

CITY OF PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE – 2026 BUDGET SPEECH

As presented by City Finance Chair, Joe Masi

Your Worship and fellow members of Council, it is my pleasure as Chair of the Finance, Legislative and Property Committee to present to you the 2026 City of Portage la Prairie budget.

The 2026 Budget positions the City to maintain strong service levels while continuing to advance Council's priorities for growth, infrastructure renewal, and community investment. While 2026 is not an assessment year in Manitoba, updated assessment information provided by the Province reflects ongoing development within our community. This growth supports a modest tax increase that allows the City to manage rising operating pressures without reducing services, ensuring residents continue to receive reliable and responsive municipal programs.

In 2026, residents will see continued progress on major initiatives that strengthen transportation networks, enhance public safety, improve recreational spaces, and advance long term water and wastewater infrastructure needs. The budget also includes the administrative and project-delivery capacity needed to ensure these initiatives move forward effectively. As Portage la Prairie continues to grow, this approach helps the City remain responsive to emerging needs while preparing for future demands on infrastructure and services. These investments reflect Council's Strategic Plan focusing on quality of life, community safety, and enabling planned growth.

INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE

The largest and most significant capital commitment continues to be the Water Treatment Plant Upgrade and Expansion. Tendering and contract award are planned for 2026, with construction to follow. This project has an estimated capital cost of approximately \$117.9 million and will modernize the City's water treatment capacity while improving reliability. The City has secured a \$40 million funding agreement with the Manitoba Water Services Board and has requested additional matching funds. Approval for related debt borrowing has also been received. This investment reflects Council's Strategic Plan commitment to continued investment in utility infrastructure.

Work is also progressing on the Water Pollution Control Facility as the City reviews the best procurement method for the larger nutrient removal upgrade. As that work continues, certain components of the project may move forward independently, such as the decommissioning of older equipment and other improvements that support the long-term upgrade.

The replacement of the ultraviolet disinfection system is a priority for the facility. The existing ultraviolet system is no longer supported by the manufacturer, and

replacement parts are not available, making an upgrade necessary. The total cost of the ultraviolet replacement is \$2 million. Approximately \$1.47 million will be funded through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, with the remaining amount funded through the City's Nutrient Removal Reserve. Advancing this work now addresses an urgent operational need, improves system reliability, and ensures critical equipment is replaced as planning continues for the broader upgrade.

Construction will begin on Gladys Cook Way. This new connection will provide direct access to Lakeview Development and support continued growth in the southeast part of the community. The project includes the construction of the road and the intersection that will link to River Road. Funding from the Province of Manitoba's Strategic Infrastructure Basket will support the project, and the remaining costs will be covered through City reserves, allowing the work to move forward without affecting municipal tax levels and supporting Council's Strategic Plan commitment to sustainable neighbourhood growth.

Funding of \$165,000 dollars has been allocated to replace the West End Welcome Sign that was removed during construction. The project includes the construction and installation of a new sign, along with consulting services to support its design and to develop a broader approach to community signage. This investment will enhance the western entrance to the community and support consistent and welcoming signage across the City.

MULTI YEAR STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATIONS

In 2026, the City continues implementation of its multi-year Plan for Roadway Infrastructure Investment. Council is once again allocating an additional seven hundred thousand dollars from the Canadian Community Building Fund for road renewals, bringing the total roadway infrastructure allocation to approximately \$1.4 million, consistent with 2025 levels and achieved without increasing taxes. This continued investment supports resurfacing, reconstruction, and essential annual maintenance, allowing the City to address aging roadways and maintain safe, reliable transportation routes. By using the Canadian Community Building Fund to finance the increased allocation, the City is able to sustain this enhanced level of road work without placing any additional burden on local taxpayers, ensuring long term infrastructure needs are met in a financially responsible manner.

Continuing with the City's multi-year strategies, Council is maintaining its commitment to enhancing parks and public spaces across Portage la Prairie. In 2026, \$120 thousand is being invested in greenspace improvements.

Aligned with the Greenspace Investment Priority Plan, these funds will support upgrades to playgrounds at Provista, Ninth Street Northwest, and Island Park. These updates will refresh aging play structures, improve safety, and ensure

these well-used community spaces remain welcoming and accessible for families. These projects directly align with Council's Strategic Plan priority to enhance recreational opportunities and green spaces. This continued investment strengthens the City's recreational network and supports the long term goal of creating vibrant, high quality outdoor spaces as our community grows.

BEAUTIFICATION OF OUR COMMUNITY

The City continues to invest in projects that enhance visual appeal and community pride. Ongoing investments in recreation areas, Crescent Lake, and neighborhood improvements support the City's Strategic Initiatives and help create welcoming and attractive public spaces for residents and visitors. This work aligns with Council's Strategic Plan priority to continue investing in beautification projects to showcase our community.

