

Market Watch

S&P/TSX 32,612.93 +234.29	S&P 500 6,966.28 +44.82	DOW 49,504.07 +237.96	NASDAQ 23,671.35 +191.33	DOLLAR 71.96¢US -0.16¢	OIL per barrel US\$59.12 +\$1.36	GOLD US\$4,500.90 +\$40.20
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WestJet execs tried cramped seats on flight weeks before viral video sparked backlash

The Canadian Press

On a calm, cloudy day in Calgary last November, WestJet CEO Alexis von Hoensbroech stepped onto a plane bound for Toronto along with five other executives, the chairman of the board and several union representatives to try out the new, super-tight seating at the back of the cabin.

Sitting in rows 27 and 28 out of 31, the group gathered on the Boeing 737 at the request of unions officials who cited concerns around a new seat configuration that featured less legroom than ever on most economy seats — and went on to draw national attention after a video showcasing the tight fit for passengers went viral.

In a TikTok post by an Alberta woman that has racked up more than 1.1 million views, her parents can be seen squeezing into a row that leaves barely enough room to move their legs.

“Impossible to straighten out my knees to the front,” says her father in the Dec. 27 post.

“I’m going to be sharing my leg space with him,” adds her mother.

The online backlash and union response underscore questions of safety and comfort on WestJet narrow-body

planes that can accommodate lower fares and more passengers — 180 — but potentially at the cost of traveller experience.

Fewer than six weeks earlier, the company’s chief executive occupied an identical seat to the TikTok user, and graciously offered to take the middle one, said Alia Hussain, who chairs the flight attendant union’s WestJet contingent and sat next to him.

Most executives who were on board “acknowledged that the seating configuration would present challenges” on longer trips and night flights due to the limited comfort and mobility,” the union executive told members in a bulletin on Nov. 26 and obtained by The Canadian Press.

“At the same time, there was sentiment from WestJet leadership that, outside of longer flights, the configuration was generally acceptable.”

Von Hoensbroech had a more positive take on the trip.

“This is a popular seat pitch on many airlines in both Europe and North America, so the experience was familiar and I personally felt OK in this seat,” the CEO said in an emailed statement to *The Canadian Press*.

“However, I understand it is subjective and many people may feel different, we are actively listening to

this feedback.”

The Calgary-based company announced in September it would reconfigure the seating on 43 Boeing 737 jets to install an extra row and divide the cabin into more tiers. So far, 21 planes furnish the compressed configuration.

A dozen of the 22 rows in the planes’ economy class feature 28-inch pitch — the distance between one point on a seat and the same point on the seat in front — versus 29- or 30-inch pitches on most other carriers’ lower-tier seats. They also have what WestJet calls a “fixed recline design,” meaning they cannot be tilted back.

Workers and passengers have pushed back, warning that the cramped cabin curtails safety, particularly in the event of an evacuation, and hurts the customer experience.

“WestJet pilots believe this reconfiguration erodes the guest experience and devalues our brand,” said Jacob Astin, who chairs the WestJet contingent of the Air Line Pilots Association, in an emailed statement.

He noted that Transport Canada had approved the change, but said it nonetheless “reduces the superior safety margins of previous layouts due to increased cramping.”

No other large Canadian airline has 28-inch pitch seats.

WestJet has stressed that the overhauled layout allows for more affordable fares. More spacious rows are also available at a higher price.

“Because safety is so important to us, it’s worth noting as part of the reconfiguration the aircraft underwent an extensive safety and certification process. All modifications were completed in accordance with Transport Canada’s rigorous airworthiness standards and WestJet’s own high internal safety requirements,” said WestJet spokeswoman Julia Kaiser in an email.

“We are closely monitoring guest and employee feedback to assess the product’s performance, comfort and suitability.”

For cabin crew, the more confined environment can make it harder to clean after a flight, carry out emergency procedures such as helping with oxygen masks and have a comfortable commute to or from an upcoming shift, according to the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

The changes, which the union was not consulted on, may also aggravate passengers already frustrated by the flying experience generally, said Hussain.

“We are the face, we’re on the front line of this change where passengers are finding out about it as they board,” she said in a phone interview.

“We don’t need to be in a race to offer the least.”

The narrower rows put some WestJet cabins on a par with budget carriers such as Spirit Airlines, Frontier Airlines and Wizz Air, all of which sport 28-inch seats.

“At what point do we just all stand and hold onto a rubber ring handle?” asked one TikTok commenter.

PUBLIC NOTICES

8AM - 4PM SPECIAL SERVICES

Electric Outages.....403.529.8260

Gas Emergency.....403.529.8191

Water & Sewer Emergency403.502.8042

After Hours Special Services403.526.2828

DEVELOPMENT PERMITS APPROVED
JANUARY 1 TO JANUARY 7, 2026

COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL/
INSTITUTIONAL

1991 STRACHAN ROAD SE - Installation Of
Portable Sign

168 8 STREET SE - Change Of Use To Health
Care Office.

