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Saddle Hills



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COVER PHOTO: INTERIOR PHOTO: Kaz Kaiser

Judy Stahl



A Message from the Reeve - Reflecting on 2024

As I look back on 2024, I am once again in awe of all our community has achieved this year. I feel privileged to call Saddle Hills County my home and grateful for the many wonderful people throughout the County, without whom many of these accomplishments wouldn't have been possible.

2024 was an exciting year, in which we saw some long-term projects finally come to fruition. Project Aurora, which will bring affordable high-speed fiber internet to the County, with free hookups, was launched at the beginning of the year, thanks to a collaboration with Canadian Fiber Optics and funding from the Provincial and Federal governments. The project is one of the biggest of its kind and we are proud to be one of the first rural municipalities in the world to bring fiber internet service of this scale to a typically underserviced area. Thanks to the work of our partners at Northern Lights Fiber, the labour-intensive backbone of the initial project scope is complete and properties within the Hamlet of Woking have already been connected to, and are reaping the benefits of, this service.

Another milestone for the year, was the June opening of the greatly anticipated Saddle Hills County Health Clinic - a feat which would not have been possible without the hard work of both Administration and Nurse Practitioner, Palvi Sharma. Palvi's dedication to creating a space where local residents could have their healthcare needs met in a timely and caring manner is unparalleled, and we are grateful that she has chosen to make the Peace Region her home. Alongside this, we also saw the completion of the new Pleasant View Lodge senior housing facility in Spirit River. We hope that the combination of these projects, as well as the other services offered by Saddle Hills County, will mean that families are able to stay together in their home communities, receiving the vital care they need and retaining the way of life that we all enjoy.

With a focus on future prosperity, the County also continued to expand our Rural Potable Water Network, with over 150 connections and 320 km of pipeline installed to date. We also saw progress on the G5's collaborative Central Peace Regional Water Project, receiving additional funds from the Provincial government in order to make this dream a reality. Work has now begun on the Peace River intake and we look forward to seeing the developments on this exciting project in the upcoming year.

With the strength of these achievements behind us, Council is excited to head into the new year and share the many new projects and initiatives the County will be working on in 2025. We look forward to another bright year ahead.



After the resignation of long-term Councillor, Willis Fitzsimmons, in September 2024, Saddle Hills County Council opted to hold a by-election to fill the vacant seat. Nominations ran from October 9-28, 2024, resulting in four Councillor nominations.

The By-Election was held at the Blueberry Mountain Hall on Monday November 25, 2024, with an Advance Vote taking place on Monday, November 18, 2024 at the Saddle Hills County Admin Building. Official results for the 2024 Ward By-Election are as follows:

WARD	CANDIDATE	NO. OF VOTES	STATUS
5	Hampton, Themis-Marie	13	(New)
5	Hickman, Kassondra Dawn	28	(New)
5	Johnson, Rick	12	(New)
5	Klatt, Shirley	52	Elected (New)

COUNCILLOR SHIRLEY KLATT

Saddle Hills County is pleased to welcome new Ward 5 Councillor, Shirley Klatt, who will serve until the General Election, at the end of 2025.



Shirley was born and raised in northern Alberta, growing up on a mixed farm north of High Prairie. She moved to Saddle Hills County with her husband in 1997, as part of her career as an Alberta Fish and Wildlife Officer. After enjoying a couple of years in retirement, Shirley went back to work, spending four years as a Peace Officer for the Alberta SPCA.

Now on her second retirement, she enjoys spending her spare time with her family, including her seven grandchildren, as well as actively participating in the Canadian Kennel Club, as a Field Tracking Judge.

She looks forward to using her experience in her new role as a Councillor.



Are you a farmer or rancher with marginal or uneconomical lands?

ALUS helps you establish wetlands, tree planting, native prairie, pollinator habitat, and many other projects. Over 1,700 farmers and ranchers have enrolled more than 52,000 acres of land in the ALUS program.

ALUS PROJECT EXAMPLES



Planting Shelterbelts or Eco-Buffers



expanding buffers, and creating grassed waterways



A Planting vegetation for pollinator



Creating, restoring or enhancing



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nstallation of bird nests, bat boxes or other habitat structures



What is the ALUS Program?

Saddle Hills County launched the ALUS Program in June 2024.

ALUS Saddle Hills is looking for agricultural producers to join our program, and provide land for ecosystem services.

