

Summer Village of Birchcliff

Winter 2026 Newsletter



Greetings from Council and Administration

We are committed to protecting Birchcliff's values, enhancing community life, and safeguarding both the environment and your investment. This newsletter provides updates on the following key areas:

1. **2026 Municipal Budget Highlights**
2. **2026 Utility Bill**
3. **Ice Huts and Fires on the Ice**
4. **Garbage & Recycling Schedule**

2026 Budget & Three-Year Operating Plan

Council approved the 2026 Budget and Three-Year Operating Plan in November. The budget was developed using conservative financial assumptions and reflects stable operating costs, placing Birchcliff in a strong financial position as the community moves into 2026.

Key Assumptions

The budget was informed by the following factors:

- Forecasted **\$13,000 in residential assessment growth revenue** from new and redeveloped properties
- **2025 Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 1.8%**
- **Bank of Canada inflation outlook of approximately 2%**
- **Lower anticipated investment income**, reflecting analyst projected lower interest rates through 2026

A key priority for Birchcliff Council was to hold municipal taxes at last year's level. As a result, the **2026 municipal mill rate remains unchanged at 2.0677**. *Individual property taxes may vary depending on changes in assessed property values.*

This outcome was achieved through disciplined, zero-based budgeting and long-term financial planning.

Long-Term Financial Sustainability

- In **2021**, Council introduced a four-year financial strategy to address provincially imposed RCMP cost downloads and a **60% reduction in MSI infrastructure funding**. This strategy successfully closed the funding gap and now contributes **\$85,000 or more annually**, exceeding its original target.
- In **2023**, Council adopted a **Financial Reserve Policy and Plan** to strengthen investment returns and improve capital planning. **Financial reserves now total approximately \$1.62 million**, establishing a long-term run rate exceeding policy targets. These reserves are sufficient to fund forecasted capital projects through **2031 and beyond**, including an **800-metre West End Trail expansion in 2026** and future road resurfacing projects.

Planning for the Future

Through responsible budgeting, strong reserve management, and long-term planning, Council and Administration continue to protect taxpayers, invest in infrastructure, and maintain the quality of life that makes Birchcliff a sustainable lake community.

2026 Utility Bill

The annual waste water bill will remain unchanged at \$242.30.

The rate for garbage pickup will increase from \$137.63 to \$185.25 due to an increase in Landfill and operation costs.

The rate for recycling remains unchanged at \$0.

Ice Huts

To protect the health of Alberta's waterbodies, encourage stewardship, and promote conservation, anglers using ice shelters (huts) are now required to label their shelter if they are leaving it on the ice for longer than 24 hours. Label in a contrasting color with text 2.5 cm or taller with the following information:

- Your Wildlife Identification Number (WIN), or
- Your name and telephone number

Fires on the Ice

Alberta municipalities are advocating for the use of fire pits rather than allowing fires directly on the ice. This measure would not only enhance safety but also contribute to preserving the pristine condition of our lake. Please participate in the "Take It Off Program" where there is no trace left on the ice when you leave, including burnt material that will pollute the lake upon spring thaw and can be a danger to persons engaged in water sports.

Weekly Email Notifications

Signing up for weekly web update email notifications will keep you up to date on pertinent information within our municipality, and to provide us with a tool for communicating effectively in the event of an emergency.

On behalf of Council and Administration, enjoy the rest of the winter, keep safe and stay healthy.

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