



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Saddle Hills County 2026 Budget Highlights

Saddle Hills County remains focused on long-term stability, smart growth, ensuring that communities are well-positioned for the future. Council has approved in principle the 2026 Operating Budget, a \$57.5 million financial plan that continues to strengthen essential services, support rural infrastructure, and invest in programs that enhance quality of life for residents.

“This year’s budget focuses on maintaining the services our residents rely on while investing in projects that keep Saddle Hills County strong, connected, and resilient,” Reeve Gerry Richard went on to say, “Council is committed to building a County we are proud to call home.”

The 2026 operating budget reflects a modest increase of just over \$216,000 from the previous year. Public Works continues to represent a significant portion of the operating plan, ensuring roads, graveling, fleet operations, and engineering services remain well supported. Protective services also saw continued investment, with increased funding directed toward enforcement and fire protection to ensure reliable emergency response across rural areas.

Agriculture remains a high priority, with ongoing support for the ALUS program and other initiatives that promote sustainable land use and growth within the farming community.

The County’s commitment to safe, reliable water services remains evident throughout the budget. Water, wastewater, and solid waste services make up a considerable portion of annual operating costs; however, this year’s budget reflects a natural decrease in net expenses thanks to new revenue from the expanded waterline system and the recycling program’s launch.

Community services—such as childcare supports, Nurse Practitioner services, and FCSS programming—remain stable, with increased investment in 2026 to ensure families have access to essential programs. Recreation funding will maintain and enhance County campgrounds and parks, contributing to the outdoor experiences residents and visitors enjoy throughout the year.



Saddle Hills County's dedication to community organizations remains strong. Through grants, partnerships, and ongoing support to local groups, more than \$12 million will be directed into community-led initiatives and regional services that enrich the lives of residents across the County.

Council approved several financial increases to programs, including increased funding for rural water cistern grants, enhancements to the Rural School Staffing Supports Subsidy Program, and continued support for the Saddle Hills County Library Board, and an updated childcare subsidy rate for eligible employees and residents.

Key regional partnerships will continue into 2026, including Project Aurora's work to expand fibre internet connectivity, and support for the Central Peace Fire Rescue Commission as the new Spirit River Fire Hall moves forward. To fund major infrastructure and community commitments, the County will draw almost \$9.9 million from reserves.

Council has approved in principle a \$50 million 2026 Capital Budget. A Capital Budget is funded through a combination of Federal and Provincial grants and reserve funding. Council continues to invest in essential areas, public works, protective services, agriculture, water and waste management, recreation, and community care.

"This budget represents a balanced approach to maintaining core services while investing in the priorities that matter to residents: safe roads, reliable water, strong emergency services, local programs, and healthy, thriving communities." - Reeve Richard

For a breakdown of the 2026 budget, please visit the County's [\*\*Budgets and Finances\*\*](#) page.

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Media Inquiries:

Fran Haughian, Communications Coordinator

[\*\*fhaughian@saddlehills.ab.ca\*\*](mailto:fhaughian@saddlehills.ab.ca)

Junction of Highway 49 and Highway 725, RR 1, Spirit River, Alberta, Canada, T0H 3G0  
Phone: 780-864-3760 | Fax: 780-864-3904 | Toll Free: 1-888-864-3760