



ALBERTA

JOBS, ECONOMY AND TRADE

Office of the Minister  
MLA, Calgary-South East

AR 84858

December 18, 2023

Mr. Tyler Gandam  
President  
Alberta Municipalities  
300, 8616 - 51 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T6E 6E6

Dear Mr. Gandam:

Thank you for your October 30, 2023, letter regarding your request for a review and response to three of your organization's 2023 resolutions. As Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade, I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

**B7 – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Coverage for Community Peace Officers Under the *Workers' Compensation Act* (WCA)**

Alberta's government supports the mental health and wellbeing of all Alberta community peace officers and the vital role they play in keeping our municipalities safe and secure. Our government values their contributions and dedication and wants all workers with work-related psychological injuries to have reliable access to the help they need.

Currently, the presumption for psychological injuries including PTSD is available to first responders, including peace officers as defined in the WCA, correctional officers, and emergency dispatchers. Under WCA, "peace officer" means an individual appointed as a peace officer under Section 7 of the *Peace Officer Act* who is authorized by that appointment to use the title "sheriff". Only sheriffs are eligible for the psychological injury and PTSD presumptions under WCA. A presumption means the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) presumes the injury is work-related when adjudicating the claim. It does not guarantee claim acceptance. It simplifies the claim process by eliminating steps required to link a diagnosis to the occupation.

Even without a presumption, workers' compensation benefits for psychological injuries are available to all workers through the usual WCB claim process. This means peace officers who are not sheriffs may be eligible for benefits through the regular claim process. At this time, no changes to the WCA or regulations are being considered. However, your suggestion has been noted and will help inform future legislation review.

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## **B-16 – Provincial Support for Downtowns, Business Districts and Main Streets**

Alberta's government is committed to making stronger municipalities across the province. As part of the COVID-19 pandemic recovery in Budget 2022, the Government of Alberta allocated \$10 million to assist in downtown revitalization in both Calgary and Edmonton. The City of Edmonton and the City of Calgary each received a grant of \$4 million and their Downtown Business Associations each received a grant of \$1 million to support revitalization initiatives. Alberta's government recognizes that issues identified in Calgary and Edmonton are shared with many other municipalities. The programs listed below are intended to support the recovery and further development of Alberta's communities.

Through the Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF), the province has committed to delivering substantial financial support to Alberta municipalities. This new infrastructure grant program will replace the existing Municipal Sustainability Initiative in 2024/2025.

The LGFF will start at a baseline funding level of \$722 million in 2024/2025 and will increase to \$820 million in 2025/2026. This reflects the program's requirement that funding will change at the same rate as the change in provincial revenues from three years previous. While final decisions on project eligibility have not been made, streetscape improvement projects contributing to downtown vitality, such as signs, street lighting and sidewalks, are anticipated to continue being eligible under the new framework.

Municipalities are also expected to have flexibility to direct LGFF funding toward projects supporting existing and new businesses, and industrial districts, including rehabilitation and construction of road, water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure.

Additionally, municipal councils may pass a bylaw to form a Business Improvement Area (BIA) to advance commercial vibrancy in a specific area. BIAs may be established to improve, beautify and maintain property in the area; develop, improve and maintain public parking; or promote the area for business or shopping.

Finally, the Community Revitalization Levy (CRL) program is a financial tool, which can be used to revitalize an area where redevelopment is hindered due to significant and persistent barriers. By forgoing the collection of education property tax on the incremental property assessment growth in a CRL, the province supports municipalities in investing in redevelopment of a CRL area and advancing opportunities to spur economic growth and development. In 2022, the CRL program was revised and reopened to new applications.

For more details on the LGFF or CRL, I encourage you to reach out to my colleague, the Honourable Ric McIver, Minister of Municipal Affairs.

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Alberta also provides a range of small business supports, including a wayfinding service called Biz Connect ([alberta.ca/small-business-resources](https://alberta.ca/small-business-resources)), which provides referrals to relevant organizations. Typical referrals include partner organizations such as Alberta Business Link and Futurpreneur for business advice, guidance and mentorship; government grants and programs such as the Canada-Alberta Job Grant; financial institutions and non-profit organizations offering loans; and targeted supports for minority groups (e.g., women, newcomers, Indigenous or youth entrepreneurs), business type (e.g., social enterprise) or business phase (e.g., start-ups).

With respect to small businesses' repayment of federal Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) loans, the province is directing small businesses to share their concerns with the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, the federal Minister of Finance, and to contact the CEBA Call Centre at 1-888-324-4201. We have requested the federal government share regional CEBA data to support engagement with the business community and industry partners. Additionally, on October 20, 2023, Premier Smith and her counterparts from across the country sent a joint letter to the Government of Canada urging that government to provide additional time to allow businesses to take advantage of the loan forgiveness option in addition to extending CEBA loan for another year.

### **C7- Trade Agreement Impacts on Municipal Procurement Processes**

The New West Partnership Trade Agreement (NWPTA) establishes rules governing trade in goods and services, investment, procurement, subsidies, and labour mobility among the four western provinces. It was designed to open more trade between the four parties than can be achieved nationally, under agreements such as the Canada Free Trade Agreement (CFTA). NWPTA creates a market of over 12 million people and a Gross Domestic Product of more than \$757 billion (2022).

Alberta's government continues to encourage other provinces to join the NWPTA as the most comprehensive trade agreement in Canada. The province will raise the possibility of adjusting thresholds with other NWPTA parties; however, all decisions to amend the agreement require consent of all four signatories.

Thank you again for taking the time to write. I hope this information will be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,



Honourable Matt Jones  
Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade

cc: Honourable Ric McIver  
Minister of Municipal Affairs