Mehari**, and **Samson** from Eritrea who live in **Boyle McCauley**. In 10 years, Samson wants to drive semi-trailers. Gernay wants to be in nursing.

Silvius’s lessons include basic English, words, and greetings. The hard-working students are determined to learn English to help them find jobs. “We need Canadian experience,” says Mehari. His goal is to speak perfect English within 10 years.

One student shared that he had worked for 14 years in Israel as a temporary worker. They have paid their dues to get to Canada.

By December 2025, Silvius introduced a book, **As Long as the Rivers Flow** by **Alberta Cree author Larry Loyie**, a residential school survivor. Loyie died in 2016 at the age of 82 years. As his co-author, I was more than happy to come in and talk to the students about our award-winning book. I brought photos of Larry Loyie as a boy and as an adult in his red ribbon shirt. With the 10th anniversary of Larry Loyie’s death coming up, I was rewarded with good memories as I spoke with the students.

“Their backgrounds have a similarity to our Indigenous people. The students and I talk about colonialism and racism,” says Silvius. “Eritreans were colonized by Italy. They lost

their language rights after the Second World War when the British made a deal with Ethiopia to annex them.”

One page at a time, the class is reading its way through *As Long as the Rivers Flow*. Larry Loyie wrote the story of his traditional childhood before he was taken to an Alberta residential school. Silvius provided copies of the book. A teaching friend provided a study plan. As a writing exercise, students also have a guide to help them tell their own story.

Tigist has already told her story after New Year’s Eve 2025. She wrote, “I want to tell you about my first New Year’s Eve in Canada. I saw the children skating on the rink. It made me feel happy. The kids were beaming. The firepit smelled good. My family did a tour of the celebrations downtown. Next year, I will see the fireworks as I am skating on the ice.”

Slowly but surely, the students tackle English and discuss their first year in Canada. Silvius wants them to be able to keep learning and flourishing. “The provincial government is likely to hold a referendum on immigration. Of course that is in the back of my mind,” she says.

As a long-time community activist, she is determined to continue teaching. “Immigrants bring a tremendous amount of enthusiasm to our city and province. They are eager to work and work hard. Their open-hearted spirit inspires me.”

Getting cozy with Yosi’s

A new café face in a familiar space



Yoseph Haile in his chef’s attire. | Photo supplied

JACOB ULICKIJ

What do you get when an Eritrean chef and a Filipina wife move from Israel to Edmonton and take over a local donut shop? Turns out the answer is a whole lot of great food and an even better story.

Yoseph Haile spent most of his life as a chef. After cooking across continents, he is proud to launch his own eatery — **Yosi’s Café** — on **Alberta Avenue**. His diverse menu brings together the people, places, and flavours that shaped him over his life.

“It’s been my dream to open a space where everyone can feel wel-

come,” Haile says, “and Edmonton has been friendlier than I thought any big city could be.”

Haile met his now-wife in Israel, and together they immigrated to Canada in 2017. Haile worked labour and construction jobs to provide for his family while he sought out a future café space that would allow him to return to his passion — feeding people. Having recently relocated from Regina to Edmonton, he met the owners of the now-closed **Corpus Donuts** on 84 Street and 118 Avenue and immediately felt the chemistry.

“The Corpus owner is a Filipina, and with my wife also being from the Philippines, we found we had a lot in common right away,” says Haile.

The Corpus Bakeshop owners helped Yosi’s Café through mentorship and collaboration to pass Edmonton’s business and food handling requirements.

“I started with zero,” Haile says. “The Corpus family was so kind and made the whole process of launching a business easier.”

With just one other business partner to share the cooking and front of house duties, Haile says his newest challenge is finding the time to let the business breathe and enjoy his first winter in Edmonton with his wife and four children. Already, he says, the sheer amount of things to do make Edmonton a family-friendly city, with plenty of opportuni-

ties to meet like-minded people and find unexpected connections in the diverse restaurant community.

“Food is how you express yourself,” he says. “And our food is meant for everyone.”

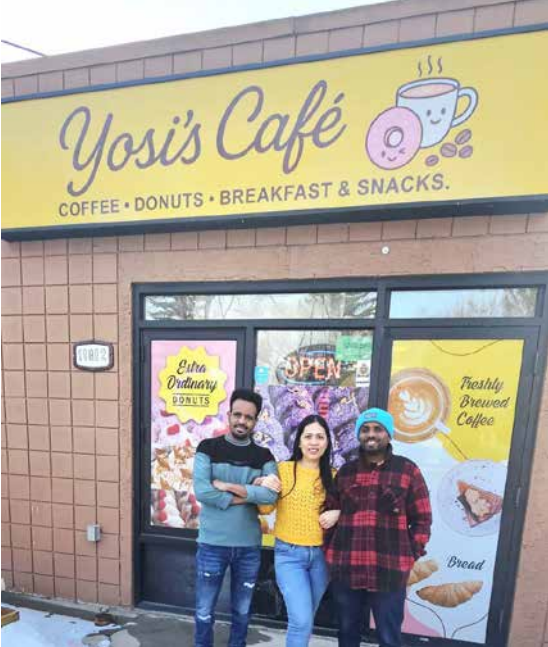
Haile’s menu standouts include the Ethiopian sampler **beyaynetu** — a colourful spread of stews and vegetables — and the traditional Mediterranean breakfast **shakshuka**, rich with tomatoes, spices, and eggs. Also on the menu are familiar Filipino dishes like **Kare Kare** (a peanut-based stew with crispy pork belly) and familiar Canadian mains like cheeseburgers and pastas.

