

Mill Woods Mosaic

April 15, 2026

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The Multicultural Voice of Edmonton Southeast

Independent • Non-partisan • Interdenominational

This month:

Waste of Money

Was the flight of Artemis II around the Moon a big success or a big waste of money?

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A Word, if I May

Ron Kuban writes about the power of words and the risk they present when taken out of context.

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Art and Movement

The artist Shaheer Zazai has created a vibrant floral artwork which is now displayed on a maintenance building.

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Party Politics

Floor crossings are a symptom of party politics, not a cause of democratic failure, says local historian Tom Monto.

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Let's Begin Again

Mill Woods has changed over the years, but we can begin again, says Sharan Sandhu.

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Mr. Alberta Culture



Horst Schmid was the first Canadian post World War II immigrant elected to a legislature in Canada and cabinet minister.

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Harvest Festival

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, Ric McIver, hosted a Vaisakhi celebration on April 13 in the Legislature Building rotunda. Vaisakhi is a Sikh festival and Punjabi harvest festival marking the birth of the Khalsa order by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. The celebration included performances by local Sikh and Punjabi singers and remarks from provincial politicians.

Photo: Legislative Assembly of Alberta

UCP government wants to restore trust in immigration system

Alberta's government is introducing legislation to establish greater provincial oversight over immigration, crack down on fraud and restore trust in the system.

The federal government's loss of control over immigration has led to unsustainable population growth, pressure on public services and cases of abuse by bad actors. In response, Alberta's government is introducing Bill 26, the *Immigration Oversight Act*, which strengthens provincial oversight of employers, foreign worker recruiters and immigration consultants.

"Albertans deserve to know that immigration in Alberta is fair, transparent and addresses the real needs of Alberta's labour force," said Joseph Schow, Alberta's Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration. "This legislation improves accountability and gives the province more control over how the immigration system is used and gives us tools other provinces use to ensure the system is working for Albertans."

If passed, the Immigration Oversight Act will require employers to register with the province before accessing federal temporary foreign worker programs. It will also establish a licensing system for immigration consultants and foreign worker recruiters, strengthening oversight, reducing fraud and ensuring only legitimate, qualified businesses and consultants are operating in Alberta.

Bill 26 gives Alberta tools already in place in jurisdictions like Saskatchewan and British Columbia. A new employer registry and licensing for recruiters and consultants will:

- Crack down on fraud and exploitation, including fake job offers, illegal fees and misrepresentation.
- Enable faster enforcement through stronger penalties and compliance tools.
- Increase transparency in hiring and better align immigration with Alberta's labour needs.

"As Chair of the Alberta Centre to End Trafficking in Persons, I wholeheartedly support the Government of Alberta and the Ministry of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration for introducing the *Immigration Oversight Act*," said Paul Brandt, chair, Alberta Centre to End Trafficking in Persons. "This vital legislation is an important step to protect newcomers and temporary foreign workers from exploitation and to disrupt labour trafficking in our province. By holding employers, recruiters and consultants accountable, Alberta is sending a clear message that mistreatment of vulnerable people coming here to work will not be tolerated."

The majority of employers, recruiters and immigration consultants follow the rules and support newcomers. Requiring registration and licencing increases transparency, protects vulnerable workers and strengthens confidence in the system.

Alberta's government is taking action to ensure immigration supports the province's economy, addresses labour gaps and protects the people who come here to build a better life.

Lizette Tejada, MLA for Calgary-Klein and Shadow Minister for Immigration and Multiculturalism of Alberta's New Democrat Caucus, criticized the proposed Bill 26:

"This UCP government's Bill 26, the Immigration Oversight Act may address exploitative practices, which we have brought to the ministry's attention many times.

"However, additional parts of this legislation are clear government overreach by Danielle Smith and the UCP to give themselves more power over immigration. In doing so, Bill 26 duplicates federal processes and adds unnecessary red tape for small businesses.

"Worker exploitation is a real issue that can be better addressed through enforcing Labour Standards. Given the divisive rhetoric that is already being used in relation to immigrants by this UCP government, we are concerned about their overreach and the impact it will have on newcomers to Alberta."

Quick facts

- Immigration is a shared federal-provincial responsibility
- Alberta does not currently have a single, comprehensive framework to oversee employers, recruiters and immigration consultants involved in hiring foreign nationals.
- Prohibited activities include fake job offers, illegal fees and misrepresentation targeting foreign workers.
- The proposed legislation would introduce enforcement measures, including fines, licence suspensions and bans from hiring or recruiting.
- A public registry will allow workers and the public to verify whether employers, recruiters and consultants are authorized to operate in Alberta.

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Public Engagement for City Budget 2027 - 2030 Edmonton City Councillor Jo-Anne Wright

On April 14th, the City held a public engagement session at Ridgewood Community League. It was one of 12 being held across the city – one in each Ward. The intent of the session was to gather feedback from residents to help develop the upcoming four-year budget that Council will deliberate in December.

Although attendance was sparse, there was a wide variety of opinions and perspectives provided. Residents shared their ideas around where more is needed to be spent, such as snow removal, roadway improvements and community amenities; where we could reduce some spending; and how we could increase user fees for city facilities and attractions. Administration will take this feedback to incorporate into a “What We Heard” report that will be presented to Council in the fall.

If you missed the engagement session, there’s still time to have your say. Before May 1st, go to Edmonton.ca/Budget where you can learn more about the budget process, where the dollars go, and link to a survey to have your responses included in the “What We Heard” report. My team and I will also be holding six more in-person sessions throughout the Ward to focus in on what’s important to those living in Ward Sspomitapi. Check out joannewright.ca and click the “City Budget” tab for a list of dates and locations.



Coun. Jo-Anne Wright

annwright.ca and click the “City Budget” tab for a list of dates and locations.

Coming up this week in Council, we will also be discussing Administration’s report around tax levy tolerance to guide the development of the 2027 - 2030 operating and capital budgets.

The report outlines the four factors that contribute to property tax increases: escalating costs to deliver current service levels; lagging non-tax revenue such as grants, user fees and permits; new and enhanced services; and the largest contributor, population growth. Although recent municipal tax increases have been above the annual rate of inflation due to a number of factors, the report suggests that a more appropriate comparison would be to consider the rate of nominal gross domestic produce (GDP).

With so much to consider, please be sure to have your say either online or at one of the in-person open houses. It’s important for me to hear from Ward Sspomitapi residents so I can bring the voice of the southeast to our discussions in City Council.

As always, if you have any comments or concerns, I encourage you to reach out to my office at 780.496.8148 or joanne.wright@edmonton.ca.

Letters to the editor welcome

We invite you to write letters to the editor. A maximum of 275 words is preferred. Letters must carry a first name or two initials with surname, and include an address and daytime telephone number. All letters are subject to editing. We don’t publish letters addressed to others or sent to other publications.

E-mail your letter to: The Editor of the *Mill Woods Mosaic*, mwmosaic@telus.net.

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Mayor welcomes Québec City delegation interested in Edmonton civic projects

On March 16, Mayor Andrew Knack and the City of Edmonton welcomed a delegation from Québec City for a learning exchange on civic projects.

The Québec City delegation included Mayor Bruno Marchand, two City Councillors, the CEO of the Québec City Chamber of Commerce, senior leadership for the TramCité project and four media representatives.

“We’re very happy to welcome Mayor Marchand and the Québec City delegation to the City of Edmonton,” said Mayor Knack. “This is a wonderful opportunity to share our learnings with a fellow municipality that is as deeply and equally as committed to balancing the current and future needs of their residents as we are. This recognition also confirms that the strides that Edmonton is making to advance core services are working and effective; other municipalities are seeing the progress and want to collaborate to bring the same positive changes to their cities.”

Delegates and City staff attended meetings related to city building and tour transit and waste services operations.

“We are pleased to engage with the Edmonton teams on the major projects shaping their city’s future,” said Mayor Marchand. “Their expertise in public transit, urban planning and the broader challenges of achieving balanced and harmonious growth is a genuine source of inspiration for us.



This visit offers a valuable opportunity to exchange knowledge and perspectives, helping both our cities continue improving the services we provide to our residents. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Mayor Knack and his entire team for their warm and generous welcome.”

This visit provided an opportunity for the two cities to share knowledge and align on municipal priorities such as waste services, housing affordability, downtown vibrancy, homelessness and public safety. By sharing experiences, challenges and solutions, both cities learn from one another and strengthen the systems that serve their residents.

For more information:
edmonton.ca/CityProtocol
ville.quebec.qc.ca/en/
cdpqinfra.com/en/tramcite

Edmonton's Mayor Andrew Knack (at the podium) with the Mayor of Québec City, Bruno Marchand (right) at a press conference on March 16 in Edmonton City Hall. On the left is Jean-Luc Lavoie, city councillor for the Pointe-de-Sainte-Foy district in Québec City who is responsible for business relations for their TramCité Project.

Photo: City of Edmonton

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The Mill Woods Mosaic publishes a variety of opinions.
Unsigned editorials express the view of the publisher.
Signed pieces express the views of the writers only.

Our Opinion

What a waste of money!

Earlier this month, four astronauts flew around the Moon and back to Earth on board of the Artemis II spacecraft. Three of them were US-Americans, and one was Canadian, Jeremy Hansen, who is now celebrated as a "Canadian hero." The mission was regarded as a big success, because the crew tested life support systems for future, long-term lunar missions, and they were able to complete the flight safely, splashing in the North Pacific Ocean.

The cost of the Artemis II project is billions of dollars, but is it worthwhile to spend such a large amount of money for such a project? What are the benefits for the population of our Planet Earth?

