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# Canada's 2025 federal budget

*Canada Strong, spending high, priorities renewed, and a historic deficit*

Emma Marshall

Publishing Editor

Every budget has its own footprint, and this one started with a shiny new pair. Finance Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne laced up a fresh pair of black Oxford-style shoes before stepping into the House of Commons—a nod to the long-standing Canadian budget-day tradition.

But this year, the ritual came with a made-in-Canada twist. On Nov. 3, ahead of the 2025 federal budget, Champagne visited Boulet Boots in Saint-Tite, Que. where he joined local workers on the factory floor to make his shoes.

Rolling up his sleeves was a symbolic gesture to underscore his promise that this would be “an investment budget” built on Canadian resilience.

## A new era of budgeting

The 2025 federal budget, released on Nov. 4 and titled Canada Strong, marks the first fiscal plan under Prime Minister Mark Carney's leadership.

Branded as a blueprint to “build, empower, and protect,” the document promises record investments while forecasting a \$78 billion deficit, the largest outside of a pandemic year. This is expected to gradually shrink to an operational budget by 2028-29.

For Carney's government, the message is clear: long-



The newly proposed Canadian federal budget promises big spending, launching Canada into a \$78 billion deficit if approved. Photo courtesy of Instagram/@fp\_champagne

term resilience outweighs short-term restraint.

“It's our country. It's your future. We are going to give it back to you,” said Carney in his pre-budget speech on Oct. 22.

The budget also ushers in a procedural shift. Traditionally released each spring, federal budgets will now be tabled in the fall, with the fiscal update moving to spring.

This change, part of the government's new Capital

Budgeting Framework, is designed to make spending decisions more transparent and better aligned with the fiscal year that begins April 1.

“Today, we're laying a stronger financial foundation for Canada,” said Champagne in a news release. “This is how we'll deliver generational investments that build Canada Strong.”

For the first time, the federal government has divided its spending into two categories: “operational spending” for regular programs and services, and “capital investments” for long-term priorities like housing, defence and infrastructure.

Unlike previous years, the budget does not include an Indigenous-specific chapter.

“The government remains committed to reconciliation. Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Indigenous Services Canada deliver important programs that are legally or constitutionally required,” the document reads.

“Budget 2025 falls short in meeting the urgent and long-term needs identified by First Nations,” wrote the Assembly of First Nations in response to the budget release.

While some commitments were made to First Nations regarding infrastructure and

major project consultation, there is “no specific First Nations investment in health, training, language, or Truth and Reconciliation.”

## What's in it, and why it matters

The budget pledges \$141.1 billion in new spending over the next five years. The document outlines \$25 billion for housing, \$30 billion for defence, \$115 billion for infrastructure and \$110 billion for productivity and competitiveness over the next five years. This is alongside about \$60 billion in savings through staffing reductions and efficiency measures.

About 42 per cent of the plan focuses on strengthening Canada's sovereignty, while 36 per cent targets cost-of-living relief for Canadians.

For average Canadians, tax rates remain stable in many areas, but incentives and regulatory changes target sectors like clean energy, manufacturing, tech and housing.

Champagne and Carney have both framed the plan as a pivot toward resilience, arguing that strategic spending now will make Canada less vulnerable to future shocks.

However, not everyone

is convinced. The Fraser Institute warned that the plan could increase policy uncertainty, with some fiscal conservatives arguing Ottawa is prioritising political optics over fiscal prudence.

Still, supporting business groups and economists have cautiously welcomed its emphasis on productivity and innovation, arguing that Canada must invest now to address low growth and global instability.

## The politics of passage

As of Nov. 7, the Carney government has secured two of the three required votes in the House of Commons to pass the budget, a critical step for a minority government facing mounting pressure. With one final confidence vote expected next week, a defeat could trigger a winter election, the first in less than a year.

For now, Champagne appears confident his Canada-made shoes will carry him—and the government—across the finish line.

“These are bold, pro-consumer actions we need to build a stronger economy and bring down costs for Canadians,” said Champagne in a news release on Nov. 6.



With the last vote to pass the budget set for Nov. 17, a failure to pass with opposition support could head Canadians into another election. Photo courtesy of Instagram/@fp\_champagne & @markjcarney



Strike One:

# Opinion: Union dues and provincial blues

Ryan Montgomery

Staff Writer

The last time anyone in Alberta said the terms “general strike” with any sense of gravity or urgency was a long time ago. The year 1919, specifically, was a time of mass labour upheavals across Canada. This series of strikes was called The Great Labour Revolt, either an ominous title or a triumphant one, depending on whether or not you were writing the paycheques or receiving them.

These strikes were in response to multiple factors, among them rising costs of living and unemployment (sound familiar?) and were only put down after a detachment of RCMP officers fired into a crowd of strikers in Winnipeg, killing two, an event known as Bloody Saturday. I guess they just gave things cooler names back then.

A general strike is a strike consisting of unions from a wide variety of industries with the goal of creating a strike so wide-reaching and disruptive that the government is forced into reaction.

“General strike” was a

phrase relegated to the annals of obscure labour history and the fantasies of armchair communists.

That was, until Oct. 29, when Danielle Smith’s provincial government invoked the notwithstanding clause to put an end to a nearly four-week-long teachers’ strike and impose a new contract on the union.

The strike began on Oct. 6 after the breakdown of negotiations between the province and the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA), the union representing all public school teachers in Alberta. The teachers’ primary goal in negotiation was a cap on class sizes, a demand that the province flatly denied, citing cost reasons and a lack of brick-and-mortar space. And just like that, an impasse was found, a strike was called, and over 50,000 Alberta teachers left their classrooms for the picket line.

The ATA would strike until the aforementioned date of Oct. 29, on which the provincial government passed Bill 2, otherwise

known as the Back to School Act. I bet in 1919, they would have given this a cooler name.

The bill, which was hastily passed at 2 a.m., imposed back to work legislation on the ATA and forced the teachers back to work. Back-to-work legislation is a bill passed by a government which imposes a new agreement on a striking union and thereby forces them back to work.

The provincial government invoked the notwithstanding clause — a particularly autocratic constitutional provision that allows a government to bypass certain sections of the Charter for a period of five years, to restrict the union’s ability to strike for a period of four years and thereby ensuring that the teachers cannot fight the agreement.

They also imposed a daily fine of up to \$500,000 a day for any organisation that defies the order.

This iron/ham-fisted course of action by the province elicited a fierce reaction from Alberta labour. The Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL), the unified body which



Troops galloping around the bend in Winnipeg on Bloody Saturday. Photo courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba

represents 26 unions across Alberta, constituting over 170,000 workers, harshly condemned the provincial government.

President of the AFL, Gil Macgowan, in a fiery speech on Oct. 29, paraphrased Second World War era Prime Minister Mackenzie King.

“Not necessarily a general strike, but a general strike if necessary,” he says.

There’s a reason a general strike hasn’t occurred in Alberta for over a century. They’re an incredibly drastic measure.

According to Macgowan,

this is the reason it hasn’t happened yet, saying, “we don’t have systems and mechanisms for this, there’s no ‘general strike’ button.”

Questions of the legality of a general strike still loom over the ATA, and what the province’s response would be. That being said, the unprecedented nature of the province’s actions may just warrant such a drastic action. If the government can legislate away the workers’ right to strike, and the union doesn’t do anything about it, then what are they there for?

Strike Two:

# Fallout from the “nuclear option:” Alberta unions threaten general strike mobilisation

*The provincial use of the notwithstanding clause has united nearly 400,000 workers under a common front coalition*

Vlad Semeshko

Staff Writer

In the wake of the Oct. 27 decision of the Alberta government to invoke the notwithstanding clause with the Back to School Act, many spectators and commentators in the province have now begun to wonder if the stage has been set for a general strike in the province.

The Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) has joined with other unions under the Common Front coalition, together representing almost 400,000 workers.

President of the AFL, Gil McGowan, criticised the choice of tools to deal

with the strike, stating that the government chose the “nuclear option” out of all other options which were available to them.

The notwithstanding clause is a legal tool at the government’s disposal, which allowed it to bypass any possible legal challenges with the implementation of the Back to School Act.