Another specialty is fresh-baked donuts, requiring multiple proofs to ensure the perfect bite. They are then dusted with powdered sugar and piped with ube cream, chocolate ganache, or fresh strawberry filling.

Due to the labour and time required to make these treats, they are often available starting in the afternoon on weekends. This means if you want your fix of treats, it’s best to skip an early dessert and save your appetite until they’re fresh out of the oven!

Supporting Yoseph

Haile and his café means supporting local hospitality, a true DIY spirit, and a business built on generosity. Yosi’s Café is open Tuesday to Sunday for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and drinks. And while you can order through Uber Eats, you’d miss the real magic — the warmth, the honest conversation, and the joy of discovering another special something on the Ave.



Owner Yoseph Haile (left) with his business partner Abraham (right) and his wife Lyrin (centre). | Photo supplied



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Lorraine Shulba teaches a free adult art class on Tuesday night, with free family art class on Thursday night. Both start at 6:30 pm at the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts. The winter session runs until March 19. Spring session runs April 7 to May 28.
| Photo Constance Brissenden



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Cold-starting your summer garden

Winter farming tips for the overeager

JACOB ULICKIJ

Surely as the sun rises, time keeps getting away from me. Just as I settle into the crawling pace of post-Christmas winter, a seemingly endless cold expanse gives way to the sudden rush of spring activity.

For home gardeners, a \$2.49 investment in a pack quickly becomes a few dozen hours of soil preparation, potting, watering, and babying through to harvest. As nice as it is to head outside without hunting down two or three extra layers, those bored days inside look more appealing in hindsight.

It got me thinking — what can I do once the days start getting longer to make sure I’m not scrambling once the ground thaws? After all, Growing Together showed me just how much work even a small market garden can be, and with North-Central Edmonton being a Zone 4 growing region (at best), time itself is no friend for ambitious garden planners. Miss a week or two in February, and you can lose a whole crop by July.

In the spirit of simplicity, we’ll look at two winter activities that will help ensure your garden flourishes and your costs remain low.

Some simple seed science and organization

It’s boring, tedious, and a little mind-numbing, but so was buying the same pack of kale three years in a row because I forgot I already had it. Organizing by varietal (brassicas, lettuces, beans, etc.) is a great way to ensure that you’re not missing any planting deadlines for starters. I’m writing this in early February and already have celery, delphiniums, ornamental grass, and ghost peppers in soil blocks to ensure they’re garden-ready by May!

As you organize (or impulse buy before garden centers order new stock), you may discover seeds you purchased or were given years ago. Luckily, most seeds remain viable over the years and will germinate at a near-perfect rate even if you’re a season or two late.

Home viability tests are simple and affordable. All you need is a clear plastic container, a few sheets of paper towel, and labels. Begin by cleaning your container and punching a few holes in the lid. Sprinkle

Here is a quick chart for you to reference if you have extra seed stock at home. These are averages, as you can expect huge jumps in viability and seed health, even between varieties of the same species.

A Safe Bet (4+ Years)	Possible (2-3 Years)	Risky (0-2 Years)
• Basil • Beet • Brussel Sprouts • Cabbage • Cauliflower • Celery • Chard • Cilantro • Cucumber • Dill • Eggplant • Kale	• Arugula • Asparagus • Beans • Broccoli • Carrots • Fennel • Kohlrabi • Oregano • Peas • Peppers • Spinach	• Chives • Corn • Leek • Marjoram • Onion • Parsley • Parsnip • Sage

the seeds onto a damp paper towel, fold it over a few times, then place it inside. Label your seeds as specifically as you can on the outside of the container, and set it on a warm windowsill. After a week, open the paper

Building a growing setup

The factors at play here are light, humidity, temperature, and airflow. You want 8-12 hours of strong, full-spectrum light, a warm grow medium, constant humidity (but not condensation), and enough airflow to prevent mold. While it seems like these factors all work against each other, many entry-level growing kits provide you with everything you need to excel.

I like growing on wire racks. They’re cheap, allow lots of airflow, and make it easy to stack trays vertically. From there, I hang grow lights with adjustable strings so I can raise them as plants grow. Heat mats go under the slow starters, and everything runs on simple timers.

Heat mats are kept on all hours, whereas the lights are connected to a second power block that is controlled by a programmable timer. This means that the seeds are warm throughout the nights, but are only exposed to light during ideal times — saving me money and improving the chances of surviving hardening off.

Other supplies include: misting bottles for water and insecticidal soaps, directional grow lights for leggy plants, plenty of dome

lids and trays, and a catalogue of seed packets to reference what I have planted. When plants are better established, I will often introduce a small fan to simulate wind and promote better stalk growth and prevent spoilage from moisture. As a bonus tip, store any unused seeds above or away from your trays to avoid accidental spillage during watering.

As we’ve touched on with other gardening articles, the key is to keep having fun. If winter watering stresses you out, there’s no shame in buying starters from local greenhouses or the Alberta Avenue starter sale! But if you’re at all like me and willing to take on a little more each year, I hope these tips give you some new ground to till as you wait for the long Edmonton winter to break.

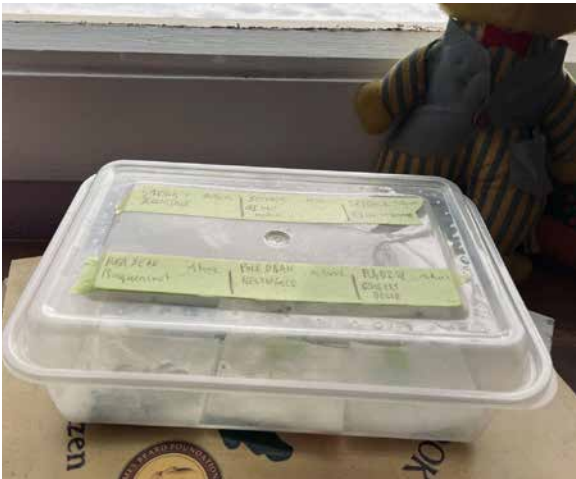


towel and see how many of the seeds show signs of healthy germination, like emerging roots.

