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# St. Albert Gazette

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**Inside:**

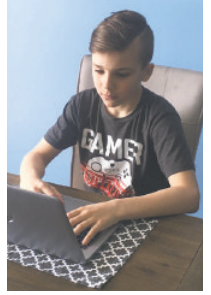
- Spring flooding ..... 3
- Recovery task force ..... 5
- Rural cuts ..... 13
- Opinion ..... 24
- Letters ..... 25
- Farmers' Market ..... 29
- Classifieds ..... 36
- Employment ..... 39

**Library layoffs**

Glum day at St. Albert Public Library as 43 temporary layoffs are announced ..... **4**

**▶ The ups and downs of e-learning**

Experts, educators weigh in..... **8**



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CHRIS COLBOURNE/St. Albert Gazette

**THROUGH THE WINDOW GLASS** – Jordan Dore of St. Albert talks with his great-grandmother Theresa Charest, 102, via their smart phones through the window of Chateau Mission Court on Tuesday afternoon while practising social distancing measures to ensure seniors like Charest – who are living in supportive living, seniors' lodges and long-term care facilities and who are in the most vulnerable age group – stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## City in 'good position' financially to handle downturn

BY HANNAH LAWSON  
Staff Writer

St. Albert is in a good financial position to ride out the economic downturn locally as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, city officials said Monday.

City council received updated financial projections of impacts of the pandemic on city revenues and expenses, with deficit projections attached to varied facility opening dates.

Forecasts range from a best-case \$4.6 million deficit, with a targeted June 1 opening date of city-owned facilities. Director of finance Diane McMordie noted it will take time for facilities to ramp up to normal operations, and the updated projection includes those assumptions.

In an April 6 presentation, city staff were projecting a \$3.8-million deficit attached to a June 1 opening.

Should facilities instead open Aug. 1, the deficit would increase to approximately \$5.6 million, and would start to bleed over into 2021. An October opening date would inflate the deficit to \$6 million, with a \$1-million deficit in 2021.

"What these forecasts are telling us is that we have a significant financial impact we will need to deal with in 2020," McMordie said. "Depending on how the situation plays out, more mitigation strategies may be required in the near future, (and) longer term changes may be required for future budget years."

St. Albert has already begun implementing some mitigation strategies, including temporary layoffs of non-permanent staff, wage freezes, transit service reductions and deferring capital projects.

See "Financial," page 6

## 'Be a pane in the glass'

How seniors, loved ones are staying connected with window talks

BY BRITTANY GERVAIS  
Staff Writer

St. Albert resident Jordan Dore sits on a ledge outside of his great-grandmother's ground-floor window at the Chateau Mission Court retirement home, leaning in closer to see her through the glass.

His great-grandmother Theresa Charest sits in a wheelchair inside her room right by the window, a phone pressed against her ear.

"How are you doing? Do you ever get bored?" Dore asks into his cellphone.

"Oh no, I don't have time for that," the

102-year-old replies, who just celebrated a birthday on April 13. "Life is too short to complain."

Though her family wasn't allowed inside the facility to celebrate, Dore said they surprised her for a socially distant celebration, holding up signs outside her window close enough so she could read them.

This is the new normal for nursing home residents and their families, as long-term care facilities and retirement homes in Alberta shut their doors to visitors to protect residents from the COVID-19 pandemic earlier this month.

That's because the Public Health Agency of Canada considers older adults more vulnerable to potentially fatal complications from contracting COVID-19, a new strain of coronavirus linked to respiratory illness.

To date, 307 cases have been confirmed at continuing care facilities in Alberta and 36 residents at these facilities have died.

Having lived through the Spanish Flu pandemic that took the life of her mother when she was just six months old, Charest said she wasn't exactly expecting to see another pandemic in her lifetime.

See "I'm really grateful," page 11



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