Nonetheless, the government’s decision to invoke the clause has greatly disrupted labour relations in the province, with the AFL publicly declaring that it is “beginning the process

of organising towards a potential general strike.”

Sandra Azocar, the president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, which represents licensed practical nurses and healthcare aides employed by Alberta Health Services, told reporters at a press conference on Wednesday that wages and workplace safety are the top concerns for union members.

She went on to state that the union is hopeful about reaching a deal, but ultimately made it clear that they are willing to strike if

necessary.

Labour rights in Canada have been shaped throughout a century of rich provincial history of labour activism.

There have been many major sectoral strikes across provinces, with large shutdowns and walkouts occurring across unions representing one to a few industries, such as coal miners or postal service workers.

On the contrary, there have only been two province-wide general strikes in Canada, which involved different unions belonging to multiple

industries that halted work across the entire province in a coordinated action.

Quebec’s 1972 general strike began with the formation of a common front, known as the Front commun, between three labour federations, where over 200,000 public sector workers went on a province-wide strike.

Schools, hospitals, and government services were some of the sectors that were shut down. Demonstrations

Continued from Pg. 3

grew larger after the three union leaders got arrested for defying the back-to-work legislation.

A decade later, in 1983, British Columbia saw a general strike of its own. While only coming close to a full provincial shutdown, Operation Solidarity became known for the province-wide movement it grew into. Having a large political impact on the province, over 200,000 public sector workers coordinated walkouts across the province.

Sparking as a response to the Social Credit government's austerity bills, Operation Solidarity shut down schools, public transport, government offices and hurt the capacity of other essential services, ending with a government settlement before reaching

final escalation.

It has been over 40 years since the general strike in British Columbia, signifying how historic a general strike would be if it were to occur presently anywhere in Canada.

However, a general strike is still very unlikely to happen. With almost half a million employees under a common banner of labour, and new headlines of 16,000 nurses voting 98 per cent in favour of a strike, the scenario does not seem entirely out of the realm of possibility.

and feel empowered to take steps forward, but also know what services are available through us," Sidhu says.

Like Security Services, the Healthy Campus Team provides hands-on support that focuses on mental health within the broader dimensions of healthcare.

Recently, they redeveloped their "Mini Mental Health Primer" to accommodate the increasing mental health literacy of students. A self-paced resource, the primer allows students to explore their own mental health and the options available to them through campus services.

"Our events and services are always designed to be as low-barrier and accessible as possible for students. We want to meet you where you're at and offer the support you need," writes the Healthy Campus Team in an email statement.

Last year, the team launched their After Hours Peer Support Centre, which provides free, confidential support for students in distress. Peer support is offered by trained student volunteers, and the centre is available as a drop-in service Monday through Friday from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The Healthy Campus Team also hosts a number of events throughout the year, including harm-reduction and naloxone training sessions, therapy dogs in the library and weekly groups run by the team's counsellors.



Calgary workers show their support for the Common Front movement. Photo courtesy of the Alberta Federation of Labour

# Mental health efforts at MRU

## How campus services support students in need

Rylie Perry  
Arts Editor



MRU Security Services are available at any time. Photo courtesy of MRU Security Services

Last term, only 10 per cent of students considered their mental well-being level to be high, as collected by the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS).

In response, MRU has been increasing mental health efforts on campus, including those through Security Services, the Healthy Campus Team and SAMRU.

Manesha Sidhu, director of Security Services, says incidents on campus are becoming increasingly linked to mental health struggles, whether it be anxiety attacks or something more.

To support students, security representatives now undergo distress training, which is facilitated through informed professionals with the Healthy Campus Team.

The team is also versed in trauma-informed care, with training provided by the Office of Safe Disclosure, a new addition to the MRU campus that provides services related to discrimination, human rights and equality.

"We see mental health and the support around mental health as a bit of an ecosystem, each department on this campus has some responsibility in that," says Sidhu.

In addition, Security Services' newest initiative implemented an on-site social worker, who brings an intentional, trauma-informed lens to safety planning for students that may require further guidance.

"We want students to take safety into their own hands

### THE REFLECTOR

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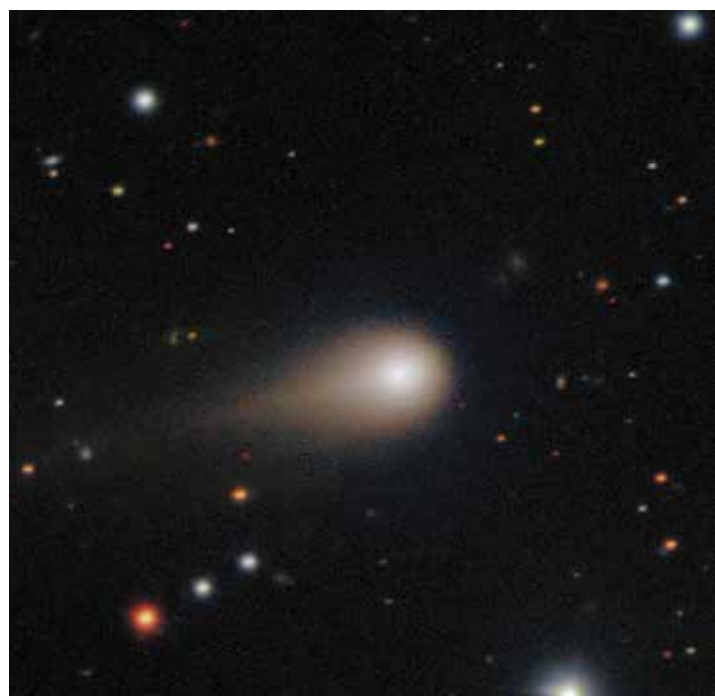
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## Meet the comet shaking the science community

*Study finds 3I/ATLAS has natural, not alien origins*

**Julia Finot**

Staff Writer



Comet 3I/ATLAS as seen above Chile on Aug. 27, 2025, by the Gemini Multi-Object Spectrograph. Photo courtesy of International Gemini Observatory/Wikimedia Commons

Our solar system has experienced a rare visit from an ancient interstellar comet, and while some are interested in learning about its brief stay, others are speculating that it may have alien origins.

Somewhere beyond the sun, a large comet races around our solar system—meet 3I/ATLAS, a bright, fast, and unique look into another universe.

First spotted by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) back in July, the 3I/ATLAS reached its closest point to the sun on Oct. 30. Though it is not believed to pose a threat to Earth, some debate that its high speed and dazzling light could be evidence of alien technology.

In an article for Medium, Harvard astrophysicist Avi Loeb hypothesised whether the comet's significant speed and mass were consistent with terrestrial or technological material, writing that "alien technology might employ thrusters yet with higher speeds."

However, a September study published in EarthArXiv investigated the misconceptions surrounding the comet's alleged

extraterrestrial origins and determined that 3I/ATLAS is naturally formed.

**"This study shows that the features of 3I/ATLAS are consistent with natural origin," the study reads. "This means that Dr. Avi Loeb's idea that 3I/ATLAS is an alien expedition is not true."**

With a large sedimentary body measuring over 11 kilometres in diameter, the comet is larger than its predecessors, but it has the chemical makeup of an interstellar object.

### Interstellar, not extraterrestrial

An interstellar object is something that has appeared in our solar system from another solar system, which is what the 3I/ATLAS has been confirmed as due to its speed and direction.

There have only been two other cases where scientists have identified interstellar objects: first, back in 2017, with 1I/'Oumuamua and then in 2019 with 2I/Borisov. The 3I/ATLAS is considered to be a combination of these two phenomena, with the 2I/Borisov being an everyday comet, while the 1I/'Oumuamua barely fits this definition.

A comet has three parts—the nucleus, the coma, and the tail. The nucleus of a comet is composed of frozen rocks, dust, and gas, while the coma is the surrounding cloud of dust and gas. Together, those two things create the brightest part of the comet.

Though the 3I/ATLAS does have these characteristics, they're slightly different from those of other comets. When it entered the solar system, it seemed to have the three

parts of a comet, but recently, scientists have determined its tail has faded away. It still has a nucleus and coma, but unexpected observations of them have been made as it moves closer to Earth.

As 3I/ATLAS has travelled through the solar system, its appearance has shifted. The colour of the comet has significantly become brighter since scientists first discovered it. This, combined with its off-course travel plans, has baffled the scientific community.

