aspire
Child Development Centre

ANNUAL REPORT

2024/2025

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"I'm truly grateful for the opportunity my daughter has and to see the immense progress she's made. Words fall short when I try to express my joy at seeing her progress."

~ Aspire parent

What does HOPE look like at Aspire?

It is grounded in our values:

Holistic
An integrated approach to all we do that is personalized and inclusive

Optimistic
Focused on innovation, empowerment, and investment in the future

Passionate
Generating excitement, commitment, and celebrating milestones

Empathetic
Keeping a curious mind, cultivating understanding, and connection

Grounding Our Work

Aspire Child Development Centre (Aspire) is a charitable organization in Red Deer, Alberta, run by a team of caring and passionate professionals who work with families and the local community to provide services to children with diverse needs.

Mission

Aspire is dedicated to enriching the lives of children by providing comprehensive child development services in collaboration with families and communities.

Vision

Understanding, honouring and supporting the journey of children and families.

Land Acknowledgement

We are grateful to provide HOPE to children and families on the traditional territories of the Indigenous peoples of Treaty 6, Treaty 7 and Métis ancestral lands. We respect the histories, languages, and cultures of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our community.

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Cathy Gukert,
Board Chair

JoAnne Hayden,
Executive Director

"Honouring 40 years of service while planning for the future, Aspire continues to evolve, innovate, and expand its impact for children and families across Central Alberta."

Dear Friends of Aspire,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff at Aspire, we are pleased to present this annual report that highlights our organization's impact and achievements from September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2025.

This year marked a milestone for Aspire when we officially embraced our new identity as Aspire Child Development Centre. The name change, guided by our dedicated Name Change Committee, reflects the breadth of impact of Aspire; it builds on our past while defining our current and future work supporting the development of children with diverse needs from across central Alberta.

Future-focused planning was also top-of-mind with the conclusion of our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan and the reality that Aspire would have to grow to meet community need. This led to the launch of the Future Planning Committee, comprised of staff who worked throughout the year to identify Aspire's needs and space requirements ensuring we can create an environment that supports growth, inclusion, and innovation for years to come.

Informed by the work of this Committee, Aspire launched our 2025-2027 Strategic Plan, which distills our focus to three Strategic Directions: Financial Sustainability, Program Expansion and Enhancement, and Technology Integration and Innovation. With a new Strategic Plan in place, Aspire also made changes to our strategic planning process, allowing for flexibility and growth as we navigate the ever-changing environment within which we operate.

Planning for the future requires a great deal of thoughtful decision making. Every decision for Aspire's future is made through the lens of how it will impact families and, at the same time, every decision must also be weighed against fiscal responsibility. With this in mind, Aspire's progress this year was also shaped by the vision of the Capacity Review Committee, which reviewed and assessed current workload estimations and developed a comprehensive estimator that will be used across disciplines and allow for more accurate budgeting.

Beyond the extensive efforts of our Board and staff throughout the year, Aspire made sure to acknowledge a significant event on May 1, 2025, with the celebration of our 40th birthday! Aspire is incredibly rare in that we have individuals who have been with us since our first day of operations, and we also have recent team members. Thanks to the collective, caring effort and expertise of our entire team, Aspire has and will continue to support children, families, and our community, now and for decades to come.

On behalf of the Board and staff, thank you for being part of the community of supporters at Aspire Child Development Centre.

Cathy Gukert,
Board Chair

JoAnne Hayden,
Executive Director

Serving Central Alberta

6,600 km2 Region Aspire serves – in schools, homes, and community programs

"Keep being amazing. You are changing live there is no other support like this for our kiddos." ~ Aspire parent

PROGRAMMING AT ASPIRE

Aspire connects with families and children when and where we are needed most. By understanding the individual needs of each child, Aspire's team provides creative, innovative, and integrated services that are beneficial now and in the future.

Assessment, Consultation and Training Services (ACTS)

Provides assessment and parent training programs where children and families receive professional support from Aspire's multi-disciplinary team. The two distinct offerings for families include:

- Six-week Transdisciplinary Assessment and Consultation (TAC) clinics for children 2 years to 7 years, 11 months old
- Diagnostic clinics for children 2 years to 12 years, 11 months old

Upon completion of either option, families receive an assessment report, strategies, community referrals and, if relevant, a diagnosis for their child.