ALUS provides expertise, resources, and initial cost sharing for the establishment of environmental projects, as well as annual payments for the goods and services generated

Saddle Hills County contains approximately 381 farms, covering 535,279 acres. We believe our producers and communities will benefit from the farm base conservation program that ALUS provides.



COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

GET INVOLVED & HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF ALUS IN OUR COMMUNITY.

Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC)

The Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC) is critical to the ALUS model. It ensures that the local programs are directed, implemented, and managed by the communities they affect.

The PAC is made up of at least 50% local producers, with the remainder filled by local government and those within the community with the environmental knowledge to implement the programs effectively. The composition of the PAC is important to ensure that the many perspectives of the community and local context are at the forefront of ALUS program development.

The PAC is responsible for deciding which ALUS projects will move forward and the amount of funding allocated to projects. The varied expertise of the members allows them to make well-informed decisions, with respect to the local economy, environment, and community.

















Earn up to \$300 for your Local 4-H Society

Changes to the AgriStability program in 2025 aim to simplify filing and increase predictability, resulting in files being processed sooner. How will this affect your operation? Starting in 2025, participants will be able to choose between optional reference margin (ORM) and accrual adjusted reference margin (AARM) and request coverage notices, if they have selected the optional reference margin.



Beef Producers Winter Webinar Series

Register now for the Beef Cattle Research Council's 2025 Winter Webinar Series, covering topics focused on improving the health and bio-security of Canada's beef herds, based on practical, science-based information for Canadian beef producers and veterinary teams. This will include need-to-know information for Foot and Mouth Disease prevention and parasite control management.



Start Preparing for your Farm's Future

Although the Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program (RALP) is closed for applications until February 1, 2025, it's never a bad time to start preparing for your farm's future. Given the high number of applications in 2024, strong demand is anticipated for 2025, which will be the final year of the program. While the 2025 application form will be available closer to the intake date, start planning your projects now for a greater chance at success in the next application cycle.





STAY UP TO DATE

ON AG NEWS FROM SADDLE HILLS COUNTY

Agriculture is at the heart of our community. Keep informed of all the latest Agriculture News in Saddle Hills County or get more information on any of the stories below by visiting the dedicated Agriculture News stream on our website at **saddlehills.ab.ca/agnews** or by scanning the QR code. You can also follow the hashtag **#saddlehillsag** on Instagram for all the latest agriculture updates.



The Peace Country Beef and Forage Association (PCBFA) is seeking project sites in Saddle Hills County for Crop Variety Trials in 2025.

Potential sites would ideally have the following assets, although any sites submitted will be considered:

- Uniform soil type, fertility, and adequate drainage
- Six (6) Acres
- 🖇 Easily accessible and ideally along a major road
- Representative of typical Saddle Hills growing conditions
- No shading from trees or buildings

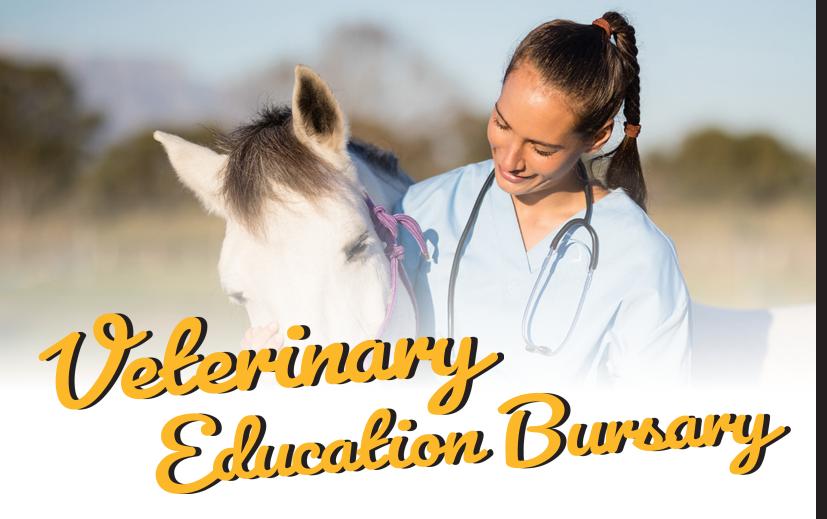
Ideally, cereals would be seeded onto a pea or canola stubble and peas and canola onto a cereal stubble. This means that ideal plots would have these in very close proximity or a perennial forage stand that was terminated in the full.

Other assets include:

- Clean, weed-free site, with past 3 years field history available
- Near to an ACIS weather station
- Recent soil test results
- 🖇 Availability of producer support for spraying, discing, harrowing etc.



