



PRLS BOARD TALK

Highlights of the Parkland Regional Library Board Meeting SEPTEMBER 17, 2026

2027 Budget

The board approved the draft 2027 budget. At the May board meeting the board asked staff to bring three budgets back to the board at their September meeting. The first budget had no change in the per capita rate (for information only). Budget scenario 1 was made in the manner of Parkland budgets for the last 30 years (\$10.18). In this scenario, the requisition did not take into account collecting revenue to cover capital purchases. Budget scenario 2 was the same as budget scenario 1 with additions for capital purchases. (\$11.05).

Some points to note include:

- Overall, expenditures, other than capital expenses, are anticipated to increase by 1.44% in 2027.
- To balance the budget, it will be necessary to increase the municipal requisition/levy by \$1.06. This is primarily to allow the inclusion of actual capital required for maintaining current service structure.
- The current salary grid has been used, allowing eligible employees a step up the grid. Four employees have reached the top of the grid and will not be eligible for an increase.
- Computer Software License costs are increasing
- Internet Connection fees have increased slightly
- eContent (eBooks, eAudiobooks, etc.) has been increased slightly due to demand

- The Member Library Computer line was changed to the actual cost of the computers needed for member libraries

Provincial grants amount to approximately 38.6% of PRLS' total income.

Revised Approach to Capital Purchases

If Parkland doesn't do some financial preventative maintenance now, it will become less financially stable over time. Parkland is always within its budget for providing services and would post a surplus if it did not have to account for the depreciation of capital purchases. In the past, (because of policy) Parkland has not had the ability to include capital expenditures in the budget, except in the budget supplement which permitted staff to pull required funds from reserves. This is unsustainable – we can no longer afford to fund capital purchases (vans, computers, etc.) simply by using surpluses achieved in previous years. The situation, if it is allowed to continue, would be dire; staff want the board to be aware of and address the problem before it becomes catastrophic.

As presented at the board meeting, a three-pronged approach will correct Parkland's direction:

1. A realigning of the actual reserves that are held within Parkland's bond portfolio
2. The ability to create a separate reserve that is accessible and not locked in the form of bonds
3. A \$1.06 increase in the budget to allow Parkland to save for expected capital purchases

Staff believe that the proposed increase is modest given what it will achieve. Staff will continue in their constant quest to evaluate efficiencies in procedures; allowing Parkland to continue to be able to provide outstanding service in the face of ever-increasing costs.

Licensing Costs for Microsoft

Since 2011, Parkland has maintained an agreement with Microsoft for the licensing of various software throughout the region. This year, we were informed that Parkland no longer qualifies under the existing agreement and that we must move toward a new agreement with different terms.

The renewal cost quoted was four times what we are currently paying. As a result, Parkland had no choice but to make changes to computer software throughout the region.

With the new agreement, Parkland's licensing fee will exceed \$58,800 despite the reduction of licenses.

Parkland Website Project

Sitecore is the software platform Parkland's website is based on. This year, we received a new agreement with a significant increase to our licensing fee.

Tim Spark, Parkland's Manager of Technology Infrastructure, negotiated the cost down, however, due to Sitecore's 5% planned increase per year, compounded, Parkland is currently exploring different website platforms.

After some discussion, the board decided to wait until after Parkland has the chance to discuss the issue with member libraries to get an idea of their priorities and will revisit the issue at the November board meeting.

CAP Libraries – New Libraries Regulation

A number of communications sent to all library boards by the Government of Alberta related to Bill 28 and the recent changes to the Alberta Libraries Act and Regulation.

There were two letters from the Coalition of Alberta Public Libraries (CAP) signed by Parkland Board Chair Barb Gilliat seeking clarification on a number of issues related to the new legislation. Gilliat's letter received an email response from Dan Williams, and a letter sent to Assistant Deputy Minister Ethan Baynes received a written response. As a result of the letter to Baynes, he invited the members of the CAP Steering Committee to a meeting on July 22nd by Zoom.

Subsequent to the meeting with the Assistant Deputy Minister, a meeting representing members of the broader public library community was held on July 30th. At the meeting, five working groups were established:

- **Principles to guide policy framework**
- **Policy framework for implementation**
- **Identify restricted works**
- **Manage restricted works**
- **Customer communications**

These groups are to work on those mechanisms for compliance with the legislation by January first. Parkland's Director sat on the first group "Principles to guide policy framework".

In addition to the passing of the changes to the Libraries Act and Regulation, the government indicated that operational guidelines will be provided to assist library boards obtain compliance with the new legislation, which was released on September 22nd and forwarded to libraries and their boards.

News from Trustees

Penhold & District Public Library has a new library manager and would like to thank those that came to say goodbye to their now retired manager, Myra Binnendyk.

Elnora Public Library will start construction on a new building next month. The building will house the village office and the library. Big thanks to Tim Spark at Parkland for helping move the SuperNet.

2026 Board Survey

The Parkland board evaluated itself with three survey questions:

Do you believe you have a good understanding of Parkland's role and services? 30 out of 32 people said yes.

By the end of a board meeting, do you believe you have received the information you need to be able to speak to council about what transpired? 26 out of 32 people said yes.

Would you willingly come back to serve another year on the Parkland Board? 28 out of 32 said yes.