If some seeds lag behind or fail to sprout, it means their overall health is less than ideal, and growth may be slower than if you were to buy fresh seed. For crops that you will sow and harvest multiple times, like lettuce and arugula, this might not be a problem. But for slow-maturing plants like peppers, find more vigorous seeds that give you a better chance of fruit by the end of summer.



An entire market garden began in these 8 sq ft. | Jacob Ulickij



100 per cent germination rate on two-year-old radish seeds. | Jacob Ulickij

Healthy and on a budget: Tabbouleh

Save money by making this Mediterranean staple at home

SHERRIDON ROUTLEY

One of my favorite go-to weekly meals on a budget is the healthy vegan Mediterranean appetizer salad spelled تلويت in Arabic, which goes by several different translations such as Tabbouleh, Tabouleh, Tabouli, or even Tabooli. I'm detailing my own version here, but all traditional recipes center around similar ingredients where only the ratios of bulgur wheat to parsley differ.

Bulgur wheat: ancient grain, modern benefits

A staple food in Middle Eastern diets dating back thousands of years to ancient Mesopotamia and the Byzantine Empire, bulgur is made by parboiling, drying, and cracking whole wheat kernels. This technique preserves the wheat without needing refrigeration, and the result only needs water to revive.

Healthwise, it's an excellent source of fiber,

protein, and essential minerals while being low in fat and calories. This supports digestive health and helps maintain steady blood sugar levels, making bulgur a heart-healthy choice that can aid in weight management and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.

Fun fact: In Turkey, bulgur is consumed 2 to 2.5 times more than pasta and rice, respectively. According to the Journal of Food Engineering, the average person consumes 25 kilograms annually.

Sourcing the ingredients on a budget

Although most of the vegetables can be sourced at major grocery stores, they're often overpriced. Taking a trip to the local **Lucky 97, Italian Centre,** or the not-so-local **Elsafadi Bros.** is essential to staying on budget. As a cyclist, I find it helpful to travel to multiple outlets when gathering ingredients since they vary in freshness and price daily, with Elsafadi usually being the best deal.

An average spend to get enough vegetables for a week's worth of salad would be \$20. The staple ingredients aren't hard to find, but they cost more upfront. Buy in bulk to save money! Altogether, your spend should come to \$30 if you factor in staples.

Ingredients (makes 6-7 large portions):

- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Juice from 2 large fresh lemons
- 2 garlic cloves, grated (go for more if you like)
- 2 teaspoons sea salt
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- A couple shakes of cayenne if you like the heat
- 2 bunches finely chopped curly parsley
- 2 bunches finely chopped fresh mint
- 3 bundles finely chopped green onions (scallions) or finely minced white/red onions
- 2 diced English cucumbers
- 2 diced sweet red peppers (I prefer the long ones from the farmers' market, but omit if they are out of budget)
- 2 cups diced fresh tomato (firm tomatoes are best - 2 large or 3 small)
- 1 and ½ cups rehydrated bulgur wheat (briefly heat on the stove if you're pressed for time)

Many of these ingredients are non-traditional but help make the dish a meal on its own.

Instructions:

A big factor in the prep time for this dish is whether or not you use a food processor. If you're using just knife skills like I am, this can easily take an hour (put some good music on!). The hardest part is de-stemming the parsley. One trick is to hold a bunch at an angle on a cutting board with the stems in hand and lightly shave the leaves off. The mint also needs to be de-stemmed, and if you're cutting with a knife alone, tear the leaves off into a rolled-up pile and use side-to-side cuts to avoid pressing into the mint and bruising it. With a food processor, you can be less precise with the de-stemming, which is faster, but it also makes the leaves a bit mushier in my opinion.

Since I make enough tabbouleh for a week, I prefer to keep the ingredients in three separate parts and combine them when serving. After the veggies are prepped, get a large bowl and whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, salt, coriander, paprika, and cinnamon. Add this mixture to the rehydrated bulgur and stir well. I keep the parsley, mint, peppers and onions separate from the cucumber and tomato.



What my prep looks like | Sherridon Routley

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Westwood
Community League

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The meaning of Ramadan

The Muslim holy month runs from Feb. 17 to Mar. 19 this year

MARYAN ALI

Ramadan is the most beloved month of the year for our family. It is the most holy month and sacred of the whole year too. We fast from dawn until sunset. We do not eat or drink anything. Everyone is expected to fast, except children and sick people — but if the children wish to, they can.

It is a different month every year because it falls in the lunar calendar. It usually is 29 or 30 days, depending on the lunar cycle. We observe the moon to see when exactly every year Ramadan begins. This is a month to reflect on our actions and renew our intentions. This helps us to grow our relationship with God, strengthen it, and to sustain spiritual growth throughout the year.

Weeks before Ramadan, we start getting the house ready. We wash all the walls in the house, put decoration and lights, and prepare meals. We send money to family back home

and give money to local mosques because they have Ramadan baskets to purchase. It is a worldwide sharing of charity to those in need around the world.