### If not alien, then why alien-shaped?

Between its makeup and trajectory, it is believed that the 3I/ATLAS originated from the Milky Way's thick disk. This area is outside our solar system, but it is believed to be home to stars older than 13 billion years, which suggests that the comet may be misbehaving due to its ancient origins.

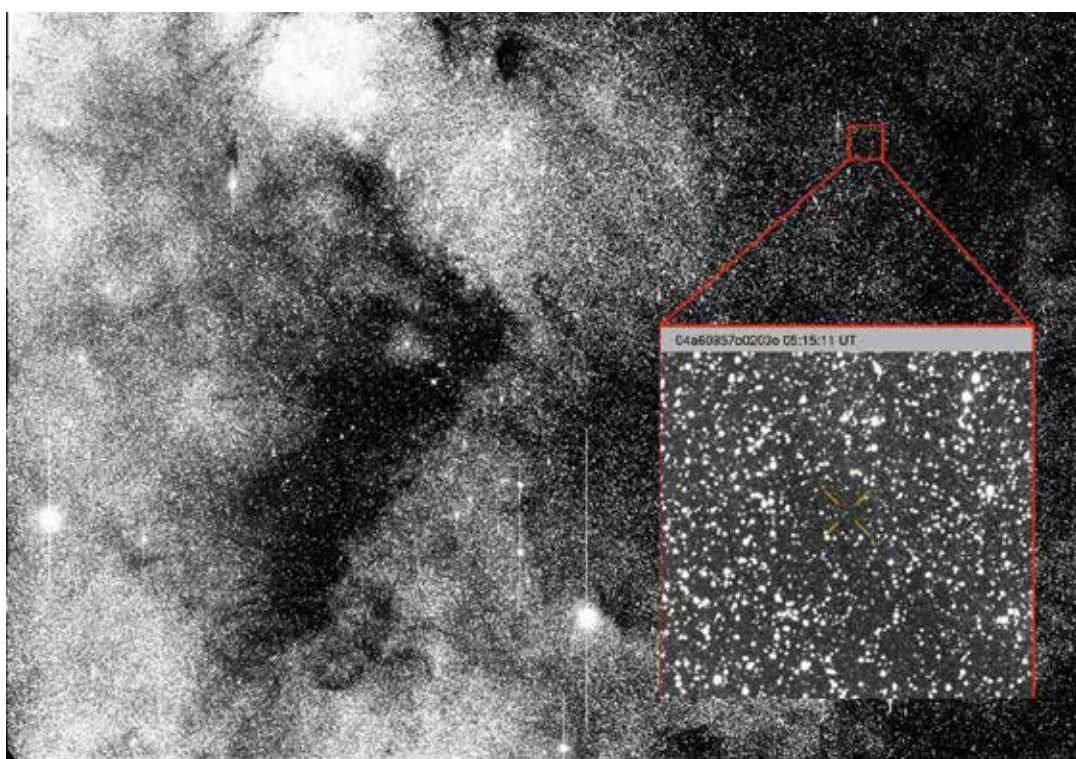
A report by astronomers at the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (a major observatory in Cape Town) revealed their telescope picked up a radio

signal from 3I/ATLAS. This wasn't a communication-based radio signal, but rather a signal detecting hydroxyl radicals. In short, it is one of the most potent oxidising agents commonly found in the nucleus of a comet, which is not believed to be released from alien technology.

Another misconception is that the comet is a threat to humanity. NASA has confirmed that 3I/ATLAS will have no impact on Earth. The closest it will get to us will be about 270 million kilometres, which is farther than the sun is from Earth. Theoretically, it would take around 200 days to reach the comet via a space shuttle.

The 3I/ATLAS started its journey behind the sun in late October and will not be visible to scientists again until late 2025, when it returns close to Earth on Dec. 19.

Whether it is a piece of history from another solar system or an eye-opener to what lies beyond us, the comet serves as a reminder to everyone of how much of the universe we have yet to explore.



The observation of comet 3I/ATLAS when it was discovered and photographed by ATLAS on July 1, 2025. Photo courtesy of University of Hawaii/NASA



# Guide to giving your mental wellbeing a boost

*Five ways to nurture your mind amid winter blues*

**Anais Loepky**  
Contributor

Let’s be so real, sometimes surviving this time of year can feel like trying to catch smoke with bare hands. A 2022 survey by Statistics Canada shows that Canadians are far more likely to experience major depressive episodes in the winter compared to the summer months.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) impacts nearly three per cent of Canadians and is defined as a severe onset of depression during weather changes. However, not every rough patch is considered a mental health condition.

The Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health says 15 per cent of the nation goes through the “winter blues,” which is a milder form of SAD characterised by “low energy, irritability, and low mood.”

Even if someone doesn’t meet the clinical criteria for conditions like depression or anxiety, for example, periods of stress or constant worry can take a real toll on daily life.

With all the chaos that life loves to throw, it can sometimes seem impossible to find a moment to breathe, let alone take care of oneself. Here are a few doable ways to support mental well-being amid the hustle and bustle.

## Romanticise the little things

It sounds silly, but intentionally making the small things feel extra special can make a big difference. Something as simple as lighting a candle when studying or sipping morning coffee from a favourite mug can change the tone of an entire day.

According to the American Psychological Foundation, paying attention to small sensory experiences—taste, smell, touch, and sight—can reduce stress and improve emotional well-being. Minimal touches can really make any day feel extra precious.

## Gratitude journaling

Keeping a gratitude journal has become pretty trendy lately—and research from Harvard Health Publishing shows it’s for good reason. A 2024 publication by Maureen Salamon summarises findings from the Nurses’ Health Study, saying that people who regularly reflect on what they’re grateful for tend to feel happier and more optimistic about their lives. Additionally, participants



**Research shows time spent with loved ones and positive habits help beat the winter blues. Photo courtesy of Anita Austvika/Unsplash**

with a high overall gratitude score had a nine per cent lower risk of dying from cardiovascular, respiratory, and other diseases.

“We know that gratitude makes people feel happier,” the study reads. “That in itself has a small effect on mortality risk...they’re more likely to show up for medical appointments or exercise.”

It’s easy to forget to pause and appreciate the little things, but a gratitude journal makes it simple to build that reflection into one’s daily routine. The article recommends asking oneself questions such as who you’re grateful for, life events you’re looking forward to, and what you might currently be taking for granted.

## Curate your digital space

While eliminating screens from daily life isn’t realistic, being mindful of which accounts are followed and where attention is given can make all the difference. Algorithms often seem to know people better than even their closest friends, so guiding them toward positive and uplifting content can help reinforce the best aspects of life.

Science also supports this finding. A 2018 study by the University of Pennsylvania finds that reducing time spent on stressful or comparison-heavy social media makes

people feel noticeably less lonely and anxious. So yes, unfollowing an influencer or muting a particularly negative relative might actually be an act of self-care.

## Social connection

Through promoting both interaction and isolation, social media is undoubtedly a double-edged sword. Whether it’s online or offline, research shows that spending time with others is a strong predictor of long-term happiness.

In 1938, Harvard scientists started tracking the health of nearly 240 of the university’s sophomores. Today, over 80 years later, the Study of Adult Development spans generations and is the longest of its kind. It concludes that close, positive relationships make for a better life.

“Those ties protect people from life’s discontents, help to delay mental and physical decline, and are better predictors of long and happy lives than social class, IQ, or even genes,” reads a 2017 article by The Harvard Gazette.

Spending time with people who share similar values and cheer on personal growth can help ease stress—and might even provide a slight boost to physical health.

On the other hand, investing energy in negative or draining relationships can significantly impact

confidence and overall mental well-being. Curating an inner circle with the same attention one would give to a social feed can make a noticeable difference.

## Habit pairing

Habit pairing is a wellness trick that takes minimal effort but delivers fabulous results. Rather than creating an entirely new routine, a small positive habit is simply attached to something already done daily.

For example, doing a wall sit while brushing your teeth provides a guaranteed daily mini-workout. A few quick affirmations during a skincare routine or a call to a grandparent on the commute home are other easy ways to sneak positive habits into everyday life.