If you would like to offer a piece of land for trials, please complete and submit a PCBFA 2025 Project Site Application, available on the Saddle Hills County website at **SADDLEHILLS.AB.CA/PCBFA-2025** or by scanning the QR code.



In an effort to promote post-secondary education in veterinary medicine and encourage rural large animal veterinary practice, Saddle Hills County offers a Veterinary Education Bursary Program for eligible students. This was extended in 2024 to include Veterinary Technologist programs.

ELIGIBILITY

- Students do not need to be from the Central Peace Region but priority will be given to students primarily residing in one of the G5 municipalities, consisting of Saddle Hills County, the Municipal District of Spirit River No. 133, the Town of Spirit River, Village of Rycroft, and Birch Hills County.
- Be enrolled in a recognized post-secondary Doctor of Veterinary Medicine or Veterinary Technologist program or have applied for a post-secondary veterinary program, noting that funds will not be dispersed until proof of acceptance and enrollment is received.
- Commit to living and working in rural Alberta, for a veterinary clinic servicing Saddle Hills County residents, following graduation.



APPLICATION PROCESS

- Supply two (2) letters of reference.
- Supply a copy of their most recent transcripts as well as proof of enrollment.
- Write a 500 word paragraph detailing their future career plans.
- Complete the Veterinary Education Bursary Application, available online.

EFP FARM PLAN WORKSHOP



19 February 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Saddle Hills County
Admin Building



REGISTER: saddlehills.ab.ca/ EFP-Workshop

Free (incl. lunch)





Blueberry Fire Reall

Construction work on the new Blueberry Fire Hall began in late spring 2024 and is being carried out by K&M Building Contractors (2004) Ltd. Work has steadily continued on the highly-anticipated project and as of the end of last year, all interior and exterior concrete work and interior framing is now complete, as well as the installation of exterior and overhead doors.









Electrical and mechanical rough-ins and gypsum boarding is currently underway, and final site grading on the project is scheduled for completion in spring of 2025.

Further updates, including a completion date and projected opening, will be provided as available.

2024 Pholo Contest

This results are in! The theme was 'The Wilderness is our Back Yard' and we asked you to show us what you love most about recreation in the Peace Country. Be it summers on the lake, camping, fishing, snowshoeing, festivals, parades, events, let's show the world why our back yard is the best recreation spot in Northern Alberta.

Participants could enter up to five images as either a Youth or Adult, with prizes available in Public Choice and Judge's Choice categories, as well as an overall winner.



Rylee Jassman - Youth, Public Choice



Johannah Stahl -Youth, Judge's Choice



Miguel Maliwat - Adult, Public Choice



Kaz Kaiser - Adult, Judge's Choice



Kaz Kaiser - Youth, Public & Judge's Choice and Overall Winner



Johannah Stahl -Youth, Public Choice



Brittany Dolen - Adult, Public Choice



Lyla Yanishewski - Adult, Judge's Choice



Judy Stahl -Adult, Public Choice



Josiah Steinke -Adult, Judge's Choice



Kaz Kaiser - Youth, Judge's Choice



Mallory Kaiser - Adult, Judge's Choice



Johannah Stahl -Youth, Judge's Choice



Shelbie LeClerc - Adult, Public Choice



Otto Fitzpatrick -Youth, Judge's Choice



Jo Ann Edey -Adult, Public Choice



Johannah Stahl -Youth, Public Choice



Towards the end of 2024, Saddle Hills County made some changes to the delivery of assessment services in the County, with Council appointing Aaron Steblyk, with Compass Assessment, as the new Assessor for Saddle Hills County.

Compass Assessment Consultants Inc. is the longest-standing property assessment service provider in the Province of Alberta. The pride themselves on their quality assessments and friendly service, currently providing assessment services to 12 municipalities throughout Northern Alberta.

Their approach to assessment is focused around accurate data and equitable treatment of all properties. Compass Assessors will always endeavour to make contact with a property owner when conducting a site visit and, when on site, carry out a thorough inspection to ensure that they do not need to revisit properties more than necessary. The goal is to provide everyone with quality service, dependable valuations, routine maintenance, and reliable expertise.



INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT ASSESSMENT SERVICES?