There are more than eight million people living on Earth, but so many of them are living in poverty and suffering. Wouldn't it be better to spend that outrageous amount of money on improving living conditions on our planet and fix the many problems we have here, before venturing to other planets?

The USA are a leader in space exploration, but their government should focus more on providing better health-care, education and infrastructure for their citizens and help poorer countries instead of wasting billions on the Moon.

Forget about space! Let's take better care of Mother Earth. She deserves it, and we will all benefit from it.

Is crossing the floor unethical or the right thing to do?

When another Conservative Member of Parliament crossed the floor to the Liberal government caucus in the House of Commons, a friend on Facebook found it "unethical" and demanded that this MP should resign, and a byelection should be called. I had to remind my friend that it is legal in Canada within the Westminster system – prioritizing the individual MP's independence. The political party for which a candidate campaigns before an election does not "own" the MP when he/she is elected.

There are many examples of MPs and members of provincial legislative assemblies (MLAs) who crossed the floor for different reasons. When my wife Susan and I campaigned for our MP David Kilgour to get reelected in Edmonton-Southeast (2000) and Edmonton-Beaumont (2004), we supported him, because he was a good representative of his constituents and helped many of them, especially immigrants who wanted to sponsor parents and children to join them in Canada. He was a humble man who was dedicated to his mandate and not in it for himself.

Kilgour happened to be a Liberal, but that was secondary for us. Actually, he started his career as a politician when he was elected as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party in Edmonton-Strathcona in 1979, but in April 1990, he was expelled from the

Tory national caucus after criticizing the Mulroney government's policies. He sat as an independent for several months before joining the Liberals and became Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, Secretary of State for

Health and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

Zwozdesky was a conservative Liberal or a liberal Conservative, but – like Kilgour – a principled politician, and he probably accomplished more as cabinet minister than he would have as an MLA in the opposition. He was very community-minded, attended many community events, and he was the only cabinet minister who gave everybody his personal cell phone number, so they could phone him directly 24/7.

When I grew up in Germany, floor crossing was not a big issue, because Germany has proportional representation, so majority governments are rare, and political parties have to form coalitions to be able to govern, and that is a good thing, because they are forced to compromise instead of wasting time and taxpayers' money fighting each other.

Fortunately, Canada has a majority government again since Liberal candidates won three byelections on April 13, but it's going to be a razor-thin majority and will not be an easy ride. My friend who was upset about the floor crossing is probably even more upset now, because he believes that Prime Minister Mark Carney's government is a "socialist dictatorship", but I think that – regardless of political affiliation – it is important for us to have a strong and stable federal government

**Arnim
Joop**

*From the
Desk of the
Publisher*



Latin America and Africa and Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific in Jean Chrétien's government, but he quit the Liberal Party in 2005, because he was upset over allegations in the sponsorship scandal and legislation to legalize same-sex marriage.

Another example in our community of Mill Woods was our long-time MLA Gene Zwozdesky who was first elected in the 1993 Alberta general election as the Alberta Liberal Party's candidate, but he crossed the floor to the governing Progressive Conservatives in 1998 and became Alberta's Minister of Education, Minister of



Artemis II sent four astronauts around the Moon, and it was celebrated as a big success, but what is the benefit for the more than eight billion people living on Planet Earth? The mission cost a fortune, but billions of people on Earth are still suffering and starving.

Cartoon by Susan Moshynski (www.bythebay.squarespace.com)

in this turbulent era of our history. With a ruthless President in the White House, who makes many enemies and has decided to be a hostile neighbor, we need strong leadership in Ottawa and must make new friends around the world to be less dependent on the U.S.

I think that politicians of all parties need to shape up and make more efforts to earn the trust of their constituents, because there are more and more Canadian citizens who are fed up with politics and tend to tune out, but that is a dangerous development, because if people pay less attention to politics, politicians will be more tempted to do whatever they want, because they are not held accountable for their actions.

What we need is more old-school politicians like the former MLA and cabinet minister Horst Schmid who passed away on April 4 at the age of 92. Schmid, who was Alberta's culture minister and founded the Edmonton Heritage Festival more than 50 years ago, was a hard-working politician, a humble man with integrity, and a role model. For more about Schmid, please read Thomas Lukaszuk's tribute on page 9 of this issue and a speech about Canada which Schmid gave in Winnipeg in 1978 (pages 10 and 11).

Arnim Joop is the founder, publisher and editor of the Mill Woods Mosaic. He also publishes the Albertaner which is the only German language newspaper in Canada.

A Word, if I May

A very long time ago, in places near and far, there was "the word", and it was beautiful, for it helped convey, time and again, information about people, things, places, events, and much more. Nearly everywhere, people uttered this word, and others like it. Later, they inscribed them wherever and whenever they could, so that these words thrived, and were transported across their land and beyond. Humans saw these words as a special gift and were inspired by them, almost as if they were created through divine intervention. Then, they began to link these words and form many enticing stories. This process was enjoyable, even useful, and they continued speaking and then writing words, to describe every facet of their life. Over time, words grew exponentially and were dispersed far and wide. Unfortunately, they flourished unchecked, so that both their meaning and purpose became distorted, even misleading.

You see, we human beings have always been story tellers. Words helped us frame stories about our existence, from the recollected past to an anticipated future. Initially, these tales were spoken and later they were also written. In either form, their purpose served to relay specific messages and invoke a desired response. Unfortunately, over time, the meaning of many words evolved greatly to create misunderstanding and strife.

We inherited these stories through a process which is still useful for passing knowledge from one generation to the next. For example, our predecessors memorized chosen narratives and then retold them repetitively to keep the story alive. To some degree, they were successful and many ancient stories have been partially substantiated by archeological findings. Nevertheless, this process is problematic and should not be taken for granted.

Storytelling raises two key concerns: The first relates to process the second to outcome. When thinking about process, we know that only until a few

Ron Kuban

Time Passages



centuries ago, nearly all stories were narrated orally through comparisons, symbolic representations, and metaphors. From the start, these were open to diverse interpretations. Understanding them was heavily dependent upon each listener's ability to accurately grasp the narrative's intended meaning, and then correctly remember its messages when transmitting it to others.

The concern over outcome is best illustrated by the "broken phone" game, where children sit in a circle and whisper a pre-determined statement from one to the next, until the message is restated to its originator. As the number of communicators increases there is a predictable decrease in the accuracy of the message being transmitted. Similarly, the longer the delay between the hearing of a story and its retelling, the greater the chance that its message will mutate and become incomplete or even inaccurate.

All stories are anchored in and impacted by the context of their era and geography. Therefore, they are influenced by powerful yet subtle filters or lenses, which give them their true meaning. These lenses include the

unique cultural and linguistic interpretation of their era, and the political interests which shaped and reshaped them over time. It is worth noting, therefore, that the narratives communicated long ago were crafted based on the knowledge, perceptions, and ideologies of their period. Therefore, people's names, descriptions of things, or specific expressions had precise meanings that made sense at the time but were altered or lost through retelling or translation.

When we try to understand the exact meaning of ancient texts today, we are confronted by many challenges. One is uncertainty over their original meaning. Given that all languages have evolved over time, and many have vanished altogether, we are left with doubt regarding the intended meaning of terms or expressions. Then, there is the issue of accuracy of expression. Many of the ancient texts were often compiled centuries after the events they described and were tainted by distorted memories. Additionally, these narratives were often bolstered, revised, or eliminated by those in power to suit their specific agenda. The accuracy of these stories was further diluted through repeated translations, especially when translators replaced original terms with expressions they found more meaningful or appropriate for their time.

When considered collectively, these challenges should alert us to be more astute about accepting ancient texts in their literal sense. Unfortunately, many such narratives are still being treated today as if their meaning is unassai-

lable. This is evident in the storylines or rituals propagated by cultural and religious organizations. Their stories are often deemed flawless and reflective of their original meaning. These stories or dictates persist without the recognition that needs, lifestyles, and capabilities have changed significantly.

I recognize that, throughout the ages, organizations have attracted their members by offering unique connections to a glorious past told through historical narratives. This is okay. However, when the accuracy of these stories is unverifiable, or factually unreliable, they become nothing more than wishful thinking based on speculative or potentially fictional narrative. That is problematic.

I firmly believe that ancient stories provide valuable context to help us understand our past and navigate the present. However, they should not automatically be taken as definitive or dogmatic directives. To do so, is to ignore the transformation of language, the imperfection of memory, and the influence of diverse agendas on the adaptation of these stories. These hamper our understanding of these stories in their proper context.

Let me be clear, the word is a wonderful tool to craft our much-needed stories. That said, we should be its master, not its slave.

Feedback is welcome at rkuban@shaw.ca

Ron Kuban is a long-time community volunteer and builder.

The next issue of the Mill Woods Mosaic will be published on May 15, 2026. The deadline is Friday, May 8, 2026.

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Standing Strong: For Alberta, For Canada

I want to express my gratitude to you for reading this local publication and staying involved with community news. I am currently in the spring session at the Legislature, where it is a privilege to advocate for the people of Edmonton-Ellerslie. In our community, I have spoken with many neighbors who are concerned about the current direction of our province. Albertans here are looking for stability and solutions, and they are overwhelmingly opposed to the dangerous idea of separatism.

"I am not a separatist; I am a proud Albertan and a Proud Canadian."

A few months ago, our leader Naheed Nenshi signed a non-partisan pledge with those simple words. Every single member of the Alberta NDP caucus signed it because we are proud Canadians who believe our province is at its strongest when we are a leader within a united country. Curiously, not a single UCP MLA was willing to sign that same statement.

