



Five ways the Alberta budget might affect you where you live

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Deficit, borrowing and other big numbers were the key pieces of the Alberta budget released on Thursday, but a number of smaller

measures will be felt in the pocketbook. *Emma Graney* looks at five ways the budget may hit home.

1. Carbon tax

Alberta's new economy-wide carbon tax means you'll pay more to fill your gas tank and heat your home. Under the program, the price of gasoline will rise by 4.49 cents per litre, and diesel by 5.40 cents. Natural gas will go up by \$1.011 per gigajoule.

Annually, that will add up to \$191 for a single person, \$259 for a family and \$338 for a couple with two children. Rates will rise again in 2018, increasing the burden on your wallet by \$286 for a single person, \$388 for a couple and \$508 for a family with two children.

Part of that will be offset by a rebate, but only if you earn less than \$51,250 as a single person, \$100,000 as a couple, or \$101,500 as a couple with two kids. The maximum rebate will range from \$200 for an adult and \$300 for a couple; throw in another \$30 per child for a maximum of four kids.

2. Family supports

Two new programs coming into effect in July will put more money in the pockets of low and middle-income families.

The Alberta Child Benefit, paid quarterly, sees annual benefits of up to \$1,100 for one child and \$550 for each of the next three kids. The full amount will be paid to families earning less than \$25,500. Families earning more than that will see their benefits reduced, phased out once income reaches \$41,220.

The Alberta Family Tax Credit will be changed, with benefits rising 1.3 per cent this year and the cut-off threshold for earnings increased from \$36,778 to \$41,250.

3. Museum fee and camping increases

When you pack your tent and sleeping bags to go camping from July 14, be sure to include some extra cash. Campsite water, sewer and shower rates at provincial parks will increase by \$1 per night to \$7, as will equestrian corrals rates. On-site pump out services will double to a maximum of \$50 per service.

And if you're a fan of Alberta's museums and heritage sites, prepare to pay more at the nine parks that charge entry fees. The Culture and Tourism Ministry has hiked the maximum annual pass rates anywhere from \$5 to \$20 this summer, as part of a review that sees maximum prices potentially increasing by up to \$95 by 2021.

Information in the government's budget document was wrong, but the ministry said the maximum increase for annual passes is \$10 for adults (from \$40 to \$50), \$5 for both youth and seniors, and \$20 for a family pass.

4. Small business tax cut

Albertans who own small businesses will see their corporate tax rates lowered come Jan. 1, 2017, from three to two per cent. The idea is to help offset the carbon tax.

The cut will tie Alberta with Saskatchewan for the lowest small business tax rate in the country, and will be worth an estimated \$185 million in 2017-18.

5. ALERT gets cash

Rather than the cut it was expecting, the Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams (ALERT) will get a \$2.6 million boost this year. Forty sheriffs from the Safe Communities and Neighbourhoods team and surveillance unit will be transferred back to the government. Their work will fall under the Justice and Solicitor General budget instead of ALERT.

The provincial government had hoped the federal government would kick in to support the program. When that didn't happen, the NDP moved to increase the agency's support with \$2.6 million this year, for a total of \$29.1 million.

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