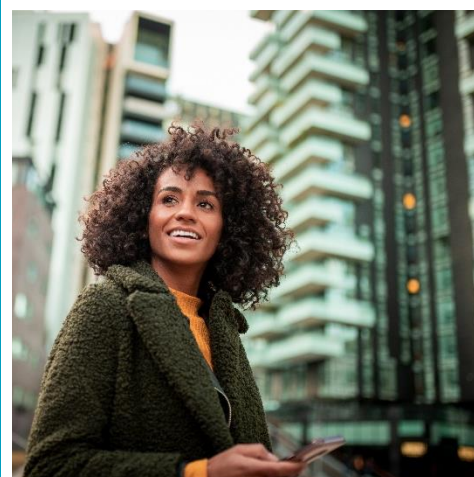


2024 Resolutions Book



 **Alberta
Municipalities**
Strength
In Members

Post Convention Results
September 27, 2024

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About Resolutions

Alberta Municipalities (ABmunis) conducts an annual resolutions process that enables member municipalities to bring forward common issues and solutions and seek member approval to give direction to ABmunis' Board of Directors to advocate to the federal and provincial governments on members' behalf.

This process includes a resolutions session at ABmunis' annual Convention where Regular Members vote on resolutions that have been submitted by members. When a resolution is adopted by members, ABmunis takes action to develop and implement an advocacy strategy for each resolution.

As set out in ABmunis' [Resolutions Policy](#), for a resolution to be presented at ABmunis' Convention, the resolution must:

- address a topic of concern affecting municipalities on a regional or provincial level,
- be approved by the council of the sponsoring municipality, and
- be seconded by an additional municipal council of different sized population.

A resolution must not direct one or more municipalities to adopt a particular course of action or policy but must be worded as a request for consideration of an issue, including a call for action by ABmunis.

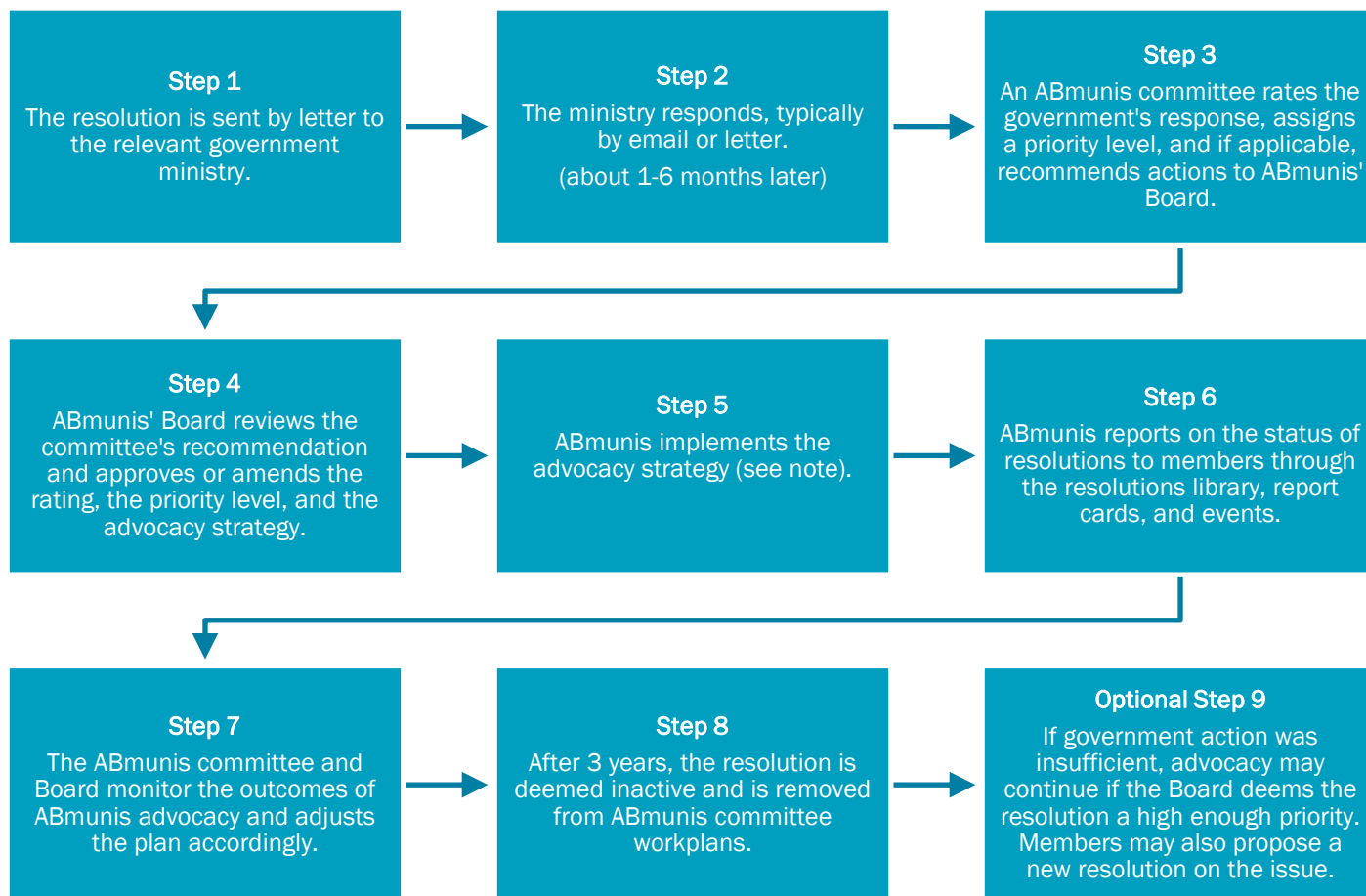
About this Resolutions Book

This document summarizes the results of member voting on the 2024 resolutions, which took place at ABmunis' 2024 Convention in Red Deer on September 26, 2024. All adopted resolutions are considered active for a three-year period.

Due to the high number of resolutions and length of debate on some resolutions, the allocated time for the 2024 Resolutions Session ended before members could debate and vote on six resolutions. Per section 45 of ABmunis' Resolution Policy, resolutions which are not debated at a Resolutions Session are to be considered by ABmunis' Board following the Convention. This applies to the six resolutions listed under the section labeled "Outstanding Resolutions". An update on this process will be shared with members following the Board's October 2024 meeting.



What happens after members adopt a resolution?



Note: ABmunis' advocacy strategy will differ depending on the priority of the issue. If the Board deems a resolution to be a low priority, ABmunis will monitor the issue but may not take other action after sending the initial letter to the government. Whereas a resolution that is considered a high priority may lead to an advocacy strategy such as sending additional letters, seeking a meeting with a minister, premier, or senior staff, conduct research, strike an ad hoc working group, collaborate with other stakeholder organizations, engage media, conduct a public social media campaign, encourage members to take specific action, or other initiatives.

Status of previous resolutions

All resolutions that have been voted on by members over the previous fifteen years are posted in the [Resolutions Library](#) on ABmunis' website. The Resolution Library summarizes:

- the resolution,
- the response and any actions by the government,
- ABmunis' rating on whether the intent of the resolution has been met,
- ABmunis' rating on the priority of the issue, and
- ABmunis' actions to advocate for the issue.

The status of resolutions can also be viewed through ABmunis' new annual [resolution report cards](#).

2024 RESOLUTIONS

**Adopted:
Active Resolutions**

B1: Independent Office of Integrity for Local Government

Moved by: Town of Rocky Mountain House
 Seconded by: Town of Sylvan Lake, Town of Legal
 Category: B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
 Subject: Governance
 Status: **Adopted - Active**

WHEREAS the Municipal Government Act requires that municipalities must establish a code of conduct bylaw which governs the conduct of councillors with the intent to build and inspire public trust and confidence in local government by upholding high standards;

WHEREAS there is an inherent conflict in that fellow council members have to determine and enforce the actions of their peers in a structure that needs to be cooperative and collaborative for effective governance;

WHEREAS responsible conduct of elected officials, both individually and collectively as a council, is essential to sound, fair and effective governance;

WHEREAS the current structure of code of conduct legislation places the chief administrative officer and other municipal administration in a difficult position as they are tasked with hiring an investigator and coordinating the investigation of individuals who oversee their compensation and employment;

WHEREAS it would be fairer and more impartial if a third party assessed and determined if a code of conduct complaint was valid and if so, conducted the investigation and recommended appropriate actions warranted by any breach; and

WHEREAS local governments are best served by resources and tools that reflect the legislative framework for local government in Alberta, which is based on democracy, transparency and accountability.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the provincial government to establish an Independent Office of Integrity to serve the public, elected officials and local government officials in an advisory, educational and investigative role in the application and enforcement of council code of conducts.

BACKGROUND:

The sections of the Municipal Government Act (MGA) in regard to code of conducts came into force October 26, 2017, giving municipalities until July 23, 2018 to establish a code of conduct bylaw.

Under the previous MGA there was no requirements for a code of conduct and councillor conduct was addressed locally.

Municipalities can't remove councillors from office, but councillors can use codes of conduct to remove other councillors from committees and exclude them from some meetings. But councillors on the receiving end of those judgments argue that power can be wielded sometimes inappropriately.

Councils need to work collaboratively and cooperatively to effectively govern. This requires a concerted effort of working together and becoming a team that is respectful to each other and accepting different opinions. A code of conduct complaint can be counterintuitive to this essential aspect of a council in that it places council members in quasi-judicial role on a peer.

While the principle of code of conduct bylaws is important, it is just as important that it is implemented in a fair and unbiased manner. The creation of an independent third party such as an integrity office would alleviate this,

whereas the office would evaluate and determine if a breach occurred, investigate and recommend disciplinary actions that are suitable to the breach.

The establishment of an inquiry office would also remove administration from being involved in any code of conduct process. This reinforces the dichotomy of council and municipal administration and potential conflict between the two.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

There has been no previous resolution on the matter; however, based on significant input from members, ABmunis has used previous provincial consultations on the MGA to recommend the creation of an independent office. In June 2024, ABmunis met with the Premier and Minister of Municipal Affairs who were both receptive to the idea. This led to Municipal Affairs using its July 2024 consultations on the development of regulations related to the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act (Bill 20) to include questions on how an Integrity Commissioner's Office could be structured, its extent of power, and the funding source. The approval of this resolution would provide further confirmation that ABmunis' members support the creation of an independent body to serve municipal councils in the investigation and recommendation of sanctions related to code of conduct violations.

B2: Allowance of Automated Vote Counting Systems in Municipal Elections

Moved by: City of St. Albert
 Seconded by: Town of Rocky Mountain House
 Category: B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
 Subject: Governance
 Status: **Adopted - Active**

WHEREAS the timely, accurate and efficient operation of municipal elections is essential to uphold the principles of democratic integrity and effective local government;

WHEREAS municipalities across Alberta have historically employed a variety of vote counting methods, ranging from manual counting of ballots to the use of automated vote counting systems that count paper ballots, that best enable them to facilitate local elections based on the unique demographics and structure of their municipality;

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta’s Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 repeals the section of the Local Authorities Election Act that enables the use of automated vote counting systems, necessitating that municipalities solely employ the manual counting of ballots in future local elections, thereby running counter to the core principle of enabling local decision-making;

WHEREAS a municipal electoral ballot can contain many different votes, including a vote for mayor, multiple councillors, school board trustees, senate candidate nominations, and referendum or plebiscite questions, the complexity of which can both increase the risk of human error and the time required to complete a manual count;

WHEREAS municipalities have utilized automated vote counting systems at their discretion to effectively mitigate the complexity and time required to count ballots in order to produce accurate, reliable and timely election results;

WHEREAS the previous Local Authorities Election Act and current municipal bylaws include stringent, effective and tested regulations for the use of automated vote counting systems, in addition to the allowance of manual re-counts, which have ensured fair, accurate and authentic local elections for many election cycles;

WHEREAS the requirement of manual ballot counting will impose a financial burden on municipalities that have previously relied on automated vote counting systems, limit the ability to provide accurate, timely and reliable results, and increase the risk of delayed results and errors; and

WHEREAS some municipalities have not utilized manual vote counting in years or decades and would therefore incur significant risk in adapting alternative vote counting processes without precedent or corporate expertise, thereby increasing the likelihood of delayed results, errors, and cost escalation.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta to permit municipalities to utilize the vote counting system of their choice in the operation of their local elections, including automated vote counting systems, to ensure accurate, cost-effective and timely results for Albertan voters.

BACKGROUND:

On April 25th, 2024, the Government of Alberta tabled Bill 20, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, which makes substantive changes to the Local Authorities Election Act (LAEA). The bill repealed section 84 of the LAEA, which stated:

84(1). An elected authority may by bylaw provide for the taking of the votes of electors by means of voting machines, vote recorders or automated voting systems.

Further stipulations within this section referenced the allowance of electronic voting tabulators and included stringent requirements and regulations for the use of such equipment.

Bill 20 replaced this section with the following:

84. A local jurisdiction shall not provide for the taking or counting of votes by means of voting machines, vote recorders, automated voting systems or tabulators.

Many municipalities have used automated vote counting systems – such as electronic tabulators– over a large number of election cycles. These systems typically involve a voter filling out a paper ballot, which is then deposited in an electronic tabulator that records their votes; the technology utilized is similar to “scantron” automated test scoring systems that are used for educational exams in schools and post-secondary institutions across Alberta. Once a paper ballot’s votes have been recorded by the electronic tabulator, the paper ballot remains accessible should any errors or close results necessitate a manual re-count of the ballots.

The use of such systems allows for the effective and timely counting of ballots, some of which can contain over a dozen different individual votes, including votes for mayor, multiple councillors, school board trustees, senate nominees, provincial referendums, and local plebiscites. For example, in the City of St. Albert’s 2021 election, over 17,500 individual ballots were cast, with each ballot containing 7 separate votes, and 17 candidates elected or referendum questions answered out of over 50 options. Similar complex ballot dynamics exist among many municipalities in Alberta.

The previous LAEA enabled the use of automated vote counting systems at a municipality’s discretion, and also placed regulatory stipulations and requirements for their use; municipalities that utilized the equipment often included stricter stipulations for its use within their own election-regulating bylaws. The City of St. Albert’s Municipal Elections Bylaw 20/2017, for example, includes the following regulations:

- Requirements that the automated vote counting system has been tested, is in good working order and will provide accurate results;
- Requirements that the integrity of the automated vote counting system is protected through security measures designed to prevent unauthorized access or tampering of the system;
- Regulations for contingencies should an automated vote counting system malfunction.

