



# *Narrative Summary*

*5 Year Unit Review*

*2008/2009 – 2013/2014*

## **1. Introduction**

Parkland Institute, located in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta, is an Alberta-wide, non-partisan research network. Parkland studies economic, social, cultural, and political issues challenging Albertans and Canadians, using the perspective of political economy. The results of this research are shared widely by the Parkland and used to promote broad scholarly and public discussion of the issues. We accomplish this by producing publicly accessible research reports that are disseminated broadly to the public at large, academics and policy makers through the media, the internet, conferences, symposia and direct mail.

The past five years have been a time of significant transition for the Parkland Institute, having welcomed a new Director, research director, research manager, and administrative coordinator. Parkland has also recently adopted a new set of bylaws, bringing its governance in line with the Academic Centres and Institutes Policy of the University of Alberta. In the spring of 2014 Parkland relocated from its old location, a house on Saskatchewan Drive, to the main floor of the Humanities Centre.

Despite all of these changes, the Institute has continued to grow and thrive, making a significant contribution to public policy dialogue and citizen engagement in Alberta and across Canada. Parkland Institute has become a go-to organization for commentary and analysis for provincial media, non-profit organizations, labour unions, academics, and community groups. The institute's staff and researchers are regularly invited to present at conferences and symposia across the country, and its research publications receive broad dissemination through mainstream media, social media, academe, and word of mouth. Parkland's work is also frequently referenced and tabled in the Alberta Legislative Assembly, as well as in assemblies across the country, and in both committees and the house on parliament hill.

What follows is a brief overview of some of the highlights from the last five years in the Parkland Institute's main areas of work and focus. For more detail on the organization's finances, research, or programming over the last five years, please refer to the data included on the attached USB key.

## **2. Research**

Since April 1, 2008 the Parkland Institute has published 29 reports and 16 fact sheets. These publications have covered topics as diverse as results-based budgeting, infrastructure maintenance privatization, elder care, liquor privatization, water markets, municipal finances and P3s, royalties, and many others.

In addition to the work of Parkland staff on many of these publications, others were researched and written by acknowledged experts and researchers from across Canada. These have included such notable names as Jeremy Schmidt (post-doc in Anthropology at Harvard), John Loxley (Economics, U of

Manitoba), David Hutton (FAIR), Colleen Fuller (CCPA), Greg Flanagan (Public Finance, U of L), and others.

A number of these reports have also been co-published with other groups and organizations in order to maximize their reach, impact, and dissemination. Some of these have included the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, both national and provincial offices, the Alberta College of Social Workers, the Federal Accountability Initiative for Reform (FAIR), and the Firelight Group.

All research publications are subjected to a double-blind peer review process. Every report is accompanied by a media release with copies sent to all relevant government agencies and ministries. Where possible, report launches are accompanied by public presentations by the authors, and on occasion, speaking tours in conjunction with other organizations. Wherever possible Parkland's research projects are integrated into our ongoing programming and outreach activities.

Some key examples of this have included the inclusion of our fact sheets on tax reform, and our research director, on the province-wide Join Together Alberta tour as well as a key part of their campaign and website. Likewise, our 2013 report on elder care in Alberta, *From Bad to Worse*, was accompanied by a seven-city speaking tour organized by Public Interest Alberta profiling our research and including Parkland staff. The 2011 release of the report *Alternative Water Futures in Alberta* by Jeremy Schmidt was followed up with a five-city speaking tour by the author organized by the Our Water is Not for Sale Network.

One of Parkland's most successful collaborations in this regard was our work with the Alberta College of Social Workers to develop a Social Policy Framework for their organization. The collaboration resulted in two published reports, both of which were well-received by the media, tabled in the legislature, and circulated broadly across the province. The second report contained a framework and series of recommendations which were adopted as policy by the College, and used to form the basis of their intervention in the provincial government's consultations around their own social policy framework. In addition, the second report was strongly featured in a full-day conference on poverty and social policy organized by Public Interest Alberta and the Edmonton Social Planning Council.