To ensure our voices are heard, the

Gurtej Singh Brar

**MLA
for
Edmonton-
Ellerslie**



Alberta NDP recently launched a new initiative: **For Alberta, For Canada**. This campaign is designed to mobilize Albertans against the very real possibility of a referendum on separatism this fall. We know that we all have to work together for Canada, and this effort is a crucial way to protect our future. We cannot afford to sleepwalk into a referendum that threatens the

stability of our province and our country. We will be using our extensive experience, our electors' lists, and our grassroots ability to stand up for Canada against the threat that separatism poses.

For months, the response from this UCP government to questions about separation has been "A sovereign Alberta within a United Canada." This is a word salad that provides no concise answer and serves only to avoid taking a clear stand. This type of rhetoric is being used for political survival at the expense of provincial stability. We only need to look at the example of Brexit to see the long-term economic and social damage that occurs when a political party chooses division. Albertans cannot afford the chaos such a path would bring to our economy and our communities.

The discussion of separation is a dangerous distraction from the issues that actually impact Albertans' kitchen tables. While this UCP government focuses on political games to avoid alienating a specific part of their base,

they are failing on the files that matter most. This includes their abysmal records on a stronger public health care system, affordability, and a stronger public education system that addresses classroom complexities.

I firmly believe that picking scapegoats is not the way to lead. Albertans deserve a government that focuses on real priorities, like building new hospitals and addressing the issues that directly impact Albertans in a positive way. Alberta's New Democrats believe in our province as a leader within a united Canada. We are not separatists.

As your MLA for Edmonton-Ellerslie, I join our leader Naheed Nenshi and the entire Alberta NDP caucus in reaffirming our unwavering commitment to ensuring Alberta remains a strong, vibrant, and inseparable part of a united Canada.

Gurtej Singh Brar is the Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for Edmonton-Ellerslie and Senior Advisor on Small Business to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

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MLA Gurtej Singh Brar (left) is interviewed by Laet Bhinder, Political Analyst for Watan TV Canada, at a "Meet your MLA" event on March 14.



MLA Gurtej Singh Brar (left) along with MLA Jasvir Deol (Edmonton-Meadows) at the Iftar at J.Percy Page High School on March 12. Iftar is the evening meal served at sunset to break the daily fast during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

Photos: Office of MLA Gurtej Singh Brar

“I am YEG Arts” Series: Shaheer Zazai

**Interview by Jamie Chapelsky
Edmonton Arts Council**

Commuters along Whitemud Drive can now spot a striking new addition to the city’s public art landscape: a vibrant floral artwork climbing along the exterior of the Gerry Wright Operations and Maintenance Facility. Created by Toronto-based Afghan-Canadian artist Shaheer Zazai, *In Community We Grow* depicts a pixelated vine system with flowers in different stages of bloom. The pixelated floral design symbolizes growth, unity, and resilience, forming a dynamic visual story about interconnectedness and the relationships that help communities flourish.

To explore the inspiration behind *In Community We Grow*, we spoke with artist Shaheer Zazai about how the project evolved from his usual studio practice, and how the artwork explores transit’s role in supporting movement, connection, and collective growth.

What drew you to apply for this public art call?

I saw the call for submission on Akimbo, and then curator Nadia Kurd encouraged me to apply. I don’t have a background or history in public art, so I was hesitant, but when I got that message, I thought I should give it a try.

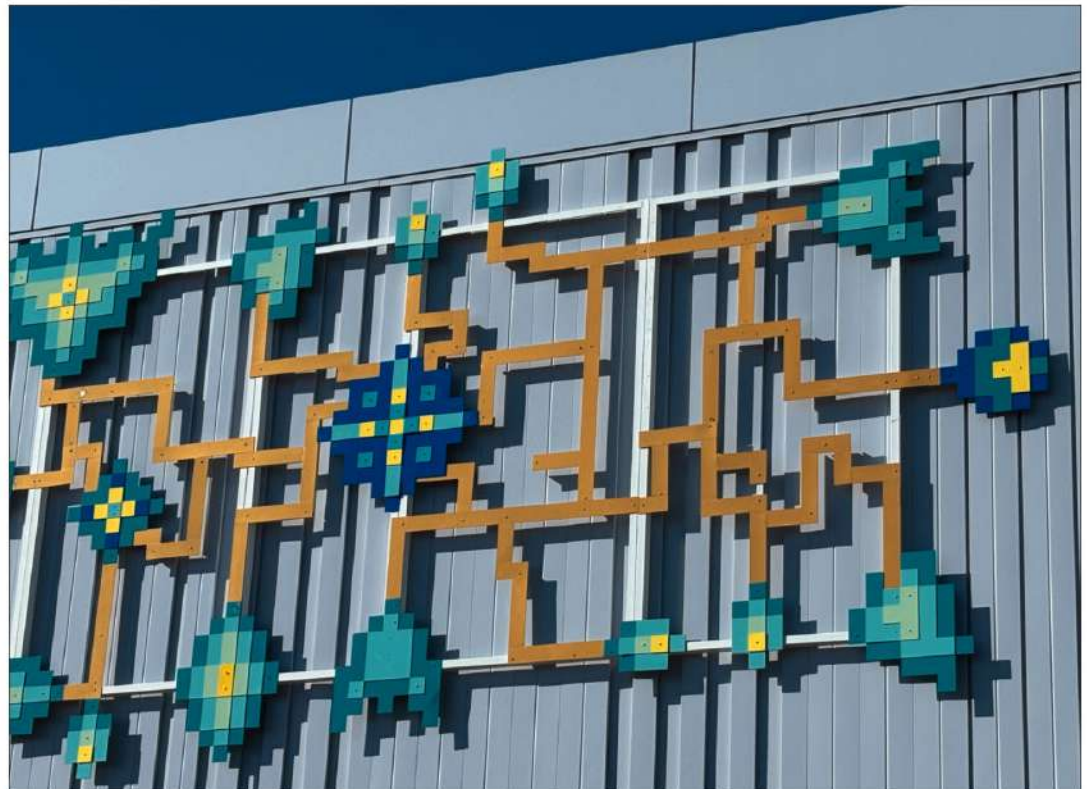
This is the first major large scale work I’ve taken on. Technically, this is the first public art I’ve done that is going to stay up permanently; I’ve done some temporary public installations: some light box works that were up at U of T Mississauga for about four months; video work at Emily Carr; a small-scale work with a community arts organization that works with low-income housing in Etobicoke, Toronto. But this scale and magnitude was not anywhere in my imagination.

As this was your first permanent piece of public art, what surprised you most about this process?

The big surprise was how much an idea transforms with time. When I work on artworks of course ideas evolve and things change in the process, but I hadn’t experienced an artwork evolve over this much of a duration. When there’s years involved and you explore the materiality and start working with the logistics of it, everything ends up informing the artwork in different ways.

From what I imagined I was going to do, to figuring out how this could even be done, the idea had to evolve and change so that the logistics and ideas could come together on the same plane. Before that it’s like they were sitting on completely different levels, and they both had to slightly adjust till they came to being on an equal playing field. I didn’t expect this much evolution to happen, but I’m quite happy with the outcome. I would have not done what I’ve done if it wasn’t for it being such a durational thing.

Tell us about the inspiration behind the design of this project and the connections you’re exploring in the work.



The new artwork *In Community We Grow* by Shaheer Zazai at the Gerry Wright Operations and Maintenance Facility

Photo: City of Edmonton

Flowers are in most of my recent bodies of work. That also comes from my work’s history referencing textiles and culture. When we look at different communities and cultures around the world, when it comes to textiles, we’ve all been speaking the same language; we just don’t look at it that way. We’re so focused on the differences, but if we actually look at the textiles of the world, we can see that everybody speaks the same language.

Textiles were the core, but the more I looked into communities in Edmonton and how diverse they are, and the more I thought about the fact that the public art is going to live on a transit systems property, it made me think deeper into the relationship of transit, migration, communities, and diversity. All those things go hand in hand.

I’ve designed and imagined the piece *In Community We Grow* as a vine; the vine stems become the transit system that moves the nourishment required for the flowers to grow. For me, the vine stem is the transit system, and where there is a flower, communities have anchored. The communities are connected by the transit system; it’s what moves them around and fuels the communities. The different sizes of flowers in my work represent the different stages of a flower blooming, from a bud to a fully bloomed flower, which also speaks to the different ages of each community. There are some communities that have been around for thousands of years, and then there’s ones that just appeared yesterday, but they’re all living in this ever-evolving way. Communities evolve, but transit systems and migratory routes connect



Shaheer Zazai

Photo: Provided by the Artist

Continued on page 8

In Community We Grow: Where art and movement intersect

Continued from page 7

us. So, we have a lot of parallels as humans in nature, we just don't look at nature as much anymore to reflect on it and see ourselves in it.

Tell us more about your process of creating digital designs using Excel.

To map the design, I had to look at the building and understand what kind of grid would fit the space, and that ended up being a four-inch grid. That four-inch grid told me what my pixelation limit was, and how it could still be perceived as pixelated and yet appear floral.

This goes back to textiles. Textiles are a series of numerical decisions. We choose how many knots it takes to make an image in the same way image making digitally is a series of pixels. Image making computers owe a lot to textiles. Computer language – binary language – comes from a Jacquard loom.

Going back to Excel and Word, it all started with Microsoft Word for me. It was a self-prescribed punishment because I was opening my laptop too much and not actually doing anything with it, just scrolling Instagram or Facebook. I told myself that that day's task was to sit and type 2013 dots and spaces. That's all I was allowed to do. When I finished it, I started giving each highlighter color a numerical location on the page. I would count the number of characters and place the red where it belongs, yellow where it belongs, etc. And because of numbers and repetition, patterns started forming. That's when I realized that I'm not doing something unique here, what I'm doing is using the language of textiles. That led to the works looking textile-like.