Automated vote counting systems also allow for increased reliability and voter confidence in the use of complex ballots. For example, the City of St. Albert’s local election processes enable a voter to place their own marked paper ballot in an electronic tabulator; should the tabulator identify an error on the ballot, the voter will be given an opportunity to request a new ballot, ensuring that their votes are counted. Such contingencies and allowances would not be possible with a manual count, which would necessitate a degree of subjectivity to interpret unclear or improperly marked ballots and thus increase the risk of votes not being counted and vote counting errors.

Municipalities that utilize automated vote counting equipment have also invested notable resources in their operation and regulation; for example, the City of St. Albert regulates the use of electronic tabulators in its Municipal Elections Bylaw¹ and signed a contract with a value of \$55,000 to utilize 31 tabulators in its most recent election. The requirement to utilize manual vote counting will require a broad overhaul of municipal bylaws that regulate elections in municipalities that have utilized automated vote counting systems and will necessitate the design and operation of new vote counting processes in addition to the contracting and/or training of vote counting personnel. Collectively, this will impose financial burdens on affected municipalities due to the resources required to enact an overhaul of this scale to design and employ a new electoral process.

Furthermore, the lack of recent precedence on the utilization of manual vote counting in addition to the lack of corporate knowledge will increase the risk of delay, errors and other related issues for municipalities that have not

¹ City of St. Albert – Municipal Elections Bylaw 20/2017

https://stalbert.ca/site/assets/files/30875/consolidated_municipal_elections_-_by_bylaw_25-2023.pdf

recently utilized manual vote counting to tabulate complex ballots, which could negatively impact the ability for municipalities to provide timely, effective, and efficient elections. Such delays and errors could undermine the trust of residents in their local government's ability to uphold the principles of democratic integrity and effective local government.

Allowing municipalities to employ the vote counting system of their choice and design – whether through a manual count or the use of electronic tabulating equipment – will ensure that they can provide reliable, accurate, and timely elections for their residents, and will maintain the tradition of trust in the municipal electoral process that has been held by Albertans for generations. Furthermore, the autonomy to make a decision such as this is best suited to occur locally, amongst those who know and understand their communities the greatest.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

When the Government of Alberta introduced Bill 20, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 during the spring 2024 legislative session, Alberta Municipalities highlighted concerns with the removal of electronic tabulators amongst other concerns with Bill 20. The Government of Alberta has stated that the intent of removing the use of voting machines and tabulators is to increase trust in local election processes. If this resolution is approved, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response. Further advocacy would be recommended to the ABmunis' Board by the Municipal Governance Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

B3: Provincial Education Property Tax Reform

Moved by:	City of St. Albert
Seconded by:	Town of Penhold
Category:	B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
Subject:	Governance
Status:	Adopted - Active

WHEREAS local public infrastructure such as transportation, water/wastewater utilities, stormwater management, and other local priorities are vital to the sustainability of municipalities and the quality of life for Albertans such as recreation and community facilities;

WHEREAS municipalities across Alberta have highlighted the need for increased municipal infrastructure funding and alternative financing mechanisms and policies to maintain existing infrastructure, build new infrastructure, and support community growth, through the adoption of several associated resolutions at the 2023 Alberta Municipalities Convention;

WHEREAS provincial revenue-sharing with municipalities does not meet the need for local public infrastructure investment, as it has decreased from \$420 per Albertan in 2011 to \$186 in 2024, while municipalities face increasing fiscal pressures related to population growth and high inflation-driven construction costs¹;

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta’s 2024-27 Fiscal Plan expects that municipalities will collect over \$2.7 billion in provincial education property tax in 2024 on behalf of the province, and predicts this figure will grow by 4.3% a year to \$3 billion in 2026-27²;

WHEREAS on behalf of the Government of Alberta, municipalities collect \$1 billion more for provincial revenue via the provincial education property tax than what they receive in total provincial funding for municipal infrastructure via the Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF), competitive grant programs, and other one-time capital investments; and

WHEREAS the 2023 mandate letter for the Minister of Municipal Affairs directs the ministry to review the feasibility of amending the provincial education property tax to assist municipalities with retaining more funding for local priorities.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta to action the Minister of Municipal Affairs’ mandate letter from the Premier, to review the provincial education property tax to assist municipalities with retaining more funding for local priorities, with the outcome being that municipalities receive provincial funding for municipal infrastructure equal to or greater than what is collectively requisitioned in provincial education property tax on an annual basis for the Government of Alberta.

BACKGROUND:

The collection of the provincial education property tax by municipalities in its current form was established by the Government of Alberta in 1994. Based on equalized assessment value, the province calculates each year the amount of provincial education property taxes that a municipality must transfer to the Government of Alberta. Municipalities are subsequently responsible to calculate the amount of provincial education property taxes to be charged to each property based on their assessed property values. As the provincial education property tax is

¹ Alberta Municipalities – Preliminary Analysis on Alberta’s 2024 Budget, pg. 5 - <https://www.abmunis.ca/system/files/2024-03/ABmunis%20Preliminary%20Analysis%20on%20Alberta%27s%202024%20Budget.pdf>

² Government of Alberta’s 2024-27 Fiscal Plan, Page 63 - <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/23c82502-fd11-45c6-861f-99381ffc748/resource/3782cc8f-fdc4-4704-9c50-07fc36e05722/download/budget-2024-fiscal-plan-2024-27.pdf>

typically billed to residents in combination with their municipal property taxes, residents may be unaware that approximately 30% of their property tax bill is submitted to the province – it is a reasonable expectation that local property taxes billed by a municipality will fund the services and infrastructure needs within their local community.

The Government of Alberta's 2024-27 Fiscal Plan notes that municipalities are expected to collect \$2.7 billion worth of provincial education property tax in 2024-25, and that this revenue will grow by 4.4% per year to \$3 billion in 2026-27¹.

As the provincial education property tax is tied directly to property assessment values, growth in assessment and new development means that growing municipalities have seen their associated tax requisition increase in 2024 despite a provincial freeze on the tax rate. This increase is especially tangible for municipalities witnessing exceptional growth in development and assessment values, which in effect causes them to become victims of their own success as their provincial education property tax rates increase along with their growth in assessed property values.

The 2023 Mandate Letter for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs directed the Minister to “review the feasibility of amending the provincial education property tax to assist municipalities with retaining more funding for local priorities.” At the 2024 Alberta Municipalities Spring Municipal Leaders Caucus, Premier Danielle Smith noted that the Province will provide more public infrastructure funding to municipalities in 2024 – approximately \$3.6 billion total – than what municipalities collect in Education Property Tax, if all infrastructure spending is included in addition to LGFF allocations. Analysis by Alberta Municipalities found this assertion is accurate if inclusive of federal funding for local infrastructure allocated by the province and spending on provincially-owned highways and bridges; due to these funding allocations either being dissociated from provincial revenues and spending, or from funding municipally owned and operated infrastructure, a more accurate figure of \$1.73 billion is being spent on local infrastructure, which is \$1 billion less than what municipalities will collect in provincial education property tax in 2024².

Should the Government of Alberta reform the provincial education property tax and/or revenue sharing mechanisms with municipalities to be equal to or greater than what they collect in education property tax, the additional \$1 billion in funding would bridge the municipal infrastructure funding gap that exists when current LGFF Capital funding compared with historical funding for municipal public infrastructure³.

Reforming the education property tax in this manner would provide municipalities with the needed fiscal capacity to maintain and build infrastructure to support the quality of life Albertans expect from their local and provincial governments.

There may be some instances across Alberta Municipalities' membership base where individual municipalities currently receive more funding in provincial grants than what they collect in provincial education property tax. The active resolution clause has been worded to consider this factor, as the intent is not to lead to decreased funding for any municipality, but to be equal or greater than what they are individually requisitioned in provincial education property tax.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

Over the years, members have approved numerous resolutions on the issue of provincial property taxes with the most recent resolution in 2020, which called for the Government of Alberta to take over responsibility for the collection of provincial property taxes. The Government of Alberta's response was that the current system provides for the most efficient method of collecting provincial property taxes. Through the development of the Local

¹ Government of Alberta's 2024-27 Fiscal Plan, Page 63 - <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/23c82502-fd11-45c6-861f-99381fff748/resource/3782cc8f-fdc4-4704-9c50-07fc36e05722/download/budget-2024-fiscal-plan-2024-27.pdf>

² Alberta Municipalities – Breaking Down Alberta's Capital Support for Municipalities in 2024. <https://www.abmunis.ca/news/breaking-down-albertas-capital-support-municipalities-2024>

³ Alberta Municipalities: Let's Talk About Infrastructure - <https://www.abmunis.ca/advocacy-resources/infrastructure/lets-talk-about-infrastructure>

Government Fiscal Framework Capital program, ABmunis also highlighted and advocated against the growing gap between provincial property taxes and provincial capital funding provided to municipalities.

Since the release of the Premier's 2023 mandate letter, ABmunis has sought regular updates from ministers on the government's progress and to date has been informed that the review is still under work. If this resolution is passed, it will be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response. Further advocacy would be recommended to ABmunis' Board by the Municipal Governance Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

B4: Restoring Provincial Grants in Place of Taxes (GIPOT) Funding

Moved by: Town of High Prairie
Seconded by: Town of Mayerthorpe
Category: B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
Subject: Economic
Status: **Adopted - Active**

WHEREAS properties owned by the Government of Alberta are exempt from municipal property taxes, but the province provides a Grants in Place of Taxes (GIPOT) program to fund municipalities for the municipal services provided to provincial properties;

WHEREAS the Provincial budgets since 2019-2020 have made significant reductions in GIPOT funding to all municipalities across Alberta;

WHEREAS Budget 2024-25 has provided an increase of \$2.1 million in the GIPOT funding to reflect the rising assessment and construction of new provincial government infrastructure;

WHEREAS despite increases in Budget 2023 and Budget 2024, GIPOT’s 2024 budget of \$38.1 million is still well below past funding levels of \$60 million before the province cut the program budget in 2019-20; and

WHEREAS these reductions have placed an unfair and disproportionate burden on municipal ratepayers.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the reinstatement of full funding, at a minimum to the 2019/20 funding level of \$60 million, for all properties that are eligible for GIPOT.

BACKGROUND:

The provincial government reduced the GIPOT program by 25% in 2019/20 and a further 25% in 2020/21, for a total reduction of 50% compared to 2019/20. The overall program funding reductions related to these changes in the 2019/21 provincial budgets were significant, impacting almost all municipal units in Alberta. GIPOT’s 2024 budget of \$38.1 million is still well below past funding levels of \$60 million before the program cuts by the provincial government in 2019/20.

Historically the revenue flows to the municipalities were based on the taxes the Crown would pay if the properties were not exempt from taxation. This change in funding has effectively downloaded costs to the ratepayers within the municipalities.

This gap in provincial funding points to the need for the province to recognize the essential role that the day-to-day municipal services play in supporting provincial building and properties.

Both Alberta Municipalities and the Rural Municipalities of Alberta have been advocating for a more equitable and fair funding of properties which fall under the GIPOT classification.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES’ COMMENTS:

GIPOT funding has been a priority of ABmunis for many years dating back to 2016 when members were encouraged to participate in a letter writing campaign to express concerns with changes to the program. In recent years, ABmunis has highlighted how reductions in GIPOT are one of many examples of how hundreds of millions of dollars have been downloaded onto municipalities between 2017 and 2023. Overall, this resolution aligns with ABmunis’ advocacy on municipal financial health and municipal funding. If the resolution is passed, it will be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for a response and further advocacy recommended to ABmunis’ Board by the Municipal Governance Committee within the context of other priorities.

B5: Small and Remote Municipalities Need Regional Economic Development Alliances (REDAs) to Thrive

Moved by: Town of Mayerthorpe
 Seconded by: Town of Coalhurst
 Category: B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
 Subject: Economic
 Status: **Adopted - Active**

WHEREAS the Municipal Government Act (MGA) R.S.A. 2000, Chapter M-26, Section 3 – Municipal Purposes states “the purposes of a municipality are (3)(a) to provide good government, (3)(a.2) to foster the economic development of the municipality, (3)(b) to provide services, facilities or other things that, [...] are necessary or desirable for all or part of a municipality; and, (3)(c) to develop and maintain safe and viable communities;

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta’s Economic Development in Rural Alberta Plan (EDRAP) document clearly identifies REDAs as essential partners in the work to grow Alberta’s rural economy through “*continued collaboration and investment in Regional Economic Development Alliances*”;¹

WHEREAS the Premier’s 2023 mandate letter to the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade specifically instructs the Minister to work with REDAs by “collaborating with partner organizations, including Regional Economic Development Alliances, to enhance wayfinding services and other business-attraction initiatives for investments under approximately \$50 million”;²

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta (GoA) has embraced a more than 20-year partnership with REDAs and their members to undertake regional economic development initiatives of mutual interest and this partnership has positioned Alberta as a leader in the delivery of regional economic development;

WHEREAS most rural Alberta communities are served by one of the nine REDAs and many small urban and remote municipalities rely on REDAs for economic development service delivery due to limited budget capacity; and

WHEREAS an innovative solution can be implemented to budget for long-term, consistent provincial funding for REDAs to ensure small and remote municipalities continue to have access to economic development services thus ensuring vital growth in Alberta’s economy.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade and the Government of Alberta as a whole to implement measures for the provision of continuous, stable funding for the nine existing REDAs, supporting each with a budget of \$225,000 per year consisting of \$125,000 per year in operational funding and \$100,000 per year in project funding.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Alberta and the current REDA Chairs to develop a clear purpose and program structure for the REDAs, inclusive of a stable, long-term, collaborative approach to funding.

¹ Government of Alberta’s Economic Development in Rural Alberta Plan, page 14 - <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/economic-development-in-rural-alberta-plan>

² 2023 Mandate letter to the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/mandate-letters-to-ministers-2023>

BACKGROUND:

Over 20 years ago, the GoA envisioned a way for groups of municipalities within a geographic region to collaborate on mutually beneficial economic development initiatives and the REDAs were born. Based on an “all for one and one for all” concept, REDAs undertook projects aimed at building economic resiliency in small and remote rural areas where limited capacity meant that economic development was worked off the side of someone’s desk.

REDAs are member-driven organizations that utilize strategic planning to develop regional priorities. Historically, REDAs have tried to align themselves with provincial priorities wherever possible to maximize results for the entire province. Uniquely positioned to help the GoA deliver the Alberta Advantage in rural areas, REDAs are trusted bridges between the provincial government and their member municipalities building and maintaining networks of local, strategic relationships and expanding much needed growth opportunities.

