

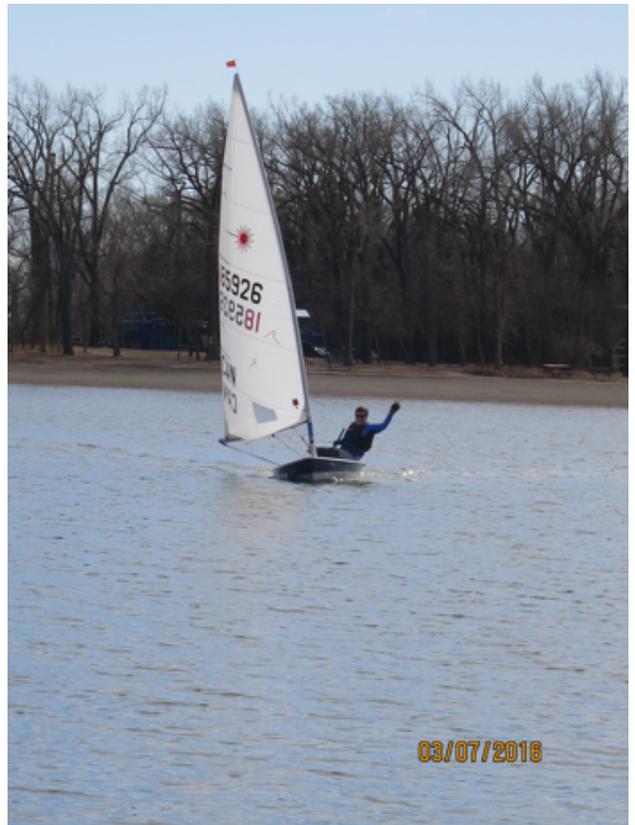
## First Sail of the Year - A Fait Accompli

March 7 is early for a first sail in Alberta! The temperature had been reaching double digits for several days and the lake had opened up a week ago. I was waiting for my chance. When I looked out the window this morning I said to myself "this is the day". After digging the Laser out of the garage I found my sailing gear and then drove the 15 km north from Lethbridge to Park Lake. I rigged in still conditions with the temperature rising to 12 degrees. Then I donned my

full-length wet suit. I was ready to cast off just after noon. As I hopped into the boat I saw a light breeze coming down the lake towards me. I caught the first zephyr and then my boat accelerated as the breeze filled in to become 5 knots from the southwest. A southwesterly in Lethbridge on a sunny March day does not stay at 5 knots



for long, so I knew my time for a safe sail would be limited. I quickly got my sea legs under me and did a series of upwind tacks and downwind gybes while dodging flocks of newly arrived swans and ducks. Bruce Storey, a St. Mary's Sailing Club friend, rode his Harley out to Park Lake on this sunny day and he snapped these photos of the sailboat. It was a good sail, an hour in ever increasing puffy and shifty winds, and then I came ashore to drink some water and chat with Bruce. When I embarked again the wind was up to 15 knots and gusting higher. I put on another layer. The wind chill was noticeable. After 15 minutes of planing back and forth a hard gust hit and awarded me with a face wash of winter water. I had tempted fate enough for a winter sail on the Canadian prairies so I pointed my bow towards the abandoned launch ramp. The first Alberta "soft water" sail of 2016 is a fait accompli.



**Yes, March 7 IS early for a first sail of the year in Alberta!**

Richard Quinlan