103 Children | **206** Caregivers | Were Supported

"I loved having all disciplines close by to ask questions. I thought the program was organized and well laid out. I will be forever grateful for this experience." ~ TAC parent

Early Access to Supportive Education (EASE)

Is a therapy-based preschool serving children aged 2 years 8 months to 4 years, 7 months who have been diagnosed with a disability, including at least one severe developmental delay. Each child receives personalized learning plans tailored to their unique needs and goals.

While in EASE, children receive full-time support from Aspire's child development facilitators, multi-disciplinary therapy team and certified teachers who work together to support each child in their learning and development.

60 Children | **120** Caregivers | Were Supported

"EASE has been a life-changing program for our family. I cannot stress [enough] how significant the impact has been. We are so grateful." ~ Aspire parent

School and Family Services (SFS)

This program provides screening, consultation and assessment services to children and families. These services are provided in homes, in schools and within other community programs. Through the school programming options, Aspire's multi-disciplinary team provides services with the goal of building capacity for school staff so they can best support their students. Through the parent-initiated, in-home specialized services, Aspire's team provides parents with resources, strategies and tools to help their child learn skills and participate in daily routines.

376 Children

752 Caregivers/ educational professionals

Were Supported

"We were very happy with the services provided. A consultation-based system worked well for us. We were able to work on the ideas that were presented prior to the next visit [from the Aspire team]."
~ Partner school

Park IT Inclusive Community Summer Program

Park It is a free, drop-in summer playgroup for children with diverse needs, their families and the broader community. The inclusive atmosphere at Park IT offers developmentally appropriate activities tailored to support the unique needs of children and their families. The environment fosters a culture of respect and belonging, encouraging acceptance and providing a safe space for children and caregivers to learn, grow and connect with each other. Park IT was co-sponsored by ATB Financial and Rotary Club of Red Deer Sunrise in 2025.

463 Children

Attended Our

Summer Program!

"We loved attending Park IT this year! Thank you for running a great program" ***~ Park IT Parent***

ASPIRE COMMUNITY

Board of Directors 2024-2025

JoAnne Hayden,
Executive Director

Cathy Gukert,
Board Chair

Lance Clark,
Vice Chairperson

Jamie Nelson,
Secretary/Treasurer

Kurtis Chick,
Director

Jill Hockin,
Director

Shauna Nestransky,
Director

Brianne Raymond,
Director

Heather Reynolds,
Director

Kim Surian,
Director

Ensuring a Solid Foundation for the Future

The Board of Directors at Aspire is comprised of volunteer board members from across the community. Some are Aspire parents who still want to give back, even though their children have completed programming. Others may not have a personal connection with Aspire, but they feel drawn to contribute because of a shared belief in the positive outcomes for children and families from across the region. No matter their connection, the Board members' level of commitment, passion, and service to the current mission and future vision of Aspire is inspiring.

Aspire Staff

Learning and Growing Together
Having a strong team is essential to every aspect of our programming and services, so Aspire created a new Professional Development Shadowing Program for staff. This program offers staff opportunities to learn from one another, fostering professional growth and enhancing our collective expertise.

By shadowing colleagues across disciplines, team members gain fresh perspectives and skills, strengthening the quality of care we provide. A total of nine staff applied and were accepted for this program, with very positive feedback on the experience.

"The staff at Aspire are absolutely amazing! An excellent team who truly make the children feel welcome and loved." ~ Aspire parent

65 staff, including 38 full time and 27 part time

Volunteers

Dedicating Time Through Volunteerism
Aspire launched the HOPE Hero initiative this year, recognizing and empowering volunteers who embody Aspire's core values. This past year, Aspire's volunteers shared their time and talent with us at fundraising events across the community, having a significant impact on our organization. With an increased focus to build our HOPE Hero program and recognition program, Aspire will be able to connect with even more caring and dedicated volunteers.

H.O.P.E. HERO

Alumni

A Community That Gives Back: The Power of Aspire
Alumni Aspire is proud to have a growing community of dedicated Alumni who continue to be an important part of our story. Our Alumni give back in many meaningful ways that go far beyond volunteering at events and being part of our planning committees. They share their lived experience and expertise by serving on our Board of Directors, helping to guide Aspire's vision, and ensuring our programs remain responsive to the needs of children and families.

Alumni also act as community ambassadors, championing Aspire's work, building awareness in the community, and connecting new partners to our organization. In addition, they support families currently accessing programming by offering workshops, mentorship, informal opportunities for connection, and generous donations that sustain and expand our vital services, giving parents a sense of community and support as they navigate services for their children.