A 2010 study in the European Journal of Social Psychology says that performing a behaviour consistently in the same context helps it become automatic, which is why pairing a new habit with an existing one can be so effective. Over time, the add-on becomes as natural as the original habit.

Mental well-being isn’t about perfection—it’s about finding small moments that make life feel a bit calmer and warmer. Simple things, from a gratitude journal to a favourite playlist, can give just the small boost needed.



**Writing in a gratitude journal is proven to improve both mental and physical health. Photo courtesy of Erika Andrade/Pexels**

# Uber drivers: The lives of those behind the wheel

*From long hours to late-night chats, locals share what drives them to do the job*

**Abby Weidman**

Staff Writer

For many Calgarians, Uber is an integral part of their daily life. But for the people behind the wheel, it's more than a ride—it's a livelihood built on flexibility, long hours, and a steady stream of meeting new people.

After launching in San Francisco in 2010, Uber expanded its operations to Canada in 2012, initially in Toronto, before eventually reaching Calgary in October 2015.

As of May 2025, City of Calgary records say there are more than 16,581 active drivers for Uber and Lyft combined—nine times the number of licensed taxi drivers.

One local driver, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, moved to Canada a decade ago and has been working full-time with Uber for the past six years. They applied to drive during the pandemic and have stayed for the consistent income.

"I have to maintain a steady schedule," they say.

Most days start before sunrise. They drive through the morning rush, break in the afternoon, and head back out for the evening crowd. On weekends, they often work from 11 a.m. until midnight.

"Flexibility is only for emergencies," they say. "That is non-negotiable. You

have to be picky with what's important and what's not."

Driven by both practical and personal reasons, they say their goal is to earn as much as possible to meet the basic needs of their household. The driver says Uber is stereotyped as a side hustle, but that they don't see this as accurate.

"It's a network run by full-time drivers," they say. "Everyone thinks you can start and end at any time, but if you want to make money, that's not the case."

For them, driving for Uber is a business in its own right—one that requires discipline and planning.

**"You're your own type of boss," they say.**

What has kept them sticking with Uber for this long is the ability to set their own schedule. They say that interacting with the public on a daily basis is an added plus.

"My other almost 20,000 trips have been friendly," they say. "I always try to engage with the ones that want me to, but if they want their personal space, I give it to them."

The driver says that Uber takes safety seriously. Riders

can check that the license plate matches the app, and every trip is tracked from pickup to dropoff—benefiting both the driver and the rider. They hope this gives younger or first-time passengers feelings of reassurance.

They also noted the rating system plays a role in keeping riders and drivers accountable.

"If I rate someone lower than three stars, they will not match with me again, no matter how close I am," they say. "This works as well for the riders."

According to Uber's website, if a driver is rated one star, the likelihood of the passenger being matched with them in the future is low. With enough low ratings, the driver could lose access to the Uber platform completely.

While the first driver treats Uber as a full-time job, another Calgary driver, Khan—who agreed to speak on a first-name basis only—approaches it differently.

Khan moved to Calgary from Dubai two years ago and has been driving with Uber since, which is what he spends his weekends doing. During the week, he works at Chatter Mobile and puts time into building his own tourism company.

His days start slowly, usually waking up late,

making breakfast and sipping his coffee before heading out. Unlike many drivers, he avoids rush hour and prefers airport trips, where the pace is calmer.

"I don't want to be stuck in traffic," he says. "I don't like traffic."

For Khan, flexibility is the most valuable aspect of the job.

"When I want, I can just go offline and go to my home," he says. "It's a very easy job."

Still, Khan recognises that the job isn't easy for everyone.

**"If you do full-time Uber, it's really, really hard," he says.**

"If your income is totally dependent on Uber, they have to work 12 hours, 13 hours, 15 hours, to achieve their goal of the day."

For Khan, driving is as much about conversation as it is about earning a living. He says the more he drives, the easier it becomes to read people, and he especially enjoys picking up students and tourists.

"Students are very nice," he says. "It's good to talk to them, to know their story, what they are doing, you

know?"

Often, Khan finds himself giving tourists advice about Alberta's scenic destinations, such as Banff and Jasper.

Khan says driving for Uber has helped him save money and invest in his tourism business. Back in Dubai, he was a tour guide, and with that experience, he hopes to build something similar in Calgary. He already owns a van and another car for transit.

"I'm on my way towards success," he says. "I will achieve my goals in a few years."

Even when Khan's tourism company takes off, he plans to keep Uber as a source of income on days he has nothing to do.

For passengers, especially students, Khan says Uber is a safe way to get around.

"They shouldn't be scared," he says. "When you sit in the car until you leave, everything is recorded. It's good for you and good for me."

He adds that the Uber app tracks trips and flags long detours or unusual delays.

Through it all, Khan says the freedom of the job and the people he meets keep him behind the wheel, even though he joked that money is the main factor.

"\_Money, money!" he says with a laugh.



View of an Uber driver from the backseat. Photo courtesy of Priscilla Du Preez/Unsplash



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## Get informed, Get involved

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Meeting Dates	Sept 22	Oct 27	Nov 24	Jan 19	Feb 9	Mar 16	Apr 20	May 11	June 8
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All meetings are in Council Chambers (Room Z236), 4–7pm  
If you're interested in attending a meeting, please email [governance@samru.ca](mailto:governance@samru.ca)



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# We aren't in Kansas anymore

Alberta Theatre Projects presents *The Wizard of Oz*

**Katrina Ebuenga**

Staff Writer

With a whimsical storm brewing, get ready to be swept away by *The Wizard of Oz*.

Following the iconic yellow brick road, venture into a production surrounded by friendship, bravery, and a search for the mysterious wizard.

Brought to stage by Alberta Theatre Projects (ATP), in association with Forte Musical Theatre Guild, the highly anticipated production is set to commence at the Martha Cohen Theatre at the Werklund Centre—formerly known as Arts Commons—from Nov. 25 to Jan. 4, with tickets starting at \$35 each.

Featuring ATP's largest creative team of over 30 talented members on board,

the vibrant and innovative design of Oz is packed and ready for audiences to join them over the rainbow this holiday season.

Specially hand-picked and curated by artistic director Haysam Kadri, this "Season of Legends" is set to take audiences on an unforgettable journey, wandering through memorable classics.

"It has a very legendary imagination to it, and with the cinematic lore of these timeless tales, it just all came into place," says Kadri.

The season is full of magical stories, such as *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, and this musical adaptation of L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* is sure to keep the magic



of the holidays going.

Directed by Tracy Power alongside musical director Joe Slabe, the ageless story is amped up this season with endless creative approaches to the technical design, which still honours the iconic songs from the beloved classic.

"They are really looking to bring the score to 2025, and I'm really excited about the way in which the arrangements will happen. I'm really excited to be able to share the holiday spirit of the musical," says Kadri.

The production will be their biggest yet, loaded with a team of talented artists and canine friends that are ready to carry on the Oz mantle.

"It's both nostalgic and very forward-looking for us, and in terms of the production, it's really honouring the magic of live theatre while embracing the bold and imaginative design," says Kadri.

Celebrating their 50th anniversary season, ATP's *The Wizard of Oz* aims to give back to the Calgary theatre community. The elaborate reimagining brings a new vibrancy, celebrating the legendary imagination audiences have always brought to ATP productions.

"It's a story about courage, friendship, and finding your way home that resonates deeply with our journey as a theatre company and with Calgary audiences," says Kadri. "It bridges generations,

grandparents, parents, and children can all share an experience together."

Equipped with endless creative possibilities, the set design takes audiences to another world, all with the help of local Calgarians.

Going full out in green, ATP's "Go Emerald" campaign takes on an innovative approach in designing the breathtaking world of Oz. By collecting and transforming everyday household items, such as plastic lids, metal items, and wooden spoons into stage prop pieces, ATP aims to recreate their own version of Oz.

"It's a really exciting and inspiring design element because audience members know that this campaign happened, and they know they're going to see some of the household items on the stage," says Kadri.

This recycling drive encouraged audience members and the public to be a part of the creation in building Oz, adding a special touch of charm.

"It's an incredible initiative, and to see the community become part of the magic on stage, we're combining classic storytelling with inventive design and theatricality," says Kadri.

