



County of Wetaskiwin No. 10

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Strong Proactive Leadership • Safe Progressive Communities

October 8, 2019

Honourable Jason Kenney
Premier. President of Executive Council
Office of the Premier
Executive Branch
307 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2B6

Dear Premier:

RE: Police Cost Model Review

The County of Wetaskiwin has been made aware of proposed changes to police funding currently being considered by the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, in conjunction with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. The Government of Alberta has requested feedback from municipal officials regarding these changes and the resulting proposed police costing model through an online survey; please consider this correspondence as additional feedback to the information that has thus far been provided to municipalities.

The information we have received has created immense concern for both County Council and Administration with respect to ensuring that an effective and efficient level of police service is guaranteed for the citizens and residents we proudly serve. Under these proposed changes, there is a significant possibility that the level of service our ratepayers receive will sharply decrease, while the costs they incur to fund that service will sharply increase.

The County of Wetaskiwin recognizes that, during the 2019 Election, the United Conservative Party election platform stated that, if elected, a UCP government would “consult with municipalities on the province’s funding formula for police services...”. We are also aware that Minister Schweitzer is currently engaged in a “Talking Rural Crime” tour in various communities across the province, and that police funding is an important component of the overall rural crime conversation. However, the consultation process on this funding review has so far been extremely limited with a very narrow timeframe for feedback. The only formal engagements between municipal and provincial officials on the subject have been a webinar hosted by the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Municipal Affairs in early September, and dialogue sessions between provincial staff and representatives of the Rural Municipalities of

Alberta (RMA) and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA). As to direct consultation with Albertans, Minister Schweitzer's tour has so far been the only significant example, and the extent to which police funding has been discussed in this tour is unknown. A lack of consultation for the rural public on significant issues has been lacking under previous governments, and it was hoped by many of the individuals we represent that consultation would improve under this government. To be blunt, the level of consultation thus far on this highly important issue for rural municipalities has been completely unacceptable.

The Government of Alberta contends that these proposed changes to police funding will actually increase the level of police service received by rural residents. However, the fact that rural and smaller urban municipalities will now essentially be responsible for paying a portion of police costs currently shouldered by the provincial government leads the County to seriously question this. Under the proposed model, costs of anywhere between \$390,000 to \$1,800,000 will be effectively downloaded onto the County of Wetaskiwin to pay for a current level of service from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). From the perspective of County, the RCMP, and even the Rural Crime Strategy of your party, the current level of service is considered woefully inadequate. The severe burden of these costs would almost certainly lead to the County of Wetaskiwin having to reconsider current crime reduction initiatives that are providing an enhanced level of service to County residents and serve as an indirect way of funding rural policing. This includes the hiring of an Enhanced RCMP Member and Crime Analyst at a cost of \$270,000 annually, which is fully paid for by the County and not eligible for reduction of applicable costs under the current proposed model. Additionally, the County currently employs three (3) Community Peace Officers (CPOs) that assist our law enforcement partners in the areas of road protection, traffic safety and enforcement, public safety, and other important initiatives. Due to the costs associated with the proposed funding changes, the effectiveness of our CPO program will almost certainly be diminished, and the overall level of service provided to County residents will significantly decrease.

During the webinar between provincial and municipal staff on this issue, participants were informed that, in order to ensure that costs imposed on rural and small urban municipalities would result in increased service, municipalities would be given a right of input in the Annual Performance Plans of RCMP Detachments in their area. The County of Wetaskiwin would like to note that municipalities have been able to provide such input for several years now, and that such input provides no guarantees for equitable and adequate rural policing services. This is particularly true for rural and smaller urban municipalities that share detachment areas with larger urban communities, especially those that operate under a "POST System" where Provincial and Municipal RCMP Members are combined. In these areas, one (1) of which contains the County of Wetaskiwin, most requests for service typically come from urban residents. Since calls are not prioritized based on the level of funding provided by each municipality, the fact that rural and smaller urban municipalities will now have to pay directly for policing will not guarantee a more equitable level of service. Significant steps will need to be taken by the provincial government to ensure that these funding changes result in equitable and effective levels of service.

During the 2019 election, one of the major items that rural Albertans supported, including those within the County, was an increased commitment by the Government of Alberta to providing

resources to tackle rural crime. By effectively downloading a large proportion of frontline policing costs onto rural and smaller urban municipalities, this government is transferring the financial burden of policing to rural residents. At best, this is without any demonstrable increase in the level of service and, at worst, this will result in a significant decrease in the level of service. The County of Wetaskiwin strongly believes that the Government of Alberta under your leadership should support rural Albertans in effectively tackling rural crime and maintain your commitment to a significant amount of the population that supported the United Conservative Party in forming government. Rural Alberta is an immensely important segment of this Province and should be supported and treated as such.

If there are any questions or concerns regarding the position of the County of Wetaskiwin, please advise. The County of Wetaskiwin hopes that the Government of Alberta does take our concerns seriously and look forward to a solution that supports all citizens that enjoy a quality rural lifestyle in the County of Wetaskiwin and throughout Alberta.

Yours sincerely,



Terry Van de Kraats
Reeve

:bc

cc: Honourable Doug Schweitzer, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Honourable Kaycee Madu, Minister of Municipal Affairs
Honourable Rick Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations, MLA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin
Honourable Jason Nixon, Minister of Environment and Parks, MLA, Rimbey-Rocky
Mountain House-Sundre
Mr. Al Kemmere, President, Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA)
Deputy Commissioner Curtis Zablocki, Commanding Officer, Royal Canadian Mounted
Police (RCMP) K Division
Inspector Keith Durance, RCMP Wetaskiwin Detachment
Staff Sergeant Harpreet Dhaliwal, RCMP Breton & Thorsby Detachments