Coming Together to Overcome Obstacles

Aspire's fleet of two small buses is crucial to the Transportation Program. On November 5, 2024, one of these was involved in an accident when a collision between two other vehicles forced one of these into the path of the oncoming bus. The Aspire bus was on its way to pick up EASE children but, thankfully, none were on board yet, and the two staff members involved sustained only non-life-threatening injuries. The bus, itself, became engulfed in flames and was a total loss.

A new bus would not be available until the following summer, which meant that children from Red Deer and surrounding communities urgently needed alternate transportation. Fortunately, Aspire has a very creative team led by our Transportation Coordinator. They continued to provide transportation services by having staff pick up and drop off children in their own vehicles, in combination with some parents, when they were available. For almost seven months, this incredible team effort ensured the children continued to receive the essential programming through EASE.

The support extended even further. Thanks to a generous grant of $22,954 from the Community Foundation of Central Alberta, Aspire was able to pay the remaining cost of the new bus – the amount not covered by insurance. What could have been a big roadblock to children attending school after the accident was, instead, a grand coming together of families, staff, and community supporters to keep transportation going for the EASE preschool year!

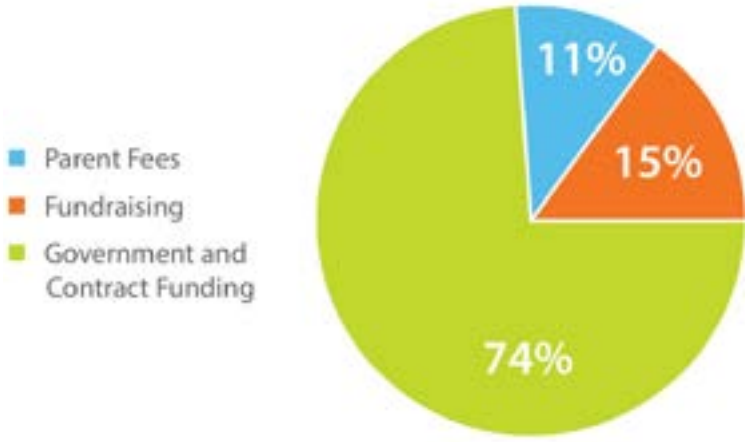
Once again, Aspire faced and solved a problem with creativity, teamwork, and support.

Our new bus, which arrived in August, was named "Gus" by our Aspire community.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

As Aspire continues to open doors for families across Central Alberta, the demand for our services remains consistently high.

Securing sustainable funding and maintaining strong annual fundraising efforts are essential to meeting the needs of children and families today while building capacity for the future. Our focus remains on strengthening organizational stability and expanding our ability to deliver high-quality, impactful services.



In 2024/2025, Aspire's Community Relations team led a variety of fundraising initiatives, including signature events such as Evening of Decadent Dessert, Push & Pace, donor and sponsor engagement, and targeted grant applications. The generosity of individuals, organizations, foundations, and corporations continues to play a vital role in advancing Aspire's mission, helping us provide specialized services to children and families with diverse and complex needs.

$500,000 fundraising target in 2024-2025, achieved through special events, donor and sponsor contributions, and grant applications.

Evening of Decadent Dessert and Aspire Children's Raffle - October 3, 2024

Aspire's signature fundraising gala, Evening of Decadent Dessert, once again drew a strong gathering of dedicated and caring attendees, all coming together in support of Aspire families. The event was presented by Red Deer Mechanics, and it included a champagne reception, buffet dinner, live auction, silent auction, raffles and, to the delight of all, the fan favourite dessert buffet. Aspire once again combined Evening of Decadent Dessert with the draw for the Children's Raffle, sponsored by Southside Dodge, Tsunami Water Solutions, Artemis Jewellers, Servus Credit Union, Real Country and Zed98.9.

Funds raised: $197,850

500
Guests

107
Volunteers

Family Holiday Night - December 11, 2024

Past and present families of Aspire joined community members in visiting with Santa and Mrs. Claus and wandering through the Christmas wonderland at Blue Grass Garden Centre in December 2024. The craft corner was a special favourite, and family members of all ages enjoyed hot chocolate and cookies as they took in the festive spirit. This family-friendly event was possible with support from the Elliott Family.