Photo courtesy ClipartMax

Gathering home treasures brings the world of Oz to life in a unique and magical way that will make this production one to remember. Reflecting Dorothy's world, a touch of home is exactly what is needed.

**"It's not about replicating the film, it's about rediscovering the sense of wonder in the heart that makes Oz timeless," says Kadri.**

Creating an experience for everyone to share, ATP offers a Pay-What-You-Can night on Nov. 25 and That \$20 Ticket Thing on Nov. 28, expanding accessibility.

"My goal is to keep creating a season that feels alive, something that brings people together, surprises them, and reminds them why theatre matters," says Kadri.



Duncan stars as Toto in ATP's *The Wizard of Oz*. Photo courtesy of Alberta Theatre Projects

## OUT'N ABOUT

**Documentary Film Festival**  
Presented by Calgary Underground Film Festival, CUFF.Docs Documentary Film Festival celebrates 13 years of filmmaking. Showcasing independent non-fiction films, the festival includes over 15 full-length features, which vary in genre, style, and subject. The festival runs from Nov. 19 to Nov. 23 at the Globe Cinema.

**Gremlins at the GRAND**  
Hosted by the GRAND, the November Night Series continues with Joe Dante's cult classic, *Gremlins*. Catch the film on Nov. 23 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:45 p.m., with Tubby's serving food on-site for purchase. Tickets are available at thegrandyyyc.ca, starting at \$15.

**Art Market**  
Returning for a 39th year, the Art Market Craft Sale is on Nov. 20 to Nov. 23, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily. Hosted at the Calgary Telus Convention Centre, the event features the "Artists in Motion" series, where artists rotate through mini studios, making their art live.

**Glenbrook Holiday Makers Market**  
Back for another year, the Glenbrook Community Association presents the Holiday Makers Market. Join local artisans and businesses on Nov. 22 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Glenbrook Hall. Admission is free to the public, with more information at eventbrite.com.



# Keeping art in balance

*How Kristine Zingeler moulds the boundaries of ceramics*

**Rylie Perry**

Arts Editor

There is a balance to all art and all forms of inspiration.

For Kristine Zingeler, a Calgary-born-and-based artist, balance can be found in ceramics, which challenges how shape and textures can be applied to seemingly mundane objects, like wasp nests.

“Clay itself is a very good teacher,” says Zingeler. “It’s this very easy act that you can push in whatever direction you want. It’s so forgiving, and it really teaches you to be flexible.”

Partnered with the Esker Foundation, Zingeler’s site-specific installation, *In The Balance*, is a series of ceramic works that explore the simple complexities of wasp nests.

“Wasps are such an integral part of our planet, but they’re also such a hated part of our planet,” says Zingeler. “And when you see a wasp nest in the wild, it’s this big thing hanging off a little branch. It’s all these delicacies, but also strengths that kind of go together.”

Located in Inglewood, the project space is open from Oct. 27 to Feb. 22, with free admission year-round.

Founded in 2012, the Esker Foundation aims to make contemporary art accessible for everyone, creating opportunities for public dialogue and personal exploration.

“With the project space, it’s not something you can



**Kristine Zingeler in her home studio in Calgary. Photo by Rylie Perry**

apply for,” says Zingeler. “So it was really exciting when they reached out to me. It was really cool and such a dream.”

Working tirelessly throughout the summer to complete the installation, Zingeler considers them to be a body of work, not just a collection of ceramics.

“Making these works, and especially after seeing them installed, it was very exciting to see them working as a group, and I think they’re stronger that way,” she says.

While her fascination began with the texture

and intricacies of fossils, Zingeler soon found herself engrossed in studying wasps as a subject. Her interest ranges from specific species behaviours to general nest structures, which have all helped to inform her art.

“I feel like I am always really curious about something different all the time,” Zingeler says. “And I think being interested in all these shapes and textures and forms and colours seep into you a little bit.”

Zingeler’s ceramics are not just wasp nests, however, but a diverse range of forms that

do not seek to imitate, but rather be inspired by unique formations.

“I think if you try and make something that is like a replica of what you see, you’re essentially creating a prop for a natural history museum. It’s not really art anymore,” she says.

Beyond her inspiration, a commonality in her work is the importance of these forms’ ability to hold something. Zingeler has continued to ask herself why she keeps creating vessels, and what beautiful metaphors may be hiding

within this fixation.

“There is this saying that I love, called a pregnant emptiness,” she says. “Before the Big Bang, there was nothing, but how do you have everything come out of nothing, right? So it’s this pregnant emptiness that holds the entire cosmos inside. It’s so powerful.”

From these notions comes the balance that Zingeler’s project space hinges on.

“There’s no way to escape this, like, mother-artist kind of role. And I think that takes a lot of balance as well,” she says.

Zingeler finds beauty in the balance that comes with being a mother, an artist, and an individual, accepting that her practice wouldn’t be what it is today without the duelling demands of life.

“My kids inspire me all the time with what they find and what they think is beautiful and what they’re interested in,” she says.

Zingeler’s work with and beyond the Esker Foundation has contributed meaningfully to the Calgary art scene, keeping a difficult yet delicate practice alive.

She challenges what it means to be an artist and how little pieces of inspiration can shape an entire community.

“The art scene in Calgary is so supportive. It’s small enough that everyone knows each other, but there is amazing art and galleries here that inspire me,” she says.



**A piece from Kristine Zingeler’s exhibit, *In the Balance*. Photo courtesy of the Esker Foundation**



# Calgary, and all that jazz

*How a new generation of Calgarians can enjoy jazz*

**Emma Voelpel**  
Contributor

Although the city echoes with the sound of country music, Calgary also has a jazz scene that is steadily on the rise.

When most people think of Calgary culture, they think of cowboys, horses, and, of course, the Stampede.

The city—so affectionately nicknamed ‘Cow-Town’—has made a name for itself, with Western culture being the backbone of the community and the economy.

However, despite the popular belief that Calgary is country-music-oriented, the city has much more to offer.

## The festival

Every year, JazzYYC, Calgary’s jazz collaborative, puts on events that rekindle the city’s love affair with different genres of music.

Last year, the collective presented over 450 musicians, with the majority of them being from Calgary or the surrounding area.

“We have a really energetic community here,” says Kodi Hutchinson, artistic director of JazzYYC.

In particular, their Canadian Festival that took place throughout the month of November showcased Canadian artists, displaying their talent and passion for music.

The festival featured a variety of musical acts, each

representing a different branch of jazz music. Kicking off the five-day event was Juno and Grammy award-winning singer Alex Cuba, who performed an intimate set with his guitar at the Bell Music Centre.

The other five days saw bands performing different variations of jazz music like tango, funk, or swing. Musicians on the piano, bass, trumpet, and violin also play like it’s second nature to them. Together, their musicality captivated audiences, really encompassing just how much talent Canada has to offer.

With both ticketed and free shows, it was a buffet of music that reached all kinds of interests. The organisation also offered discounted tickets for those under 25 years old, providing options for those who wish to dabble in different musical genres that they may have never heard of.

“I just want to try and get people to like this thing that I love,” says Hutchinson. “Our goal is to give a wide range of music that fits with, you know, that we would say falls under the umbrella of jazz.”

Other events the organisation puts on throughout the year include programming for International Jazz Day in April, as well as their Summer Festival in June.

## JazzYYC’s lab band

Throughout Calgary’s history, there has been a distinct generational gap between those who take an interest in the art. Universities have slowly dissolved their music programs over the years, creating obstacles for up-and-coming musicians to explore music and jazz. The relationship this city has with the genre is distinctly different from other major cities in Canada.

However, over the past decade, the city has been experiencing a resurgence in the genre.

The jazz collaborative has been a pioneer in giving opportunities to younger generations to practice the music. Their youth lab bands—a joint initiative with the Mount Royal University Conservatory—provide education and experience for students to become both part of a jazz collective and to gain more knowledge about the art.

Izy Montanez, an alumni of the program, took on a front-of-house role for the recent Canadian Festival, seeing firsthand just how much of a crowd these events bring in and the conversations they

**Continues on Pg. 12**



Payadora Tango and Beyond playing the Ironwood Stage and Grill. Photo by Emma Voelpel



**No Hard Feelings**

The Beaches

**AWAL**

**Score: A**

With *No Hard Feelings*, The Beaches double down on their alternative pop charm and prove that catchy doesn’t have to mean shallow. The Toronto-based band has certainly made a mark on the Canadian music scene, and *No Hard Feelings*, released on Aug. 29, is no exception.