For a full list of Assessment FAQs, information about the Assessment Appeals Process, Farmland and Small Business Assessment, and much more, visit our website at **SADDLEHILLS.AB.CA/ASSESSMENT**



AARON STEBLYK; AMAA, RES

PRESIDENT & ASSESSMENT OPERATIONS MANAGER

Aaron provides a wealth of experience, with his diverse background working in large, urban cities for the first half of his career and rural and urban municipalities throughout Alberta for the last decade. He has conducted farmland, residential, commercial, and industrial assessments for numerous counties since 2005. Aaron is an Accredited Municipal Assessor of Alberta (AMAA) in good standing with the Alberta Assessors Association and holds the Residential Evaluation Specialist designation (RES) with the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO).



Aaron believes in providing open communication and a personal approach to assessment services. In his downtime, he enjoys spending time with his wife and two children, woodworking, and travelling.

Aaron drives a white Ford pickup, which you may see around the County during inspections. The truck will have Saddle Hills County decals and Aaron will have identification on hand.



BRADY HARDER; AMAA

ASSESSOR

Brady holds formal training in Appraisal and Assessment from Lakeland College, as well as a Petroleum Land Administration Certificate from SAIT Polytechnic. He joined Compass in 2017, after working as a Construction Surveyor in Northern Alberta. Brady is an accredited Municipal Assessor of Alberta (AMAA) in good standing with the Alberta Assessors Association. He holds a wide range of assessment experience, from farmland to residential and commercial and leads the re-inspection process for Compass. Brady prides himself on being a great communicator and thorough and transparent with residents.



In his free time, he enjoys travelling with his wife, all types of motorsports, especially drag racing, and coaching volleyball.

Brady drives a dark grey/black Ford pickup, which you may see around the County during inspections. The truck will have Saddle Hills County decals and Brady will have identification on hand.



Students from the Bonanza, Savanna, Spirit River Regional Academy, Saint Marie Catholic, and Rycroft Schools visited Saddle Hills County's Administration Complex on Thursday, September 26, 2024, to learn about municipal government at the County's annual Leaders of Tomorrow event.

Grade 5 and 6 students from each school participated in a mock Council Meeting, electing leaders from their classmates to sit as Reeve and Council as they made decisions and discussed topics relevant to their area. Reeve Alvin Hubert and Deputy Reeve Kristen Smith led them through the meeting, using their many years of combined experience to take students through the process.

As part of the meeting students voted on a variety of resolutions, including one regarding Halloween candy and another that saw all students receive a free Saddle Hills County frisbee each.









Students also received a tour of the County facility from Administration staff, including some of the County's large equipment, such as graders, tractor, spray truck, fire truck, and garbage truck. Community Peace Officer, Wayne Olson, was also on hand to let students know all about the County's bylaw enforcement program and show students the Peace Officer Vehicle.

A special thanks to all the staff members who volunteered to be on hand to demonstrate equipment and answer student's questions. Local Volunteer Firefighters also generously donated their time to provide information on one of the the fire trucks and equipment, delighting students and staff alike with their extensive knowledge and demonstrations.





Students and staff were treated to lunch, catered by County staff, before heading back to continue their days. Thank you to everyone who participated to make the day such a success! We hope that this annual event provides knowledge and passion, encouraging our youth to be involved in their local government as they grow in the community.

County Mews



NORTHMARK ROAD PAVING PROJECT

Work has is now complete on the Northmark Road (Township Road 764) Asphalt Paving Project! The project saw 5.6 km of the road paved, east from Range Road 70 to Highway 731.

Council set the speed limit for the new stretch of paved road to 100 km/hr, from Highway 731 to 100 meters east of Range Road 70.

Please drive safely and observe posted limits.

NEW CEMETERY GRANT STREAM

Saddle Hills County adopted the new Cemetery Capital Grant Program in early September. The new program is intended to provide funding to cemeteries located within Saddle Hills County for capital projects, such as repairs to existing grounds and facilities or new construction on the grounds.

Eligible projects include repair work to existing headstones, plots, grounds structures or facilities, and new construction of grounds structures or facilities including fencing, a columbarium etc.

For 2024, Council extended the deadline from October 15 to November 1, in order to allow organizations more time to submit their applications for the next calendar year.

BONANZA WATER TREATMENT PLANT UPGRADES

In 2023, Council approved the 2024 Rural Waterline Program, which included an estimate of \$700,000 for two water distribution pump upgrades at the Bonanza Water Treatment Plant, the design of which was contracted to MPE Engineering. During the design process, challenges arose due to the small size of the plant. It was also identified that the Clearwell size at the plant will need to be upgraded in the next 8-12 years, if the rural water system expansion continues to grow, unless truck fill usage is limited. MPE Engineering provided projections for the project, including the upgrades needed to accommodate short and long term demand.