OTHER CAPITAL PROJECTS

The 2026 budget also includes several capital investments that support the ongoing renewal of City assets. These include upgrades to City buildings, replacement of aging trucks and loaders, improvements to lighting and security systems, and facility repairs across multiple sites. These investments ensure that City infrastructure remains safe, functional, and reliable. They also help reduce future maintenance costs by addressing needs before they become more complex or expensive. This work supports the City's commitment to maintaining high quality municipal facilities and equipment throughout the community.

The replacement of the Fire Rescue and Command vehicle is underway after Council awarded the RFP in December 2024. This specialized apparatus has an estimated cost of \$1.26 million, and production typically takes eighteen to twenty four months. The City paid \$700 thousand in 2024, and the remaining \$562 thousand is scheduled for 2026, which will complete the purchase.

SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS AND PROGRAM SUPPORT

The City is purchase two aquatic harvesters at an estimated cost of \$480 thousand as part of the Crescent Lake vegetation management strategy. This investment supports ongoing work to maintain water quality and manage vegetation growth in Crescent Lake. To operate this equipment, the budget includes \$66 thousand for a seasonal staff member and for the equipment rentals needed to transport and manage the vegetation that is removed. These additions allow the City to begin this program while maintaining existing service levels.

The Community Safety Office has grown significantly and now requires space that better supports its daily operations. The City is acquiring a building to meet these needs, funded through existing reserves with no impact on municipal tax levels. As the program has expanded, so have its administrative requirements. To support this work, the budget includes a CSO Administrative Clerk at an estimated annual cost of \$79,500. The budget also provides \$20,000 for a body camera system for Community Safety Officers. This system will support safety, transparency, training, and liability reduction. In addition, \$7,000 has been allocated for an in-car laptop to give officers mobile access to bylaws, reports, and records, improving efficiency and reducing the need for office trips. These investments strengthen the program's capacity and support Council's Strategic Plan priority to enhance community safety and wellbeing.

Within the Utility Fund, the budget includes a Utility Administrative Clerk to provide consistent onsite support at the Utility Building. Administrative coverage is currently split across multiple facilities, which results in delays and requires technical staff to complete administrative tasks that take time away from core operations. This position will improve workflow, support timely processing of documentation and data, and strengthen overall departmental efficiency. The position will have an estimated annual cost of \$79,500 and is supported within existing utility rates.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND GRANTS

The City continues to partner with a wide range of organizations that contribute to local programs, recreation, arts, culture, and social supports. For 2026, a total of 2.57 million dollars is allocated across community grants, partnership organizations, and City committees. This includes support for agencies that provide essential services to residents, such as the First Presbyterian Soup Kitchen and the Highway Community Kitchen, both of which play an important role in addressing food insecurity in our community. These investments, along with funding to organizations providing youth programming, arts and cultural opportunities, senior supports, public safety services, and community development initiatives, reflect Council's continued commitment to strengthening quality of life across Portage la Prairie.

BUDGET SUMMARY

In summary, the 2026 budget includes:

- A general fund net operating budget of \$25.6 million, with \$14.8 million generated through tax revenue and a capital budget of \$7.1 million
- A utility und net operating budget of \$19.4 million and a capital budget of \$106.9 million

This proposed budget will result in an increase of 3.21% to property owners' municipal taxes. The year over year increase for a residential property with assessed value of \$250,000 and no change in assessment is \$72 annually, which is approximately \$6 per month.

The next step in our 2026 budget process is to await the Portage la Prairie School Division's budget, which will be used to finalize our financial plan and determine the total mill rate.

We expect to complete our 2026 Financial Plan by April. Following a public hearing to approve the document, it will be submitted to the province. Your tax bill will be mailed by early June. Additionally, we will provide various tools on the City's website to help you calculate your 2026 taxes in advance.

The budget speech will be posted on the City's website in the coming days.

In conclusion, I am proud of the collaborative effort between City Administration and City Council in crafting a forward-thinking budget that continues to:

- Foster sustainable growth through the development of vibrant neighborhoods.
- Enhance recreational and cultural opportunities, green spaces, and expand our active transportation network.
- Invest in community safety and well-being.
- Strengthen infrastructure to drive economic investment in our community.
- Support beautification projects that showcase the pride we have in our community.
- And, most importantly, ensure our budget is mindful of our citizens' ability to pay.

Again, thank you to my fellow Council members and Mayor Knox for your support with this budget. I look forward to accomplishing great things with all of you for our community in 2026.