614 15 STREET SW - Proposed Installation Of
Two Portable Signs


HOME BUSINESS

11 ROSSLAND DRIVE SE-Home Business
Minor-Landscaping/Service (Junk Removal).
(Refused. No application fee payment /
Incomplete application)

1346 MCKENZIE CRESCENT NW - Home Business Minor - Electrician.

59 SOMERSIDE GATE SE - Home Business Minor - Advertising.

What's Happening
in your Neighbourhood?



Scan code
to view development
notices online
(updated weekly)

GAS, ELECTRIC, WIND ENERGY RATES
SET FOR JANUARY

Medicine Hat - The City of Medicine Hat has set
its January energy commodity rates.

Natural Gas – all customers

The January natural gas default rate is \$2.865 per gigajoule (GJ),
down from the previous month of \$3.293 per GJ.

The rate is based on the weighted average cost of the City’s natural
gas purchases for the month of consumption, plus \$0.07/GJ to
recover transactional costs and a small rate of return, in accordance
with the Gas Utility Bylaw 2489.

Electricity – Residential, Farm, Small and
Medium Commercial, Unmetered Services
and Rental Lighting

The calculated electricity rate for January, February and March
2026 is \$0.0500/kWh which, under the Electric Utility Bylaw 2244,
defaults to the minimum \$0.07000/kWh for Residential, Farm, Small
and Medium Commercial, Unmetered Services and Rental Lighting
customers.

The rate is based on a 12-month, volume weighted forecast as per
the ICE-NGX wholesale electricity energy market, not to exceed
a maximum of 11 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh) or go below a
minimum rate of seven cents per kWh, and is recalculated on the
first business day of January, April, July, and October.

Electricity - Large Commercial, Industrial
and Street Lighting Customers

The current default electricity rate for Large Commercial, Industrial
and Street Lighting customers is \$0.12025 per kilowatt hour.

The rate is based on the average of the rates for owners whose
regulated rate tariffs are approved by the Alberta Utilities
Commission under section 103(2) of the Electric Utilities Act for that
calendar month as posted by the Alberta Utilities Commission on its
internet page under Rate of Last Resort (ROLR) Regulation.

Under the new ROLR Regulation, this fixed rate is expected to
remain in place until December 31, 2026.

Rate of Last Resort	Rate per kWh
Direct Energy Regulated Services	\$0.12020
ENMAX Energy Corporation	\$0.12060
EPCOR Energy Alberta GP (Edmonton)	\$0.12010
EPCOR Energy Alberta GP (outside Edmonton)	\$0.12010
City of Medicine Hat Rate (based on the average)	\$0.12025

Going Green Charge

Customers also have a “Going Green” surcharge on their bill. This
surcharge is for renewable energy purchased for residential, farm,
small and medium commercial customers.

The Going Green surcharge is calculated monthly to recover costs
incurred to purchase renewable energy.

The Going Green surcharge for January is \$0.0046 per kilowatt hour.

For more details about energy rates, visit medicinehat.ca/energyplans.

For further information, please contact:
media@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.

REAL CHRISTMAS TREE RECYCLING

Recycle your **real** Christmas tree **now until January 30, 2026**,
by dropping it off at one of the following convenient drop off
locations:

• 20 Northlands Way NE – Northlands Co-op
Recycling Depot

• 240 Kipling Street SE - Kipling Street Recycling Depot

• 3292 Dunmore Rd SE - Southwest corner of the
Medicine Hat Mall parking lot

Prior to drop off, **please remove all plastic bags, stands, tinsel
and decorations.**

Please note that **artificial trees cannot be recycled** in this
program nor in the blue recycling cart program. Artificial trees that

can no longer be used or donated should be discarded in your
grey waste cart.

Alternatively, you can take your real Christmas Tree to the
Compost Facility or your unusable artificial tree to the Landfill, both
located within the Waste Management Facility.

The Waste Management Facility hours of operation are as follows:

• Monday through Saturday


o 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

• Closed on Sundays and all Statutory Holidays

Download the Recycle Coach App, refer to medicinehat.ca/landfill,
or contact Environmental Utilities at 403-529-8176 for more
information.

www.medicinehat.ca

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comedy inspired by and featuring the
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Show runs Jan 28 - Feb 1
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Name: _____

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Mail or drop off at the Medicine Hat News
922 Allowance Avenue SE, Medicine Hat, AB T1A 3G7

CONTEST DEADLINE JANUARY 22 AT 1:00 PM