As a result of Council deliberation, the updated estimates will be brought forward to the 2025 Budget deliberations and Administration will proceed with the design to upgrade the pumps, with Council adding additional funds after tender opening, if required.





STE. MARIE CATHOLIC SCHOOL FENCE

Principal, Carla Knezevich and Kindergarten teacher, Marcy Martin-Macdaid, from the Ste. Marie Catholic School in Spirit River, were present at the November 26, 2024 Council Meeting to request funding to assist with a new fence at the school. Due to safety concerns for both students and staff, the school elected to build a fence on the property, at a cost of \$18,644, which was completed on November 1, 2024. With the limited funding available in the school's budget, they were seeking financial assistance towards the cost of the fence. After deliberation, Council voted to provide a grant of \$20,000 to the school to cover both the cost of the fence and other capital expenditures.

CHANGES TO BURSARY PROGRAM

Council added an additional \$20,000 to the Bursary Program in the 2025 Interim Operating Budget to accommodate changes made to Policy AD34 - Bursary Program, which will now include Trades and Driver Training programs alongside the post-secondary programs already covered by the bursary.



ELECTION OF REEVE

At the October 22, 2024
Organizational Meeting, Councillor
Kristen Smith was acclaimed as
the new Reeve for Saddle Hills
County, with previous Reeve,
Alvin Hubert, acclaimed as Deputy
Reeve, for the 2024-25 year.

PEACE OFFICER BODY-WORN CAMERA

Vehicle-mounted cameras are a mandatory requirement of the Peace Officer program and the County's Community Peace Office vehicle is already equipped with an onboard recording system that records all vehicle stops and other occurrences in which the vehicle's emergency lights have been activated.

Body-Worn Cameras (BWCs) are now frequently being utilized alongside these vehicle cameras, and work wirelessly in-tandem with the onboard systems. As a remote device, they add audio to the recorded video, providing additional accountability and transparency.

Council adopted the new Policy PS13 - Peace Officer Body-Worn Cameras, a required policy that addresses public awareness, CPO responsibilities, and use of recordings, among other things.

STARS 2024 ANNUAL UPDATE

Glenda Farnden, Senior Municipal Relations Liaison, with STARS, was present at the September 24, 2024 Council Meeting, to provide an annual update on the organization's operations.

In 2023/24, STARS handled a total of 37,365 emergency requests, resulting in approximately 11 daily missions. Four of these missions were carried out within Saddle Hills County, although a total of 42 Saddle Hills County residents were flown via STARS, from a number of locations throughout B.C. and Alberta.

STARS also reported a new addition to it's medical toolkit, with an innovative new blood protocol. Medical crews now have access to two additional products that help stop bleeding that can be utilized in extreme cases and for patients who require more than two units of blood.



The Remote Potable Water Hauling Subsidy was created in 2024 to provide a fair and equitable subsidy to Saddle Hills County residences that will not be able to connect to the Rural Potable Waterline network that is currently being built throughout the County.

Under Policy UT02, Council may prescribe areas of the County that are eligible for the subsidy. Eligible residences will then receive subsidies at a rate of \$15 per cubic meter, not exceeding 100 cubic meters, to a maximum of \$1,800 per year. The subsidy will only be funded once per residence, per calendar year, and the water must be for domestic use only.

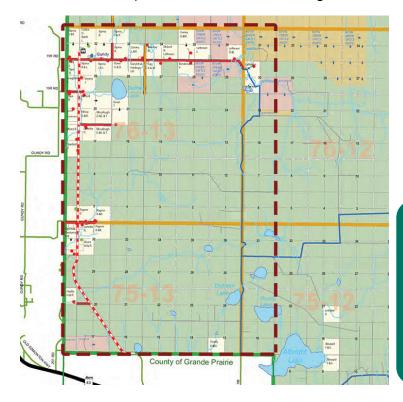
Each year, eligible residents are required to complete a Remote Potable Water Hauling Subsidy Application to be included in the subsidy, available on our website or at the County Administration Building. Before January 31 of the following calendar year, they will then be required to submit valid documentation showing the date the water was hauled or purchased within the year and the number of cubic meters purchased. As the program began in 2024, it does not cover expenses incurred in 2023. Residents should also note that they will need to re-apply each year in order to be included in that year's subsidy.



For more information on the subsidy or to submit receipts, visit our website at **SADDLEHILLS.AB.CA/WATER-HAULING-SUBSIDY** or scan the QR code.