The Beaches lean towards the radio-pop side of the alternative genre, and in this album the tradition was continued. The tracks are catchy and complex with the overall structure being excellent. *No Hard Feelings* demonstrated the musical skill of the band—the bass drove the rhythm with edge, the guitar supported emotional elements and the lyrics blended with the vibe of the songs.

While “Takes One to Know One” stands out with a punchy chorus, tracks such as “Sorry For Your Loss” and “Fine Let’s Get Married” start to blur together after a few listens.

Nonetheless, the album has radio hit tracks that deliver The Beaches signature upbeat tone and remain consistent with witty lyricism.

Songs which stood out in the album include, “Jocelyn,” “Last Girls At The Party,” “Touch Myself” and “Takes One To Know One.” “Last Girls At The Party” dominated the Billboard Canada Modern Rock Airplay chart for 11 weeks, a testament to The Beaches ability to fuse sharp lyricism with radio spunk.

In conclusion, *No Hard Feelings* reinforces The Beaches reputation as one of Canada’s most popular alternative bands. The clever lyricism, infectious hooks and high energy prove the band has continued to evolve without losing their charm.

—Avarie McKinnon-Forgeron

**TRON: Ares (Original soundtrack)**

Nine Inch Nails

**Interscope Records**

**Score: A**



After a four year lapse, Nine Inch Nails returned with an album release for the *TRON* movie on Sept.19—a soundtrack which proves that the band’s industrial edge can thrive in a cinematic world. With the band’s excellent use of synthetic instruments, Nine Inch Nails was the correct choice for this soundtrack.

*TRON: Ares* is the first film soundtrack Nine Inch Nails has produced and it allowed for new musical avenues to be explored. The emphasis being on the climax of the songs and the beat to invoke suspense in the film. Listening to the soundtrack is enjoyable, especially for fans, revealing a different side of the Nine Inch Nails sound, focusing on instrumental composition.

While the soundtrack format is restrictive, *TRON: Ares* maintains the originality of the Nine Inch Nails sound. The song “Shadow Over Me” channels the gritty emotion of previous

releases preserving the band’s signature style.

Stand out songs from this album include, “Shadow Over Me,” “As Alive As You Need Me To Be,” and “I Know You Can Feel It.” Reaching number 12 on the UK Official Singles Sales Chart, “As Alive As You Need Me To Be” demonstrated that the band has more success to come.

—Avarie McKinnon-Forgeron



Continued from Pg. 11

bring up.

“Not only do we want to grow the awareness of the music, but the people,” says Montanez.

“Jazz is a community, jazz is a conversation.”

The program has doubled in size over the past year and can be expected to grow even more in the years to come, with an abundance of players receiving scholarships across North America, displaying their musicality in other facets of music.

The future of the arts and jazz in Calgary

JazzYYC is only expected to become bigger as time goes on. More events and musicians can be expected in the future as the city itself expands.

Calgary hasn’t just seen an interest for jazz arise, but an interest in the arts as a whole.

There’s been a growing demand in the city to make the arts more accessible and diverse.

The City of Calgary has been conducting major artistic infrastructure expansions including the Werklund Centre and the Glenbow museum since earlier this year, completely revamping the downtown area.

“We’re one of the most diverse cities in Canada. We’re one of the fastest growing cities in Canada,” says Hutchinson.

With a growing city also comes spaces for developing communities. These projects could turn around Calgary’s downtown area. Creating a culture that could attract more people to take an interest in the arts.

Jazz isn’t just a single entity that you can easily categorise, it has many branches that have been evolving into other various genres of music for many years. It’s a form of music that isn’t contained by structure. It’s loose, improvised and doesn’t follow any rules.

The diversity of jazz reflects the diversity of Calgary, and the city is creating a space for the music that will only grow bigger with time.



Alex Cuba playing the Bell Music Hall. Photo by Emma Voelpel

Meet your STUDENT GOVERNING BOARD (SGB)

The SAMRU Student Governing Board consists of members of the MRU student body. They provide strategic direction and priorities for the organization.

[samru.ca/SGB](https://samru.ca/SGB)

and the REPRESENTATION EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (REC)

The REC team is your student voice! They fulfill the board's representation and advocacy priorities by representing the interests of MRU students to the University and to the government.

[samru.ca/REC](https://samru.ca/REC)

Visit our website at [samru.ca](https://samru.ca)



# MRU women's basketball ready to rebound, reload and run it back

*As one era ends, another begins as two Cougars legends enter their twilight year*

**Julia Finot**

Staff Writer

With the U SPORTS basketball season now in full swing, the Mount Royal University (MRU) women's team is not just looking to shoot their shot with a playoff run—they want to drain it and go deep.

After last year's playoff heartbreak, Head Coach Robyn Fleckenstein and her team are ready to crash the glass hard and rebound not just the ball, but also their season.

## Beyond heartbreaks lie lasting legacies

Last year, the Cougars finished the season with an 11-9 record—ranking fifth in the stacked Canada West Prairie division. Coming off a strong series sweep against the University of Manitoba, the Cougars played Trinity Western University in the Canada West Play-In Game for the playoffs.

MRU fell short to the Spartans by a mere five points.

Any loss can be emotional, but that one was heartbreaking. Not only did that end their playoff run early, but it also brought the departure of some of the best women to ever wear the Cougars jersey—all-time three-point leader Maddy Hooper, all-time assist leader Jamie Lalor and her sister, Hayley.

Hooper and Jamie played all five seasons for Fleckenstein, growing into the leaders who shaped today's culture within the team.

"They've grown up as people... it's the best feeling ever," says Fleckenstein. "There are so many things that they get to learn here that really set them up for whatever comes after this."

Their exits left some roster spots empty that would not be easy to fill, and that kick-started the 2025 off-season.

## Not a timeout, just a takeover

For the team, the off-season

isn't a break. It is time to take over.

Development is the core of this program, and with a roster full of new faces, the stakes are high. But their hunger is higher.

"Our group is driven and hungry, and I think we know winning is hard," says Fleckenstein.

"Growing now [will] lead us to where we're going."

Their growth starts early. Cougars development doesn't start in September alongside school—it starts back in May. With so many rookies on the team, it is especially important to get everyone on the same page before their season tips off.

The summer months are for getting everyone up to speed on new plays while developing a connection between team veterans and fresh faces. Both are crucial in order to succeed in the long season.

The team needed to be ready for the 2025-26 basketball season because Canada West threw an unforgiving full-court press at them.

## Net gains

Six new players joined the roster this year, making MRU one of the youngest teams in the conference. The coaching staff searched far and wide for the talent that would replace Hooper and the Lalors, and they took advantage of every part of the globe.

They added some Canadian talent in Martha Lado, but they also dipped into international waters bringing in Elise Carline.

As good as the recruits are, they need leaders in their locker room to guide them through their first collegiate seasons—a friendly face that is there to help no matter what.

The Cougars have assigned each rookie a veteran to help them to the new expectations of being on a U SPORTS team—on and off the floor.

"There is a big caring atmosphere in that space, I

just want to make sure that they're helped and taken care of," says Fleckenstein. "I think great teams make each other better, and sometimes that's about holding your hand, but sometimes it's also like [getting] a good smack."

## Assists go beyond the scoresheet

At the end of this season, the team will say goodbye to two valuable players who have been with the team for years—Nora Luca and Jenika Martens.

Both women have cemented their legacies as Cougars legends with unforgettable collegiate careers, and no one knows that better than Coach Fleckenstein.

"They both should be very proud of themselves and the things they have done," said Fleckenstein. "They are ready to go into the world and take on that next challenge, and that is always a huge indicator for us [that] we have been successful for them."

Martens spent seven years with the program, persevering through every

challenge imaginable, from a wonky pandemic season to a devastating ACL tear. Luca joined her season shortly after, and together they grew. They have a chemistry built on grit, leadership and love for the game.

Their impact reaches far past the court. They are models of resilience, strong academics and leadership, all of which inspire the younger Cougars.

