



## News Release – For Immediate Release Thursday, December 6, 2018

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### Interim County budget focuses on roads, critical infrastructure and strengthening communities

The County of Grande Prairie's 2019 budget recognizes the role that high caliber roads offer in enhancing the quality of life for County residents while helping to support the Alberta economy. As such, Council has committed to investing considerable funding to County road and infrastructure projects. Of the County's 135.7 million dollar budget, 81.1 million dollars has been directed to general operations and 54.6 million dollars towards capital projects.

"This budget focuses on investing in priority road and infrastructure projects as well as maintaining services, programs and partnerships with affordable tax levels," explained Reeve Leanne Beaupre. "Given the uncertainty of provincial grants that provide a stable revenue stream, Council and staff have worked hard to prepare a budget that will responsibly meet the needs of all County residents and businesses."

The proposed tax increase for an average residential property is 2 per cent. That is a \$35 per year increase on a residential property valued at \$435,000. Council directed Administration to keep budgets within a 2.5 percent increase in 2020 and 2 percent increase in 2021.

A few of the services, programs and projects Council approved for 2019 include:

- Over half of the capital budget is going towards road and bridge projects
- \$4.5 million in recreation, community and culture grants to various organizations
- \$1.2 million to City of Grande Prairie for tax sharing agreement to recognize County residents using City recreational facilities.
- Area Structure Plans for Pipestone area and Northeast Clairmont
- New playschool at Harry Balfour School and an increase in programming at Whispering Ridge Playschool due to demand.

This budget is the organization's first three-year plan to meet the requirements of the Municipal Government Act. The final budget for 2019 will be released in spring once a complete review of the current market conditions at that time is done, the provincial budget is known, and linear assessment values are received from the province. Tax rates will be finalized at that time.

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## Budget Highlights

### Capital Budget

Approximately \$31.1 million is being invested in capital road and bridge projects.

The proposed new construction includes 18.4 km of road surfacing including the paving of gravel roads, surfaced road overlays, and re-construction, with divisional road projects to be determined.

Grant funding for road projects is estimated at \$4.2 million, including a \$1.1 million Federal Gas Tax Grant and \$3.1 million in funding from Provincial Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) Grant.

The following is a list of scheduled road projects:

- Northgate and Crossroads North Industrial Park 98 Ave. – overlay 11 km
- Spruce Wood Estates subdivision – base and pave 2.10 km
- Dunkley Meadows subdivision– base and pave 1.30 km
- JD Willis subdivision– overlay 1.10 km
- Country view North 105 Ave., 106 Ave., 107 Ave., and 97A St. – grade, base and pave 0.75 km
- Althen Corner 156 Ave., 101 St., and 102 St. – overlay 0.40 km
- RR 93 Regional Waste Facility Road - overlay 0.40 km
- Whispering Ridge School Site – sidewalks
- \$14.2 million for Divisional Road projects
- \$4.2 million for bridge rehabilitation and replacement projects
- \$2.1 million for spot construction, road widening projects and road condition assessments

In addition to road construction, the capital budget includes:

- \$7.1 million for replacement of vehicles and equipment
- \$400,000 for a Water Tender for Town of Sexsmith Fire Department
- \$240,000 to support upgrades of the Grande Prairie Regional Pound
- \$300,000 for playground upgrades, campground improvements including a power site expansion to Pipestone Creek Campground
- \$173,500 for upgrades to the Community Services Snow Storage Site to meet Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) regulations
- \$112,500 in County Sportsplex improvements including the installation of a second fishing dock for the pond, playing field upgrades, directional signage and purchase of maintenance equipment



## Operating Budget

The operating budget proposed for 2019 includes:

- \$4.5 million in recreation, community and culture grants to various organizations
- \$1.6 million towards Weed Control services and programs
- An estimated \$1.2 million to the City of Grande Prairie for the tax sharing agreement (share of municipal tax revenue- 20 per cent from the co-generational facility and 10 per cent on any new commercial/industrial development in areas serviced by Aquatera)
- \$1 million over ten years (beginning in 2020) to Grande Prairie Regional Hospital Foundation for a patient bedside engagement system
- \$781,000 for maintenance of greenspace, cemeteries and trails
- \$500,000 for ditch maintenance and to improve drainage throughout the County
- New playschool program at Harry Balfour School and an increase in programming at Whispering Ridge School from two to three classes

## Schedule of Fees and Rates Change

- Utility fees for water and sewage/wastewater will increase by three per cent for the average residential and commercial utility customer in the hamlets of Bezanson, La Glace, Teepee Creek and Valhalla.
- Campgrounds will increase the Group Area fees as well as increase day use fees and implement half day use rates.
- Payment of tax accounts online with a credit card will now be charged a 2.2 percent convenience fee.

The updated schedule of fees, rates and charges will be posted on the County's website ([www.countygp.ab.ca](http://www.countygp.ab.ca)) in January.