

Market Watch

S&P/TSX 33,817.51 +222.53	S&P 500 6,909.51 +47.62	DOW 49,625.97 +230.81	NASDAQ 22,886.07 ???	DOLLAR 73.05¢US +0.04¢	OIL per barrel US\$66.48 +\$0.08	GOLD US\$5,080.90 +\$83.50
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It's the first tax season since the CRA revamped its services. Here's what to expect

RITIKA DUBEY
The Canadian Press

The Canada Revenue Agency says taxpayers should have an easier time this tax season, a year after it faced criticism for long wait times and, in some cases, bad advice from representatives.

The agency has revamped its operations, undertaking a government-ordered service improvement plan focused on addressing call centre delays, which wrapped up in December. Since then, it's streamlined its websites, hired more call centre workers and

revised standards for accuracy.

"We recognize that our service has been challenging in the past," said Melanie Serjak, assistant commissioner of the assessment benefits and service branch at the Canada Revenue Agency.

"We've made many efforts to improve that service and we've been completely focused on improving how Canadians interact with us."

The 2025 tax-filing season officially kicks off on Monday and continues for a little over nine weeks, ending April 30 for most taxpayers.

Many of the agency's updates for this year centre around the CRA My Account. Taxpayers will be able to manage their balance or amount owing and set up a payment plan without speaking with a collections agent.

Serjak said correct basic information on CRA accounts — name, contact details, banking information and address — is "critical for a smooth tax-filing season," and helps reduce the need to call when filing a return online.

Starting this year, those locked out of their CRA accounts can get access again via security questions, instead of calling the helpline and staying on hold. Those creating a CRA account for the first time won't have to wait for days for their log-in credentials via mail — and can verify their identity via government-issued identification.

Web content should now be easier to follow and understand, Serjak said. The agency will also streamline digital notices of assessment to make them available only through the CRA My Account. Taxpayers who have their preference set to receive paper mail will continue to receive their notices of assessment by mail.

The CRA also expanded topics on its 24-hour generative AI chatbot, launched last March, while retiring its old chatbot, Charlie. Unlike generative AI, which creates new content based on questions asked, Charlie provided answers from pre-determined scripts to assist in frequently asked questions and straightforward inquiries.

People can also chat online with an agent on weekdays between 8 a.m. ET and 8 p.m. ET, increasing the service by an extra three hours.

"A lot of our efforts have been on improving those self-serve options so that reduces the pressure on our phone lines," Serjak said.

And if none of that helps, Serjak said there will be more agents available this year to take calls.

The agency is still working to hire an additional 1,500 call centre workers for the upcoming tax season, adding to its existing crew of 3,500 agents. However, the agency said it can't provide final staffing numbers because the hiring is still underway.

Gerry Vittoratos, national tax specialist at UFile, said the CRA's top priority this year should be answering calls within a reasonable time.

"The majority of the interfacing people do with the CRA is the call centre," he said. "The CRA is basically the only place you can go to get these answers."

Vittoratos said the agency has no option but to improve services.

"They have a big responsibility to be on the ball, essentially, to be able to provide the service that Canadians need," he said. "It's rightfully so that they're under scrutiny."

And they're prepared for higher call volumes when the peak tax-filing season rolls in.

On average, the agents tackle about 40,000 unique calls a day during the non-tax months of October to December; however, that can climb to an average of 90,000 unique calls a day during the peak months of February to May, Serjak said.

The agency said its goal is to answer an average of 70 per cent of unique callers during the tax season.

The CRA plans on operating six days a week during the peak months, available Saturdays for phone calls between March 21 and May 2 from 9 a.m. ET to 5 p.m. ET.

Still, some people may have to wait to speak to an agent.

Serjak said the aim is to keep wait times under 30 minutes. The agency has set up a team to monitor and divert calls to the phone menu if the wait time is going to be longer than the half-hour limit.

"They can check our website for the current wait times and then determine when is the best next time to call in order to reach an agent," she said.

The CRA faced flak last year for giving incorrect or bad advice to taxpayers calling for help.

In a scathing report published last fall, Auditor General Karen Hogan said call centres were failing to answer questions about individual taxes, estimating the accuracy and completeness of responses at just 17 per cent. The numbers were better for business tax or benefits questions, with accurate responses to those calls 54 per cent of the time, the report said.

Serjak said the agency has since beefed up its training program, revised its accuracy evaluation of agents and set up tools to see how they're doing on the accuracy and completeness of their responses. Before an agent gets on the telephone, they go through anywhere from two to 13 weeks of in-classroom training, followed by weeks of live training on the phone alongside a more senior agent.

She added the agency has now achieved an accuracy rate of over 90 per cent as the targeted training and coaching continue.

Vittoratos said this year, inaccuracies may not be as big of a problem because last year's tax season included massive tax-related changes, such as to capital gains taxes, which created "a perfect storm."

Long processing times for services last year were also a cause of frustration for many and the CRA says some Canadians may still see that for certain services.

"That we recognize has been a pain point for Canadians," Serjak said. While there has been progress, she said, "there are some longer-than-what-we-would-like timeframes."

Certain services, such as a T1 adjustment or refiling taxes, are still seeing long wait times. For example, a refile on paper or via phone can take up to 16 weeks, while the standard timeline is eight weeks from the time the request is received, according to the CRA website.

Serjak said efforts at the CRA are ongoing and the teams are closely monitoring progress.