Parkland Institute is currently participating as a partner organization on two applications for funding under the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's Partnership Grants programme. Both grants include Parkland Director Trevor Harrison as a co-applicant. If successful, these grants will support over multi-year periods research in line with Parkland Institute's mandate, while offering rich opportunities to collaborate with allied groups or institutions and to raise Parkland Institute's profile, both nationally and internationally.

All of Parkland's research publications from the past five years are included in the documents on the USB key attached, along with all of the corresponding executive summaries and media releases.

### ***3. Programming***

#### ***Annual Fall Conference***

Since its inception in 1997, Parkland has held annual conferences on cutting edge and policy relevant topics. The conferences are oriented towards community engagement, offering sessions on current,

applied and policy relevant research in accessible language. Conference speakers are always a blend of academics, leading intellectuals and community leaders and recognized national and international experts on the topic, often on joint panels. These conferences bring on average 700 people together on campus each year (attendance has ranged from 500 to 900), many of whom are not otherwise associated with the university.

Since 2008, our conferences, including title and main speakers, have been as follows:

**2008 – The Moral of the Story: Art, Culture, Media, and Politics**

Featuring: Megan Boler (OISE), Nora Young (CBC), John MacLachlan Gray (writer), Tariq Ali

**2009 - Crisis and Opportunity: It's time for a progressive economy**

Featuring: Jim Stanford (CAW), Judy Rebick (Ryerson), Joel Magnuson, Derrick Jensen, Marjorie Griffin Cohen (SFU), Mark Anielski

**2010 - Rewriting a Country: Toward a Just and Peaceful Canada**

Featuring: Margaret Atwood, Marci McDonald (writer/journalist), David Kilgour, Linda McQuaig, Grace-Edward Galabuzi, George Elliott Clarke

**2011 - Class Dismissed: Capital's war on workers and democracy**

Featuring: Leo Panitch, Richard Wilkinson, Stephanie Bloomingdale, Joan Sangster, Bryan Palmer

**2012 - Petro, Power, and Politics**

Featuring: Ronald Wright, Andrew Nikiforuk, Dylan Jones, Tony Clarke, Duff Conacher, Anna Zalik

**2013 – Facts, Fictions, and the Politics of Truth**

Featuring: Christopher Hedges, Michael Geist, Munir Sheikh, Clayton Thomas Muller, Katie Gibbs, Julie Cruikshank

All conference presentations are placed on the internet (audio/video) after the conference, and continue to get a substantial number of hits. In 2013 Parkland experimented quite successfully with web-casting the conference live, and will continue to do this in years ahead.

Evaluation reports for a number of the conferences are included on the USB key attached.

In addition to the annual fall conferences, in the spring of 2010 Parkland Institute co-hosted a conference with the Alberta Federation of Labour called **Remaking Alberta: Recession Alternatives for an Alberta that Works**. The conference focused on the impacts of the economic crash of 2008 for Alberta, and offered policy solutions, based partly on Parkland research, for moving the province forward. Speakers included Asbjorn Wahl from Norway as well as a variety of Alberta-based researchers, writers and activists.

In 2012 we co-hosted the **Beyond Acute Care** conference, focusing on the current challenges in elder care in Alberta. The conference included Ralph Nader as a keynote speaker, as well as a number of academics, activists, and front-line elder care workers from across the country.

***Next Up Youth Leadership program***

In 2008 Parkland, in collaboration with the Global Youth Education Network Society out of Vancouver,

brought the Next Up program to Alberta. In 2009, Parkland was able to secure funding to run parallel programs in Edmonton and Calgary.