Funding for REDAs has fluctuated over their history. Up until 2011, most REDAs were staffed and managed by GoA employees from regional offices and each had multiple employees and budgets that ranged between \$400,000 and \$500,000. In 2011, REDA funding was cancelled, and offices closed. The member municipalities of the day chose to continue supporting the work and the organizations received specific project funding from the GoA. Outcomes suffered and REDAs struggled until 2014.

REDA Renewal began as a research project to determine the potential opportunity to be found in renewing the partnership and working with the GoA to set the direction for the re-invigorated collaboration. Agreements were signed that saw each REDA provided with \$100,000 per year in operational support and a mandate to align with provincial priorities to deliver certain outcomes.

During the fiscal years of 2016-18, the REDA-CARES funding stream was created, enabling each REDA to receive \$200,000 in operational and project funding. It required REDAs to submit project plans to their GoA counterparts. The measure returned significant value to the province for that investment.

Sweeping budget cuts in 2019-20 saw REDA funding slashed to \$50,000 each. REDAs continued their work, demonstrating value and, in 2022, the GoA provided a one-time top up of \$25,000 for projects. Then, in 2023, the GoA returned the REDAs to \$125,000 per year in operational support and expressed strong government support for the value of the partnership.

On January 19, 2024, the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade announced the GoA’s intention to defund the current REDA program. This abrupt announcement will impact every REDA member across the province. With the potential to impact roughly half of ABmunis’ members, this is a matter of great consequence. For all current REDA member municipalities, it will likely mean requests for larger municipal funding contributions.

Many REDA members are small communities with limited capacity. They will have to choose between their fiscal responsibilities and their economic development goals. For the smaller REDAs, the untenable choice their members face could mean the dissolution of more than one REDA.

Even for the larger REDAs, the GoA’s decision to defund will have consequences. Without operational funding support, REDAs will have fewer dollars for meaningful projects. And, like the smaller REDAs, communities with limited fiscal capacity could be forced to withdraw from participation, further straining the REDA’s budget.

The County of Paintearth No. 18 presented a resolution on the floor at the Rural Municipalities of Alberta Spring 2024 Conference. Receiving overwhelming support, RMA will advocate for a stable funding agreement for the nine REDAs and a renewal of the partnership between the REDAs and the GoA.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES’ COMMENTS:

The resolution is consistent with a Request for Decision (RFD) that was passed by members at ABmunis’ Spring 2024 Municipal Leaders’ Caucus. The Government of Alberta’s response to that RFD was that it still intends to proceed with its plan to transition out of providing operational funding to REDAs. If this resolution is passed, it would

be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to ABmunis' Board by the Economic Strategy Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

B6: Family & Community Support Services (FCSS) Funding Increase

Moved by: City of Airdrie
 Seconded by: Town of Crossfield
 Category: B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
 Subject: Social
 Status: **Adopted - Active**

WHEREAS the Family & Community Support Services (FCSS) program promotes and enhances the well-being of Albertans, families and communities by funding preventive programs intended to help individuals adopt healthy lifestyles, improve their quality of life and build capacity to prevent and deal with crisis situations should they arise¹;

WHEREAS FCSS is an 80/20 funding partnership between the Government of Alberta and more than 318 participating municipalities and Metis settlements;

WHEREAS between 2015 and 2022 provincial funding for FCSS was stagnant and the \$5 million increase, to a total of \$105 million, in 2023 does not adequately reflect the need for services in Alberta communities;

WHEREAS in October 2023, the Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta called on the Alberta Government to increase total funding to \$130 million allowing FCSS programming to be maintained and for the fund to be indexed to inflation; and

WHEREAS investment in prevention creates a sustainable system of local support for Albertans, families and communities and by not increasing FCSS funding to take into account inflation and population growth the result will be a decrease or elimination of critical programs and services.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta to immediately increase provincial funding for Family and Community Support Services commensurate to population growth and annual inflation rates, which would currently amount to funding of \$161.5 million in 2025, to adequately and sustainably fund necessary prevention programs and services in communities across Alberta.

BACKGROUND:

Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) has provided funding for vital programs and services to residents in municipalities across Alberta since 1966. Today, eligible services under FCSS must be preventative in nature and may include initiatives and programs that help communities:

- identify their social needs and develop responses;
- promote, encourage and support volunteer work in the community;
- inform the public about services;
- support children and their families’ social development;
- help families enrich and strengthen family life and function more effectively in their own environment; and,
- enhance retired and semi-retired people’s quality of life.²

Previous FCSS funding resolutions were adopted at Alberta Municipalities’ Conventions in 2006, 2007, 2010 and 2014. The Government of Alberta increased funding to a total of \$100 million in 2015 and added an additional \$5 million in 2023. Provincial funding increases have not kept pace with population growth or inflation. From 2000-2023 Alberta added nearly 1.7 million people and inflation averaged 2.25% per year over the same time period. Quickly eroding any additional funds provided by the province and municipalities.

^{1, 2} Government of Alberta, Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program, <https://www.alberta.ca/family-and-community-support-services-fcss-program>

In October 2023, the Family and Community Support Services Association (FCSSA) of Alberta requested an additional \$25 million, a 24% increase, in funding from the Government of Alberta to fund FCSS programs. Noting that preventive programming significantly reduces the amount of money that needs to be invested in health care, mental health, addictions, and the justice system.

“Every dollar invested in preventive services saves us \$7 to \$12 in future spending on justice, health care and addictions. As our provincial priorities focus on critical social issues, Albertans have never needed FCSS more than today.”

Murtaza Jamaly, President
Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta
October 3, 2023

FCSSA is a member-driven organization that was established in 1981 to bring FCSS programs from across the province together to connect, collaborate, and to maximize resources.

A funding increase of \$25 million to \$130 million would help to maintain current FCSS programming levels across the province according to the FCSSA. No additional funding was allotted to FCSS in the 2024 Alberta Budget. Should provincial funding be increased, municipalities would need to increase contribution rates to maintain the 80/20 funding partnership required under the *Family and Community Support Services Regulation*. It should be noted that many municipalities are currently contributing more than 20% to local prevention programs.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES’ COMMENTS:

This resolution aligns with ABmunis’ past advocacy where the unchanged level of FCSS funding from 2015-16 to 2022-23 and again in 2024-25 represent a downloading of costs onto municipal governments. The resolution aligns with ABmunis previous advocacy to seek an increase in FCSS funding to keep pace with Alberta’s growth and costs of services. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to the ABmunis Board by the Safe and Healthy Communities Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

B7: Alberta First Responders Radio Communications System Equipment Funding

Moved by:	Town of Strathmore
Seconded by:	Village of Rockyford, Town of Mayerthorpe
Category:	B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities' strategic initiatives
Subject:	Social
Status:	Adopted - Active

WHEREAS a provincewide radio system helps first-responders, such as police, fire, and ambulance, coordinate to improve safety and response times;

WHEREAS it is the province's mission to provide quality, cost effective, secure, reliable, accessible land mobile radio communications supporting all Alberta first responders;

WHEREAS the Alberta First Responders Radio Communications System (AFRRCS) is a two-way radio network launched in 2016 to be used by first responders in municipal, provincial and First Nations agencies across the province;

WHEREAS the Alberta First Responders Radio Communications System was designed to allow agencies to share talk groups, allowing inter-agency communications to be achieved in a powerful fashion; and

WHEREAS not all municipalities have access to the Alberta First Responders Radio Communications System due to a lack of available funds for equipment.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the Government of Alberta to provide financial support for municipalities with a population of less than 3,000, and for regional groups, to obtain equipment necessary to participate in the Alberta First Responders Radio Communications System (AFRRCS).

BACKGROUND:

The Alberta First Responders Radio Communications System (AFRRCS) is the provincewide radio system that helps first-responders, such as police, fire, and ambulance, coordinate to improve safety and response times.

AFRRCS Operations, Maintenance and Sustainability (OMS) is responsible for the maintenance of the system and network to allow communications encompassing 335 sites and over 33,000 devices. The system is monitored 24/7, 365 days a year by the System Control Centre (SCC). There has been substantial provincial investment to build the infrastructure of the system across the province, while encouraging all relevant stakeholders to participate to achieve complete inter-operability Alberta-wide.

First responder agencies are eligible to use the system on a no-cost basis. Approved secondary responders are permitted to use the system with a yearly fee. This does not include the expense of equipment, which can cost \$5,000 to \$15,000 per radio unit. For context, a larger community like Strathmore required a \$250,000 investment to furnish the number of radios required to support the detachment.

The system has been operational since July 2016, but not all municipalities in Alberta are current participants due to the investment required in the radios needed to access the system. Unfortunately, the outlay of dollars for these radios is cost intrusive to many budgets in towns, villages and counties with vast space and smaller populations.

The Town of Strathmore prioritizes Community Wellness as a part of its strategic plan – putting emphasis on the value of the health of residents, and focusing on the maintenance, protection, and improvement of services that support optimum lifestyles. Alberta has one of the largest and fastest growing populations in the country and

Strathmore has seen its share of growth. With a population of nearly 15,000 it is imperative that additional available safety measures be accessed, not only by the Town, but extending to the surrounding communities. It is these smaller community partners who should not be overlooked, as everyone works together to contribute to the safety of Albertans. Those wearing the same uniform should be afforded the same access to communication systems to achieve the greatest benefit. It puts residents at a disadvantage and overall risk when not all villages, towns, and smaller municipalities in the province share in the amazing tool that is the Alberta First Responders Radio Communications System. Strathmore has extensive firsthand experience in the challenges faced with communications when working together with neighbouring municipalities to respond to major incidents along Highway 1 who are not all on the same system. These learnings highlight the importance of these tools.

Alberta Municipalities has advocated for collaboration between communities, and putting everyone on an equal footing with access to use of core resources that pertain to the safety and well-being of Albertans should be considered.

The proposal before Alberta Municipalities' members is to advocate that the Government of Alberta provide financial support for the purposes of obtaining the required resources, in the form of emergency service radios, to access the AFRRCS. The proposed action would be in alignment with the Government of Alberta's mission to support rural economic development. Smaller communities building their support systems serves to deliver on this by having the same advantages as larger urban centres.

The health and safety of all Albertans is a priority and ensuring that the delivery of care by those first responders who know their communities best – through access to cost effective, secure, reliable, accessible land mobile radio communications that benefit everyone.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

This resolution aligns with past ABmunis advocacy on the need to support municipal access to AFRRCS. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to the ABmunis Board by the Safe and Healthy Communities Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

B8: Declining Fire Department Services Across Alberta

Moved by: Village of Mannville
 Seconded by: Town of Vegreville, Town of Smoky Lake
 Category: B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
 Subject: Social
 Status: **Adopted - Active**

WHEREAS small communities across Alberta rely on volunteers to serve as firefighters and first responders and therefore, having a sufficient number of volunteer firefighters is essential to the health and safety of each community;

WHEREAS businesses that employ volunteer firefighters do not currently receive a tax credit for doing so;

WHEREAS provincial Fire Services Training Program funding increases are necessary for small community firefighter training; and

WHEREAS the Government of Canada’s former Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) for fire/emergency training and equipment is no longer available.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities:

1. advocate to the Government of Canada to create a business tax credit for businesses that allow employees who are volunteer firefighters to attend calls during business hours; and
2. advocate to the Government of Canada to reinstate the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program.

BACKGROUND:

Over the past several months, there have been several instances where the Village of Mannville’s local fire department has not been able to respond to calls due to the dwindling numbers of volunteer members. In addition to the decline in members, there are several existing members that are unable to leave their place of employment to attend emergency calls.

The Government of Alberta (GOA) reinstated the Fire Services Training Grant (FSTP) in 2022 providing a maximum grant of \$10,000 per application. The grant is to financially assist municipalities to ensure fire services are adequately trained to address the community’s risks and levels of service. It would be helpful if the overall program funding of \$500,000 were increased to provide all municipalities opportunities to receive this funding, plus keep pace with inflationary increases in training costs.

The Federal Government cut the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) in 2013. The JEPP was used to fund major capital purchases for fire departments. Reinstating a modernized JEPP would reduce deferred equipment purchases due to fiscal pressures. This grant is imperative as the longer these purchases are deferred the higher the risk to community safety.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES’ COMMENTS:

In its 2024-25 budget, the Government of Canada increased the Volunteer Firefighters Tax Credit from \$3,000 to \$6,000 to help support volunteer firefighters.

ABmunis has advocated on issues related to emergency management in the past. The provincial government and other organizations are undertaking reviews and working groups to improve wildfire response from numerous perspectives. If the resolution is passed, it will be forwarded to the Government of Canada for a response and further advocacy would be recommended to the ABmunis Board by the Infrastructure Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

B9: Preventative Psychological Services Support for Municipal First Responders and Emergency Dispatchers

Moved by: City of St. Albert
 Seconded by: Town of Mayerthorpe
 Category: B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
 Subject: Social
 Status: **Adopted - Active**

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has stated that improving emergency medical services response times is a priority;

WHEREAS municipalities support emergency medical service response through their provision of first responder services (firefighters, police officers, peace officers, and in some instances, paramedics) and emergency dispatcher services, with these services often working in coordination with Alberta Health Services’ emergency medical response;

WHEREAS in supporting emergency medical response, municipal first responders and emergency dispatcher services can be exposed to traumatic incidents that cause psychological injury, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which may require treatment and extended medical leave, reducing municipal capacity to support emergency medical service response;

WHEREAS the Workers Compensation Act permits for the presumptive coverage of traumatic psychological injuries for first responders and emergency dispatchers, resulting in municipal taxpayers funding both the coverage required for recovery and return to service through increased premiums, in addition to the overtime required by active-duty personnel to cover such absences;

WHEREAS the provision of preventative psychological services reduces the frequency and severity of psychological injuries for first responders and emergency dispatchers, enabling fewer associated medical leaves and a more consistent and reliable roster of personnel on active duty;

WHEREAS the provision of preventative psychological services improves the mental health, well-being, and resiliency of first responders and emergency dispatchers, strengthening their ability to perform their emergency medical response duties; and

WHEREAS a more consistent and resilient roster of first responders and emergency dispatchers would both strengthen emergency medical service response times while also reducing the burden on taxpayers to cover associated Workers Compensation Act claims and overtime coverage for absences.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta to provide a grant or funding mechanism to municipalities to provide preventative psychological services to municipal first responders and emergency dispatchers to reduce the risk of psychological injury and the associated burden on taxpayers to treat such injuries, in addition to bolstering emergency medical services response services in Alberta.