Funds raised: $1,150

132
Guests

12
Volunteers

Push & Pace - June 7, 2025

Parkland School was once again the home base for Aspire's inclusive, family-friendly Push & Pace Fundraiser. Participants of all ages and abilities powered through the breezy June morning by walking, running, strolling, and rolling their way along the routes, all in support of Aspire. Presented by SurePath Group, Push & Pace provided an array of activities celebrating children, families, and our community.

1, 3, and 5 km routes
Funds raised: $17,122

133
Participants

30
Volunteers

FEE ASSISTANCE

Aspire developed our Fee Assistance Initiative to remove financial barriers and help to ensure that all children, regardless of their economic circumstances, have equitable access to early intervention and programming they need.

The Fee Assistance Initiative helps families by covering a portion or all of the parent fees at Aspire. To receive assistance, families complete an application form in which they are asked to share their stories of need to help us better understand the roadblocks to services in our community and the struggles they face. Year-over-year, Aspire is seeing an increasing need for families.

"I am writing to express our sincere gratitude for the approval of the fee assistance for our son. This support means a great deal to our family. Your generosity and understanding are deeply appreciated, and we want to acknowledge the positive impact this decision will have on his academic journey. We are truly thankful for the opportunity this assistance provides."
~ Aspire parent

Fee Assistance Endowment

Looking to the future, Aspire has worked with the Community Foundation of Central Alberta to establish the Fee Assistance Endowment. This long-term, sustainable solution will alleviate the need for annual fundraising for Fee Assistance, and it will allow Aspire to support families for decades to come.

Our progress as of August 31, 25, was more than **$233,000**

Our target was to raise **2 million** for the Fee Assistance Endowment in 5 years

$105,000+ In support provided in financial services

90 Families applied for fee assistance in 24/25

"In the EASE preschool program, we're seeing a growing number of families applying for full Fee Assistance to support their child's participation. Many of these families are newcomers to Canada, including refugees, who share stories of immense sacrifice of familial time for financial survival—like a father working the night shift at McDonald's and coming home just in time for the mother to begin her day shift at the restaurant.

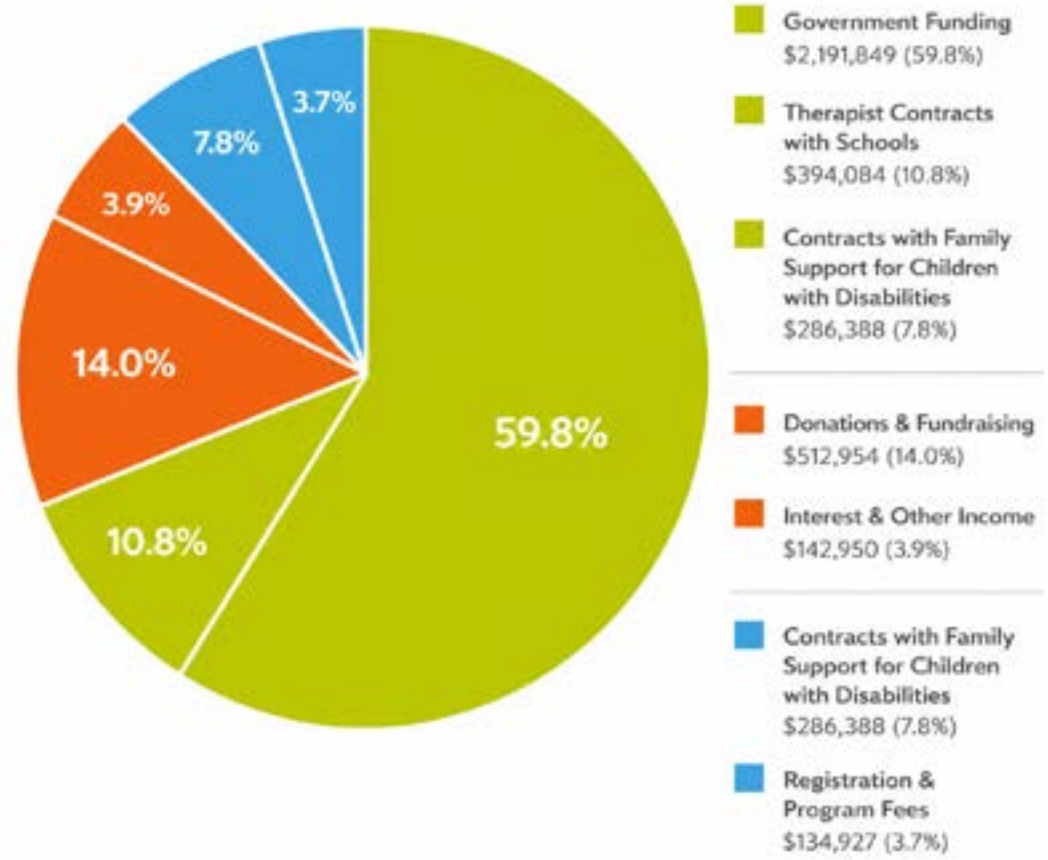
They're incredibly grateful for Aspire's transportation program, which ensures their child can attend our specialized preschool without adding financial strain or challenging their work schedules.