Next Up is a youth leadership program for young people (aged 18-32) passionate about social and environmental justice. Each year 12-14 young people in each of Edmonton and Calgary participate in a seven month program focused on developing policy analysis skills in a variety of areas, as well as practical skills in areas like media, campaign organizing, fundraising, anti-oppression, theatre, and numerous others. Alumni of the program become part of the Next Up Network, wherein they connect with program alumni from the programs in Vancouver, Saskatoon, and Ottawa. Parkland Institute provides much of the policy content for the program, as well as office space for the program to operate out of in Edmonton, and Parkland's Executive Director sits on the advisory committees in both Edmonton and Calgary. The annual Parkland conference is a key component for both programs every year, and many alumni have remained very connected with the work of Parkland and other partner organizations. We have now seen five cohorts in Edmonton and four cohorts in Calgary go through the program, with program alumni now holding key positions in organizations like CCPA, the Council of Canadians, and Lead Now across the country.

### ***Community Service Learning – U of A***

For a number of years Parkland partnered with the CSL spring immersion course to offer a public speaker series that ran in conjunction with the course. The theme of the series would be the same as the course (Oil and Community, Oil and the Arts, etc.), and both students and the public would be invited to participate. This provided a wonderful opportunity to connect students with experts from the community along with Parkland members and supporters.

### ***Public Events and Presentations***

In addition to the formal ongoing events listed above, Parkland also regularly hosts or co-hosts one-off events in response to emerging issues or to highlight a visiting academic, author, or speaker. In Edmonton these events are usually held on the U of A campus and regularly draw audiences of 50 to 100 people. In Calgary and other centres around the province these events are held in a variety of venues, and draw similar crowds. Some of the noteworthy events from the past five years, outside of presentations by Parkland report authors, include events with Maude Barlow, Asbjorn Wahl, Vandana Shiva, Allison Pollock, Jane Kelsey, Dr. Michael Rachlis, Andrew Nikiforuk, and many others.

Parkland staff are also regularly invited to speak at academic, union, community, and advocacy events around the province, and occasionally in other parts of the country. On average staff are doing 3 or 4 of these presentations every month during the programming year. These presentations provide an opportunity to share Parkland's work and research broadly, and also provide a platform for ongoing network and collaboration with other organizations, institutes, and academics.

Parkland's staff researchers, director, and executive director are also frequent presenters and guest-lecturers at high schools and in undergraduate and graduate level courses at universities and colleges around the province, particularly at the U of A, U of C, and MacEwan, and at Old Scona and Jasper Place high schools.

### ***Edmonton Life-long Learners Association (ELLA)***

In the spring of 2014 Parkland Institute was invited to present a course at the ELLA spring school. ELLA

and the Faculty of Extension collaborate every year to develop a three week series of courses covering a range of topics, delivered by academics, for adults over 50 years of age. Each course runs every day for the three week period, and includes 15 hours of instruction time. Parkland’s 2014 ELLA course was titled Alberta as Petro-State, and was team taught Trevor Harrison, Shannon Stunden Bower, David Campanella, and Ricardo Acuña. The course had 69 students in it and covered a significant amount of information, mostly from Parkland research. The formal evaluations have not been received yet, but verbal feedback received both from students in the course and from the ELLA organizers has been tremendously positive. Parkland is hoping to make this a part of its annual programming calendar.

## 4. Parkland’s Impact

### *Academic*

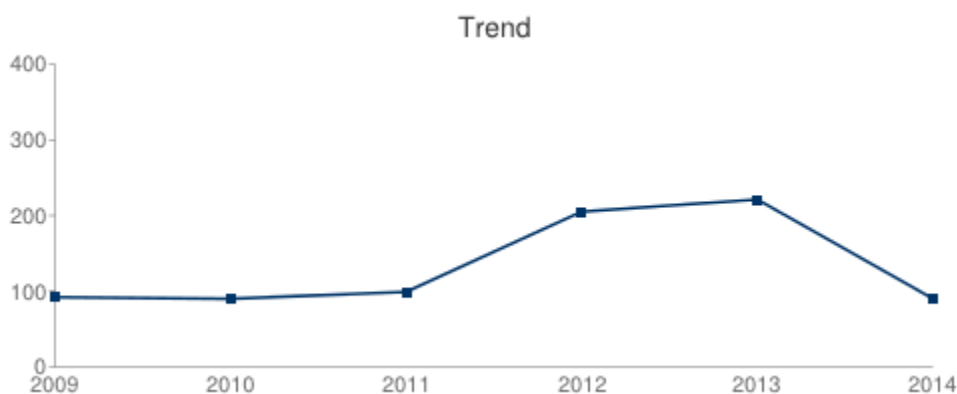
A search of Google Scholar yields 210 results for Parkland Institute in the period 2008 – 2014. Many of these represent multiple citations for specific Parkland reports and other publications. We also regularly have requests for inclusion of Parkland reports, books, and op-ed on the reading lists for various courses at post-secondary institutions across Canada and even some in the United States.