A few years ago, when my children started to fast, I started the Ramadan challenge for my kids to make the month more fun for them. One year, I did a scavenger hunt, where I hid money around the house, and whoever found it could keep it. This year, our challenge is to support a family for the whole year by sending them money. My children will volunteer at the mosque to help with the iftar set-up. Some mosques have iftar (food) for the community so everyone is able to break their fast together. Supporting family and neighbours are central values during this month. Sharing meals brings people together, fostering unity, gratitude, and a strong sense of community.

Ramadan is more than just fasting for Muslims. We believe that it's the month where we have to have taqwa (God consciousness and awareness). It's the month of peace, tranquility, goodness, forgiveness, and seeking paradise. We practice self-restraint and we don't just do whatever we want. We do our best to do what God says to do. We do more prayers at night because the nights are given more value, even though we are fasting during the day.

In this month, there's a special night called Laylat al Qadr (Night of Power) because that's when the Quran was first revealed to the Prophet from God through the angel Jubreel. This night changes from year to year, and is decreed by scholars. It is believed that spending this one night in prayer is more valuable than 1,000 months of worship.

When Ramadan ends, we have a celebration

called **Eid al-Fit**. We have a big feast and we do a big morning prayer together. We believe that Ramadan is a powerful reminder of faith, gratitude, and caring for others; it's a time that nurtures both the soul and the community.



Skating with Ibrahim

A day of beautiful memories and perseverance

MARYAN ALI

It was Sunday morning January 18, 2026, when I first went back on the ice after many years. I admit I was afraid.

My Sunday mornings always start with my son Ibrahim waking me up. He says "Hooyo (meaning 'mom' in Somali), wake up." And I always reply, "What time is it?" He tells me the time and I always say I will wake up in 30 minutes .

Sometimes he stays with me in bed and other times he gets his morning routine done.

After 30 minutes, I told him today we would go skating. I need to go outside and check the weather. If it's not too cold we will go. He jumped off the bed and ran outside to check the weather. He saw that the weather was amazing to skate. He was so happy.

I made chocolate and blueberry pancakes. We ate quickly and walked to our community rink.

On our way to the rink, Ibrahim's face was full of excitement. He had a big smile like a moon. I helped him put his skates on and he asked me if I was putting my skates on too. I told him no: "I helped you and once you find your balance I will put on my skates."

Oh boy! He found his balance within five minutes. He asked me to put my skates on. I said not yet, because I wanted to make sure I was able to help him if he needed me.

My plan was really not to skate because I had not done it for a long time and I really don't know how to skate that much.

Also, I was only going there to take him. But he didn't know that. And he had been asking me to take him skating since the snow fell to the ground. I would say yes, we would go skating, but never really put a time or a date on it. Ibrahim said, "Oh please, please, Hooyo. Put on your skates."

Of course I have a hard time saying no to Ibrahim sometimes. I finally put my skates on. The minute I took my first steps on the ice I wanted to get off. I was so scared. I had so many thoughts coming to my mind. "You will fall and break a leg," I

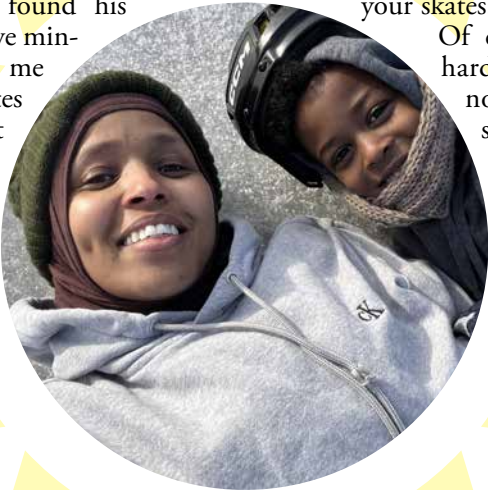
thought. There were so many negative things running in my mind.

As I was about to sit back and take my skates off, I said to myself, "If you do this, you are not teaching Ibrahim anything good."

Also Ibrahim was saying to me, "Don't take the stakes off. You can do it, Hooyo. I will help you find your balance." And he sure did. His words meant a lot and he held my hands.

We skated together for about an hour and had a fun time. We even played his favourite sport which is soccer, but we called it ice soccer because we used a hockey puck. And, of course, he won. The score was 2-0. After we were done, I was so proud of myself and of Ibrahim for believing in me and pushing me to put my skates on.

Maryan works and volunteers in Norwood and surrounding neighbourhoods.



Maryan and son Ibrahim found balance together on the ice of a local skating rink. | Supplied

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Community League

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Cooking together with meaning

Food and cultural exchange boosts NorQuest’s LINC program



Instructor Zofia Trebaczkiewicz of Edmonton Public Library with students Maryama (left) and Amina (right) and volunteer Janine Brisebois (far right).



LINC students Yeny and Mohama with volunteer Alex Barlow (right) and tasty baked cookies.



Zinash enjoyed the cooking and kindness in EPL's kitchen.
| All photos by Constance Brissenden

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

Sometimes the best word in English is a simple “Yay!” After 90 minutes cooking in the kitchen at the **Edmonton Public Library (EPL)** downtown, someone from the **LINC class (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada)** shouted with joy. The focaccia was ready, and the flat Italian bread looked awesome.

NorQuest College’s Cooking Connections class is a twice-a-semester event at EPL. It’s a fun and tasty way for students to practice English with community volunteers.

The 12 LINC students participating come from many countries. They represent Afghanistan, Rwanda, Eritrea, Syria, Nigeria, and elsewhere. English is their second language, and they are working hard to master it. Instead of desks, they share cooking workstations with English-speaking volunteers. All morning, they chop, slice, dice, stir, and blend ingredients together. And they talk.