When their Fee Assistance application is approved, it lifts a significant burden, easing the financial pressure they already face and allowing them to focus on building a better future for their family with Aspire's support."

~ Erin Unti, Intake Coordinator, Aspire Child Development Centre

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Revenue



Expenditures

Programming expenditures	$2,806,637
Administrative and building expenditures	$960,472
TOTAL	**$3,767,109**
Gain (loss) on disposal of capital assets	$94,195
NET EARNINGS	**($9,762)**

This financial information has been condensed. To view the complete audited financial statements, please contact JoAnne Hayden, Executive Director, at 403-340-2606.

OUR COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

Benefactors of Aspire $10,000+

Calgary Shaw Charity Classic Foundation (Birdies For Kids)	$16,311.68
Community Foundation of Central Alberta was (Red Deer & District Community Foundation)	$22,954.42
Fire and Flood Emergency Services	$90,000.00
Gateway BOP & Controls Inc.	$18,547.00
Lykal Holdings Ltd.	$15,000.00
Southside Dodge Chrysler Jeep	$26,290.00
Stingray Radio/New Country 95.5 FM	$44,915.10
The Kinsmen Club of Red Deer	$10,000.00
Tsunami Water Solutions	$10,000.00

Partners of Aspire $5,000 - $9,999

Artemis Jewellers	$6,295.00
ATB Community Foundation	$5,000.00
Canada Helps	$9,657.32
Canadian On Line Giving	$5,778.60
Hi-way 9 Express Ltd.	$5,000.00
Pediatric Consultants Associated	$8,000.00
Red Deer Advocate	$7,050.00
Rotary Club Of Red Deer Sunrise	$5,000.00
Sexton Family Of Companies	$5,000.00
SurePath Group Ltd.	$5,000.00
TD Bank Group	$5,500.00
The Red Deer Mechanics	$6,440.00
Central Alberta Heating Solutions Ltd.	$5,000.00
Collicutt Energy Services	$7,000.00

Advocates of Aspire $500 - $4,999

ABC Creation & Design	$500.00
Alair Homes	$1,500.00
Alberta Asian Motorworks A Division Of 843755 Alberta Ltd.	$670.00
Amanda's Cake Decorating	$1,000.00
Arrow Limousine Services & Sedan Services	$1,439.10
Boston Pizza Foundation	$2,425.00
Brawler Heavy Haul Ltd.	$1,500.00
Cafe Millennium Inc.	$650.00
Canadian Natural Resources Limited	$500.00
Charities Aid Foundation Of Canada	$1,694.00
City of Red Deer	$742.00
Connect First and Servus Credit Union Ltd.	$4,000.00
Cosmos Bottle Depots Ltd.	$817.75
Crissy's Crumbles	$500.00
Davex Construction Ltd.	$2,900.00
Develop Yo'self	$500.00
Donna C. Purcell Professional Corporation	$500.00
General Appliances Lacombe Ltd.	$733.95
Hein's Enterprises	$2,000.00
Inclusive Beauty Studio	$780.00
J-Tax Services	$1,000.00
Kinsmen Club Of Innisfail	$1,000.00
Kinsmen Club of Lacombe	$1,500.00
KMS Tools & Equipment	$2,011.31
Marler Integrity Incorporated	$2,146.95
Mountain Music DJ Services	$500.00
Northside Construction Partnership	$600.00