### *Media*

Since January 1, 2009 Parkland Institute has recorded 499 mentions in various media outlets around the country (full raw media hits report is on USB key). These include, as would be expected, a significant number of hits on mainstream media outlets in Alberta (Edmonton Journal, Calgary Herald, Red Deer Advocate, Lethbridge Herald, Fort McMurray Today, CBC radio, local television stations, etc.), but it also includes a number of mentions, stories, op-eds, and coverage of our research from outlets as diverse as the Globe and Mail, the Winnipeg Free Press, the Business News Network (BNN), the Toronto Star, St. John’s Telegram, Sun newspapers, and rural Alberta weeklies from around the province.

Of those 499 media mentions, 44 were op-ed pieces written by Parkland staff and researchers that were published in mainstream media outlets across the country. Part of Parkland’s ongoing communications strategy is to publish, on average, one op-ed per month in a major newspaper during the Institute’s programming year (September – April) as a way of promoting and disseminating the institute’s research, contributing to public discourse, and promoting the institute.

The following graph, which takes those 499 media hits and plots them by calendar year, shows the growth that Parkland Institute has experienced over the past five years in terms of media profile and presence:



## ***Social Media***

Social media also forms an important part of Parkland Institute's communications and dissemination strategies. Parkland Institute has a strong presence on both Facebook and on Twitter, with both those social media sites being used to promote our research, advertise events, encourage engagement, and of course, direct traffic to the institute's main website. Parkland also maintains an email contact management database containing over 3,000 distinct e-mail addresses. E-mail blasts are sent out on average once a week promoting our research, media appearances, and events.

Here is an overview of Parkland's on-line presence:

Facebook Followers: 1,389

Twitter Followers: 1,484

E-mail cms addresses: 3,073

Parkland website average monthly visits: 3,400 (up 36% from 5 years ago)

## ***Alberta Legislature***

Parkland Institute has been referenced 64 times in the Alberta Legislature since April 1, 2008. Most of those references have been in the context of Parkland research being used in the formulation of questions and statements by members of the opposition or of a Parkland research report being tabled in the Assembly. Parkland researchers are regularly invited to brief opposition members and to present research and information to various legislative committees and consultation processes. In the last five years Parkland has presented or participated in consultations on taxation reform, water markets, the social policy framework, a provincial savings strategy, inequality, and most recently on the social innovation endowment.

## ***5. Finances***

As a trust unit at the University of Alberta, Parkland must be able to fundraise enough revenues to cover all of its research, programming, and operational costs every year. The Institute receives important in-kind support from the Faculty of Arts at the U of A in the form of office space and access to the university's administrative infrastructure. The Office of the Provost and VP Academic also provides an annual amount of \$12,000 to help cover the travel expenses of the Institute's Director, Trevor Harrison, from Lethbridge to Edmonton on a regular basis.

Parkland's revenue has shown steady growth over the course of the last five years, climbing from an amount of \$405,694 in the 2008-2009 fiscal year to an amount of \$525,053 in the 2013-2014 fiscal year.

The Institute's revenues in its most recent fiscal year came from the following sources:

- Individual Donations: \$ 79,218 (15%)
- Organizational Donations: \$ 176,897 (34%)
- Fundraising Revenue: \$ 32,720 (6%)
- Endowment Allocation: \$ 49,980 (10%)
- Programming Revenue/Sponsorships: \$ 82,369 (16%)
- Research Donations: \$ 103,859 (20%)

Despite the Institute's steady growth in overall revenue, Parkland has struggled to see significant growth within the category of individual donations. The Institute's hopes that the U of A Advancement department will be able to offer support over the coming year to institute a strong individual donor and major gift program.