Ending up in Excel was kind of a natural progression. There is software that is designed for textile design that looks pretty much like an Excel file. Coming from my project management background, I'm sitting on Excel all



The new artwork *In Community We Grow* by Shaheer Zazai at the Gerry Wright Operations and Maintenance Facility

Photo: City of Edmonton

day for work. It is a tool that was already there that gives me perfect control when making grids and placing things where they need to be.

What do you have coming up? Anything exciting happening that we can share?

I think the most exciting thing that is coming up is rest. I have a solo exhibition right now at the Art Gallery of Mississauga. Other than that, I don't have anything immediately scheduled,

which is kind of nice to say. I'm focused on fully finishing this public art piece – there are a few more flowers to be added. Once those are up, I can actually look at it and be like, all right, we're done. I'm looking forward to when the landscaping is done and it's fully blooming in the area.

About Shaheer Zazai

Shaheer Zazai is a Toronto-based Afghan-Canadian artist with a current

studio practice both in painting and digital media. His practice focuses on exploring and attempting to investigate the development of cultural identity in the present geopolitical climate and diaspora.

Want more YEG Arts Stories? We'll be sharing them here and on social media using the hashtag #IamYegArts. Follow along!

For more information about the Edmonton Arts Council, visit the new website edmontonarts.ca.

Provincial government launches Alberta-China advisory committee

The Alberta-China Advisory Committee will support efforts to strengthen ties with our second-largest trade partner and attract investment to grow the economy.

The committee will provide targeted insight on trade and investment opportunities with China, supporting government efforts to focus on partnerships that deliver results for Albertans. In 2025, Alberta's exports to China were valued at almost \$9.6 billion, making China Alberta's largest export market after the U.S. and a priority market to attract further investment and grow key industries. Crude oil exports have increased significantly following completion of the Trans Mountain Expansion pipeline, reaching 220,700 barrels per day in 2025.

China represents significant demand for Alberta's world-class agriculture, agri-food and energy products. Advancing this partnership further positions Alberta as a reliable global supplier of food and energy.

"China is already a key market for

our energy, agriculture and agri-food products, and we are focused on expanding trade," said Premier Danielle Smith. "This committee will help us take a strategic approach to this important international relationship, strengthen market access and secure more investment that creates jobs and grows Alberta's economy."

The Alberta-China Advisory Committee met for the inaugural meeting on April 8, in advance of the mission to China led by RJ Sigurdson, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation and chair of the committee.

"Alberta's farmers and ranchers produce the highest quality commodities in the world and China represents a key opportunity to expand markets for our world-class agriculture products," said Minister Sigurdson. "This committee will help ensure we understand the conditions necessary for our province to position ourselves so we can continue to maximize on trade opportunities in a changing global environment. The focus will be ensuring that

Alberta agriculture remains competitive, connected and positioned for long-term growth."

Committee members

Committee members have been selected based on their knowledge and expertise in business, academia, public policy and community leadership.

- RJ Sigurdson, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation (Chair)
- Ms. Nina Bai, founder and director, Exceller Communication Consultant Inc.
- Dr. Jinguang Hu, associate professor and Schulich Research Chair, University of Calgary
- Mr. Nick Han, founder, Arveco Inc.
- Mr. Ben Leung, executive director and CFO, Insignia Energy Ltd.
- Ms. Grace Liu, director, Westar Travel
- Mr. Jake Louie, president and CEO, Citiland Group
- Mr. Bennett Wong, partner, Dentons

Canada LLP

- Dr. Benny Xu, Doctor of Acupuncture
- Mr. Bo Yang, president, E.R. Bridge Express Logistics Ltd.
- Mr. Gary Zhang, president, MRF Geosystems Corporation

The Alberta-China Advisory Committee aligns with recent federal efforts to expand Canada's ties in the region, including new federal agreements to advance the Canada-China partnership.

Quick facts

- The committee is an advisory body with no official decision-making authority and will convene up to four times a year.
- Members are not remunerated, except for reimbursement of travel expenses.
- Secretariat support is provided by the Ministry of Intergovernmental and International Relations, Executive Council.

Horst Schmid was deeply committed to culture and multiculturalism

By **Thomas A. Lukaszuk**

Horst A. Schmid lived a life that bridged continents, cultures, and generations of public service. His journey – from Germany to Alberta – was not simply one of personal success, but of shaping a broader Canadian story: one that embraces diversity, celebrates culture, and recognizes the strength that comes from many voices contributing to a shared future.

As the first German-born cabinet minister in Canada, Horst brought with him not only the perspective of an immigrant, but the conviction that public life should reflect the richness of the people it serves. That conviction found its fullest expression when he became Canada's first minister of culture. At a time when the idea of cultural policy was still taking shape, he understood instinctively that culture was not a luxury – it was the foundation of identity, belonging, and national confidence.

Culture and multiculturalism were not abstract ideas to Horst; they were deeply personal commitments. He believed that every community, no matter how small or newly arrived, deserved recognition and respect. His work helped elevate cultural expression in Alberta and across Canada, creating space for traditions, languages, and stories that might



Horst Schmid with former German Honorary Consul Fritz König (left) and former Alberta Deputy Premier Thomas Lukaszuk (right).

Photos: Supplied by Schmid Family

otherwise have been overlooked.

His influence extended far beyond policy. Horst was a mentor in the truest sense – generous with his time, thoughtful in his guidance, and genuinely invested in the people he supported. He saw potential in others and took pride in helping them find

their path in public service. I was fortunate to be among those he encouraged. As the first Polish-born cabinet minister in Canada, I felt a particular connection with him; he understood the challenges and opportunities that come with building a life in a new country, and he offered

both wisdom and reassurance drawn from his own experience.

Horst's contributions were recognized not only in Canada but internationally. Receiving the highest civilian honours from both East and West Germany was a rare and remarkable distinction – one that spoke to his ability to transcend divisions and represent shared values of service, culture, and humanity.

Yet, beyond titles and honours, what defined Horst A. Schmid was his character. He carried himself with dignity, approached public life with integrity, and remained deeply committed to his community. He believed in service not as a career, but as a responsibility – one that required humility, perseverance, and respect for others.

His legacy lives on in the institutions he helped build, the cultural landscape he helped shape, and the many individuals he inspired. For those of us who had the privilege to know him, his example continues to guide us.

Horst A. Schmid reminded us that public service, at its best, is about more than governance – it is about people, culture, and the enduring effort to bring communities together.

Thomas A. Lukaszuk was a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta from 2001 to 2015, cabinet minister in the Government of Alberta and deputy premier of Alberta.



Horst Schmid hosting a weekly German radio program on Radio CKER Edmonton

Dr. Horst A. Schmid (1933 - 2026)

- born in Munich, Bavaria, Germany
- emigrated to Canada at age 19
- worked as a miner in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
- moved to Edmonton
- ran a German restaurant in Edmonton
- founded the German folk dance group Bavarian Schuhplattlers of Edmonton
- hosted a weekly German radio program on Radio CKUA Edmonton
- elected as Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for Edmonton-Avonmore
- became the first Canadian post World War II immigrant elected to a legislature in Canada and to be appointed a Cabinet Minister in Canada.
- Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation
- founded the Edmonton Heritage Festival
- Minister of Government Services and Minister of Culture
- Minister of State for Economic Development and International Trade
- Minister of Tourism
- Commissioner General for Trade and Tourism
- President and CEO of Flying Eagle Resources



Horst Schmid was proud to be made Honorary Chief Flying Eagle.

Horst Schmid (1978): "The magnificent mosaic of Canada"

On April 4, the Honourable Dr. Horst A. Schmid passed away at the age of 92 in Edmonton. Schmid, who was born in 1933 in the Bavarian capital of Munich in Germany, immigrated to Canada at age 17 and worked in a gold mine in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

In 1971, he was elected as MLA for Edmonton-Avonmore and became Alberta's Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation. He was the first Canadian post World War II immigrant elected to a legislature in Canada and to be appointed a Cabinet Minister in Canada.

On Sept. 14, 1978, Schmid gave a speech to the Tri-Club Dinner in Winnipeg, Manitoba, expressing his fondness and appreciations for Alberta and for Canada. Almost half a century later, this thoughtful speech is still – or again – very relevant. He speaks about the "magnificent mosaic" of Canada, "one people making up a nation great among the nations of the world." It is a great reminder that our great Province of Alberta should NEVER separate from Canada and remain "Forever Canadian."

Here is the complete text of the speech with the title "May I Ask You":

May I ask you now to hear me, and in your own hearts try to understand the reality of what I have to say?

I'll speak not of pipelines and natural gas ... Not of the fabulous tarsands of McMurray, nor of the vast coal deposits that have become so desirable in industry again. I am not thinking of ranching, farming, forestry, or small business – important though all these are – nor even of the complex industrialization mushrooming within this province (and adding to the attendant problems of implosion and pollution).

With the utmost respect, I speak of our home, the people who make it what it is, our oneness now threatened, our country from the Pacific to the Atlantic, from the U.S. border to the to the Arctic Ocean: our nation.

"I have visited in England one of those models of Gothic architecture which the hand of genius, guided by an unerring faith, has moulded into a harmonious whole. This cathedral is made of marble, oak, and granite. It is the image of the nation I would like to see Canada become. For here I want the marble to remain the marble; the granite to remain the granite; the oak to remain the oak; and out of all these elements, I would build a nation great among the nations of the world."

Sir Wilfrid Laurier

Our people in the West spring from over sixty different nationalities.

