



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
OF **WOOD BUFFALO**

A message from Councillor Kyle Vandecasteyen

WARD 4



January 2026 Update

I hope everyone had a safe, joyful and relaxing Christmas and New Year's. While December marked the wind-down of 2025, it was anything but quiet. It was a truly exceptional month for our communities. The warmth of the season highlighted by beautiful light displays and well-attended gatherings made this one of the most memorable Christmas seasons yet.

Anzac and GLE Santa Clause Parades

Both the Anzac and Gregoire Lake Estates Santa Claus parades were wonderful events, and I extend a sincere thank-you to the many volunteers and organizers who make these traditions possible each year. Throughout the month, I heard countless positive comments from residents about how much they enjoyed participating in and watching these events, which speaks volumes about the spirit of our communities.

Council's Seniors Luncheon

I also had the pleasure of attending the Council Seniors Luncheon at SMS Place. It was a fantastic afternoon filled a generous helping of sticky toffee pudding! It was especially meaningful to see so many of the builders of our communities come together to celebrate. I was delighted to connect with many Ward 4 elders and seniors, sharing stories, laughs, and thoughtful conversations.

Top 50 Under 50

On December 4, the YMM *Top 50 Under 50* and *This Is Home* launch took place. This inspiring event showcased the innovation, determination, and heart that define our region. Hearing the stories and accomplishments of so many local residents was truly uplifting.

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Contact me:

kyle.vandecasteyen@rmwb.ca

 587-941-1645

Of special note was the recognition of **Ernie and Wendy Desjarlais of Conklin**, named YMM Builders. Your unwavering commitment to building community, supporting those in need, and improving the place we all call home is nothing short of remarkable. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition and thank you for everything you do for our region.

Distinguished Alumni Award

Another proud moment was seeing **Anzac's own Chelsi King** receive the Distinguished Alumni Award for Professional Excellence from Keyano College. I've had the pleasure of working with Chelsi through her role on the Anzac School Council, particularly on advocacy related to the playground replacement. Her professionalism, dedication, and passion for community are exactly why she is so deserving of this honour. Congratulations, Chelsi.

Anzac Community Christmas Dinner

On December 7, the 43rd Annual Anzac Community Christmas Dinner took place, and what an incredible evening it was. The turnout was fantastic, with the room filled with conversation and laughter throughout the night. It was wonderful to reconnect with familiar faces and meet new ones during such a busy season. The Anzac Choir filled the hall with Christmas music, and Zee Bar provided a delicious meal enjoyed by all. Events like this are truly the glue that binds our rural communities together. A special thank-you to AFCSS and WLCA, along with the evening's MC, Ashley Parks, the care, time, and effort put into this event were evident and deeply appreciated.

Interim Budget Highlights for Ward 4

At Council's final meeting of 2025 on December 9, Council passed the interim budget for the first quarter of 2026. This ensures that RMWB operations continue without interruption and allows Council the time needed to thoroughly review and debate the full 2026 budget in the new year. Included in the interim capital budget were two important projects for Ward 4: the **Anzac Community School playground replacement** and the **Conklin Multiplex playground repair**. Approval at this stage allows administration to begin moving these projects forward so work can start as early as possible in 2026.

Rural Engagements

Throughout December, IRR had planned to host community engagement sessions in Anzac, Janvier, and Conklin. These gatherings were to include updates from Administration, open discussions on community issues, and of course a game or two of bingo. Unfortunately, due to weather/health concerns the Janvier and Conklin engagements were canceled pending reschedule in the new year. Thank you to IRR, Administration, and especially to the community members who took the time to attend and participate in the Anzac engagement. I look forward to the reschedule and participation for Conklin and Janvier in the new year.

Over the past month, I've heard many concerns, accolades, and thoughtful suggestions through these engagements, as well as during phone calls, coffee meetings, and conversations in passing. As we move into 2026, several key topics will come into focus through both Council work and community engagement. The work to improve and grow our region is ongoing, and the passion, commitment, and resilience of our residents continues to inspire me. We all share the goal of building a strong future while preserving what makes our communities the special places we call home.

As we move deeper into winter, with December ushering in some extreme cold spells, please take extra care, travel safely, and look out for one another. Warmer days are ahead.