In terms of expenses, Parkland continues to dedicate most of its available funds toward staffing and research costs. The break-down of expenses in the most recent fiscal year is as follows:

- Core Staffing: \$222,524
- U of A Admin Assessment: \$11,530
- Administrative Expenses: \$15,373
- Programming Expenses: \$82,031
- Research Expenses: \$228,709

The Institute's financial reports for the period of this review, as well as the draft budget for the 2014-2015 fiscal year, are all included with the documents on the USB key.

## *6. Staffing*

Parkland's current staffing component consists of the following:

Trevor Harrison, Director – single course release from U of L  
Ricardo Acuña, Executive Director – full-time  
Shannon Stunden Bower, Research Director – full-time  
David Campanella, Public Policy Research Manager – full-time (Calgary)  
Lindsey Yao, Admin Coordinator – full-time (currently on mat leave)  
Sharlene Oliver, Promotions and Outreach – half-time

The Institute also often hires contract researchers for specific projects and a conference/special events coordinator as needed on a casual basis.

## *7. Governance*

Parkland Institute has recently completed a review of its constitution, and made the changes necessary to be in compliance with the U of A's Policy on Centres and Institutes and to ensure maximum effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency in the Institute's governance.

The Institute is now governed by an Executive Committee consisting of the Institute's Director, the co-chair of Parkland's Advisory Board, and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts (or designate). The Dean is the only voting member of the Executive Committee, and acts on advice from an advisory board that is appointed by the Executive based on the following criteria:

- The board will have 20 members, 10 of whom will be from the academic community (broadly defined) and 10 of whom will be from the community (representing Parkland's diverse stakeholders and target audiences)
- The 10 academic board members will be selected from the following institutions: U of A (2), U of C (2), U of L (2), Athabasca U (2), other universities and colleges (2).
- The 10 community board members will be selected from the following categories: a public sector union, a private sector union, Health Sciences Association of Alberta, United Nurses

of Alberta, Alberta College of Social Workers, Alberta Teachers' Association, Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, three individuals from the community-at-large.

- Associate board membership (voice but no vote) will be granted to the Alberta Federation of Labour, Public Interest Alberta, and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

The new constitution was just approved in the winter of 2014. A board slate will be presented to the meeting of the Parkland Executive Committee in mid-June 2014 for approval.

The Director of Parkland Institute is appointed by the Dean of Arts, on the advice of the Board, for a minimum 3 year term. The current Director, Trevor Harrison, is currently in the middle of a five-year term.

A copy of the Parkland Institute Constitution is included on the USB key.

## *8. Looking Forward*

In the winter of 2013 the Parkland Institute embarked on a comprehensive strategic visioning and planning process. As part of that process, Board committees and staff have been looking at all aspects of the Institute's work (research, programming, communications, finances and administration) with an eye to ensuring maximum effectiveness, growth, and sustainability in the years to come. A significant part of this process involves not only looking at each individual area of work, but also assessing how best to allocate our resources between areas—determining what balance between research, programming, communications, and fundraising would serve the institute's vision and mandate best. This process will be picked up by the new board in the 2014-2015 fiscal year, with clear decisions and a plan in place by the end of the fiscal year.

We have recently been informed by two of our staffers, research manager David Campanella and outreach and promotions coordinator Sharlene Oliver, that they will be departing Parkland over the course of this summer. Although both of these fabulous staff members will be missed, Parkland Institute will not be immediately replacing these positions, opting instead to wait until the strategic planning process is further along and we can ensure that we are hiring in accordance with that plan. Despite this decision, the Institute is confident that it will be able to continue to produce top quality research, promote the values and objectives of the Faculty of Arts and the University of Alberta, and remain financially viable well into the future.