They have one thing in common: their fathers came here in search of a dream, at about the time Laurier was trying to bring into being the nation Canada would one day be, each people retaining its own character, yet each part of a magnificent mosaic, one people making up "... a nation great among the nations of the world ..."

So they came: the Voyageurs and the Scotsman, the Irish, the Scandinavians, and the Ukrainians in "Sifton's sheepskins"; the Hungarians, the Germans, the Italians, and the Britishers, heartsick and tired of the



Dr. Horst A. Schmid speaking at the University of Alberta Faculty Club in 2013.

Photo: Uwe Weiz

hates and wars that (time and again) put out the lamps of Europe.

They came: Americans forever seeking new frontiers for their independent natures; Japanese fleeing the teeming tenements of the Far East.

They came with nothing – nothing but the fierce determination that there they would prove that any man, given any chance, can do as well as others.

They came, giving of their very lifeblood to this land, that their children could walk in it as befits common children of a common father.

Our prairie people – most of them untrained, uneducated when they came – did what no generation before them ever did: They beat "the prairie locusts" as they beat the drought ... and they turned the prairie desert into a bread basket for the world.

Miracles?

Yes.

But the real miracle was the transformation that they wrought in their own lives, the miracle that Laurier dreamed would make this nation great among the nations of the world: unity in the diversity of the West, Québec, the Maritimes, Ontario.

They learned that each man's problem was his neighbour's problem.

The problem of plague was no worse than the problem of ethnic bigotry, of religious hate, so prevalent still in other countries.

They fashioned their life so that in Canada – if anywhere on Earth – men could truly live, laugh, and labour as friends, as brothers: and brothers they become, as the children of one nationality married those of another ... Theirs to be the best of all worlds.

Some witty fellow has said that a Canadian is a man whose parents were born in Scotland; who has married a nice Italian girl from Québec; heads up a Jewish wholesale business; rides downtown in a German Volkswagen, to see a play written by an Irish author and performed by English, black, American, and Scandinavian actors, then takes his family to a Ukrainian restaurant where he orders Chinese sweet and sour ... all in honour of his daughter's forthcoming wedding to a Polish engineer she met while majoring in Greek Classics at the university.

"We are all Canadians. Below the island of Montréal, the water that comes from the north from Ottawa unites with the waters that come from the western lakes, but uniting they do

not mix. There they run parallel, separate, distinguishable, and yet are one stream, flowing within the same banks, the mighty St. Lawrence, and rolling on toward the sea, bearing the commerce of a nation upon its bosom: a perfect image of our nation. We may not assimilate, we may not blend, but for all that we are still the component parts of the same country."

That statement was uttered by Laurier on December 10, 1886, ninety-one years ago. Substitute Western Canada, Québec, the Territories, Ontario, and the Maritimes for Ottawa and Montréal, and I suggest that in Canada, our people are one stream, a proud and generous people, a free, united people.

Does such idealism make men soft? Unsophisticated?

If you visualize Alberta's land and its seasons, what would you see? You would see the drilling rigs working through the long sub-zero nights. Have you ever counted the cost of one dry well? Have you ever counted the cost of one bad landing when thirty-two men died in the snow-shrouded wastes in the freezing waters of the high Arctic night? Soft men?

On the prairies, can you visualize the combines harvesting the seas of golden wheat? A beautiful picture – you know how those seas were created! In our bush land, they were carved ten acres in a year by axes and human hands. The fathers grubbed the standing trees, the children piled the brush and burnt it. The mothers pulled the tough, hard roots from the breaking.

Before the days of Medicare, some of those mothers ruptured themselves, pulling roots from the clearing. They went to early graves, part of the price that has been paid for the riches of the West today ... riches we all share, riches the world shares.

But the riches we count most dear are not grain and cattle and oil.

If I hesitate now, it is because I don't know what being a Canadian – what living in Canada – means to you who were born here. But I can tell you some of the things it means to me.

In a world where crowned heads are disappearing, it means – for one thing – the Monarchy. Perhaps I come by this respect and appreciation for our Queen honestly, because Bavaria (where I was born) was traditionally a peaceful monarchy. Did you know that the name of one of our Bavarian Palatine princes was the first to be inscribed on the Charter, granted by Charles of England, incorporating "The Gentlemen and Company of Adventurers Trading Into Hudson's Bay" – today's Hudson's Bay Company?

But being quite objective about the Monarchy, which would you which would you rather have: a dictator, who has not even tradition to restrain him – or a Queen? ... A president – as in the American system – who must scabble every four years for enough votes to keep him in office? ... Or a Royal Head, above the pattern of changing politics, whose material wants are of no concern, whose real wealth is the affection of her people?

Continued on page 11

"One nation – great among the nations of the world!"

Continued from page 10

The monarchy is a visible reminder of our past ... of the long struggle towards human betterment ... a symbol of reassurance in an age that is frightening not only to older people, but especially to our youth.

When everything is being swept away in a floodgate of change, people just anchor their faith to something unchanging. Maybe not without reason is some of our youth picking up the beard styles, the ruffles, and bows of what we still refer to as "the Victorian era" – an era identified with a Queen.

Our present Queen – to whom the word "gracious" can most surely be applied: a model wife and mother, every inch a lady – gives our youth and ourselves a tradition with which they (and we) can identify ... a formality and pageantry that add richness to our lives.

So, when I think of the things Canada has given me, it may sound strange to your ears to hear it – but this country gave me back a Monarch. Perhaps not until you have lived under dictators and tyrants do you understand fully what this means.

You do not have to be a Queen to receive a royal welcome in Canada: this "part of Canada" gave me that – in full measure and overflowing – when I came here as a youth of nineteen.

So I came to Canada – a boy who could speak some French and Italian, but not English (and I thought French was the national language of the country!) – and I would like to tell you what Canada means to me.

It means working in the gold-mining camps of Yellowknife, first as a ditch-digger, then on a mucking machine, then as a cage-tender as men go three thousand feet into the bowels of the Pre-Cambrian Shield to search, drill, and blast hard rock for gold – working with all kinds of men, of all classes and creeds, everyone greeting you as an equal ... and no one ever uttering the epithet "D.P."

You know what Canada means to me? Being asked to play the role of an Englishman in a Noel Coward play – me, Horst Schmid, still with a Bavarian accent so thick you could cut it.

Canada, to me, will always mean going week after week into CKUA radio station to broadcast musical programmes to people who are sometimes homesick for their native land ... Of being asked to become a director of the Edmonton Opera Association, at a time when you are an unknown.

You know what Canada means to me?

It means towns and villages where



In 1987, Horst Schmid was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws by the University of Alberta. This honorary degree recognizes his significant contributions to culture, international trade, and his legacy in the province.

Photo: Supplied by Schmid Family

people still trust one another so much that they forget to lock their cars, let alone their doors ... Where a man you've never met hands you a beer over the garden fence – or, better still, helps you dig the post-holes ... Where, absolutely unknown, you go campaigning in an election and people – even the ones who tell you they're not going to vote for you – urge you to stop and have a cup of coffee, even to come around to the back and take a dip in the swimming pool ... Where their kids offer you a share of their lemonade.

As a candidate in 1971, you may well understand that as an immigrant, I told myself that if one hundred people tell me to go back where I came from, I would withdraw my nomination. As it was, I knocked on 5,746 doors and not

once did anyone even indicate this thought to me. However, one of the doors I knocked on was answered by someone with an obvious German accent ... in fact, someone who I knew. When I asked him to vote for me, he told me he was a member of another party. Guess what: I told him to go back where the hell he came from.

These are no little things, ladies and gentlemen.

These are the things that make life worthwhile. These are the things perhaps you find nowhere else on Earth anymore. These are the things I want to guard and pass on to my children ... and yours.

And they are some of the things Canada means to me.

Many thoughts past through my mind – one being that, in Canada, we do not

even stop to realize what peace really means nor the blessing it brings us.

Consider the world about us – not just brother fighting against brother in so many lands, or the news that deluges us daily of hate and assassination, of upheaval and disaster.

And thus I could go on.

Instead, I will refer – for the last time – to the night I was elected. As sons a long way from their parents will do, I phoned them. I spoke to my mother. "Would you believe," I said, "that I was elected an MLA?"

"You mean you were appointed a sort of honorary MLA – for the work that you've been doing – or something?" she said.

"No – an honest-to-goodness MLA, chosen by the people."

"Horst," said my mother, "would you believe we have elected a Turk to the Bavarian legislature?"

Since such a supposition is impossible in Bavaria, my answer was "No". In fact, I told her that if she said that, I'd think she was crazy.

"Well, Horst, she said, "that's what I think you are – out of your mind!"

I guess she really didn't believe it till I returned to Bavaria, where never in a thousand years could I have become a cabinet minister.

During a visit there at a reception given for the province of Alberta by the Bavarian legislature, I was presented with a gold medal. They did not know who I was, really – a cabinet minister from Alberta – and you should have seen their faces when I talked to them, one by one along the reception line, each in his own local dialect.

Will you believe, that at that moment I knew to the full how privileged I was ... How lucky I was to have come to this land – and with what pride I represented Alberta and her people? As a Canadian?

Well ... you and I, ladies and gentlemen, unworthy or helpless though we may feel, are the builders of our nation, our Canada.

Each one of us has a responsibility. Each must have respect for the rights of others. Each must see in his neighbour the dignity and worth he wants in this life for his own.

I have faith that we will think beyond the moment ... That we will build well ... That, remembering what brought your ancestors here and their sacrifices to build the Canada we share today ... we will work in the only way that befits Canadians – together on that keystone of true nationhood – that we may pass on to our children a finer, richer legacy than even our own parents dreamed of.