BACKGROUND:

The Workers Compensation Act defines “first responders” as firefighters, paramedics, peace officers, or police officers. The WCB, in its publication on *Presumptive Coverage for Traumatic Psychological Injuries (first responders, emergency dispatchers and correctional officers)*, notes that “presumptive coverage for psychological injuries” sustained by first responders, emergency dispatchers and correctional officers is provided in certain situations¹. This

¹ https://www.wcb.ab.ca/assets/pdfs/workers/WFS_Presumptive_coverage_for_traumatic_psychological_injuries.pdf

coverage demonstrates a recognized occupational risk for first responders and emergency dispatchers to be exposed to traumatic situations that cause psychological injuries, in addition to a need to receive treatment and undergo recovery. Municipal taxpayers are financially impacted by this coverage and associated treatment costs through WCB premiums their municipality must pay. For the City of St. Albert, WCB premiums have been in a surcharge (over standard industry rates) for the past five years due to psychological injury claims.

Many municipalities in Alberta provide first-responder and other associated services, such as fire services, emergency dispatchers, and – in some cases – paramedics. The employees who work in these roles can be exposed to traumatic events which cause the equivalent of a psychological injury (e.g., Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). Some psychological injuries necessitate the filing of Workers Compensation Board (WCB) claims and associated leaves of absences to manage the psychological trauma and duress associated with these events, which results in:

- Higher WCB premiums being funded by municipal taxpayers;
- A reduction of personnel available for active duty that necessitates the use of staff overtime for coverage, which is also funded by municipal taxpayers; and/or
- Reduced capacity to support emergency medical response.

Municipal first responders also support emergency medical response work under the responsibility of Alberta Health Services in situations where provincial resources are delayed, exposing these municipal first responders to risks of psychological injuries. In any case, leaves of absences for first responders to recover from psychological injuries reduces the capacity of municipal first responders to bolster provincial emergency response services.

As the consequences of psychological injuries impact the service provision of first responders and emergency dispatchers, organizations have been increasingly introducing preventative psychological services into their onboarding and professional development programs. One such service being utilized is the “Before Operational Stress” (BOS) program, which offers participants a robust, self-directed learning regiment – in addition to sessions facilitated by mental health clinicians – that covers topics such as the physiology and markers of operational stress, cognitive impacts, emotions and behaviour change, and communication. The program prepares participants to manage their operational stress, such as the experience of traumatic events, in a healthy and structured manner. Participation in the BOS program can:

- Improve mental health symptoms (e.g., depression, anxiety, substance use and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder);
- Equip first-responders with tools to manage workplace stress; and
- Enhance the sense of control over workplace stress and mental health.

A 2021 peer-reviewed study of the BOS program found statistically significant improvements in symptoms of PTSD, quality of life, stigma, and perceived social support in participants, in addition to other benefits such as improvements in symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress, alcohol use, as well as emotional regulation and resilience. The reduction in these symptoms aligns with efforts to reduce the frequency and severity of psychological injuries requiring a leave of absence and treatment for first responders and emergency dispatchers; furthermore, the stated benefits also support efforts to build resiliency among first responders, strengthening their service provision. Other supplemental preventative psychological service initiatives could further support this effort.

As improving emergency medical response services is a provincial priority, the provision of a grant by the Government of Alberta to fund the provision of preventative psychological services for first responders and emergency dispatchers would support this objective. Through improving the mental health symptoms of personnel who witness traumatic events, the risk of both receiving a psychological injury and requiring a WCB-funded leave of absence for treatment would be reduced, enabling a more consistently full roster of first responders and emergency dispatchers available to support emergency medical response. Encouraging and enabling municipalities to provide this service to their first responders and emergency dispatchers would reduce their risk of psychological injury, strengthen and maintain the roster of available municipal first responders, and reduce the burden on municipal taxpayers for the provision of services that support provincial health care service delivery priorities.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

This resolution aligns with past ABmunis advocacy on the need to provide psychological supports to first responders. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to the ABmunis Board by the Safe and Healthy Communities Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

B10: Establishing a Provincial Level of Service for Emergency Social Services

Moved by: City of Grande Prairie
 Seconded by: Town of Wembley
 Category: B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
 Subject: Social
 Status: **Adopted - Active**

WHEREAS there is currently no provincial level of service for Emergency Social Services support when hosting external communities from outside of their jurisdiction;

WHEREAS host municipalities each set a Level of Service for Emergency Social Services resulting in significant inconsistency among host municipalities;

WHEREAS there have been inconsistent answers from the province regarding what Emergency Social Services costs are eligible for cost recovery, resulting in host municipalities having to absorb expenses that have later been determined as ineligible for cost recovery; and

WHEREAS there was a record number of community evacuations in Alberta in 2023 and the frequency, severity; and duration of emergency evacuations is increasing.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for a provincial Level of Service for Emergency Social Services as a framework for providing support to external communities from other jurisdictions in Alberta or from out of province.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT the proposed provincial Level of Service for Emergency Social Services include schedules that indicate services that are considered Basic Survival Needs, and which services are Discretionary; with identification of what costs are eligible for cost recovery.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT the proposed provincial Level of Service for Emergency Social Services acknowledge that the host municipality is providing a Fee for Service and that they will directly invoice the home jurisdiction, or the Government of Alberta and will not be required to apply for Disaster Recovery Program funding to recover their costs.

BACKGROUND:

When a host municipality agrees to accept evacuees from another municipality, reserve, Metis settlement, or from outside of the province, they are doing so in good faith and trying to help others in their time of need.

Unfortunately, the result is a significant disruption of services provided to its own residents. Even worse, local taxpayers are often saddled with a portion of the costs that have been determined ineligible under a Disaster Recovery Program (DRP). This should not be happening when the host community is not the one experiencing the emergency.

During an emergency when a host municipality is asked to accept evacuees on short notice, there is verbal reassurance that all costs will be covered, but there is not enough time to prepare a written agreement. Consequently, the details are subject to individual interpretation. The time decision-making takes can't keep pace with the speed with which issues are evolving. Even when trying to clarify expectations and eligibility for cost recovery through the province, the answers will vary from one day to the next as staff changes occur and new staff are unaware of previous decisions.

Host municipalities are also asked to apply for DRP funding to recover their costs, even though they were not the community that had the emergency. This process extends the time to recover costs well beyond their fiscal year-end, forcing them to carry those costs forward sometimes for years. In many cases, a very large portion of costs have gone unrecovered.

The rules established for Disaster Recovery Programs are often referred to by staff of the province to answer Level of Service questions. There are several problems with this approach because there are several assumptions made in the DRP rules that do not apply to the host community. DRP rules are intended as a cost-sharing arrangement between the federal and provincial governments and the affected municipality. An example of this is regular staff time not being covered, only overtime. For the host municipality that forces them to subsidize the emergency costs of another municipality.

Many of the problems faced by host municipalities can be prevented if the province creates a Level of Service for Emergency Social Services for Hosting an External Community. This Level of Service should list the services that are required to meet an evacuee's "Basic Survival Needs", services that are discretionary and require approval of the Director of Emergency Management, and what services are eligible for cost recovery.

This Level of Service must be created without using the lens of the Disaster Recovery Program rules.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis does not currently have a position on this specific issue, but it aligns with ABmunis advocacy on provincial downloading of costs onto municipalities. If this resolution is passed, it will be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for a response. Further advocacy would be recommended to ABmunis' Board by the Infrastructure Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

B11: Provincial Emergency Shelter Strategy

Moved by:	City of Red Deer
Seconded by:	Town of Hinton
Category:	B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
Subject:	Social
Status:	Adopted - Active

WHEREAS the provision of emergency shelters and addressing homelessness falls within provincial jurisdiction, that adequate housing is a fundamental human right, and that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of a person and to building sustainable and vibrant communities;

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta needs to create a comprehensive emergency shelter strategy to fully address the project management lifecycle processes of initiating, planning, executing, monitoring, controlling, and closing;

WHEREAS the homeless population continues to grow, so too are the challenges that municipalities face with this segment of our communities; and

WHEREAS there is heightened community sensitivity regarding emergency shelters and their placement, so it is vital the Government of Alberta present a clear vision and strategy regarding the development process for emergency shelters across the province.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta and the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services to create a comprehensive emergency shelter strategy for the entire province. This detailed strategy will provide a vision, guiding principles, objectives, definitions, project management governance, and role clarity for provincial and municipal governments and applicable community stakeholders.

BACKGROUND:

Right across Alberta, there has been a significant increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in our communities. From the large urban cities to small villages, there is a major crisis in the number of unhoused individuals in our province.

According to Red Deer’s Point in Time (PIT) Count, held in the fall of 2022, the number of persons experiencing homelessness in the city increased to 334 in 2022 from 144 in 2018, confirming local outreach staff expectations that the number of people experiencing homelessness is increasing. Red Deer is not alone, results from the City of Grande Prairie’s 2022 PIT Count on homelessness observed at least 328 individuals experiencing homelessness in their community. This number is up from the 2018 count which saw 228 unhoused individuals. Smaller communities experience the problem at the same proportion but often with fewer resources and partners. For example, the local Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) office of the town of Fort Macleod, population 3,300, helped 82 people in 2023 who were homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

In the absence of a clear Government of Alberta emergency shelter strategy, both the provincial government and municipal governments right across the province have struggled greatly in trying to construct new shelters. For example, in Red Deer, it has been four years now since the Government of Alberta announced a capital project of \$7 million for a new emergency shelter. During this time, there has been very little progress in moving this project forward. From not knowing the provincial government’s vision, to confusion over role clarity, to not having proper project management structure in place, Red Deer is no further ahead in building this much needed piece of social infrastructure.

Shelters are a much-needed piece of social infrastructure and homelessness continues to grow in Alberta. To protect people’s fundamental right of adequate housing, the Government of Alberta must improve in clearly articulating a vision and plan for emergency shelters right across this province.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis does not currently have a position on emergency shelters, but the topic generally aligns with ABmunis advocacy on the need for provincial action to address homelessness. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to the ABmunis Board by the Safe and Healthy Communities Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

B12: Permanent Supportive Housing Capital and Operational Funding

Moved by:	City of Red Deer
Seconded by:	Village of Delburne
Category:	B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities' strategic initiatives
Subject:	Social
Status:	Adopted - Active

WHEREAS the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness has increased substantially since 2018, with numbers doubling in some Alberta municipalities;

WHEREAS the demand for supportive housing is high and Alberta municipalities are lacking sufficient permanent supportive housing options to meet the needs of people experiencing chronic homelessness with highly complex needs;

WHEREAS Alberta municipalities require both capital and operational funding for new permanent supportive housing developments to be feasible and sustainable; and

WHEREAS investments in long-term housing solutions for people experiencing chronic homelessness is far less expensive than supporting their needs while in emergency shelters and encampments.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada to increase capital and operational funding for municipalities in Alberta for permanent supportive housing to ensure appropriate housing options are available for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.

BACKGROUND:

There has been an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness and the rate of chronic homelessness across Canada, according to Infrastructure Canada's *Everyone Counts 2020- 2022 - Findings from the Nationally Coordinated Point-in-Time Count Results*¹.

- Compared to previous counts in 2018, there was a 20% increase across the country, with unsheltered homelessness increasing by 88%.
- Some Alberta municipalities have experienced an increase of 50% or greater in homelessness since 2018.

Supportive housing options are in high demand in Alberta municipalities due to the high prevalence of chronicity and complexity of needs among local homeless populations.

Permanent Supportive Housing provides long-term housing and support to individuals who are homeless and experiencing complex mental health, addiction, and physical health barriers. This program provides an appropriate level of service for chronically homeless individuals who may need support for an indeterminate length of time while striving to achieve increased independence.

By prioritizing chronically homeless individuals who require high levels of support, permanent supportive housing increases their likelihood of remaining housed long term. This reduces the instances of individuals returning to homelessness after being housed, thereby alleviating the personal impacts and system pressures that may result.

¹ "Everyone Counts 2020-2022 – Findings from the Nationally Coordinated Point-in-Time Counts," Infrastructure Canada February 1, 2024.

Investments in permanent supportive housing solutions tend to be more cost-effective than continually supporting individuals in emergency shelters and encampments. Those investments also contribute to a significantly decreased demand on other systems, such as justice and health, with provincial data highlighting that homelessness supports funding resulting in a 64.3% reduction in jail time, 53.6% decrease in hospital usage, and 50.3% decrease in emergency medical service responses.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

This resolution aligns with previous ABmunis advocacy on the need for increased permanent supportive housing to address homelessness. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to the ABmunis Board by the Safe and Healthy Communities Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

B13: Full-Time 24-Hour Home Care Support in Lodges/Supportive Living Accommodations

Moved by: Town of Tofield
 Seconded by: Town of Vegreville
 Category: B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
 Subject: Social
 Status: **Adopted - Active**

WHEREAS the service needs for rural Alberta seniors, residing in lodges, requiring enhanced services is increasing and this increases pressures for accessing community supports and amenities;

WHEREAS residents within the lodge/supportive living settings could continue to reside within this structure, without the physical and mental impact of relocation, if the minor and temporary needs could be addressed;

WHEREAS the requirement for relocation due to inability of accessible care places a significant impact on an individual’s quality of life such as loneliness, isolation, dignity, and the other imposed stresses of a forced move;

WHEREAS lodges, supportive living, designated supportive living and long-term care have recently shown a vast gap in service(s) despite these facilities having a focus on “life enrichment”; and

WHEREAS adding full-time home care services in lodges and supportive living homes would help avoid the requirement for some individuals to relocate to higher levels of care to access unscheduled health care supports, placing further burden on our already taxed healthcare system.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the Government of Alberta to provide funding for full-time, 24-hour, 7 days a week home care services in lodges and supportive living environments.

BACKGROUND:

The Alberta Government has placed an emphasis and encouragement on seniors to remain in their family home for as long as possible. Therefore, there is a trend showing that seniors are entering lodges and supportive living accommodations later in life.

Further, by entering the supportive living environment at a later stage, this sees a requirement for reassessment of higher care needs as support needs cannot be adequately addressed within the current home care service limitations.

Increased frequency of needs is now placing demand upon; families, firefighters, first aid practitioners, and EMS. These needs are focusing on items such as personal hygiene support, incontinence issues, or medication assistance in the evenings. The inability for access to these services at any given time as required is robbing these people of basic human rights and dignity of life.