Learning four new dishes opens doors to chat, to share stories, and perhaps even to create new friendships. “NorQuest, along with EPL and the Edmonton Food Bank, works to bring people together

through food and cultural exchange,” says **Natalia Jimenez**, a NorQuest Community Connections coach. All the ingredients are generously provided by the **Edmonton Food Bank**. Everyone involved is invited to take finished food home to enjoy.

The EPL kitchen is a well-equipped beauty. The recipes, chosen by teaching kitchen coordinator **Zofia Trebaczkiewicz**, seem easy. But as the morning progresses, it’s obvious that Trebaczkiewicz, a professional chef, has a few surprises tucked in her kitchen apron.

Working at a fast pace, Trebaczkiewicz teaches the difference between ghee and clarified butter in vegetable lentil soup. She shows the correct way to salt a focaccia, sprinkling the Italian bread from on high. She demonstrates that white chocolate chip cookie dough is best rolled into balls that flatten out as they cook. Some of the male students, who have never cooked before, must start by learning how to scrape

a carrot clean and chop it with onion and tomatoes into a salsa. The results for all recipes are satisfyingly tasty.

Zinash hails from Ethiopia and now lives in the Parkdale Cromdale area. The mother of four, aged eight to 22 years, has studied with LINC since September 2025. Her goal is to get a better job to support her family. She gives the English class in a kitchen a “10 out of 10.”

Zinash appreciated that Chef Zofia greeted the students with a welcoming smile, and positive attitude. The volunteers were fluent in English, which gave her a chance to try out her speaking skills. She adds, “I’m an open person. I was happy to speak English with them.” And, finally, Zinash learned new culinary approaches. “We made soup with red lentils, carrots, and celery. Back home, we use different ingredients. When I tried the soup, I enjoyed it. I even ate two bowls.”

Yeny, from Honduras, enjoys her LINC classes. “It’s fun, it’s good. In my class, there’s no one else from

Honduras. I like to meet people from different countries.”

Maryama, a student from Somalia, shared that she has been in Canada for almost five years. Back home, she worked in a clothing store and was a cook. Sadly, she says that she may have to leave Edmonton. “There is no work for me here. Language may be an obstacle. So, I keep working on my English.”

The English-speaking volunteers heard about Cooking Connections from various sources. Alberta Avenue Community League received an email, which they passed on to me.

Volunteers benefit in many ways. **Alex Barlow** heard about the event through **LACE (Learning and Community Enrichment)**, a **Catholic Social Services** program and LINC partner. He came over from the west end. “I’m trying to get into teaching English as a second language,” says Barlow. “This was a good event for me.”

Students mingled with English speakers, conversation flowed, and the food was good. I tried the yummy lentil soup and took home some of the crunchy focaccia. It was delicious. Kudos to all involved!

“NorQuest, along with EPL and the Edmonton Food Bank, works to bring people together through food and cultural exchange,”
- Natalia Jimenez



Parkdale Cromdale Community League

Programs:

Tango: Mondays 6-9pm

Youth Playwriting Club: Tuesdays 4:30pm to 5:30pm

Latin Dance: Tuesdays 6-7pm

Yoga: Wednesdays 7-8 pm

Norwood Family Centre stay and play for young families: Thursdays 9am - noon

Needle Ninjas (Knitting & Crochet) every second Wednesday 6:30-8pm

Upcoming Special Events:

Community Safety Course: May 2nd Time TBD

Cinco de Mayo Party - Latin Music May 2nd, 2026 7pm

SkirtsAFire Festival Mar 5 - 15 (community member discount)

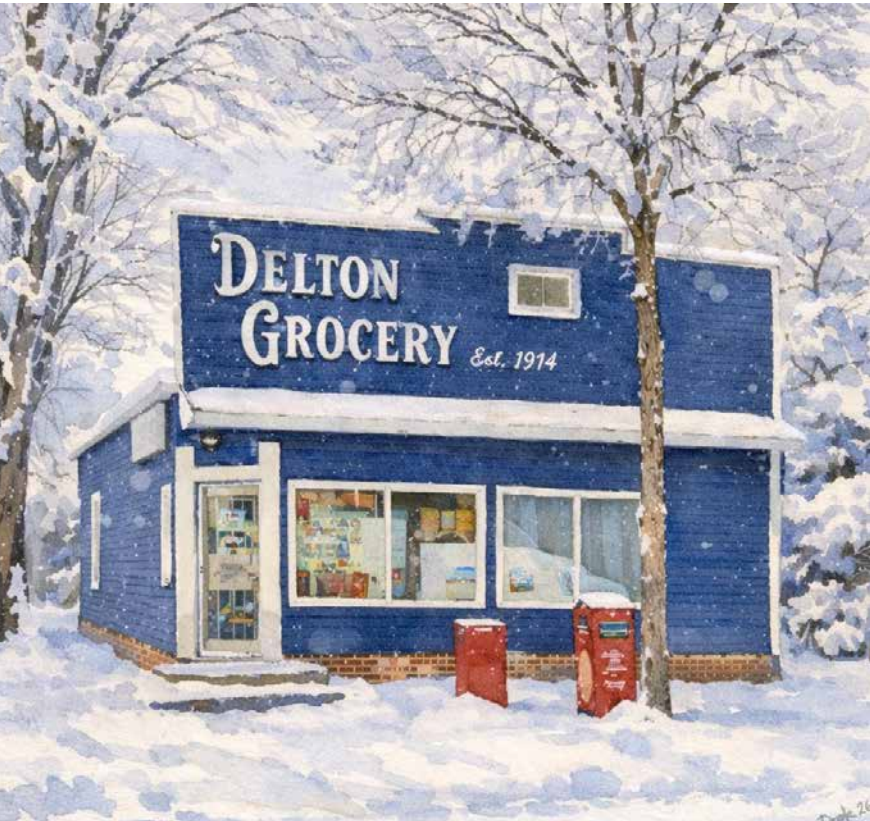


Look for details/updates at: parkdalecromdale.org or email programs@parkdalecromdale.org

