



ALBERTA  
PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

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Office of the Minister  
MLA, Calgary-West

AR 53390

February 23, 2023

Her Worship Cathy Heron  
Mayor, City of Saint Albert  
President, Alberta Municipalities  
#300, 8616 - 51 Avenue  
Edmonton AB T6E 6E6  
[president@abmunis.ca](mailto:president@abmunis.ca)

Dear Mayor Heron:

Thank you for your letter, sent as president and on behalf of Alberta Municipalities, dated November 8, 2022, regarding the provincial changes to victim services announced July 19, 2022, and scheduled for implementation by April 1, 2024.

In your letter you note that at your fall Convention you provided your members with the opportunity to submit resolutions on issues of importance to them. This fall, the Town of Canmore presented a motion for a resolution, seconded by the Town of Tofield, pertaining to the new regional governance model for police-based Victim Services Units (VSUs) for smaller, rural, and remote communities. You have included this resolution as an attachment to your letter.

*IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the Government of Alberta to halt the rollout of the new victim services model and initiate a new engagement process that fully involves municipalities of all sizes, ensures downloading to municipalities does not occur, explores how the current model could be maintained and adapted, and includes support for victims of tragedy.*

Subsequent to our receipt of your letter and resolution, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister of Strategy, Support and Integrated Initiatives, Alex Thompson, and Director of Victim Services for the Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Services, Trent Forsberg, met personally with Dan Rude, Chief Executive Officer for Alberta Municipalities, and members of his executive team on November 23, 2022.

During this meeting, our representatives were able to discuss specific questions, concerns, and suggestions from Alberta Municipalities, as well as address items specific to the noted resolution. The meeting proved to be informative on both sides, provided some valuable insights for our redesign and implementation team, and gave government opportunity to express an ongoing commitment to move forward in collaboration with Alberta's municipalities.

With that said, I have also heard from many municipalities directly about concerns with the redesign initiative. Some of the recurring themes appear to be based on inaccurate or incomplete information provided by sources other than our redesign representatives, and some of these themes are represented within your resolution. I would like to provide clarification on a number of those points.

**Will government provide an engagement process that fully involves municipalities of all sizes?**

The MLA-led review of victims services took place over 2020/21 and involved many participants including the Rural Municipalities of Alberta and the Alberta Municipalities. Other individuals and organizations engaged during this period included MLAs from across the political spectrum, volunteers and staff at police-based VSUs, victim-serving community organizations, a variety of police service representatives, the RCMP, legal experts and Indigenous organizations. Alberta held about 40 engagement sessions, with around 150 stakeholders and organizations attending. The victim services redesign is based on feedback received during these engagements and reflects the final report and recommendations of the MLA-led review.

Immediately following our July 19, 2022 public announcement, in an effort to provide further detailed information and answer specific questions, the Government of Alberta victim services redesign team began a series of large online engagement sessions with stakeholders and partners. These sessions continued through to the end of September. In addition, the team also began scheduling individual meetings with affected and/or interested groups and specific municipalities. These meetings are ongoing, and will continue through to implementation and beyond as required, and have already been instrumental in informing improvements to the model.

You will be pleased to note as well, that the redesign team has recently invited current frontline victim services unit personnel to participate in a number of virtual advisory groups. They will be working with our internal redesign team members on some of the many detailed and nuanced questions and suggestions already provided to government through engagement sessions and by way of letters received by my office. The response to this request for operational expertise and assistance has been overwhelming and we anticipate that these advisory groups will begin this important work early in the new year.

**Will this new model ensure that no downloading to municipalities will occur, and will it include support for victims of tragedy?**

Under the current model, some municipalities augment local VSUs by issuing municipal grants. In addition, some VSUs organize fund-raising events to supplement their operating budgets and/or to provide a response for non-criminal events. I am pleased to advise that the redesign team has taken this into consideration, and that the approved budget for the new regional governance model for victim services is inclusive of these amounts. This means that municipal grants and fund-raising initiatives will no longer be necessary for municipalities that are participating in the new model. Provincial operational funding will cover a fulsome system of service delivery, inclusive of a response model for non-criminal events that will be more consistent across all detachments and in all communities throughout the province.

I would like to reassure you again that the move to a regional governance model for police-based VSUs has always been intended to improve the consistency, stability, and continuity of services received by victims of crime. It was also designed to ensure that all victims would continue to be supported locally, by dedicated workers and volunteers from within and around their own communities. There was not ever an intention to remove victim service workers from communities.

These changes to victim services in Alberta are an exciting step forward to ensure victims in our province have the help they need when they need it most. Over the next year, we will continue to work closely with municipalities and Indigenous and rural communities to design and implement the new service delivery model. To ensure that you continue to have the most accurate and up to date information about the new victim services redesign, I encourage you to maintain direct contact with the Director of Victim Services Trent Forsberg at [Trent.Forsberg@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Trent.Forsberg@gov.ab.ca). He would be happy meet with you should you have any future questions, concerns, or suggestions. We look forward to continuing to engage with Alberta's municipalities on this important initiative.

Sincerely,



Honourable Mike Ellis, ECA  
Minister

cc: Trent Forsberg, Director, Victims Services, Strategy, Support and Integrated Initiatives