By having full time, 24-hours a day, 7 days a week support, the focus is placed on a humanistic approach for our seniors. Further, the demand is then removed for these services from our health care providers and remove detriment from the facilities and disciplines which they represent, such as ambulance services.

Many lodges in rural Alberta are experiencing vacancies. These vacancies are evident in both governmental and non- governmental ran entities. However, even in the non-governmental run facilities, lack of supports and services are creating barriers and roadblocks. Through the provision of enhanced services, residents would be supported and able to remain within lodges and supportive living, which they consider to be their homes. Further, this supports

resident choice(s) and eases stressors on an already taxed and burdened health care system, the individual(s), and their support network.

This issue and call to action align with the Alberta Municipalities initiatives and advocacy under the social needs' component of health care, and vulnerable Albertans.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis does not currently have a position on this specific issue, but the topic generally aligns with ABmunis advocacy on the need for quality seniors' living options. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to the ABmunis Board by the Safe and Healthy Communities Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

B14: Attraction and Retention Strategy for Rural Health Care Professionals

Moved by: Town of Hinton
 Seconded by: Village of Boyle
 Category: B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
 Subject: Social
 Status: **Adopted - Active**

WHEREAS adequate medical services and the professionals required to deliver those services are critical to the safety and well-being of all Albertans;

WHEREAS many rural Alberta municipalities¹ find recruiting and retaining health care professionals very difficult;

WHEREAS a robust and diverse workforce of health care professionals is needed in Alberta to provide equitable access to appropriate health care services no matter where Albertans live;

WHEREAS a cohesive provincial strategy focusing on increasing the number of health care professionals in rural Alberta is critical to ensuring stability and equity in Alberta’s health care system; and

WHEREAS health providers across most professional groups are overrepresented in urban areas compared to the proportion of Canadians living in rural areas (which was about 20.5% in 2019), far less than 20% of most health professionals have taken up rural practice.²

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the Government of Alberta to develop a Rural Health Care Professionals Attraction and Retention Strategy that focuses on increasing the total number of health care professionals in rural Alberta.

BACKGROUND:

The lack of health care professionals affects all communities in Alberta but is more acute outside of the major urban centres. Per this graph (next page), nearly all health care professions are underrepresented in rural Alberta, leading to staff burn out, dissatisfaction, and premature retirement as well as relocation to better staffed communities.³

In response to the shortage of health care professionals, community-driven attraction and retention initiatives are becoming increasingly common in rural Alberta. Leaders at the municipal, business, and community level recognize that health care services are crucial for community sustainability and where health services are not available, growth is unlikely and out-migration of taxpayers, investors, workers, and service providers is inevitable. To avoid a

¹ E.g., communities under 10,000 population. [Rural Health Services Review Final Report \(alberta.ca\)](#), Rural Health Services Review Committee, March 2015 the Government of Alberta. Accessed May 17, 2024.

² [Health Workforce Demographics - Rural Health Professions Action Plan \(rhpap.ca\)](#). Accessed May 17, 2024.

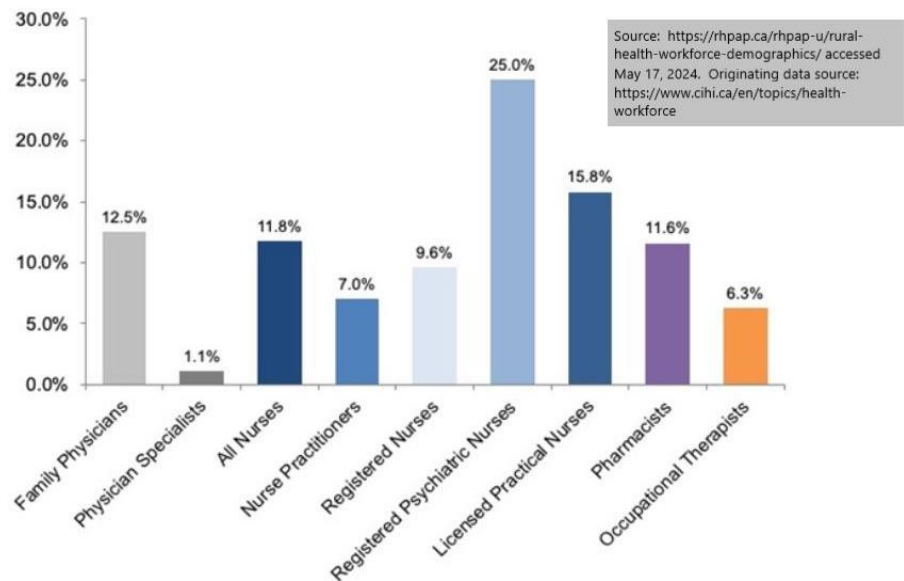
³ [Rural Health Services Review Final Report \(alberta.ca\)](#), p. 1, Rural Health Services Review Committee, March 2015. Government of Alberta.

continuously dwindling economy, municipalities are forced to act; and this represents another case of downloading of provincial responsibility onto municipalities left with little choice but to undertake property tax-funded initiatives to try and avoid consequential health care staff shortages and resulting reduction in medical services in their community.

Despite all recruitment efforts, there were still 270 medical service disruption notices issued by Alberta Health Services in 2023. This is empirical evidence that even where health facilities are established, staff to operate them are lacking and the facilities cannot serve Albertans.

Local efforts to attract and retain service providers may address immediate community concerns, if successful, but fall short in tackling the broader challenge of addressing the overall scarcity of frontline professionals in a complex and interconnected industry.

Percentage of Health Workforce Practicing in Rural Alberta - 2019



Current demographic trends in Alberta will place additional stress on our health care system in our lifetimes unless deliberate action is taken; the following data largely taken from the [Population Projections - Alberta and Census Divisions, 2023-2051](#) noted below, are grim:

1. Alberta leads Canada with a 4.40% year-over-year population growth rate (2022/2023)¹ and is expected to reach 7.1 million people by 2051.
2. By 2051, Alberta’s population is expected to reach an average age of 41.6 years, up from 39.0 years today.
3. Life expectancy is anticipated to increase by 4.7 years for females and 6.2 years for males by 2051.
4. The ‘baby boom cohort’ (people born between 1946 and 1965) will significantly impact the aging rate. By 2031, the number of Albertans aged 65 years and older is expected to make up a larger share of the population than the number of children aged 0 to 14.
5. The over-65 age demographic represents approximately 15% of the population and is expected to increase to 20% by 2051.²

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES’ COMMENTS:

The Government of Alberta released a [Health Workforce Strategy](#) in 2023, which includes Objective 2.2 to “attract and recruit health care workers to rural, remote, and underserved areas”. If this resolution is passed, ABmunis would look to work with the Government of Alberta and related stakeholders to understand the gap between the current and targeted number of healthcare professionals in rural areas, the targeted timelines, and level of investment to support attraction of healthcare professionals to rural areas. At that point, ABmunis’ Board would determine an appropriate advocacy strategy with support from ABmunis’ Small Communities Committee and Safe and Healthy Communities Committee.

¹ [Annual Demographic Estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#) Accessed May 17, 2024.

² Population Projections Alberta and Census Divisions, 2023 – 2051 [Population Projections - Alberta and Census Divisions, 2023-2051](#) Accessed May 17, 2024.

B15: Creation of a Wildfire Prevention Committee

Moved by:	Town of Hinton
Seconded by:	Town of Coronation
Category:	B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
Subject:	Infrastructure
Status:	Adopted - Active

WHEREAS Alberta Forestry and Parks is the principal agency responsible for wildfire management in the Forest Protection Area (FPA), and municipalities are responsible for fire prevention and protection within their boundaries;

WHEREAS municipalities are responsible for the management of wildfires as per Section 7(1) of the Forest and Prairie Protection Act, including all financial costs of suppression within their boundaries;

WHEREAS wildfire seasons are growing increasingly longer and more intense, placing a significant strain on provincial and municipal wildfire resources;

WHEREAS wildfire prevention strategies are a resource-intensive activity that requires resources, expertise, and funding to effectively prepare for and mitigate the effects of wildfires;

WHEREAS there are no Provincial initiatives which allow wildfire fire affected communities and industry to discuss practical and operational issues with Provincial wildfire authorities on a regular basis; and

WHEREAS it is in the best interest of all Albertans to ensure that municipalities are provided the resources and expertise to be proactive and resilient to the effects of wildfires.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta to establish a “Wildfire Prevention Committee” consisting of industry, municipal and provincial subject matter experts, elected officials, and senior municipal administrators.

BACKGROUND:

Alberta’s wildland fire seasons are worsening, posing significant challenges to municipalities within and beyond the Forest Protection Area (FPA). Wildfires are starting earlier, lasting longer, and impacting larger areas of Alberta than ever before. This increase in wildfire activity places a substantial strain on municipal fire and emergency management resources.

In response to these challenges, the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association passed resolution 2023-04 aiming to collaboratively develop a long-term strategy for managing large wildland fires. This resolution underscores the need for coordinated efforts among government ministries, Alberta Municipalities, the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, and municipalities to address the escalating threats posed by wildfires.

As wildfire seasons across Alberta grow in length and intensity, they not only endanger lives and property but also place a significant drain on municipal resources and budgets. It is imperative to take proactive measures to ensure Alberta’s municipalities are well-prepared and well-equipped to protect Albertans from the increasing threat of wildfires.

The establishment of a Wildfire Prevention Committee could serve to:

1. Inform and advise the Government of Alberta on municipal priorities.
2. Enhance communication between municipalities and Provincial agencies.
3. Encourage a proactive and collaborative approach to protecting Alberta communities from the effects of wildfires.

4. Promote advocacy and stakeholder engagement related to wildfire mitigation measures.

Through these collaborative efforts, the Provincial government and municipalities can align resources, expertise, and knowledge to enhance the resiliency and readiness of Alberta communities from the growing threat of wildfires.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis is currently participating on the Rural Municipalities of Alberta's recent Wildfire Working Group, which involves municipalities, the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association, the Government of Alberta, and the Alberta Forest Products Association and guest speakers. The purpose of the Working Group is to improve wildfire response in Alberta; however, the Working Group is scheduled to complete its work by fall 2024.

The Ministry of Forestry and Parks is also currently developing a Wildfire Mitigation Strategy to align with the federal government's Wildland Fire Strategy. Opportunities to participate in Alberta Forestry and Parks' review have been shared with ABmunis' members via our newsletter. The Office of the Fire Commissioner is also reviewing its mandate. Several engagement sessions have been held virtually and in person around the province. ABmunis emailed members directly about these sessions. This review is looking at the role and mandate of the Office of the Fire Commissioner, training standards, firefighter recognition and management of wildland fires outside of the Forest Protection Area.

If approved, this resolution will be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy recommended to ABmunis' Board by the Infrastructure Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

B17: Federal Funding for Compressed Natural Gas, Hydrogen, and Clean Diesel Buses

Moved by: City of Red Deer
 Seconded by: Town of Innisfail
 Category: B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
 Subject: Infrastructure
 Status: **Adopted - Active**

WHEREAS with the announcement of the Zero Emission Transit Fund, beginning in 2022 the Government of Canada’s funding program for municipal transit has been changed to only allow eligible purchases of hydrogen and electric buses;

WHEREAS hydrogen and electric bus manufacturers do not have the capacity to meet the demand of municipal fleet replacement with confirmed delivery times exceeding two years from date of purchase;

WHEREAS the impacts on the electrical grid and costs of upgrading building infrastructure to support new electrical demand are unknown;

WHEREAS significant technological advancements have made compressed natural gas (CNG) and clean diesel environmentally friendly solutions;

WHEREAS restrictions on municipal access to buses would decrease the service level of transit that municipalities offer, reducing the access for many residents to employment and community; and

WHEREAS restrictions on municipal access to buses would lead to an increase in personal vehicles on the road, increasing the level of emissions.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta to work with the Government of Canada to return to a federal funding program that accepts purchases of compressed natural gas, hydrogen, and clean diesel buses until 2035, which will allow municipalities to transition their fleets in an efficient and realistic manner.

BACKGROUND:

Many municipalities who provide public transit have taken advantage of previous programs such as the Green Transit Incentives Program (GreenTRIP) and the Public Transit infrastructure Fund Program (PTIF) in past years to replace diesel-based transit fleets with greener options. Significant investments were also made to construct, and service specialized fueling stations.

Transitioning to zero emission transit is a laudable goal. However, the timetable is too short for municipalities to transition without significant challenges that will be borne by their residents and taxpayers.

The current electric and hydrogen bus procurement process makes it difficult for smaller and mid-sized municipalities to fill their orders and receive buses. They are competing with major urban centres across North America. Current delivery times are beyond two years and puts fleet replacement at risk.

Additional fleets would be required to maintain service levels at current schedules, as municipalities would require two electric buses to every CNG bus. Due to the requirement of charging times throughout the day, buses would have to come off their regular service just to charge, requiring a backup bus to cover the service.

CNG and clean diesel burn significantly cleaner than previously used fuel sources. While they are not zero emission,

they still significantly reduce emissions when compared to previous diesel options. Additionally, CNG and clean diesel buses cost significantly less than electric or hydrogen buses. Currently, CNG buses can be purchased for approximately \$850,000, whereas electric buses cost approximately \$1,800,000 to \$2,000,000 and hydrogen buses cost approximately \$1,500,000 to \$1,700,000.

The environmental impact of transit is well established. Reducing the number of available buses has several major impacts on municipalities. First, it forces even more difficult choices between service levels and taxpayer supported costs. The reality is that fewer people will be able to access public transit if transitional funding of CNG and clean diesel buses is not restored. In addition, the environmental effects would be a net negative, as more people will be driving personal vehicles in municipalities who cannot afford electric buses.

