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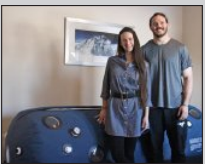


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JESSI GOWAN/Rocky View Publishing
SPLISH-SPLASH - It was a good day for puddles March 11, as snow was melting throughout Nose Creek Park. There was no shortage of slushy water where kids could put their rubber boots to good use.

Province invests \$10M to fight rural crime

CHRISTINA WALDNER
Rocky View Publishing

The Government of Alberta announced March 9 it would provide \$10 million to fight growing rural crime rates in the province.

Minister of Justice and Solicitor General Kathleen Ganley said the commitment includes funding for more RCMP, civilian staff and Crown prosecutors.

"All Albertans deserve to be safe in their homes and their communities," she said.

"While there's no single, easy solution to fix rural crime, our strategy puts several important tools in the crime-fighting toolbox. More civilian staff means more frontline officers on the street, while more Crown prosecutors will mean more timely access to justice."

The government's plan includes \$8 million to hire 39 new RCMP officer positions and 40 civilian staff, and \$2 million to hire up to 10 additional Crown prosecutors who will focus solely on rural crime.

The investment in the RCMP will allow the enforcement agency to focus its energy on its Crime Reduction Strategy, introduced province-wide in late 2013.

"Rural Crime Reduction Units are designed to act fast to target repeat offenders who commit the vast majority of crimes in an area," said RCMP Deputy Commissioner Todd Shean. "I can assure you, if you are committing crime in Alberta, we will identify you and we will stop you."

Each RCMP District, including the Airdrie RCMP, is equipped with a Crime Reduction Team

(CRT). This team targets repeat offenders, particularly in the areas of break and enters, vehicle thefts and thefts of other property. Since the Crime Reduction Strategy was introduced, district CRTs have arrested 219 people, laid 469 criminal and drug charges, and arrested 170 wanted persons.

The latest government investment of \$8 million will also allow RCMP to hire six new intelligence-focused officers and four additional crime analysts.

Ganley said the initiative will also provide better co-ordination between RCMP, police, Fish and Wildlife enforcement, Alberta sheriffs, conservation officers and commercial vehicle enforcement. New technology will also be investigated, which can help target rural crime, and the RCMP will engage in public education about crime preven-

tion in rural areas.

Airdrie MLA Angela Pitt, who is holding a town hall on rural crime in Airdrie March 15 along with Banff-Airdrie MP Blake Richards, said the province's announcement is too little, too late. Pitt is also the Deputy Leader of the United Conservative Party - the official opposition - and Shadow Minister for Justice.

"Now that the issue of rural crime is gaining public attention, the government is wanting to appear to be doing something about escalating crime rates. The new 'action plan' and announced funding won't be in communities for at least a year and a half, if not longer," Pitt said in an email to the *Airdrie City View*. "This does nothing to address the problem now and ease the concerns of frightened and worried rural Albertans."



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Airdrie archer motivated after double-medal effort

ANDREW HALIPCHUK
Rocky View Publishing

Airdrie archer Haley Priest, 13, made her city proud at the 2018 Alberta Winter Games in Wood Buffalo, Alta. – capturing a pair of medals in her first time competing in the event.

“It was exciting and fun,” Priest said. “When I first learned that I was going to the games, I was super excited and was in constant countdown mode.

“Then, I got to the games and was like, ‘Wow, is this really happening?’ It was like a dream come true.”

Competing as an individual in the cub compound event, Priest put the rest of her age group on notice when she racked up an impressive 553 score during the seeding round Feb. 17. The performance earned her first seed heading into the match play portion of the tournament.

The pressure was high, but Priest kept herself composed, winning her first two matches Feb. 18 to make it to the ‘A’ Division final. Unfortunately, she dropped her ‘A’ final to Brooklyn Berge of Zone 5 by just one point.

The Airdrie archer then went to the ‘B’ Division final, but couldn’t outscore her opponent and finished third in the event.

Even though she was disappointed with her result, Priest said there was a level of pride going into her first Alberta Winter Games and bringing home a medal.

“I was a little upset with myself and I felt like I could have done better, but in the end I was still happy,” Priest said. “It basically just motivated me to train and work more on my mental game so I can be a stronger archer when shooting in bigger competitions like that.”

She followed up her individual debut with a silver-medal effort in the Mixed Compound Team event Feb. 19, finishing second alongside teammate Warren Collins from Cochrane.

With her first Alberta Winter Games under her belt, Priest is looking forward to the 2020 event in Airdrie, where she expects to finish with a pair of gold medals.

Priest is currently attempting to qualify for Alberta’s team for the 2019 Canada Games in Red Deer, Alta., despite being one of the youngest athletes trying out for the team. Priest said she believes she has the skill and determination to crack the squad and represent her province next February.

“(Being one of the youngest competitors) puts a little bit of pressure on me, but I do like the pressure because it motivates me and gives me more confidence,” she said. “I’m 13, these girls are 16 and 17, and I am matching their scores.”



HUGE HAUL - After competing in her first Alberta Winter Games, Airdrie’s Haley Priest brought home a silver and bronze medal from her archery events in Wood Buffalo, Alta.

SUBMITTED/For Rocky View Publishing



HOCKEY HEROES - Airdrie RCMP and organizers from the Red Coats for Kids Charity Hockey Tournament present a \$14,538 donation to Community Links March 5. The funds were raised at the Jan. 25 to 27 tournament in Airdrie that saw RCMP officers from across the province participating to raise money for a local charity in the host city. The funds will help support programming and family violence initiatives at Community Links.

SUBMITTED/For Rocky View Publishing



FOR A CAUSE - Team DJ Big DeeZ dressed to impress at Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) Bowl For Kids Sake fundraiser March 11 at Shamrock Lanes, earning a prize for its team spirit. Fifteen teams raised a total of \$14,696 for the BBBS Airdrie chapter while enjoying two hours of glow bowling.

DAN KIM PHOTOGRAPHY/For Rocky View Publishing