One nation – great among the nations of the world! Our home! Our Canada!

Letters to the editor are welcome

We invite you to write letters to the editor. A maximum of 275 words is preferred. Letters must carry a first name or two initials with surname, and include an address and daytime telephone number. All letters are subject to editing. We don't publish letters addressed to others or sent to other publications.

Please e-mail your letter to: mwmosaic@telus.net

Floor Crossings Symptom of Party Politics, Not Cause of Democratic Failure

The recent floor crossings have opened a debate on the shape of our democracy. And it is not good – the shape of our democracy, that is.

Floor crossings have long been part of our Westminster system, at least potentially. Heck, our premier herself crossed the floor twice, first in 2009 and then again in 2014.

Our democracy is a representative democracy, which means we elect certain people to fill seats and in hopes that they will represent “voters.” But who do they really represent? We elect one person to represent a geographical area containing all sorts of people. So obviously some voters in the district will have someone to speak in support of their opinion, and the others will not.

Is that the best we can expect for our democracy?

A look at Europe – and many countries in Asia, Africa and South America – shows us that democracy does not have to look like this. Democracy – which can be defined as rule by the people themselves or their chosen representatives – does not have to look like this.

Democracy was invented in ancient Greece

Democracy started in ancient Greece, in Athens. That civilization used different election systems at different times, but the pinnacle of democracy there was due to leadership of a man called Cleisthenes, who around the year 600 BC divided the electorate into ten tribes. Each tribe included a sampling of male citizens in each of the three geographical areas of Athens. The tribe’s representatives were chosen by lot, and in fact those who were seen as becoming adept at working the system were ostracized (forced to live outside Athens) for ten years. The selected people from the tribes gathered in the Boule, which was composed of thousands of delegates, like I say chosen by lot. They acted like what we would call a Citizens Assembly today.

The idea that common persons, the general public should have input into laws is similar to the idea now becoming more and more widespread of the usefulness of Citizen’s Assemblies. One was used in BC in 2005 to consider reforms of the election system. Its suggestion to switch to Single Transferable Voting in multi-member districts was put to a referendum and endorsed by a majority of votes, but the result was ignored by the government.

And in 2020, the Citizens’ Assembly on Democratic Expression was organized and, after 40 hours of online meetings, came up with 33 recommendations. These recommendations were the basis of the Trudeau government’s Online Harms Act (Bill C-63), which unfortunately was not passed into law before his resignation.

Unlike Ancient Athens, we in Canada have never had assemblies of thousands of ordinary citizens debating policy and putting forward their ideas for approval as law.

Perhaps the closest we have had is when a government puts the power to

choose law in the hands of voters in general. This is done through referendums such as we saw when Edmontonians voted to close the downtown airport in 1995 and in 2021 when we voted not to adopt permanent daylight savings time.

Tom Monto

A Different Perspective



Those kind of direct questions to voters are also a part of democracy, because democratic politics is about people achieving the passage of government policy that they like, whether directly through Citizen Assemblies, petitions or referendums, or through fairly elected representation.

In Canada we mostly hold elections and then leave the government to do what it wants until four or five years later when another election is held. Some describe this as “elective dictatorship.” And often the MLAs or MPs who make up the majority in the chamber do not have the support of the majority of voters. Such minority rule leads the country or a province down paths against the will of the majority of voters.

The 1988 federal election was taken as a referendum on freer trade with the U.S. Mulroney’s Conservative party was re-elected to a majority of seats although more votes were cast for the Liberals and the NDP, both of whom were opposed to Free Trade. That free trade deal led to Canada’s over-dependence on just one trading partner. And now we are urgently working to get away from that.

There will always be those in power and those outside power

Other historical cases include the U.S. Civil War. If the U.S. government had actually represented the will of the voters, the war could have been avoided according to one analysis.

The Second World War likewise could have been avoided if the British government had been composed based on votes cast, with more-aggressive actions taken against Hitler’s early moves.

In Israel, in the last election Netanyahu’s coalition did not take a majority of votes but due to the electoral threshold, it received a majority of seats anyway. His decisions have helped cause the present destructive and expensive conflict.

The idea that one single party has overwhelming power in the House of Commons for a set period of time means deaf ears are given to those with divergent ideas. There will always be those in power and those outside power, but at least under a properly

working system, the government should have the support of a majority of voters and every substantial voting block should have a voice in the chamber, to at least be listened to, even if their remarks are not directly acted on immediately.

But such is not guaranteed today. Mark Carney’s success in assembling a majority in the House of Commons does not overcome the fact that the Liberal MPs that compose his caucus have less than 40 percent of the vote. The Conservative MPs have even fewer votes.

With no one party actually deserving power, what to do?

We can do what is done in most countries in Europe (and many in Asia, Africa and South America as well) – compose a working majority through forming a coalition of multiple parties. Certain parties put aside their differences and form a common platform and get things done.

The “party first” notions that lead to one-party rule prevents the general will of the people (of a majority of the people anyway) from having power and ensuring the government works for them.

Political parties are a convenient way to group candidates

The recent uproar against the floor crossings of Conservatives (and an NDP-er in one case) to the Liberals is to my mind just party machines upset at their inability to control elected members.

Because we don’t simply fill slots in the parties caucus; we elect individuals. Sure we would like the elected member to do what they promise but we actually have no hold on them between elections.

Are the constituents mad about the floor crossing? Some likely are, but others – the many who did not vote for the elected member in the first place – may not be, especially those who wanted to see a Liberal elected.

Parties are a convenient way to group candidates. Voters know roughly what to expect from candidates running under labels, and parties are useful forces in fighting elections. But when parties themselves are seen as the purpose of politics, they are a hindrance to democracy.

Back in the 1910s many Albertans saw that the Liberal party had “sewn up” the election process in most of the province. It was difficult to get even a Conservative elected, not to mention someone who wanted to represent workers and farmers. They pushed the Liberal government to bring in Direct Legislation where citizens could sign petitions and force the government to adopt legislation or hold a binding referendum on it.

The Alberta Prohibition law of 1915 came in through this process.

Beer sales in taverns were still allowed, and an attempt was made to collect the required number of signa-

tures to get that banned as well. But other than Prohibition, no other initiatives were able to breach the critical threshold.

Then people said “why do this work to force the government to do what it doesn’t want to do? Why not just elect a government that wants to do the right stuff in the first place?”

We have unfortunately lost the system of proportional representation

The UFA were elected in 1921 due to a groundswell of “Organized Farmer” sentiment. It promised to bring in a fairer election system. It did bring in ranked voting in each district of the province and by using city-wide districts in Edmonton and Calgary, ensured that each major party would have representation in each city.

It was not the Democracy of old Athens, but it did see a Farmer MLA and a Labour MLA elected in Edmonton in 1926, which had never happened before. And a Calgary Labour MLA was named a cabinet minister in the UFA government.

We have unfortunately lost the system of proportional representation in Edmonton and Calgary that we once had. But now perhaps there is renewed interest in establishing new forms of voting and representation. And hopefully in the future the will of the people, not just an assembly made up of winners of local dominance in separate districts, will become the basis of our political system.

Tom Monto is an Edmonton historian. His books When Canada had Effective Voting and Proportional Representation, and Protest and Progress (the lives of Harry Ainsley, Rice Sheppard and Margaret Crang) are available at Alhambra Books near Whyte Avenue. His blogsite Montopedia has hundreds of articles on contemporary events, history, politics and elections.

Do you have any story ideas for the Mill Woods Mosaic? Give us a call at 780-465-7526 or e-mail to mwmosaic@telus.net

Mill Woods Mosaic

Let's Begin Again

A stream flowed down from the mountains. It moved through valleys, past villages, steady and sure of itself. Then one day, it reached a desert. It had never seen anything like it. It tried to cross, but the moment it touched the sand, it began to disappear.

The stream panicked. "I am losing myself," it said.

A quiet voice said, "The wind crosses the desert. So can you."

The stream resisted. "I am water. I don't fly."

The voice replied, "You must let go of what you think you are. Only then will you reach the other side."

The stream had no choice. It let go. It disappeared into the sand. And then, carried by the wind, it rose, travelled, and fell again as rain – on the other side.

Sometimes, we are like that stream. We hold tightly to what we think we are – our roles, our words, our image. Words matter. But what we do matters more. And sometimes, if we're honest, the two don't line up. It's easier to speak than to act. Easier to promise than to follow through.

In our world today, there is a lot of noise. Anger is easy. Blame is easy. Words are everywhere. But something feels missing. Trust feels thinner. Patience feels shorter. Maybe it is

Sharan Sandhu

Moments in our Community



because we are holding on to words, and not paying enough attention to what we do.

We all know people who say the right things but leave damage behind them. And we know others who don't say much, but you can rely on them. You feel steady around them. They don't disappear when things get hard. Our community is built on these small actions – someone showing up, someone keeping their word, someone choosing not to add to the noise.

Maybe peace is not what we think it is. Not silence. Not everything being calm. Maybe it is like that small bird – sitting steady, even when everything around it is falling apart.

Easter just passed. In its own quiet way.

For some, it is faith. For others, it simply comes and goes. But it leaves something behind we can all hold onto. Renewal. The reminder that things can begin again. That after loss, something can return. That after breaking, something can be made whole again.

Renewal is not always big. Sometimes it is just a small shift. A different choice. Letting go of what is not working, and trying again.

Maybe, like the stream, we are being asked to let go of something – old habits, easy anger, empty words. To close the gap between what we say and how we live.

And maybe, as a community, we can learn from each other. Every culture, every faith, every family carries something good. Ways of caring. Ways of beginning again.