Membership at: www.parkdalecromdale.org/membership

Delton Grocery Store

A core landmark for service and community



Hybrid A.I. + hand painted watercolor by Dook*

DUSTIN COVEY

Before grocery stores became megamarts, there were corner businesses like the **Delton Grocery**. These general stores served as informal gathering places where neighbours met to share stories and discuss the day’s news. They were as much about conversation as commerce — places where the rhythms of daily life unfolded alongside the exchange of goods.

Today, Delton Grocery continues that tradition, remaining a local community hub where people still stop to shop and catch up with friends and neighbours.

Built in 1914, Delton Grocery has stood on the northwest corner of 88 Street and 122 Avenue for more than a century. The one-story, wood-frame commercial building is a familiar presence in Edmonton’s Delton neighbourhood, representing over 100 years of continuous commercial activity. Its rectangular plan, low-pitched gable roof, and boomtown façade reflect the straightforward commercial design typical of early 20th-century corner stores across Canada.

Delton Grocery is a surviving example of a once-common building type: the small-scale commercial store integrated directly into a resi-

dential area. These corner stores were designed to meet everyday needs within walking distance and to act as informal social centres. As retail patterns shifted and neighbourhoods changed, many such buildings disappeared or were heavily altered, making intact and continuously used examples increasingly rare.

When first constructed, the east-facing façade would have presented a bright and welcoming storefront, with large display windows flanking the entrance and a transom window above the door bringing daylight deep into the interior. It signalled openness and reliability to passersby.

Over time, the windows have been replaced and the transom window updated with more secure materials, while the overall rhythm of the original openings remains evident. These changes reflect a building that has been adapted to meet changing needs while continuing to serve its corner.

The earliest directory listing identifies the site as the Delton Meat Market, operated by **Ada Horne**. In later decades, the business was known as the **Cornish Meat and Grocery**, a name that persisted from the 1930s through the 1950s. In its early years, the building may also have functioned as a residence, reflecting a time when work, home, and community life were closely intertwined within the neighbourhood.

The location is further enriched by its association with **Edward Delegare “Del” Grierson**, who arrived in Edmonton in the 1890s while working with the **Canadian Pacific Railway** and later served several terms on City Council. The Delton community district is named for Grierson, in recognition of his contributions to the com-

mercial growth of early Edmonton. He owned prominent hotels along Jasper Avenue and 98 Street, overlooking what would later be known as Grierson Hill.

The building wears its age honestly. Flush eaves, a compact rectangular form, and a scale that speaks to neighbourhood use rather than spectacle. It was designed to do a simple job well: to shelter a business that serves the daily needs of its neighbours. It has done so, in one form or another, and continues to provide locals with groceries and more.

Despite updates to materials and finishes, Delton Grocery remains intact in form and character. Its boomtown façade, low-pitched gable roof, and straightforward commercial design still clearly express its original purpose. The building continues to anchor its corner with a quiet confidence earned through longevity and usefulness rather than monumentality.

In recognition of its historical, architectural, and community value, Delton Grocery was designated a Municipal Historic Resource by the City of Edmonton in September 2019. The designation acknowledges more than a century of continuous service and the building’s enduring role in the life of the Delton neighbourhood.

For more than a century, the corner door on the corner store has welcomed many thousands in search of the things they need. They do more than walk into a store when they visit Delton Grocery — they enter history.

* The image was created using a collection of historic and online reference photographs, combined with Dook’s own paintings to guide the AI,

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Planning a summer road trip?

Tips from a pathological planner



Derek Quittenton, surrounded by his gear, at Métis Crossing campsite northeast of Edmonton. An excellent campsite for individuals or families near Smoky Lake. | Constance Brissenden

DEREK QUITTENTON

Will you be joining your fellow Canadians touring the country this summer? Great! Now what? Start planning immediately. It's what any pathological planner, like myself, will do. Never too early and it sure beats last-minute panic. First, get your wheels into the shop. Bumper to bumper check out. What needs to be replaced? What's going to wear out on the road? Fixing something here and now will cost



In full motorcycle garb, Derek Quittenton stops to check his phone in Saskatchewan in the summer of 2025. | Constance Brissenden

less than half the price than an emergency fix on the road. You will not have to hotel it while your vehicle is in for service. Do it now. In my case, my motorcycle has an all-right rear tire. It will get me to Yellowknife and halfway back, maybe. Much better to replace it early, rather than on the road. My new rear tire is sitting here waiting to be installed in early May. Plus, I got it on a deal, by thinking ahead. Are you camping? Time to take out the tent and set it up — in your living room if you must. My 13-year-old Redverz tent, the Portable Palace as I call it, is showing her age. She needs new zippers and the time to install them is now. One local tent repair shop is already quoting a five-week repair time. Seems I am at the back of a long line. I knew I should have done this before I put the tent to bed last October. Are you a hotel person? Think you can show up every night at 9 pm at a roadside motel and just check in? Those days are over, my friend. Thanks to our yellow haired, orange-faced buddy there are no empty motel rooms in Canada. Canada is touring Canada. Hotels and motels are now fully booked by 4 pm. The \$95-a-night motel is extinct. Book ahead! Beats sleeping in the car. Now, how about your children? What are you going to do with those screaming backseaters all day? Get your children involved in planning. If you only have two weeks