The Government of Canada has committed to net-zero emissions from fossil fuels by 2035. Electric and hydrogen buses are a part of reaching that target. However, the public good provided through public transit is at risk of being diminished by moving too fast. A target of 2035 to transition public transit fleets is a more reasonable approach that can still achieve the desired outcomes without unduly burdening taxpayers.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis has advocated for funding for public transit funding in the past but has not had a position on what types and energy sources should be eligible for a public transit funding. If approved, this resolution will be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy recommended to ABmunis' Board by the Infrastructure Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

B18: Provincial Support for Watershed Management

Moved by:	City of St. Albert
Seconded by:	Town of Gibbons
Category:	B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
Subject:	Environment
Status:	Adopted - Active

WHEREAS the goals and objectives of watershed management plans under the Water for Life Strategy include a safe, secure drinking water supply, healthy aquatic ecosystems, reliable quality water supplies for a sustainable economy, flood and drought preparation, and overall watershed ecological health;

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta promotes the management of water to achieve these goals through the Wetland Policy, the Water Act and the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act;

WHEREAS achieving these goals requires an understanding of, and responses to, diverse impacts from agriculture and livestock, road salt usage, vegetation clearing, development pressures, irrigation, septic concerns, and shoreline modifications;

WHEREAS municipalities develop and apply watershed management recommendations into their municipal planning documents and operations to achieve these goals, partially to address provincial regulatory, planning, enforcement, monitoring, and reporting gaps, especially for municipalities not directly situated on major rivers such as the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers;

WHEREAS there is a lack of provincial resources for municipalities to achieve the goals of the Water for Life Strategy without municipally funded services and operations such as water quality monitoring, watershed ecological health assessments, and biodiversity assessments; and

WHEREAS Alberta is currently experiencing drought conditions, with the Province initiating water-sharing negotiations and establishing a new drought advisory committee, necessitating increased attention to watershed and cumulative effects management.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta to direct resources to bolster the application of the Water Act and the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act through increased enforcement, data collection and information sharing with municipalities, and biodiversity assessments for all municipalities located on all rivers and watersheds in the Province – including but not limited to engagement with municipalities on Water Act permit approvals to enable alignment with municipal statutory plans – to achieve the goals of the Water for Life Strategy.

BACKGROUND:

The City of St. Albert, along with over a dozen other municipalities and First Nations, are all members of the Sturgeon River Watershed Alliance (SRWA) – a municipally-supported watershed stewardship group established for the Sturgeon River Watershed, which works in partnership with the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA). The SRWA focuses on watershed planning to inform and align municipal policies and planning, ensure access to safe drinking water, promote healthy aquatic ecosystems, and enable a reliable, quality water supply for the economy – objectives that align directly with the Provincial Water for Life Strategy.

As the Sturgeon River is a precipitation-fed river, the use of the surrounding land has an increased impact on the quality and quantity of water in the watershed when compared to glacier-fed rivers like the North Saskatchewan and Bow Rivers. Whereas greater resources such as access to data on water quality, impact assessments, and

enforcement of Water Act regulations is available to municipalities situated on major glacier-fed rivers, municipalities situated on smaller tributary rivers often do not have access to the same resources.

The priority issues in the Sturgeon River Watershed are:

- Poor water quality due to excess nutrient and sediment inputs;
- Low water levels in late Summer and Fall in rivers, creeks and lakes;
- Impacts from extensive agriculture and rapid urbanization; and
- Loss of wetlands, riparian areas and other environmentally sensitive areas.

Precipitation-fed rivers have increased risk of being affected by extreme weather events and climate change, due to the lack of glacial fed headwaters; they have lower resiliency to drought and are prone to flooding in high precipitation weather events. While they are often not a source of drinking water, they can be used to attenuate waste, support a healthy aquatic ecosystem, and are tributaries to larger glacier-fed rivers like the North Saskatchewan River – the health of such tributary rivers directly impacts the state of the major rivers into which they eventually discharge.

Furthermore, the permitted and unpermitted loss of wetlands has resulted in low ecological resiliency, with major impacts to ecosystems and economies related to highly fluctuating water levels. Oftentimes, Water Act approvals that affect wetlands are granted without significant municipal consultations, resulting in conflicts with municipal statutory plans that guide the management of wetlands and watersheds within their boundaries.

These issues are not being adequately addressed through provincial resources and oversight. Municipalities situated on smaller rivers must make decisions based on incomplete or missing data critical to making informed decisions – data that may otherwise be available to municipalities situated on larger, glacier-fed rivers. As a result of this gap, sources of pollution are often not quantified or monitored, and can impact surface and groundwater quality of sub-watersheds, and by extension, major glacier-fed rivers to which they are tributaries.

Assuming the work of ecological monitoring to address the gap in provincial resources, oversight and enforcement is expensive and requires specialized knowledge and expertise to complete tasks such as water quality testing and biodiversity assessments – such costs can be prohibitive for smaller municipalities. Furthermore, Water Act approvals are often granted to private landowners without determining the impacts of such decisions on the municipality, their statutory plans, or their water management issues and priorities.

Through allocating more resources to the application and enforcement of provincial water policies and legislation for tributary rivers and sub-watersheds, and through engagement with municipalities on Water Act approvals, the Government of Alberta can provide the tools required to ensure the objectives of the Water for Life Strategy can be adequately met at every source and tributary of Alberta's water supply.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis is an active member of the Alberta Water Council, participating on several sub-committees. ABmunis is also currently looking at updating a water conservation, efficiency and productivity plan for members to reduce their per capita daily consumption of water. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response. Further advocacy would be recommended to the ABmunis' Board by the Environment and Sustainability Committee within the context of related priorities and positions

B19: Goldfish Infestation and Emergency Approval of Powder-Form Rotenone Pesticide

Moved by:	Town of Sylvan Lake
Seconded by:	Town of Bentley
Category:	B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities' strategic initiatives
Subject:	Environment
Status:	Adopted - Active

WHEREAS goldfish, an invasive aquatic species, are continuously infesting stormwater ponds, posing a serious risk to the ecosystem;

WHEREAS the only approved pesticide in Canada, liquid Rotenone, is no longer being manufactured due to a manufacturing plant closure;

WHEREAS affected municipalities have made great efforts to resolve the issue, including obtaining the necessary provincial authorization to remove the aquatic invasive species manually;

WHEREAS the exploration of alternative methods, such as electrofishing, dewatering, and dredging, have been used in the absence of liquid Rotenone; and

WHEREAS goldfish continue to infest stormwater ponds, despite using alternative methods, demonstrating how persistent the problem is for affected municipalities.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta for emergency approval of the dry form Rotenone to address invasive aquatic species infestation in stormwater pond systems.

BACKGROUND:

An extensive goldfish infestation in Alberta's stormwater ponds requires quick intervention to lessen the environmental harm to waterways and ecosystems.

The lack of liquid Rotenone has made it difficult to manage the aquatic invasive species successfully, even with attempts to address the problem using existing strategies, including physical removal, pond dewatering, and electrofishing. Emergency licensing of dry-form rotenone is required to assist in the prompt and effective management of the goldfish population and reduce the risk of ecological harm.

To mitigate the environmental risk posed to the lake by the aquatic invasive species in the surrounding stormwater ponds, it is imperative for the province to allow the emergency approval of dry-form Rotenone; this approval would not only facilitate an effective tool to control the goldfish population found in the stormwater ponds but also prevent further ecological damaging by providing an urgently needed solution to address the infestations.

By working collaboratively with relevant stakeholders, including municipalities, the Government of Alberta can address this pressing environmental concern and safeguard the integrity of Alberta's natural resources.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis does not currently have a position on this specific issue; however, this resolution aligns with past advocacy on aquatic invasive species. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response. Further advocacy would be recommended to the ABmunis' Board by the Environment and Sustainability Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

C1: Financial Disclosure of Asset Retirement Obligations

Moved by:	Town of Coronation
Seconded by:	Town of Hinton
Category:	C – Other issues of potential interest to Alberta municipalities
Subject:	Governance
Status:	Adopted - Active

WHEREAS the addition of accounting standard PS 3280, Asset Retirement Obligations (ARO), increases the transparency of a municipality's environmental liabilities through a municipality's audited financial statements;

WHEREAS the new ARO accounting standard requires municipalities and regional service commissions to report the estimated cost to retire, decommission, remediate, or monitor specific tangible capital assets that present an environmental liability at the end of its useful life;

WHEREAS many municipalities, particularly smaller municipalities, lack the administrative capacity to efficiently and accurately assess the estimated cost to retire their relevant tangible capital assets when those assets are deemed to no longer be needed to serve the community; and

WHEREAS municipalities facing the need for abatement assessments lack adequate financial support to comply with these requirements.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta for financial support and tools to support municipalities to comply with PS 3280 in the most cost-efficient manner possible.

BACKGROUND:

In 2018, the Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) approved standard PS 3280, Asset Retirement Obligations, with it coming into force for all municipal financial statements for the year ending in 2023. With the implementation of PS 3280, public sector bodies, including municipalities, need to report in their financial statements the estimated cost to retire, decommission, remediate, or monitor specific tangible capital assets once they reach their end of life. Common examples include:

- Buildings with asbestos
- Closure of landfills
- Closure of wastewater treatment facilities

The issuance of detailed guidelines by the province for this process, along with the consideration of best practices to protect municipalities from lawsuits and legal costs associated with such disclosures, would be advantageous.

Some municipalities might struggle to effectively evaluate their environmental liability, which would require hiring consultants to do the work for them. This is a cost that many smaller municipalities cannot afford.

Support from the Government of Alberta would significantly contribute to the stability and sustainability of municipalities across Alberta, enabling them to fulfill their responsibilities under the MGA while protecting them from undue financial and legal risks associated with the capital assets that carry an environmental or health risk.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis does not currently have a position on this issue. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to ABmunis' Board by the Municipal Governance Committee within the context of other priorities.

2024 RESOLUTIONS

Defeated Resolutions

B16: Culture, Recreation, and Sport Facility Infrastructure Deficit Report Card

Moved by: Town of Innisfail
 Seconded by: City of Red Deer
 Category: B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities’ strategic initiatives
 Subject: Infrastructure
 Status: **Defeated**

WHEREAS culture, recreation, and sport enhance personal health and wellness, increase quality of life through physical activity and mental health, and play an important role in social connection and inclusion;

WHEREAS all Albertans should have the opportunity to access safe culture, recreation, and sport facilities that contribute to healthy citizens, community economic development, sport tourism, job creation and sustainability of the social fabric of communities;

WHEREAS Alberta’s municipalities are ineligible to access the provincial government’s Active Communities Initiative which allocates \$30 million over three years for community groups, non-profit organizations and societies, First Nations, and Metis Settlements to renew, expand, and/or build small to medium sized public-use community sport and recreation facilities;

WHEREAS the province is expecting and encouraging continued population growth and municipal governments are primarily responsible for culture, recreation, and sport facilities in Alberta, yet the provincial government is reducing its funding support for municipal owned and operated facilities;

WHEREAS a provincial inventory of culture, sport, and recreation facilities that recognizes the physical deterioration of existing infrastructure in municipalities does not exist; and

WHEREAS a culture, recreation, and sport facility infrastructure deficit report card would reinforce the need for strategic and evidence-based decisions, and adequate funding is allocated towards infrastructure investments in municipal owned and operated facilities across Alberta.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta to fund Alberta Municipalities or a third-party organization to develop and maintain a database that provides an inventory of all culture, sport, and recreation facilities in Alberta and that the Government of Alberta use that inventory database to benchmark and make strategic and evidence-based decisions on investments in culture, sport, and recreation infrastructure.

BACKGROUND:

A strong provincial economy requires healthy and complete communities, and culture, recreation, and sport are critical community infrastructure that is essential to all Albertans. The Canadian Infrastructure Report Card (2019) indicates that 30-35% of culture, recreation, and sport facilities are in fair or worse condition.¹ Most publicly owned recreation infrastructures were built between the mid 1950’s and early 1990’s and are nearing their useful life.

The Government of Alberta (GoA) recently announced the Active Communities Initiative which is an allocation of \$30 million for community groups, non-profit organizations and societies, First Nations, and Metis Settlements to renew, expand, and/or build small to medium sized public-use community sport and recreation facilities. The grant

¹ (2024, May 5). Retrieved from Canadian Infrastructure Report Card 2019:
<http://canadianinfrastructure.ca/downloads/canadian-infrastructure-report-card-2019.pdf>

program is intended for small and mid-sized sport and recreational facility projects¹ and municipalities are considered ineligible.

Access by municipalities for culture, recreation, and sport funding is becoming scarce. The Community Facility Enhancement Program (CFEP) and the Community Initiatives Program (CIP) once were accessible for municipalities to assist with the renewal, expansion, or building of public-use community facilities and are no longer. Although it is appreciated that funding is available to community partner organizations, most community facilities are managed directly by municipalities.

The provincial government quickly responds to municipal inquiries of recreation infrastructure funding programs to utilize the Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF) Capital funding. Alberta's municipalities know that is not possible as the provincial government's spending on local infrastructure has dropped from 3.7% of total spending a decade ago to 1% today. This means that there is less investment of \$1.3 billion in community infrastructure funding² and Alberta's municipalities are facing an estimated \$30 billion deficit that will worsen without government support³.

The culture, sport, and recreation infrastructure deficit is not the only challenge. The provincial government has launched Phase 3 of its "Alberta is Calling" campaign which will be the province's largest annual increase in the province's history with an average of 550 people moving to Alberta every day⁴. Alberta's annual population growth projection is expected to be 2.5% (2022-2025) with 4.5 million population in 2022 to 7.1 million in 2051. The population is expected to become increasingly diverse as immigration will account for 55% of the expected population growth over this period⁵. Municipalities are facing increasing pressure to accommodate the province's growth and maintaining the current infrastructure while planning the addition of new subdivisions and community facilities.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis has encouraged municipalities to incorporate asset management practices to support the effective operation, maintenance and renewal of municipally owned infrastructure. A provincial database of recreation infrastructure would support this practice. If passed, this resolution will be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for a response. Further advocacy would be recommended to ABmunis' Board by the Infrastructure Committee within the context of related priorities and positions. If the Government of Alberta is supportive of funding the initiative, ABmunis would work with the Government of Alberta to determine if ABmunis or another third-party organization are best positioned to develop and maintain the database.