Our children are watching. Not what we say – what we do.

So maybe this Easter was not about saying more. Maybe it is about doing something. Even if it's just one thing right. Showing up. Keeping your word. Being a little more honest. A little more steady. A little more human.

And we begin again from there. Quietly. Today.

Sharan Sandhu is a resident of Mill Woods who works as Secretary Treasurer at the Boyle Street Education Centre.



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The Creation of the Mill Woods Land Assembly

This is the fourth in a series of articles about the history of Mill Woods that will continue throughout 2026 as I write a comprehensive history of the community. The third chapter will discuss the creation of the Mill Woods land assembly, the largest land assembly the city ever assembled. At nine square miles or 6,000 acres, it was the largest land assembly in Western Canada at the time – and on a scale more than ten times the size of the city’s current Blatchford Field development project, which began after the city closed the municipal airport in 2010.

The discovery of oil at Leduc No. 1 on February 13, 1947, led to rapid growth in drilling around the city. From 1947 to 1956, the number of wells increased from 418 to 7,390; Edmonton’s population nearly tripled from 1951 to 1969, from 158,012 to 422,418. The increase in population and residential housing construction led to a shortage of land, particularly serviced lots in the suburbs. The city annexed Beverly in 1961 and Jasper Place and parts of the MD of Stony Plain in 1962; it also attempted, without success, to annex parts of Strathcona County.

The concept of a land assembly, or bank, is relatively unknown today but came about through historical circumstances. Like other Western Canadian cities, Edmonton had accumulated significant land through tax default following the 1913 real estate collapse, and the post-World War I recession which resulted from falling grain prices. After World War II, these lots became an inadvertent land bank that the city replanned and sold off for suburban development. By the 1960s, however, the city had sold off most of this land and Edmonton was becoming concerned about housing affordability.

In late 1968 or early 1969, Assistant Superintendent of Planning Phil Ellwood had an idea: What if land southeast of the city intended for industrial development was used for housing instead? And, what if the city developed it, rather than the private sector, to reduce lot prices? Ellwood fleshed out the idea in utmost secrecy to avoid driving up the price of land in the area. The city commissioners and Mayor Ivor Dent supported the plan. The federal government provided loans through the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Premier Harry Strom agreed to help and directed the Alberta Housing and Urban Renewal Corporation (from 1970 called Alberta Housing Corporation)

Catherine C. Cole

History of Mill Woods



Journal reported that the city was predicting profits of about \$100M; profits were directed towards parks and recreation facilities in Mill Woods as well as more access roads. Whether the city or the province profited more from the Mill Woods land assembly, there is no doubt that in the 1970s and 1980s residents of Mill Woods benefited from both the focus on affordable housing in the area and the resources allocated towards developing parks and recreation facilities with funds from the land bank.

cept. If you have information about the history of Mill Woods or photographs to share, please feel free to contact me at catherinec.cole@telus.net. I am very grateful to the Edmonton Heritage Council and the Canada Council for the Arts for supporting the research and writing of this manuscript.

Catherine C. Cole is a writer, curator, and consultant. Her last book, GWG: Piece by Piece, a history of Edmonton’s Great Western Garment Company, was published by Goose Lane Editions in 2012.

to support a land assembly for the area that became Mill Woods, bounded by what is now 91 and 34 Streets and 51 and 15 Avenues.

Alberta Housing and Urban Renewal Corporation’s Executive Director Bob Orysiuk arranged to acquire the land confidentially between August and October 1969 to avoid speculation and price escalation. Because of the size of the project and the need to act quickly, he retained two law firms to purchase the land. Clement, Parlee was contracted to acquire the northern portion and Ed Achtem the southern portion. In time, controversy arose. First, in 1971, there was a dispute within City Council over how decisions were made. Later, in 1974, a more serious controversy erupted when the *Edmonton Journal* reported alleged irregularities in the land acquisition, particularly about the deal between Orysiuk and Achtem which I will outline in the Mill Woods history book.

The province sold the land to the city over time at 1969 prices. The *Edmonton Journal* reported on May 1, 1971, that the land bank was “expected to ease the financial agony for those wishing to buy.” Viewed as an experiment in urban living, the hope was that the land bank would allow orderly growth at controlled prices that would prevent exploitation and urban sprawl. Indeed, in the early 1970s, lot prices in Mill Woods were significantly lower than those in Londonderry, Dickensfield, or West Jasper Place.

An *Edmonton Journal* article March 17, 1976, noted that “The city planned to use profits realized from the sale of land within Mill Woods to acquire more land so that there would be a constant supply of both raw and serviced land.” But the city realized that without annexation the possibility of another land assembly was remote because there was no cheap land left in the city.

On August 13, 1980, the *Edmonton*

Upcoming Events

I will be leading a Jane’s Walk in Richfield on Sunday, May 3 at 1:00 p.m., departing from the LeeField Community Hall. To register, please go to: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/richfield-the-first-neighbourhood-developed-in-mill-woods-tickets-1987073204445?aff=oddtcreator>

I am collaborating with the Edmonton Public Library on a Community History Project about Mill Woods and invite residents to share memories, stories, and reflections about the people, places, and moments that have shaped the community. Through informal conversations, one-on-one appointments, and community discussions, we will create space for residents to connect with local history, explore heritage issues, and listen to the voices that make Mill Woods unique. The next sessions will be May 13 and June 10, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Mill Woods Library.

Next month, the column will focus on the Mill Woods Development Con-



Mill Woods Project Director, Phil Ellwood, who worked for the City of Edmonton from 1959 to 1977 and was instrumental in the early development of Mill Woods.

Photo courtesy of Phil and Joyce Ellwood
Credit: The City of Edmonton Public Relations & Information Bureau, City Progress, Report No. 8, Volume 4, September 16, 1971

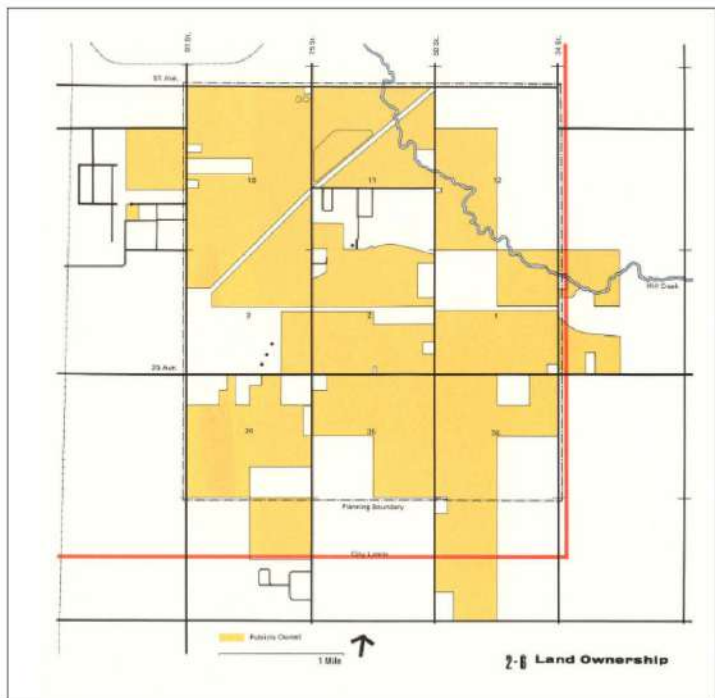


Illustration showing the proportion of publicly owned land acquired in 1969 from the Mill Woods Development Concept, page 19.

Courtesy: City of Edmonton, Department of Urban Planning and Economy

Discrimination and racism have no place in our hearts, our homes and our world.



International cooperation in Alberta

At the same time as four people were returning to earth from a historic trip around the Moon in a historic display of international cooperation, these four people were also proudly displaying what is possible when international communities work together. The Danish Canadian Club of Calgary moved to the Austrian Canadian Cultural Centre, and the two ethnic communities are sharing space now. There was a time in history when raising flag meant conquest. Today it means cooperation, pride and friendship for the future. The red and white of the Danish and Austrian flags proudly hang on either side of our Canadian Maple Leaf.

Photo: Danish Canadian Club of Calgary

The next issue of the *Mill Woods Mosaic* will be published on May 15, 2026. The deadline for advertising and editorial is Friday, May 8, 2026.

What's up?

Community events in Mill Woods

- May 2** - TCG Trade On - 1st Saturday of each month
The ultimate trading card event
Mill Woods Town Centre
2331 66 Street NW, Mill Woods
11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Website: <https://www.onlytogether.tv/trade-on>

- May 3** - Jane's Walk in Richfield with Catherine Cole, departing from the Leefield Community Hall 7910 - 36 Avenue NW, Mill Woods
To register, please go to:
<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/richfield-the-first-neighbourhood-developed-in-mill-woods-tickets-1987073204445?aff=oddtcreator>
1:00 p.m.

- May 10** - Mother's Day
Treat your mother while she is still alive. Take her out for a nice dinner, buy a cake and flowers for her. Nobody is perfect, but most mothers would do anything for their children, even when they are already adult, Mother's Day is our opportunity to spoil them.

- May 17** - Nagar Kirtan Sikh Parade in Mill Woods
The parade will begin at noon at Gurdwara Millwoods (2606 Mill Woods Road East) and end at Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha (4504 Mill Woods Road South).