PUBLIC NOTICES



8AM - 4PM SPECIAL SERVICES

Electric Outages.....403.529.8260
Gas Emergency..... 403.529.8191

Water & Sewer Emergency403.502.8042
After Hours Special Services 403.526.2828

DEVELOPMENT PERMITS APPROVED FEBRUARY 12 TO FEBRUARY 18, 2026

RESIDENTIAL

102 7 STREET NW - Garage
57 SIERRA GREEN SW - Single Detached House With Site Coverage Variance

670 8 STREET SE - Demolition (Backyard Suite)

COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL/ INSTITUTIONAL

10 3201 13 AVENUE SE - Temporary Vendor

HOME BUSINESS

141 SOMERSET ROAD SE - Home Business Minor. General Contractor/Project Manager

592 VISTA DRIVE SE - Home Business Minor Plumbing/Gasfitting/Heating



Scan code to view development notices online (updated weekly)

A person claiming to be affected by a decision of the Development Authority may appeal to the Medicine Hat Subdivision and Development Appeal Board by completing and submitting to the City Clerk Department, the required Notice of Appeal form within twenty one (21) days of this publication. Forms available from: City Clerk Dept., 3rd Floor, City Hall or City website: www.medicinehat.ca.

All Development Permits listed are subject to conditions. For more information, contact Planning and Development Services, 2nd Floor, City Hall. Ph. (403) 529-8374.

COMMEMORATIVE DRILLING RIG REMOVAL

In the coming weeks, the City of Medicine Hat will remove the display drill rig located near Tourism Medicine Hat's Visitor Information Centre due to safety concerns.

The rig was built in 1948 and drilled City of Medicine Hat gas wells between 1950-1969 and used until 1981 to service existing gas wells. In 1998, the Medicine Hat's Oilmen's Association restored the retired rig to commemorate their organization's 25th Anniversary and placed fencing and lighting at the prominent display location. It has stood since as a beacon of Medicine Hat's proud legacy in the oil and gas industry.

Those wishing to learn more about the history of Medicine Hat's public gas utility can visit medicinehat.ca/gas or visit the Esplanade Archives.

NOTICE OF FIRST READING DEBENTURE BORROWING BYLAW 4874-2026

TAKE NOTICE that the municipal council of the City of Medicine Hat gave first reading on Monday, February 2, 2026, to Borrowing Bylaw 4874-2026. In order to complete the projects (the "Capital Projects"), the City has elected to borrow monies from the Province of Alberta or another authorized financial institution by the issuance of debenture(s), pursuant to Section 258 of the *Municipal Government Act* RSA 2000 Chapter M-26.

Bylaw	Purpose of Borrowing	Estimated Total Cost	Amount to be Borrowed
4874-2026	To authorize the financing, undertaking and completion of the Saamis Solar Final Investment Decision	\$131,500,000	\$65,750,000

The Municipality shall repay the indebtedness of the above bylaw according to the repayment structure in effect, namely monthly, semi-annual, quarterly, or annual equal payments of combined principal and interest installments not to exceed Twenty-Five (25) years calculated at a rate not exceeding the interest rate fixed by the Province of Alberta or another authorized financial institution on the date of the borrowing and not to exceed ten percent (10%).

AND FURTHER TAKE NOTICE that, unless a sufficient petition demanding a poll of the electors is received within 15 days following the date of the last publication of this Notice, the Council may pass the said borrowing bylaw as described in the *Municipal Government Act*, Sections 219 to 226.

AND FURTHER TAKE NOTICE that a copy of the aforesaid proposed Bylaw may be accessed via the "Proposed Bylaws" section on the City's website at www.medicinehat.ca or inspected during office hours (8:30 am to 4:30 pm) at the City Clerk Department, Third Floor, City Hall, Medicine Hat, Alberta.

DATED at the City of Medicine Hat, in the Province of Alberta, this 14th day of February 2026, updated on this 21st day of February, 2026.

Stephanie Zubrecki, Interim City Clerk
Phone: 403.529.8221
Fax: 403.529.8324
E-mail: clerk@medicinehat.ca

PROTECT WATER LINES FROM FREEZING

The following actions should be considered to protect your water lines from freezing during the cold weather months:

- Repair broken windows and ensure windows/vents are closed during the winter.
- Insulate water pipes in unheated areas, including crawl spaces.
- For sinks located against a non-insulated outside wall:
 - o Open the vanity door to allow warm air to reach the water pipes.
 - o A light bulb placed near the water pipe may generate enough heat to keep the water flowing.
 - o Heat tape wrapped around the pipe may keep the pipe from freezing.
- Residents of mobile homes should check the condition of the heat tape on their water service and water meter.
- Protect an unheated indoor water meter with an insulated box and water pipes should be wrapped in insulation using heat tape.

- Outside water faucets and underground sprinkler systems should have the water supply shut off inside the house at the isolation valve for the faucet/hose bib.
- Sprinkler lines and faucets should be drained/blown out.
- Run a stream of cold-water, with a flow of approximately 250ml per 10 seconds, continuously from one faucet.
- If you plan to be away from home over the winter period, close the main water isolation valve located next to the water meter in your home.
 - o You should leave the heat on in your home and have someone check inside your home daily while you're away.

A frozen water service or a burst water pipe is an inconvenience and expense that most people would like to avoid. Please take all possible precautions to prevent this happening in your home or business.

For more information, refer to www.medicinehat.ca/frozenwaterlines or contact Environmental Utilities at 403-529-8176.