¹ Government of Alberta. (2024, May 3). Retrieved from Building Active Spaces and Brighter Futures: <https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=902887A915EF0-BF58-A6D7-35BC294F5758FF3A>

² Alberta Municipalities. (2024, May 5). *Let's Talk About Infrastructure*. Retrieved from Alberta Municipalities: https://www.abmunis.ca/system/files/2023-09/ABmunis%20Backgrounder_Funding%20of%20Local%20Infrastructure.pdf

³ Alberta Municipalities. (2024, May 5). *Local Government Fiscal Framework*. Retrieved from Alberta Municipalities: <https://www.abmunis.ca/advocacy-resources/infrastructure/local-government-fiscal-framework-lgff>

⁴ Gibson, C. (2024, May 9). *3rd Phase of Alberta is Calling is underway, but is province moving too fast?* Retrieved from GlobAL News: <https://globalnews.ca/news/10484561/alberta-is-calling-phase-3-movingbonus/#:~:text=Phase%20of%20the%20Alberta.help%20build%20housing%20and%20infrastructure.>

⁵ Government of Alberta. (2024, May 3). Retrieved from Building Active Spaces and Brighter Futures: <https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=902887A915EF0-BF58-A6D7-35BC294F5758FF3A>

C2: Extending Municipal Voting Rights to Permanent Residents

Moved by: City of Calgary
 Seconded by: Town of Penhold
 Category: C – Other issues of potential interest to Alberta municipalities
 Subject: Governance
 Status: **Defeated**

WHEREAS our responsibility as municipalities extends to all who people who call our communities' home;

WHEREAS permanent residents are community members who have demonstrated a commitment to our communities and, like citizens, contribute to civic life, have chosen to work here, raise families here, pay taxes here, and who use and support municipal services; however, permanent residents do not have the democratic right to vote in their local municipality;

WHEREAS the right to vote in federal elections is enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms for those with Canadian citizenship, the right to vote provincially is defined in Alberta's Election Act, and the right to vote in municipal elections is defined in Alberta's Local Authorities Election Act;

WHEREAS all orders of government make decisions that directly impact the daily lives of all residents, regardless of their citizenship status; and

WHEREAS municipal governments have a unique legislative opportunity to honour the contributions of Permanent Residents – who are long-term constituents, neighbours, and community members who pay property taxes and fees for municipal services, contribute to our local economy by working and purchasing goods and services, and create vibrancy in areas of social and cultural life – by extending them a democratic voice in local governments.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the Government of Alberta to amend the Local Authorities Election Act to expand voter eligibility to include individuals who have been granted Canadian permanent resident status.

BACKGROUND:

Definition of a Permanent Resident:

A permanent resident is a person who has legally immigrated to Canada and has been granted the status of a permanent resident but is not a Canadian citizen. Permanent residents can live, work, or study anywhere in Canada, and access most social and health benefits. Permanent residents must also pay all taxes in Canada and respect all Canadian laws. Permanent residents may be in the process of applying for Canadian citizenship, which takes a minimum of 4-5 years after immigrating to Canada.

National Context:

The term franchise, or enfranchisement, denotes the right to vote in elections for members of Parliament, provincial legislatures and municipal councils. As municipalities exist as a result of Provincial legislation, the opportunity exists to afford municipal voting rights to Citizens and Permanent Residents alike through an act of the Alberta Provincial Government amending the Local Authorities Election Act.

Canada has a history of expanding voting rights as our values evolve. Consider that dating back to the colonial period, restrictions once effectively limited the right to vote to male property holders. Since then, voting qualifications and voter eligibility have expanded, removing the restrictions on women, First Nations, Inuit, and Asian Canadians' right to vote, and eventually affirming the right of every Citizen to vote.

The expansion of voter eligibility reflects Canada’s evolving social values and a more reflective understanding of what it means to contribute to Canadian society. Currently, New Brunswick is drafting legislation to be the first province in Canada to give permanent residents the right to vote in local elections after bipartisan legislation recognized permanent residents as significant members of the community deserving of enfranchisement in local elections.¹ In addition, Toronto City Council² and Vancouver City Council³ have passed motions calling on their respective provincial governments to enable permanent residents the right to vote locally.

International Context:

On an international level, permanent residents, or their equivalent, have the right to vote in local elections in over 45 nations around the world under various circumstances including, but not limited to:

- U.S.A. (in various states)
- United Kingdom (including Wales and Scotland)
- Ireland
- Germany
- Belgium
- Greece
- New Zealand
- Switzerland
- Denmark
- Finland
- Belize
- Austria
- Netherlands
- Israel
- Australia
- And more...

Alignment with Alberta Municipalities’ Strategic Initiatives

The expansion of democratic participation to permanent residents aligns with several strategic initiatives such as:

- Fostering a Culture of Respect
- Welcoming and Inclusive Communities
- Local Authorities Election Act

Granting permanent residents the right to vote provides several benefits across the above strategic initiatives of Alberta Municipalities. The right to vote democratically further enshrines the mutual respect we have for immigrants in our communities. Civic participation fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility amongst community, strengthens social cohesion, and ensures that governments are responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people they represent.⁴ By ensuring our community members are represented in local elections, we can create stronger communities.

The provincial government has made changes to the Local Authorities Election Act (LAEA) with, and without, the advocacy of Alberta Municipalities. This would be an opportunity to make an amendment to the LAEA that will greatly strengthen our communities and ensure our democracy is reflective of the communities we serve.

Other Considerations:

In Alberta, our elected leaders at the provincial level must win the nomination of their party’s constituency association for the riding wherein they seek the nomination. To win the nomination in a riding, a candidate must receive a majority vote of eligible party members in that riding. The eligibility for party membership varies, but for example, the United Conservative Party will allow membership to⁵:

1. Residents of Alberta
2. People aged 14 and above
3. Citizens and Permanent Residents of Canada
4. Have paid the fee

¹ [Extending vote to N.B. permanent residents won’t happen by fall: province - New Brunswick | Globalnews.ca](#)

² [Council votes in favour of electoral reform measures | CBC News](#)

³ [The City of Vancouver just moved to let permanent residents vote in civic elections - BC | Globalnews.ca](#)

⁴ [Why Civic Engagement Matters in Democracy? - Modern Diplomacy](#)

⁵ [Membership – The United Conservative Party](#)

When considering the democratic process is heavily influenced by the candidates who run for leadership, it is relevant information that permanent residents are able to vote for the leader of a party and vote for candidates to secure their nominations. By proxy, permanent residents can contribute to the selection of the Premier of Alberta and their local MLAs but are unable to vote for their local elected officials.

Permanent Residents are now eligible to become Police Officers.¹

- Recently, the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program announced new eligibility to allow Permanent Residents eligibility for recruitment into Police Services, including sworn officers and civilian positions.
- This change allows Police Services to recruit international officers into the service.

Permanent Residents are now eligible to join the Canadian Forces.²

- Since 2022, in response to the growing need for stability in the Canadian Armed Forces, the ban on permanent residents enrolling in the Canadian Armed Forces was lifted.
- Permanent residents are now eligible to join the Canadian Armed Forces to alleviate what was viewed as a critical shortfall in personnel.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

This issue relates to ABmunis work to support municipalities to create [welcoming and inclusive communities](#), and ABmunis' principles that local elections should be inclusive and locally focused; however, ABmunis does not currently have a position on whether permanent residents should be eligible to vote in municipal elections. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response. Further advocacy would be recommended to ABmunis' Board by the Municipal Governance Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

¹ [Attracting skilled workers to protect communities | alberta.ca](#)

² [Minister of National Defence announces that permanent residents are welcome to apply now to join the Canadian Armed Forces - Canada.ca](#)

2024 RESOLUTIONS

Outstanding Resolutions

Due to the high number of resolutions and length of debate on some resolutions, the allocated time for the 2024 Resolutions Session ended before members could debate and vote on the following six resolutions. Per section 45 of ABmunis' Resolution Policy, resolutions which are not debated at a Resolutions Session are to be considered by ABmunis' Board following the Convention.

C3: Fires on Frozen Lakes

Moved by:	Town of Sylvan Lake
Seconded by:	Summer Village of Jarvis Bay
Category:	C – Other issues of potential interest to Alberta municipalities
Subject:	Environment
Status:	Outstanding – To be determined

WHEREAS fires directly lit on the surface of frozen lakes results in significant environmental damage due to the debris left behind, including materials such as garbage, tires, and pallets containing nails;

WHEREAS the debris from fires directly lit on the surface of frozen lakes poses a threat to the ecosystem of Alberta lakes and surrounding areas, particularly upon melting, when it enters the lake and contributes to environmental pollution;

WHEREAS the current regulatory framework lacks specific provisions to regulate fires directly lit on frozen lakes, necessitating the development of a new regulation to address this emerging environmental challenge;

WHEREAS there is an urgent need for a regulation to address this issue and prevent further harm to the environment; and

WHEREAS collaborative efforts between municipalities, the provincial government, and other stakeholders have proven effective in addressing environmental concerns in the past.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta to develop, implement, and enforce, a regulation that mandates fires be contained within raised containers to mitigate the risk of debris contamination and to prevent environmental damage caused by fires directly lit on the surface of frozen lakes.

BACKGROUND:

The practice of burning fires directly on the surface of frozen lakes, as observed in Sylvan Lake and surrounding areas, has raised concerns due to the environmental damage caused by the debris left behind. The debris often contains harmful materials such as nails, garbage, and tires, posing a significant risk to the ecosystem upon melting. While efforts have been made to address this issue through existing channels, such as 310-PARKS, the current system has proven ineffective in resolving the problem.

To mitigate the environmental impact of fires on frozen lakes, it is imperative to develop a regulation mandating fires be contained and removed when the user concludes their time on the lake. This regulation would not only prevent debris contamination, but also facilitate effective enforcement measures to ensure compliance.

By working collaboratively with relevant stakeholders, including municipalities, the Government of Alberta can address this pressing environmental concern and safeguard the integrity of Alberta's natural resources.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis does not currently have a position on this issue. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to ABmunis' Board by the Environment and Sustainability Committee within the context of other priorities and positions.

C4: Increase Capital Funding for Accessible Playgrounds for All New, Replacement or Renovated Alberta Public Schools with K-6 Programming

Moved by:	City of Spruce Grove
Seconded by:	Village of Amisk
Category:	C – Other issues of potential interest to Alberta municipalities
Subject:	Social
Status:	Outstanding – To be determined

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta announced in June 2020 that any new school with K-6 programming will have funding for a playground included in their capital budgets;

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta provides grant funding of up to \$250,000 per school to support the construction of a playground for new or replacement schools; school communities that wish to exceed \$250,000 can use fundraising to supplement the project;

WHEREAS significant fundraising is often required above the Government of Alberta grant funding with schools¹ reaching out to municipalities for additional funding due to insufficient provincial funding for accessible playgrounds;

WHEREAS accessible playgrounds are built to accommodate children of all abilities enabling youth with or without disabilities, their parents, and caregivers to fully participate in all aspects of the playground;

WHEREAS accessible playgrounds require additional funding, above what non-accessible playgrounds cost;

WHEREAS many municipal governments are working towards increasing accessibility in their communities through various measures such as accessibility policies and accessible playground standards for developers;

WHEREAS there is no mechanism that mandates accessible school playgrounds; and

WHEREAS school play time and playgrounds are vital to childhood development, which includes the development of gross motor skills, social interactions, and creativity.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta to increase capital funding for all new, replacement, or renovated public schools with K-6 programming to enable the construction of accessible playgrounds to ensure that students with disabilities have equal development opportunities.

BACKGROUND:

In 2021/2022, there were 745,770 K-12 students in Alberta with approximately 14% having a coded status that can be related to an identified disability.

Municipalities across the province recognize the importance of creating welcoming, inclusive, and accessible communities. Several municipalities in Alberta have accessibility policies in place or under development; however, school playgrounds are provincially mandated, and therefore excluded from any municipal accessibility policies.

This resolution aligns with Alberta Municipalities' Welcoming and Inclusive Communities (WIC) Initiative, which aims to help municipalities adapt to and celebrate the increasing diversity of Alberta's population. The WIC Initiative works

¹ In the context of this resolution 'schools' refer to school jurisdictions eligible for Government of Alberta capital funding which include a public, separate or Francophone grouping of schools governed by an elected school board.

to create communities where all residents and visitors enjoy a sense of belonging and where diversity adds to the social and economic vibrancy of the community, improving the quality of life for all residents, including people with disabilities.

Currently, school boards are eligible for Government of Alberta grant funding for playgrounds either through Alberta Education or Alberta Arts, Culture and Status of Women; however, school authorities and their fundraising societies are not eligible to receive funding from both sources:

- Alberta Education provides up to \$250,000 for playgrounds, through capital grant funding for new and replacement schools. Schools can use their fundraising societies to supplement playground construction builds that exceed \$250,000.
- Alberta Arts, Culture and Status of Women provides grant funding through the Community Facility Enhancement Program (CFEP) of up to \$125,000 to support the construction of a school playground. Matching funds are required, and funding can be used for new, replacement or renovated schools.

Alberta public sector entities have a history of advocating for additional capital school funding:

- In 2014, the Town of Penhold put forward the Provincial Support for School Development resolution requesting “that the Government of Alberta, when developing new schools, fulfill the role of a contractor and share the costs associated with the development of the lands for the placement of a school structure”.
- In 2017, Edmonton Public School Board successfully advocated to the Government of Alberta for funding playgrounds to be committed to in the 2020 Budget proportional to the new schools announced. In June 2020, the Government of Alberta announced that any new school with K-6 programming would have funding for a playground included in their capital budgets.

Alberta interest groups have a history of advocating for consistent accessibility standards:

- The Alberta Advocate for Persons with Disabilities is working towards a proactive approach towards reducing barriers and improving opportunities for those with disabilities.
- The Alberta Ability Network (AAN) is a collaboration of 170 organizations and community advocates located in Alberta, working together to address systemic barriers facing persons with disabilities, and has advocated to the province for mechanisms for enforcement of accessibility standards in the province.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

This issue relates to ABmunis' Welcoming and Inclusive Communities initiative to support all residents to have equitable access to services and facilities, but ABmunis does not currently have a position on whether the province should create a funding system that enables the construction of accessible playgrounds at all K-6 schools. If the resolution is passed, it will be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy recommended to ABmunis' Board by the Infrastructure Committee within the context of other priorities and positions.

C5: Doubling Speed Fines in Playground Zones and School Zones

Moved by:	City of Calgary
Seconded by:	Village of Duchess
Category:	C – Other issues of potential interest to Alberta municipalities
Subject:	Social
Status:	Outstanding – To be determined

WHEREAS ensuring the safety of children, particularly in playground zones near schools, is paramount due to their heightened vulnerability to traffic-related risks;

WHEREAS various public entities, including school boards and parent councils have voiced concerns regarding speeding and pedestrian safety, underscoring the urgency for additional protective measures;

WHEREAS other jurisdictions, such as Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Quebec, and Ontario, have successfully implemented measures to double speeding fines in school zones;

WHEREAS Alberta has already doubled fines for other vulnerable road users such as when workers are present in construction zones or when passing first responders; and

WHEREAS the provincial government holds responsibility for the Traffic Safety Act and associated regulations/specified penalties, including the establishment of school and playground zones with reduced speed limits to safeguard children's well-being.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the Government of Alberta to make changes to the Alberta Traffic Safety Act to improve safety within designated school zones and playground zones through measures such as double fines for speeding offenses or adjusting demerits to encourage improved compliance.