"I think they have left pretty strong legacies," says Fleckenstein. "And ever more important than that, they have done well in school."

## Ups, downs and everything in the paint

The start of the 2025-26 season has been an uphill battle for MRU. In their first two weekends, the Cougars played two of the top teams in the division—the University of Saskatchewan Huskies and the University of Alberta Golden Bears.

They lost all four games, but on the second night of each series they played

significantly better, pushing those top teams to closer scores and proving their mettle against the cream of the Canada West crop.

They went on to play at the University of Winnipeg Wesmen on the road, bringing two wins home with them. Fleckenstein feels this is just the beginning of the season and that a lot can change for her Cougars.

"Our expectations would be that we're competing every night," says Fleckenstein. "We don't think there's anyone who should be destroying us."

The team is mindful not to overlook anyone they play. This year's Prairie Division is so tight that anyone could win, making this an exciting year to watch the Cougars compete.

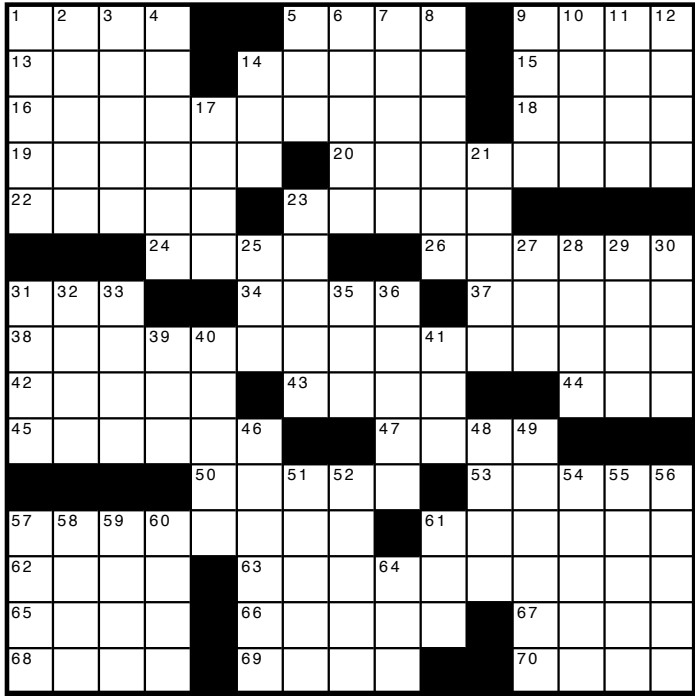
MRU finished the first quarter of their 2025-26 season with a 2-4 record, but they are looking to increase their win rate on their way to returning to the Canada West playoffs.



**Jenika Martens, #12, is putting the finishing touches on her iconic seven-year Cougars career by helping lead the next generation of MRU women's basketball players. Photo by Wil Brennan**



# REFLECTOR DIVERSIONS



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com (<https://www.bestcrosswords.com>). Used with permission.

## ACROSS

1. Chicago mayor Emanuel

5. Lively

9. Sonja Henie's birthplace
13. Converse competitor

14. One of the 12 tribes of Israel

15. Capital of Calvados

16. Gentleness

18. Hue

19. Incept

20. Thick soup of crabmeat

22. Cordwood measure

23. Physicist Enrico

24. The Beatles' "Back in the \_\_\_\_"

26. Attract

31. Possess, to Burns

34. Comfortable state

37. Cravat

38. Like afterschool activities

42. Pretend

43. Adverse fate

44. Is doubled?

45. Ample

47. Body shops?

50. Lofty nest

53. Rib

57. Savior

61. John of "Full House"

62. Lofty

63. Lacking teeth

65. "The \_\_\_\_ Dead", classic horror movie

66. Nursemaid

67. "Comus" composer Thomas

68. Golfer Ballesteros

69. Arrow poison

70. Resting places

## DOWN

1. "Caddyshack" director Harold

2. \_\_\_\_-garde

3. Pivot

4. Capital of Lesotho

5. Place

6. Draw forth

7. "M\*A\*S\*H\*" name

8. Louise's cohort

9. Twice tetra-

10. Travel on water

11. Carson's successor

12. Not duped by

14. Deep black

17. Manipulates

21. Purple bloomer

23. Impostor

25. Short time

27. Fighting Tigers' sch.

28. Arthur Ashe's alma mater

29. Surf sound

30. French 101 verb

31. Assist

32. Jump on the ice

33. Major ending

35. Hit letters

36. Irregularly notched

39. Director Howard

40. Architectural piers

41. Mischievous fairy

46. Aden native

48. Aleutian island

49. Aquanaut's base

51. V-shaped fortification

52. Papas of "Zorba the Greek"

54. Love, to Luigi

55. In good condition

56. Much of Mississippi?

57. AAA recommendations

58. Overhang

59. 554, in stone

60. Model Macpherson

61. Filthy place

64. Compass dir.



# SUDOKU

## Easy

5				4		6	9	7
8					2		4	
		9	5		3	1		8
		1	4	3			7	
			7		9			
	7			6	5	4		
1		3	2		4	7		
	2		9					4
6	9	4		1				5

## Medium

		2			4			8
							9	3
			9	2	5			
						1		4
		3	8		9	5		
6		1						
			2	5	1			
3	4							
2			7			8		

## Hard

4			1					
		9	8	7				1
3							9	
				7		3		
	4	3				1	6	
	8		2					
	6							2
7				5	8	6		
				4				9

# WORD SEARCH

## Interesting Words

F U Y D I S A S T E R A V W U  
N E G O R D Y H K C S K M A S  
F N A E N A R R E T B U S E T  
A T E R R A I N R N W E B R U  
D E T S C P O O B E B C F O A  
E R E Z I P N V H T N A B B N  
H R R A L A H G Y P Y P C I O  
Y A R Q U S P O D A V S I C R  
D R I T A T T L R L E O F S E  
R I T Z R E Y M O N O R T S A  
A U O W D R Z C F V P E I P V  
T M R L Y O Z K O E E A D A K  
E C Y X H I A B I Z G U D D L  
D S C B C D G F L N T M Q G D  
I A E R O B A T I C S D B T S

AERIAL  
AEROBATICS  
AEROBICS  
AERONAUT  
AEROSPACE  
ASTEROID  
ASTRONAUT  
ASTRONOMY  
DEHYDRATED  
DISASTER  
HYDRAULIC  
HYDROFOIL  
HYDROGEN  
SUBTERRANEAN  
TERRAIN

TERRARIUM  
TERRITORY



# Addition by subtraction

*How Cougars men's basketball has improved despite losing an all-time legend*

**Zafir Nagji**  
Sports Editor

The 2024-25 men's basketball season was a weird one for the MRU Cougars. On one hand, the team was celebrating its final year with Keivonte Watts, one of the most prolific players in the program's history, who holds many of the school's all-time records. On the other hand, the team was welcoming in a fresh, first-year head coach — Josh Mullen — and a slew of new faces on the roster to go along with him.

## Next-shot mentality

The Cougars fought every single game of the season and ended with a 10-10 record, sneaking them into the Canada West Play-In Game against the University of Winnipeg Wesmen. Watts averaged 20 points per game for a second straight season and scored 22 points in the most important game of the season. The Cougars even held a fourth-quarter lead against the Wesmen, but in the late stages of the game, Winnipeg's shot-making outlasted MRU's, and the Wesmen defeated the Cougars by an 86-74 scoreline.

Mullen saw the season as a learning experience and was proud of how his team handled their season.

"It was a great learning opportunity for us to get to the playoffs, play a national-level team, and just all the bumps and adversity you face throughout the season," Mullen says. "We handled it well, we learned some lessons, and we made some mistakes as well."

**"I think you learn a lot from mistakes just as much as you do your successes."**

Questions were raised about the state of the Cougars coming into 2025-26. Who would they be able to recruit? Would this be a rebuilding year? Who was going to be the point guard and lead this offence forward?

With a 5-3 record as of Nov. 15, the Cougars have already answered every question about their team and are a dark horse contender in this year's Canada West men's basketball season.

## Dunking on their critics

Despite ranking ninth in the preseason Canada West Coaches Poll, the Cougars hold the third-best record in their division and are on pace to qualify for this year's Canada West playoffs. They've shown an adept ability to share the wealth, receiving contributions from just about every player who touches the court and playing disciplined, defensive, physical basketball every week.