Nutri-Lawn of Red Deer	$600.00
On the Mark Productions Inc.	$950.00
Organic Oasis Spa and Salon	$587.05
ParticipACTION	$750.00
Pembina Pipeline Corporation	$2,500.00
Radisson Red Deer	$749.98
Red Deer Catering Ltd.	$750.00
Red Deer Elks BPOE # 85	$1,500.00
Red Deer Rebels Hockey Club	$1,200.00
RSM US LLP	$844.18
Scovan Engineering Inc.	$1,250.00
Servus Credit Union Ltd.	$2,000.00
Sim's Furniture Limited	$500.00
Special Event Rentals, Red Deer	$1,150.00
Stems Flowers & Cafe	$3,500.00
Telus Ambassadors - Red Deer	$1,098.27
The Alberta Knights of Columbus Charitable Foundation	$3,000.00
The Coverall Shop	$500.00
The Optimist Club of Red Deer	$2,500.00
The SnapHappy Photographer	$1,200.00
TNT Customs Graphics & Signs	$947.45
United Way Of Calgary and Area	$704.00
United Way Of Central Alberta	$1,585.00
West Lake Grill - Heritage Ranch	$550.00
Westland Insurance	$730.00

Friends of Aspire $1 - $499

1866769 Alberta Corp o/a COBS Bread	$216.68
Alberta Food & Beverage Expo	$250.00
Alberta Prairie Railway Excursions	$357.00
Albert's Family Restaurant	$100.00
All About Bouncing	$291.88
Apple Drugs - Eastview	$66.00
Arrae Patisserie	$139.00
Aspelund Sons Of Norway Lodge #4-571	$200.00
Babycakes Cupcakery	$148.00
Blue Grass Sod Farms Ltd.	$196.04
Calgary Flames Foundation	$200.00
Central Alberta Brain Injury Society	$50.00
Central Alberta Co-op Ltd.	$175.00
Central Alberta Pregnancy Care Centre	$200.00
Chai Wallah	$60.00
Clive Lions Club	$100.00
Coco Beans Baked Goods	$140.00
Comfort Inn & Suites Red Deer	$259.00
Communal Creative Studios	$400.00
Cowtown Beef Shack	$220.00
Creative Treasures	$125.00
Crumbl Cookies	$104.00
Dairy Queen	$61.85
Dr. Serena N Crum Prof. Corp.	$320.00
DutchessFlower Company	$125.00
earls Kitchen + Bar	$104.00
East Side Eatery	$60.00
Eastview IGA	$398.27
Edge Clothing	$145.00
Forest Heights Golf & RV Resort	$360.00
Gift Smack Ltd.	$199.00
Innisfail Golf Club	$457.80
Kenilworth Masonic Lodge #29 AF & AM	$100.00
Kenroc Building Materials Co. Ltd.	$350.00
Laebon Homes	$400.00
Lakewood Golf Resort	$276.00
Little Jon's Portable Toilet Services	$350.00
Maverick's Donut Company	$218.72
MILC Cake Co.	$275.00
Mom's Cookie Jar	$50.00
Moxie's Grill & Bar	$424.00
Mr. Mike's Restaurant	$400.00
Noah's Quality Water Sevices Inc.	$388.00
Olymel L.P.	$187.72
One Eleven Grill	$200.00
Parkland Nurseries & Garden Centre Ltd.	$225.00
PattyCakes	$225.00
Paul Davis Restoration Of Red Deer	$210.00
PayPal Giving Fund Canada	$179.22
Pend D'Oreille Orchards Ltd.	$200.00
Pine Hills Golf Club	$300.00
ProVerus LLP	$350.00
Raswe Designs	$450.00
Recovery Lab	$157.50
Red Deer Piling	$369.00
Red Deer Travel	$239.00
Red Hart Brewing	$120.00
Rotary Club of Lacombe	$150.00
Royal Canadian Legion Branch #38	$100.00
Royal Canadian Legion Branch #79	$200.00
Safari Spa & Salon	$383.00
Sawback Brewing Co	$96.00
Seth's Barbershop	$84.00
Spirit Creek Golf & RV	$300.00
Sport Chek	$51.24
Sylvan Lake Golf & Country Club	$350.00
The Donut Mill	$234.90
The Eye Studio Optometry Clinic	$360.00
The Forum	$250.00
The Golden Circle Senior Resource Centre	$100.00
The Gutter	$275.00
The Liquor Hutch	$300.00
The Nursery Golf and Country Club	$260.00
The Tasty Bakery	$42.92
Three Broke Sisters	$250.00
Tollers Bistro	$75.00
Totally Gluten Free Bakery	$350.00
TownPlace Suites Red Deer	$229.00
Urban Barn	$249.00
Utopia Hair Studio	$95.00
Westerner Park	$247.50
Whispering Pines Golf & Country Club Resort	$312.00

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2024/2025

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