- May 26** - Annual General Meeting with election of new board, snacks and beverages will be served
The Meadows Community League
Meadows Community Recreation Centre
2nd Floor Community League Room
2704 - 17 Street NW, The Meadows
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Website: <https://themeadowscommunity.ca>

- July 1** - CANADA DAY Celebration in Mill Woods
Mill Woods Park
2730 - 66 Street NW, Mill Woods
2:00 p.m. - midnight
If you want to volunteer for this annual community event, be a sponsor, or contribute in any other way, contact the organizers:
www.seedmonton.ca

- Do you have a community event in Mill Woods or The Meadows to announce?
Please send us the information, and we will include it in this community calendar in the next issue of the Mill Woods Mosaic.
Tel. 780-465-7526 or e-mail to: mwmosaic@telus.net*

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Important addresses for immigrants and other newcomers

If you are new to Edmonton and don't know anybody, it can be tough to find a place to stay, a job, the right school for your children or good health care services, but there is plenty of help available.

Here are some of the main agencies specializing in helping immigrants and other newcomers in the Edmonton area:

Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers

11713 - 82 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5B 2V9
Tel. (780) 424-7709
Website: www.emcn.ab.ca

The Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers offers a wide variety of programs for newcomers and helps immigrants to find a place to live, a job and English classes.

Welcome Centre for Immigrants in Mill Woods

Mill Woods Town Centre Professional Building
Suite 304, 6203 - 28 Avenue NW
Edmonton, Alberta
T6L 6K3
Tel. (587) 401-1129
Website: <https://newcomercentre.com>

The Welcome Centre for Immigrants in Mill Woods offers many programs and services for immigrants, including settlement assistance, language and educational counseling, employment assistance, citizenship classes, English classes, computer classes, public speaking classes, and youth programs.

Changing Together Centre for Immigrant Women

3rd Floor, 9538 - 107 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5H 0T7
Tel. (780) 421-0175
Website: www.changingtogether.com

Founded in 1984, Changing Together is a non-profit, charitable organization operated by immigrant women for immigrant women. Its mission is to help Edmonton and area immigrant women and their families overcome personal and systemic barriers that keep them from participating fully in Canadian Society.

Catholic Social Services

8212 - 118 Avenue NW
Edmonton, Alberta
T5B 0S3
Tel. (780) 424-3545
Website: www.catholicsocialservices.ab.ca

For more than 50 years, Catholic Social Services has welcomed immigrants and refugees to Alberta. The services are free and offered in both official languages and more than 50 other languages. In the Meadows, CSS runs a drop-in group for women of all ages and backgrounds. Participants connect through diverse activities like speaking English, sharing cultural experiences, learning to use computers and connecting with useful resources. The program, called Tea Connections, runs every Friday from 10 a.m. to noon, in the room of The Meadows Community League on the 2nd floor of the Meadows Community Recreation Centre, 2704 - 17 Street. For more information, contact Raminder Dhindsa at raminder.dhindsa@cssalberta.ca or 780-391-3204.

Family Futures Resource Network

5704 - 19 A Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6L 1L8
Tel. 413-4521
Website: www.familyfutures.ca

The Family Futures Resource Network (FFRN) is a non-profit organization providing support to families and parents in the areas of early childhood education, child and youth, family and adult support and parent education. The FFRN has three separate

locations in Mill Woods: Millhurst Site (5704 - 19 A Avenue), Knottwood Site (1733 Mill Woods Road) and Millbourne Community Site (3756 - 78 Street).

Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative

9538 -107 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5H 0T7
Tel. (780) 423-1973
Website: www.mchb.org

The Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative is a registered worker's co-operative with members from immigrant and refugee communities, providing culturally and linguistically relevant prenatal education, post-natal outreach, parenting support, family liaison and community development support to immigrant and refugee families.

Indo-Canadian Women's Association

9324 - 34 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6E 5X8
Tel. (780) 490-0477

The Indo-Canadian Women's Association is a not-for-profit organization for enthusiastic volunteers committed to full participation of immigrant and visible minority women and men in economic, social and political life in Canada.

The Shaama Centre for Seniors and Women

(formerly Multicultural Women & Seniors Services Association)
329 Woodvale Road West
Edmonton, Alberta
T6L 3Z7
Tel. (780) 465-2992

The Shaama Centre for Seniors and Women (SCSW) is a non-profit, organization. The focus is to provide service and programs for immigrant women and senior men and women. Program goal is to promote and enhance the well-being and self-reliance of seniors and women especially those at risk and isolated before a crisis situation occurs. SCSW provides social support, information sessions, and skill building classes, home and hospital visits, as well as translation, and referrals to other service providers. It also offers family support and crisis intervention. For youth, there are Urdu and math classes and homework help, and there is also an Urdu library with more than 2000 books. The SCSW is open from 9 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Friday.

Youth Empowerment and Support Services

9310 - Whyte Avenue (82 Ave.)
Edmonton, Alberta, T6C 0Z6
Tel. (780) 468-7070
Website: www.yess.org

The Youth Emergency Shelter Society is a not-for-profit organization serving young people between the ages of 15-18 who are in crisis, at risk or homeless.

Alberta Employment Standards

Edmonton Office - Main Floor Sterling Place
9940 - 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 2N2
Tel. (780) 427-3731
Website: www.employment.alberta.ca

Alberta Employment Standards is a provincial agency responsible for the administration and enforcement of employment standards in Alberta. AES has publications available for temporary for-

eign workers and their employers to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under Alberta's employment standards and workplace health and safety legislation. These publications are available in Chinese, English, French, German and Spanish.

NorQuest College

10215 - 108 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 1L6
Tel. (780) 422-2020
Website: www.norquest.ab.ca

NorQuest College is a public college offering many programs, including English as a Second Language classes and employment programs for immigrants.

Alberta Health and Wellness

Edmonton Office
Telus Tower North, Main Floor
10025 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
Tel. (780) 427-1432
Website: www.health.alberta.ca

Alberta Health and Wellness answers any questions about health care and health care insurance coverage in Alberta.

Immigrant Access Fund Canada

45, 9912 - 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 4M9
Tel. (Toll Free) 1-855-423-2262
Website: www.iafcandada.org

The Immigrant Access Fund provides micro loans to internationally trained immigrant professionals, trades people and skilled workers so they may obtain the Canadian licensing and/or training that will allow them to obtain employment in their field.

Other important phone numbers:

Edmonton Police Service

Emergency calls only 9-1-1
Police - Fire - Ambulance
Life & death, injury accident, crime in progress

Non-emergency calls
(Dispatch) 780-423-4567
Report of suspicious activity, calls for assistance, advice, etc.

Poison Centre 1-800-332-1414

Hazardous Material Spills 9-1-1

Utility Trouble Calls Only:

Power Emergency 780-412-4500
Within Edmonton

Gas Emergency 780-420-5585
Edmonton & Area

Drainage Trouble 780-496-1717

Sewer Trouble 780-496-1717

Wastewater (odour hotline) 780-469-8176

Water Emergency Service 780-412-6800

The next issue of the Mill Woods Mosaic will be published on May 15, 2026. The deadline for advertising and editorial is Friday, May 8, 2026.

What “Backpack Full of Cash” Asks Us to Consider About Public Education

In recent months, the Public School Boards’ Association of Alberta (PSBAA) has been supporting community screenings of the documentary *Backpack Full of Cash*. It’s a film that has sparked important conversations across North America about the future of public education, and it’s worth understanding why.

At its core, *Backpack Full of Cash* explores what happens when public education funding begins to follow students into privately operated schools. The film focuses primarily on the growth of charter schools in the United States and raises questions about accountability, equity, and the impact on the broader public system. While some families benefit from increased choice, the documentary asks a larger question: what happens to the system as a whole when funding is fragmented?

PSBAA, which represents public school boards across Alberta, exists to advocate for strong, accessible, and well-supported public education. Part of that role is helping trustees, parents, and communities engage in thoughtful discussions about trends that could shape our system here at home.

Jan Sawyer

Edmonton Public Schools Trustee (Ward I)



Hosting screenings of this film is not about promoting a single viewpoint, but about creating space for informed dialogue.

And that’s where the Alberta context becomes particularly important.

Alberta has long been proud of its public education system, one that is designed to serve all students, in all communities. At the same time, we are seeing increasing pressures on that system: growing enrolment, rising costs, and funding that has not kept pace. Alongside this, there are ongoing conversations about choice in educa-

tion, including charter schools and other alternatives.

Within Edmonton Public Schools, we are also able to offer a wide range of choice within the public system itself. From language programs and alternative learning environments to specialized supports and academies, families can find options that meet their child’s needs without leaving the public

system. This is an important distinction, one that allows us to balance choice with a continued commitment to equity and shared responsibility.

The message of *Backpack Full of Cash* is not that choice is inherently wrong. Rather, it highlights the importance of balance and of understanding the unintended consequences that can arise when public dollars are redirected without a full view of system-wide impacts. When funding leaves the public system, so too can supports that many students rely on, particularly those with complex needs.

For Alberta, the takeaway is clear: decisions about education are not just about individual pathways, but about the collective strength of the system. A strong public system benefits everyone, even those who may never directly access every part of it.

By bringing communities together to watch and discuss this film, PSBAA is encouraging exactly the kind of thoughtful, respectful conversation that good public policy depends on. These are not easy issues, and reasonable people will have different perspectives. But ensuring we are all informed, and that we consider both individual and system-wide impacts, is essential.

Public education has always been about more than classrooms. It reflects our shared values, our commitment to opportunity, and our belief in what we can build together. Conversations like these help ensure we protect and strengthen that foundation for the future.

As always, if you have questions about this, or anything else, please feel free to contact me trustee.jan.sawyer@epsb.ca.



Gurtej Singh Brar
MLA for Edmonton - Ellerslie

Christina Gray
MLA for Edmonton - Mill Woods

Jasvir Deol
MLA for Edmonton - Meadows