In their first weekend, MRU kept pace with the University of Alberta Golden Bears, one of the elite teams in Canada West, and even held a late lead in the second bout of their two-game series. Even though they lost both games, Mullen once again adopted a student-of-the-game mentality and chalked up the losses to "growing pains."

"We're a new group and so for us, we're kind of finding our footing," Mullen says. "I thought there were two evenly matched teams, and when that's the case, it's going to be hard-fought battles right to the end. Obviously, the Saturday game in particular is one we'd love to have back, but that's part of it, and we'll learn from it and grow from it."

## Getting the ball rolling

Clearly, Mullen's thoughts translated as the Cougars won

four of their next five games since those losses. Anchoring the team as captain is fourth-year veteran forward Sam Barnie, who credits their young core for their early success in the season.

"I really like all the young guys, it's great having a super high energy on the team," Barnie says. "These guys come to the gym every day, they don't need to stretch or warm up, they just get straight to it."

"We don't like to treat them like first-years or rookies because they're really high-impact players right away. They're already ready to go and play at the university level."

One young player that Barnie has taken under his wing is local phenom Jacob McLellan, who is hoping to bring his championship experience from St. Mary's High School to MRU.

"Sam took me for dinner when I was recruited and all that, he's definitely shown me the ropes and helped me figure out the facility," McLellan says. "He helps me keep my head up if I'm not shooting well, and if I mess up one play, he shows me how to fix it on the next, so I appreciate that a lot."

Skyscraping centre Daniel Owweye also enters veteran status this year. Standing at six feet, six inches tall, Owweye was instrumental in the team's home-opening back-to-back wins against the University of Saskatchewan Huskies, guarding ferocious rebounder Easton Thimme and limiting him to just 10 rebounds in the two matches combined — much lower than the 13 boards per game he averaged coming into the weekend. However, he knows that this team will go as far as its guards take them.

"We got some tough players that came in this past season, they're coming in, they're making good shots, they're hard players, and they have grit in them," Owweye says. "That's what we need out



**Daniel Owweye, #12, had the best slam from MRU's Friday night throwdown showdown against MacEwan, as the Cougars finished six dunks in their Student Night win against the Griffins. Photo by Wil Brennan.**

of our guards, especially because as bigs, our job is to feed the guards."

"We're here to grab boards and take it back up, and if it's not going back up, we're feeding the guards 24/7. All we're going to do is just keep feeding the guards and let them hit their shots."

## Elevating standards

Starting point guard Kole Scott has taken the reins of the offence and leads the team in scoring, averaging 11.7 points per game with his vastly improved three-point shot. Despite all of the questions coming into the season about MRU, Scott believes the rest of the conference is

underestimating just how capable this Cougars squad truly is in Canada West.

"A Canada West Championship is always the goal, and I feel like we come and work hard every day to achieve that," Scott says. "We just want to take the right steps to get there."

The Cougars will be at home for the majority of the fall semester, playing on the newly renovated Kenyon Court on Friday and Saturday nights. All games are available to watch on Canada West TV, and tickets for all home games are free for students.

The full version of this article is available on thereflector.ca and on The Reflector Newspaper app.

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**37** points scored by fourth-year Cougars forward Sam Barnie against the MacEwan Griffins, including a career-high 28 points on Friday

**8** saves made by Sjard Strauss in the U SPORTS National Tournament Final, where MRU earned their first-ever silver medal

**7** wins secured by Cougars' goaltender Scout Anderson — third-most of any goalie in the conference

**4** wins in a row for the Cougars' women's basketball team, including two wins against the second-leading scorer in the conference, Unity Obasuyi



# For the girls who just kept swinging

*WPBL represents a huge step forward in women's professional sports*

**Naomi Campbell**

Staff Writer

For many girls growing up in team sports such as hockey, soccer, volleyball and even baseball, the older they get, the fewer opportunities they have as women in the world of professional sports. There are Olympic opportunities and sometimes World Championship teams that one can try out for, but other than that, the options are bleak for these women.

Fortunately, in today's day and age, women's sports and the promotion of women in sports have gained an immense amount of media attention and global traction. Today, the world of professional sports has adapted to add leagues strictly for these amazing ladies.

In August 2023, the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL) was founded, starting out with six teams in Boston, Minnesota, Montreal, New York, Ottawa, and Toronto. It has since added two new teams in Vancouver and Seattle.

As of 2024, the Professional Women's Baseball League (WPBL) was officially founded by Justine Siegal, who was the first ever female to be employed as a coach in Major League Baseball (MLB) for the Oakland Athletics in 2015.

The WPBL is the first professional women's baseball league since The Ladies League Baseball in the late 90s. The league has named its first four teams forming in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and Boston. Set to launch in 2026, the league aims to be more than just a new professional venture—it represents a long-overdue chapter in baseball's history—one where women finally take their rightful place on the field.

## Batting for 'berta

Highlighting some of the Canadian talent at the WPBL draft is Madison Willan, who hails from Edmonton, Alta.

Willan is an accomplished multi-sport athlete, excelling in baseball, hockey and golf. She started out playing hockey at a young age and was eager to try new things, which led her to pick up a baseball glove. Willan went on to graduate from the University of Alberta in 2025, being one of the top forwards on the women's hockey team,

**"My advice to the younger girls is this: if you want to play baseball and not softball, then there is a place for you."**

while continuing to play baseball for Team Canada Women's National Team at the same time.

"Playing both hockey and baseball has shaped me in different ways, and I never really saw them as separate paths," Willan says. "I didn't decide to become a multi-sport athlete; it just felt natural to keep doing what I loved."

Willan goes on to talk about the struggles to be able to play baseball as a girl because of the limited opportunities for women. Yet, she stuck with it and continued to prove to herself and others around her that she could make a name for herself, even before an organisation like the WPBL had come along.

"There were definitely challenges sticking with baseball growing up," Willan says.

**"There weren't any competitive girl's teams, so I played with the boys for most of my childhood and teenage years. Sometimes that meant having to prove myself repeatedly just to be seen as an equal."**



**Women's sports have started to flourish, and female baseball players are finally feeling the love as the WPBL gets ready to hold its inaugural player draft. Photo from Madison Willan**

To be a girl playing on a boys' team definitely has its downsides, but for Willan, she used that as a positive aspect in shaping the athlete and person she has become now.

"I often faced more criticism for making the same mistake as a male teammate. But those experiences built my mental toughness and made me appreciate the teammates, coaches, and parents who did believe in me," Willan says.

With the announcement of the WPBL finally starting tryouts and developing a draft day, women from around the world are ecstatic to add another major stepping stone to the growth of not only women's professional sports, but also something that young girls can now look at as a final goal or the first stepping stone to their baseball careers. Willan explains her excitement for this official announcement and cannot wait to be a part of the first-ever list of prospects.

"It's something that so many of us have been waiting and hoping for. It's a real opportunity to play the game that we love at a professional level," Willan says. "I'm fortunate enough to have been selected as a part of the prospective draft list, and the chance to be a part of the first-ever professional women's baseball league would be incredible."

## Putting (bull)pen to paper

Leagues like the NHL, MLB, and NBA dominate the professional sporting landscape and live in the dreams of youth across the world, giving young boys and men huge-name athletes to look up to and take advice from. Leagues like the PWHL, WNBA, and now the WPBL bring that dream to women everywhere, giving young girls their own favourite athletes to be inspired by. Willan believes the "opportunities are only

growing" with the WPBL and that the league represents a crucial stepping stone for women's baseball players and women's sports as a whole.

After two years of waiting, from the official announcement of the league in 2024, the inaugural WPBL draft will take place on Nov. 20 at 6 p.m. MST. The draft will consist of six rounds with twenty picks per round—five per team—for up to 120 players being drafted. The order in which teams will pick was determined by a random draw, in turn landed on San Francisco drafting first, Los Angeles second, New York third, and Boston finishing it off in the first round.

The draft will use a snake-style format, where whoever picks first in one round picks last in the next. Fans can check out the event on the official WPBL Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube channels as the growing world of women's professional sports hits the baseball diamond.