to travel, get three maps, one for each of British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. Spread the maps on the floor and ask your travelling companion and your kids where they would like to go? If your kids want to go to Saskatoon to chase pirates on the North Saskatchewan River, there is your trip. On to the nasty stuff. What do you pack? This is the toughest task, selecting what you need from what you want. Packing everything is the wrong answer. First off, there are coin laundry facilities in most small towns and villages. Most towns also have thrift stores. Big secret here: it's often cheaper to buy clean used clothes at a thrift store than pay for laundry. Takes a lot less time also. It's fun too, not like watching a dryer go round, and round, and round, and round. As for food, avoid McDonald's in favour of local Mom and Pop restaurants. Chat up the locals. Suddenly you're not a stranger, but a friendly guy with a story to tell, a story to

ground. Often there is one, but not on the map. As a motorcycle rider, I've been offered space for my tent in their home quarter. The kindness of Canadian farmers is legendary and well earned. If you're travelling out of Alberta, get a full accident and health insurance for all of Canada. Alberta health care covers you but only for what Alberta pays. A broken arm fixed in Quebec does not cost the same as in Alberta. Guess which is cheaper? The out-of-province bill might be \$1,800. Alberta hHealth care might pay \$1,200 for the same procedure. Guess who's paying the difference? You are. Alberta Blue Cross or Alberta Motor Association (AMA) are good options. If you have an employee health-care plan, you might be okay. Best to check first. Buying a 30-day out-of-province extension is cheap. Paying for out-of-province expenses is not. Lastly, take time on your travels to enjoy the beauty of Canada. Stop for

Chat up the locals. Suddenly you're not a stranger, but a friendly guy with a story to tell, a story to hear.



"Stop along the way to see what's over the hill," advises Derek Quittenton, seen here along the Red Deer River near Trochu, Alberta. | Constance Brissenden

hear. They know if there's a town museum, a swimming pool, park for picnics, farmers' market. These options are cheap and cheery. I always ask if there's a local camp-

a roadside picnic, go for a little hike, look to see what there is to see from the top of the next hill. Make the journey fun, and enjoy life.

VISIT WITH YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD CONNECTORS

Terri-Lynne & Ali want to meet Eastwood residents, hear your stories, learn about your passions, and help you find a place to connect and contribute in the neighbourhood.

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Living like Grandma

Lessons lived in childhood sustain me today



Women share a meal and conversation. | Gail Silvius

GAIL SILVIUS

My grandma went through two world wars, the Prairie drought of the 1930s, the Great Depression, and the Cuban missile crisis. There were many dark days throughout her life. She relied on her commu-

nity while her husband (and, years later, her son) was off to a war in Europe. She kept faith, and believed better days were possible. These days, I find myself trying to live like Grandma. Yes, I doom-scroll and swear at the news. But then... I double-up my curtains to keep the cold air from the windows at bay. Grandma did this to save wood and coal. I do it to reduce greenhouse emissions. When I turn food scraps into broth or heat up leftovers, I remember her. There was no food waste in Grandma's Depression-era kitchen. In my apartment, I have red wriggler worms that silently turn carrot peelings and coffee grounds into new soil for tomato plants. Grandma tended her kitchen garden in the summer. In the fall, she

nity while her husband (and, years later, her son) was off to a war in Europe. She kept faith, and believed better days were possible.

These days, I find myself trying to live like Grandma. Yes, I doom-scroll and swear at the news. But then... I double-up my curtains to keep the cold air from the windows at bay. Grandma did this to save wood and coal. I do it to reduce greenhouse emissions. When I turn food scraps into broth or heat up leftovers, I remember her. There was no



saved seeds for the next year. I think of her as I set seeds into my indoor garden box for a few leafy greens in the winter. In the summer, I pick berries in our community orchard.

In the spring and summer Grandma collected rain water in a barrel and, in winter, brought in buckets of snow to melt. Saving water was a Prairie survival habit. I wash a few things by hand, and use the grey water to flush the toilet. Melted snow gives life to my seedlings. These are lessons that I learned as a child.

I listen to news of water main breaks and crumbling infrastructure, while I stock my emergency food pantry and fill milk jugs with water. Memories of Grandma and my mom stocking a bomb shelter in the early sixties stay strong, from a time when they watched a world perched on the edge of nuclear war.

WECAN turns bulk buying into individual savings. | Gail Silvius

Living like Grandma shines light on my own dark days.

As I see my government damage healthcare, I take a first aid course. I resupply my first aid kit and remember how to make a mustard plaster.

I gather with others to host the Wecan depot, a food-buying club that offers an alternative to food banks.

I share a table with women who get together to share recipes, swap kids' clothes, and learn English.

At the skating rink, there is hot chocolate for all. I watch a homeless man dancing and spinning on the ice in figure skates. I smile at his grace.

Community, faith, better days. Just like Grandma, I draw these to me to await the light.

WE CAN HELP!