ELIGIBLE AREAS 2024/25

In 2024, Council prescribed two areas as eligible for the subsidy:



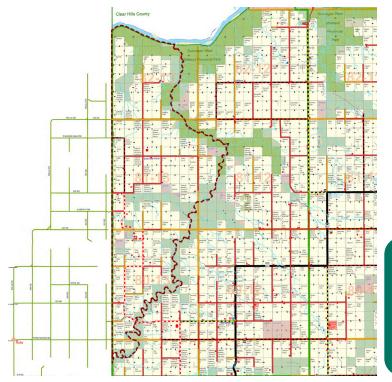
1. GUNDY:

from Township Road 770 to Township Road 752, and from Range Road 125 west to the B.C. border, as shown on the map.

2. Properties located at NE 35-78-13-W6 and NE 07-78-13-W6.

ELIGIBLE AREAS 2025

Beginning January 1, 2025, Council prescribed one additional area:



3. DOE RIVER:

west of the Pouce Coupe River and south of the Peace River to the B.C. border, as shown on the map

Our Community Opcoming Events KIDS 167



Head down to the Rycroft Community Library on Tuesday, January 22, 2025, from 3:30 - 5 p.m. and 'kreate' with your kids! This month's theme is Bears. For more information, contact the library at (780) 780-765-3973.



COMMUNITY SOUP & SANDWICH SUPPER - JAN. 24

The Fourth Creek Community Association invites you to their Community Soup and Sandwich Supper at the Fourth Creek Hall, on Friday, January 24, 2025, from 5-7 p.m. Tickets cost \$7.50 for adults and \$5 for children (under 12). All are welcome.



WOKING MULTIPLEX ANNUAL FUNDRAISER - FEB. 8

The Woking Multiplex Association will be holding their Annual Fundraiser on February 8, 2025, at the Woking Multiplex Gymnasium. Supper will be provided by George's catering, and there will be a silent auction and cash bar. The event begins at 5 p.m., with supper served until 7 p.m., and the event ending at 12 a.m. (midnight). Tickets can be purchased from April (780) 518-7756 or Denise (780) 774-2271 and cost \$30 p/p for adults and \$15 for children (ages 6-11).

Spring Lake Ski Hill

After much anticipation and extensive renovations, the Spring Lake Ski Hill has now re-opened to the public! Beginning on January 11, 2024, they will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on select days throughout January and February 2025.

For more information and updates, be sure to follow them on Facebook @springlakeskihill



The Woking Multiplex Fitness Centre is located in the Woking Multiplex, in the centre of Woking, AB. The facility has a variety of equipment, including weights, treadmills, ellipticals, and more.

The long-awaited facility opened it's doors, on October 16, 2024. Please contact wokingfitness@gmail.com for gym memberships enquiries or visit the Woking Multiplex Facebook Page for more information.







	MONTHLY	SIX MONTHS	YEARLY
Individual	\$30.00	\$165.00	\$300.00
Child (12-17)	\$15.00	\$82.50	\$150.00
Senior (65+)	\$15.00	\$82.50	\$150.00
Family (2 Adults & 2 Children)	\$80.00	\$435.00	\$780.00
Additional Child for Family (12-17)	\$10.00 each		

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LOOKING TO UPGRADE YOUR NEXT COMMUNITY EVENT?

SADDLE HILLS COUNTY IS NOW PLEASED TO OFFER A MOBILE STAGE TRAILER FOR RENTAL!



Saddle Hills County rents out a variety of equipment for public use. While this is mainly targeted at Agricultural Producers and includes things like Chicken Pluckers, Skunk Traps, and Sprayers, there is also a Commercial BBQ and now a Mobile Stage Trailer for use at community events.

The Mobile Stage Trailer will be available for free to non-profit community organizations located within Saddle Hills County.

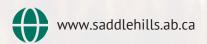
Organizations wishing to rent the trailer are asked to provide a minimum of three weeks notice prior to the event, and will be required to complete a rental agreement, including insurance information.

For more information and to rent the trailer, please contact the County Office at (780) 864-3760 or visit our website at **SADDLEHILLS.AB.CA/MOBILE-STAGE-TRAILER**





Junction of Highway 49 and Highway 725, RR 1, Spirit River, Alberta, Canada, T0H 3G0 Phone: (780) 864-3760 | Fax: (780) 864-3904 | Toll Free: 1 (888) 864-3760 Monday to Friday 8:15 AM to 4:30 PM





@saddlehillscounty



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