BACKGROUND:

This issue affects all Alberta municipalities with school zones and/or playground zones. According to a study cited by the Global Road Safety Partnership¹ increasing speeding fines by 50-100 per cent can result in a 15 per cent decrease in violations.

Given the alignment with existing provincial legislation intended to protect vulnerable road users, and the potential to help reduce safety incidents in school zones and playground zones, this resolution should be given a high priority.

While prioritizing the safety of road users in school zones and playground zones does not specifically align with strategic initiatives listed in Alberta Municipalities' 2024 Business Plan, it does align with the general strategy of prioritizing and building common solutions that strengthen municipalities.

Advocacy to increase fines for speeding in school and playground zones was addressed by Alberta Municipalities through a 2011 resolution sponsored by the City of Grande Prairie. Alberta Transportation responded that they were not pursuing an increase in fine amounts at that time. There does not appear to be any other associations or groups acting on this issue currently.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis does not currently have a position on this specific issue. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to the ABmunis Board by the Safe and Healthy Communities Committee within the context of other priorities and positions.

¹ Sakashita, C. Fleiter, J.J, Cliff, D., Flieger, M., Harman, B. & Lilley, M (2021). A Guide to the Use of Penalties to Improve Road Safety. Global Road Safety Partnership, Geneva, Switzerland.

C6: Coverage of Mandatory Drivers' Medical Exam Fees for Albertans Aged 75 and Older

Moved by: City of Cold Lake
 Seconded by: Town of Bonnyville
 Category: C – Other issues of potential interest to Alberta municipalities
 Subject: Social
 Status: Outstanding – To be determined

WHEREAS mandatory driver medical exams for Albertans aged 75 years and older were covered by the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan until 2020;

WHEREAS many Albertans aged 75 years and older live on a fixed income and are disproportionately impacted by new and increasing personal expenses;

WHEREAS the ability to maintain a driver's license impacts an individual's independence, his or her ability to efficiently attend medical appointments, and care for themselves as well as their families;

WHEREAS seniors who are not able to drive increasingly rely on municipal services, including accessible transportation, door-to-door bus services, and medical travel subsidies; and

WHEREAS it is in Alberta's best interest to encourage and support independent, active, and healthy seniors who are able to age in their communities with dignity and a high quality of life.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the Government of Alberta to reinstate Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan coverage for mandatory driver medical exams for Albertans aged 75 years and older.

BACKGROUND:

In 2020, the Government of Alberta removed mandatory driver medical exams from the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan (AHCIP) as a cost-saving measure. Amongst the reasons cited for the change was that Alberta was the only province to cover such costs.

Alberta's 2024-25 budget contains measures intended to assist seniors with rising costs, including a 25% reduction in personal registry services and a 25% coverage of the cost of mandatory medical exams. These programs are acknowledged and commended by the movers of this resolution as a meaningful step that will reduce the cost of living and help to maintain the independence of Alberta's seniors.

Given the recent and unprecedented rise in the cost of living, and the disproportionate affect that cost of living increases have on people as they age and are more likely to rely on a fixed income, however, it is requested that the Government of Alberta consider resuming its position as a leader in providing access to mandatory drivers' medical exams for its residents aged 75 years and older.

Mandatory drivers' medical exams are required at the age of 75, 80, and every two years thereafter. The requirements for such mandatory drivers' exams are, of course, reasonable given that changes in people's health can impact their ability to drive safely and are more likely to occur as people age.

The costs, however, are not consistent across the province and can range up to \$150, a 75% increase over the rate that was covered under the AHCIP, which was \$85.58. The movers of this resolution feel that it is in our province's best interest to ensure that each Albertan can live as independently as possible where they are able and willing to do so. Significant fees for mandatory drivers' medical exams can represent a barrier to maintaining a driver's license for healthy Albertan's aged 75 and older who would otherwise be medically cleared to drive.

The Government of Alberta has noted that the population of seniors in Alberta continues to rise faster than any other age group. According to the Government of Alberta’s website, in September 2022, there were 725,000 Albertans over the age of 65 years. That number is expected to double by 2042. Ensuring that Albertans aged 75 and up can afford to maintain their driver’s license will also ensure that a greater number of Albertans are able to remain active participants in the communities in which they plan to age. Maintaining independence will mitigate social isolation and exclusion, which the Government of Alberta notes “... can be a significant issue for many seniors and can lead to negative health effects including depression and a reduced sense of well-being.” (<https://www.alberta.ca/seniors-resources>)

The benefits of independence and independent mobility that come with maintaining a driver’s license are magnified in the context of rural and remote communities. Many seniors living in a rural or remote context must travel to Alberta’s larger centres for health care appointments. If these trips cannot be made independently, the burden often falls on public services or more expensive private transportation options.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES’ COMMENTS:

ABmunis does not currently have a position on this issue. On June 18, 2024, the Government of Alberta announced that seniors over 65 years of age now receive a 25 per cent discount on driver’s medical exams¹; however, this does not meet the intent of the resolution that seniors should receive full coverage under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan.

If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to ABmunis’ Board by the Economic Strategy Committee within the context of other priorities and positions.

¹ Government of Alberta June 18, 2024 News Release: “Another registry discount for seniors.” <https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=90536BB2B13FF-ADDE-CF3F-70AF076F9D229090>

C7: Alberta Learner's Licence Program Review

Moved by:	City of Brooks
Seconded by:	Town of Sexsmith
Category:	C – Other issues of potential interest to Alberta municipalities
Subject:	Economic
Status:	Outstanding – To be determined

WHEREAS the ability to drive impacts the livelihood of individuals who do not have access to public transportation to go to and from work and other daily needs, especially in rural Alberta;

WHEREAS the Province of Alberta possesses the most restrictive Learner's Licence Program in Canada;

WHEREAS within the Government of Alberta's Learner's Licence Program, a Class 7 Learner's Licence is the first step to legally driving a vehicle per Alberta's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program;

WHEREAS for the first year, a driver with a Class 7 Learner's License may only operate a vehicle if there is a passenger present who is over 18 years old and has a full Class 5 driver's license or higher;

WHEREAS after one year with a Class 7 Learner's License, a driver can complete a series of tests and upgrade to a Class 5 GDL, which no longer requires a licensed passenger, but still carries various restrictions; and

WHEREAS in Alberta, it takes up to three years to get a full, non-GDL Class 5 Driver's Licence.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the Provincial Government to review its Learner's Licence Program for legislative changes which includes shortening the Class 7 Learner's Licence period from twelve months to eight months for those 16 years of age and older who take an approved and accredited driver's training course.

BACKGROUND:

In Alberta, there is no ability to shorten the Class 7 Learner's Licence period by taking driver's training. For those 16 and over, the process requires a minimum of twelve months before a road test can be completed to obtain a Class 5 GDL, which enables the license holder to drive without a licensed passenger present.

If a person is 16 years or older when they apply for a driver's license, Alberta's GDL system requires:

1. At least one year with a Class 7 license, which requires the driver to travel with a passenger in the front seat who has a full Class 5 license.
2. After one year, the driver may complete a road test and receive a Class 5 GDL, which allows them to drive without a licensed passenger, but other restrictions still apply.
3. A driver with a Class 5 GDL may only upgrade to a full Class 5 license after they have driven with a Class 5 GDL for at least two years and have had no license suspensions or demerits in the last year. However, a driver can reduce the time they hold a Class 5 GDL by six months if they complete an accredited Class 5 driver training school.¹

If a person is under 16 years old when they apply for a Class 7 learner's license, they will not be eligible to upgrade to a Class 5 GDL until they turn 16 years old.

In most provinces, individuals with a Class 7 Learner's Licence have the opportunity to shorten the required time period to obtain a full Class 5 Driver's Licence by way of an approved and accredited driver's training course that teaches the fundamentals of driving, both in theory and practicality. Should a new driver be successful in completing

¹ Steps to getting an Alberta driver's licence <https://www.alberta.ca/get-drivers-licence-steps>

the approved and accredited driver's training course, the driver is able to cut down their probation time anywhere from 12 months to eight months (and even six months in some provinces).

If the Province of Alberta reduced the Class 7 Learner's Licence period with the approved and accredited driver's training course, it would certainly mean safer roads, as it is witnessed too often that Class 7 drivers are driving with individuals who they themselves barely know how to drive or just sit there as a passenger rather than someone who is to be providing supervision. In addition, a lot of Class 7 drivers continue to hold their Class 7 Learner's Licence for a number of consecutive years which is attributed to failing road tests, as the driver likely had no real training and or good supervision.

Giving Albertans the option to take a driver's training course that not only goes over the theory of driving, but the fundamentals of actually driving is crucial to the individual's development as a driver and fellow road user.

Furthermore, it is a great incentive for people to obtain their Class 5 GDL within a shorter period of time, which is so important in aiding in municipal economies, as new opportunities will arise for business across the province. This will also provide an opportunity for those who want to do better and learn how to be better drivers because of it. Drivers may even qualify for cheaper insurance rates with having a driver's training course on file as well.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis does not currently have a position on this issue. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to ABmunis' Board by the Economic Strategy Committee within the context of other priorities and positions.

C8: Review of Provincial Animal Protection Act

Moved by:	City of Airdrie
Seconded by:	Town of Didsbury
Category:	C – Other issues of potential interest to Alberta municipalities
Subject:	Governance
Status:	Outstanding – To be determined

WHEREAS Alberta's Animal Protection Act (APA) is a crucial legislative framework designed to safeguard the welfare of animals within the province;

WHEREAS it is imperative to periodically reassess and update existing legislation to ensure it remains effective and aligned with current standards and Alberta's APA has not been substantially changed since 2006;

WHEREAS the current version of the legislation does not differentiate between commercial and companion animals;

WHEREAS societal attitudes and norms have changed, new challenges and risks have emerged and best practices for animal protection may be enacted;

WHEREAS municipalities play a pivotal role in enforcing animal welfare laws within our jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS Alberta's outdated APA lacks clear guidance for when peace officers are empowered to act and what enforcement mechanisms are available such as cases where companion animals are in the care of an animal shelter, rescue, or humane society.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta for a comprehensive review and update of Alberta's Animal Protection Act.

BACKGROUND:

The landscape of animal welfare is dynamic, with new challenges and risks constantly emerging. Public attitudes towards animals and their treatment have undergone significant transformation in recent decades, with an increasing emphasis on compassion, empathy, and ethical stewardship.

Under the current Animal Protection Act (APA) there is no differentiation between commercial and companion animals. This distinction is necessary to provide appropriate guidelines for care and welfare enforcement. Commercial animals can include horses, cattle, sheep, swine and live poultry but usually, they are animals raised for meat production or other products from the animals. A companion animal could be anything that is not a commercial animal, but most commonly include dogs and cats.¹ While a review of the APA may include changes that impact commercial animals, this resolution allows for better protection of companion animals.

In 2006, a major revision to the APA was enacted, only the second update since its inception in 1967. A comprehensive review of the APA is now needed to identify and rectify deficiencies in the legislation, ensuring that it provides clear guidance and consistent enforcement mechanisms across municipalities in dealing with companion animals.

Modernizing legislation and regulation around kennels and rescues is critical to ensuring the welfare and safety of animals in these facilities. With the growing prevalence of companion animals and the increasing demand for adoption and boarding services, outdated regulations fail to address emerging challenges and protect vulnerable animals. Clear and comprehensive regulations can establish standards for housing, care, and hygiene, ensuring that companion animals are provided with adequate nutrition, medical attention, and living conditions. Additionally,

¹ Province of Manitoba, Animal Care Act. https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/_pdf.php?cap=a84

updated regulations can mandate regular inspections, licensing requirements, and transparency measures, enabling authorities to monitor compliance and intervene promptly in cases of neglect or abuse.

In addition, over the past decade Alberta has witnessed a significant shift in online animal sales. The increase of online marketplaces, social media platforms and unregulated transactions has transformed the way companion animals are bought, sold, and traded, presenting both opportunities and risks for animal welfare and regulation. While reputable breeders and licensed sellers may utilize online channels to connect with potential buyers, there has also been a surge in informal or backyard breeding operations advertising animals for sale online. These sellers may operate without proper licensing, veterinary oversight, or adherence to animal welfare standards, raising concerns about the welfare and health of the animals involved.

Additionally, the anonymity and convenience of online platforms have created challenges for enforcement agencies tasked with monitoring and regulating animal sales. Unlike traditional brick-and-mortar pet stores or breeding facilities, online sellers can easily avoid scrutiny and oversight, making it difficult to ensure compliance with existing regulations. This lack of transparency and accountability poses risks not only to animal welfare but also to consumer protection, as buyers may unknowingly purchase animals from disreputable sources.

Municipalities play a pivotal role in enforcing animal welfare laws within our jurisdiction. By revisiting the APA, the province can streamline enforcement procedures, provide additional resources, and enhance collaboration between municipalities and provincial authorities, improving compliance with animal welfare standards.

A local business in Airdrie, which was operating as a dog rescue organization, was recently charged under the APA. With complaints dating back to 2016, Airdrie Municipal Enforcement in partnership with the Alberta SPCA seized a large number of dogs in varying states of distress due to the care conditions at the facility. Under the authority of the APA, peace officers are empowered to act when animals are in distress; however, challenges exist as the Act does not provide direction on animal care standards for shelters, rescues, or Humane Societies. Additionally, there are no requirements for registration or oversight of organizations who provide sheltering and care for animals.

In recent years, several Canadian provinces, including British Columbia and Ontario, have taken significant steps to strengthen their animal protection legislation, reflecting a growing recognition of the importance of safeguarding animal welfare. Manitoba's legislation¹ stands out as an example with clear definitions, separation between commercial and companion animals and kennel regulations. The Alberta SPCA and other provincial animal welfare associations agree that the APA is lacking the necessary tools to truly protect animal welfare and could be engaged as stakeholders in the review process.

A comprehensive review of Alberta's APA is essential to ensure that it remains robust, relevant, and responsive to the evolving needs of companion animals and society. From incorporating scientific advancements to addressing enforcement challenges and fostering stakeholder engagement, such a review holds the potential to enhance animal welfare outcomes across the province.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis does not currently have a position on this issue. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to the ABmunis Board by the Safe and Healthy Communities Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

¹ Province of Manitoba, Animal Care Act. https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/_pdf.php?cap=a84



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