My team and I are eager to help Edmonton Griesbach riding residents with your federal government issues free of charge, including:

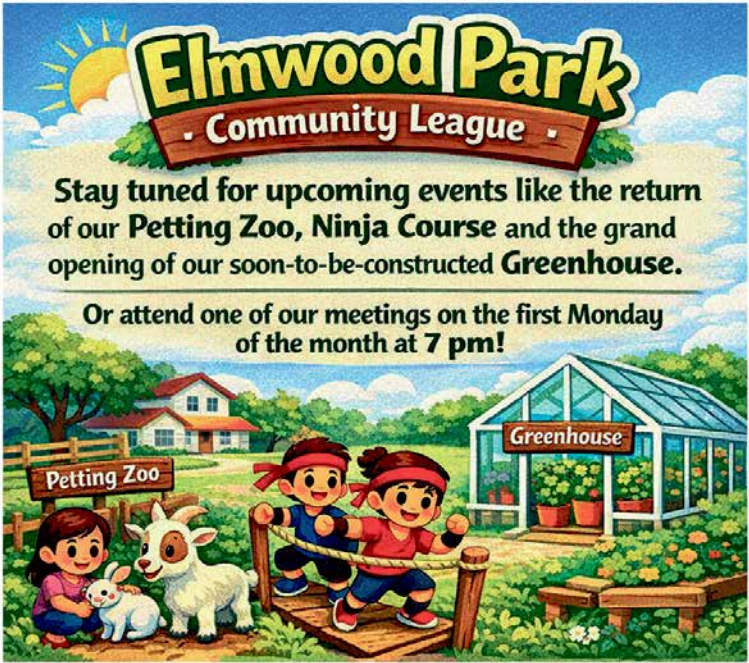
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- Passport Canada
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KERRY DIOTTE
MP | EDMONTON GRIESBACH

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Location: 9210 118th Ave
Date: March 26, 2026
Doors: 6:00 PM
Business Meeting: 7:00 PM
RSVP: albertaave.org

**Join us
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Meeting**

The meeting will include light refreshments, a presentation of our annual report, bylaw amendments and the election of new board members.

Message from your MP

Kerry Diotte, Edmonton Griesbach



Website photo

As the **Member of Parliament for Edmonton Griesbach**, it's an honour to represent our community in Ottawa.

While the media often focuses on debates and votes in the House of Commons, one of the most important parts of my role as MP is help-

ing people in Edmonton Griesbach navigate complex federal programs and services.

I constantly hear from constituents how frustrating it can be to navigate government systems. So, to these folks, I say: "I hear you. It's my duty and pleasure to help you cut through bureaucratic red tape."

My staff and I will gladly assist residents of Edmonton Griesbach with navigating federal departments and agencies, including the Canada Revenue Agency, Veterans Affairs Canada, Service Canada, and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

We can also help with passports, Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement – all at no cost to constituents.

If you're facing delays with benefits or need help getting answers from a federal department, we can

make inquiries on your behalf and help guide you through the process.

This work can be especially emotional. I remember speaking with a community member who was in tears, worried she would lose her pension through no fault of her own. After looking into the matter, my staff uncovered a bureaucratic error and helped resolve the issue. This is one of the most rewarding parts of my job – helping our community members.

Before entering politics, I worked as a journalist for many years. Public service has always been important to me, and I'm grateful to continue serving our community in this role.

Additionally, as your Member of Parliament, I know how important community is.

I'm always eager to celebrate community events and festivities particularly in our riding of Edmonton

Griesbach.

If you're organizing a community event, please let my office know — I would be pleased to attend if my schedule allows. If I have duties in Ottawa, a member of my team is often available to join you.

I'm also happy to provide certificates to mark significant milestones, including birthdays, anniversaries and volunteer recognition. Please contact my office for details.

If you have questions or comments, reach me at kerrydiotte.com or call my Edmonton office at (780) 641-8448.

Please also consider taking my one-minute survey at kerrydiotte.com/rate-my-performance. Your feedback helps me better represent you in Ottawa.

Message from your MLA

Janis Irwin, Edmonton Highlands-Norwood



Website photo

Friends,

I write to you today from the legislature, where the first legislative session of 2026 has kicked off.

As always, I continue to be so proud to represent you as your MLA, and be part of an Alberta NDP team that puts forward tangible solutions

to address the issues that you've told me are important, including access to healthcare, affordability, education, and housing.

Serving as the **MLA for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood** has been the honour of my lifetime, and I want you to know that my team and I are always here and ready to help however we can. I know that so many of you have experienced challenges with health care and social supports, and while my office can't always fix the structural problems plaguing these systems, we will do everything in our power to try to get you the support you need.

So please know that my constituency team can help advocate for you if you're struggling with a provincial government program. Provincial programs include our health and education systems, most social services (like AISH, Income Support, seniors'

benefits), registries, and many other programs that are a part of our daily lives.

If you have a concern and you're not sure if it's provincial, please reach out and we'll help determine if we can help and if we can't, we'll connect you with the elected official that can.

My constituents are, and have always been, my first priority.

I also want you to know that if you have a special event or occasion coming up, please reach out to my office, as I'd love to try to attend, and I'm always so happy to provide a commemorative scroll from the Legislative Assembly.

And in the legislature, please remember that I'm here to fight for you, and to advocate for the changes that are necessary to make your life better. As we've recently heard some harmful and divisive rhetoric relating to immigration and separation,

I hope you remember that when things seem dark and hopeless, there is power in community, in solidarity, and in showing up for each other. I promise to keep fighting because I know more than ever, that better is possible in this province and community I love.

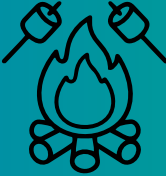
I hope to see you out and about, especially as we get closer to spring. Please continue to share your priorities and concerns with me and my team – we are just an email or phone call away.

Take care of yourselves, and each other,

Janis

Edmonton.HighlandsNorwood@assembly.ab.ca

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E-Mail: alex@otathletics.com

WWW.OTATHLETICS.COM/EDMONTON

SCHEDULE

4:30pm - 5:30pm K - Grade 2

5:30pm - 6:30pm Grade 3 - 6

SIGN UP TODAY!

SCAN ME

