



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE IN RESPONSE TO ALBERTA JUSTICE AND SOLICITOR GENERAL'S DRAFT POLICE FUNDING MODEL

Municipal Leaders Express Collective Concern Over Costs and Effects of Contemplated Change

Sangudo, Alberta, Wednesday, October 9, 2019 – Municipal councils and administrators in Alberta's Lac Ste. Anne region seek to jointly inform ratepayers about the provincial government's contemplated plan to offload policing costs onto rural areas. Collectively and through its various media channels, the County and its neighbours will continue to engage ratepayers, municipal partners and the Government of Alberta in an ongoing dialogue about this important matter and its potential impacts on rural communities.

Province Pitches Radical Fiscal Change in Uncertain Terms

Presently, residents in rural municipalities — and urban municipalities (Town, Villages and Summer Villages) under 5,000 population — do not directly pay for policing through their municipal taxes. Under the new model that the Government of Alberta proposed to municipalities this fall, these communities would begin paying between 15 to 70 percent of policing costs. Charts on page 3 of this release show the resultant financial impact to local municipalities if the proposed model is implemented. At the top end of the model, this would represent a burden of up to \$1.4 million for Lac Ste. Anne County, which equates to an increase of more than \$400 per year to the average taxpayer.

The proposed model can be viewed on the Lac Ste. Anne County website at [LSAC.ca/police-funding](https://www.lacsteanne.ca/police-funding).

Notably, this proposed cost structure comes with no mention of a corresponding increase in police service.

"Our understanding is that any monies collected under the Province's new model would be dumped into a black hole rather than invested back into rural policing," shared Lac Ste. Anne County Reeve Joe Blakeman. "I'm confident our constituents would agree that paying considerably more for the same level of service is a losing proposition. This is why we need to ensure our voice is unified and amplified on this issue." Revenue from the model was originally earmarked for general reserves, but the Province has since changed its position, announcing in recent weeks that revenue from the cost recovery will instead feed back into policing services and public safety.

Municipal Dissent and Attempts at Dialogue with the Province

Alberta's Minister of Justice and Solicitor General (JSG) Doug Schweitzer introduced this model to municipalities during a webinar on September 6, 2019. The content and tone of this webinar suggested to attendees that the proposed costs would come with no expectation of a corresponding increase in police service. A video of the webinar recording, as well as a PDF containing slides from the webinar, can be viewed at [LSAC.ca/police-funding](https://www.lacsteanne.ca/police-funding).

Following the webinar, Lac Ste. Anne County and its neighbours voiced their concerns to JSG Schweitzer that:

- If implemented, the proposed model would place a considerable financial burden on resource-strapped municipalities
- There is no mention of why the Province wants to change the formula or where the money would end up
- There is ambiguity over what – if any – additional policing resources municipalities could expect to receive
- The Province's responses to questions from municipal leaders have been noncommittal and ever-shifting

In response to the questions and concerns posed by municipal leaders in the wake of the September 6 webinar, the Province modified its original position; stating on September 20 that:

- Consultations are ongoing and no decisions have been made yet on a new police-costing model
- Regardless of which model is chosen (if any), any contributions collected will be re-invested into frontline policing, leading to an overall increase in funding for police services in Alberta
- The model has not been finalized and the Province is only at the beginning of the consultation process

Following the September 6 webinar, JSG Schweitzer received requests for in-person meetings with municipal leaders to review questions and concerns related to the proposed model. Instead of granting individual requests, a follow-up webinar was held on October 4 with no stated mandate. During this hour-long audio-only webinar, a panel of representatives from the Justice and Solicitor General and Alberta Municipal Affairs answered questions posed via text by municipalities in attendance.

The October 4 JSG webinar contained no new or substantive information. Many of the pointed questions posed by municipal leaders in attendance were deflected with blanket responses such as “we can’t speak to the thought process behind this initiative;” “we haven’t contemplated your question before;” and “we encourage you to contact your Minister or MLA so we can consider your comments.” An explanation from panelists on what happens next was similarly vague. Attendees were told that the police funding model is still in its consultation stage, and that further conversations would occur after October 15 to determine how the model might look if it were to go ahead. When it is made available, a full transcript of this webinar will be posted at LSAC.ca/police-funding.

In addition to the two webinars, the Province has given municipalities until October 15 to complete an online survey and submit written statements to Minister Schweitzer regarding the proposed costing model. Reeve Blakeman discounts the validity of a survey in which questions are clearly skewed in favour of the JSG’s intended direction. “This survey is eerily similar to the Province’s originally-voiced intent that this will be a mandatory program, and that it’s just the level of funding that is yet to be determined,” shared the Reeve.

Blakeman also noted that, to date, the Province has only sought engagement from the municipal elected, administration and related stakeholders. “We will continue to lobby on behalf of our residents,” he continued, “but for this dialogue to be meaningful and reciprocal, the Province needs to allow *all* municipal taxpayers in rural and smaller urban centers to have a seat at the table. As municipal officials, we keep being told to voice our concerns to the MLA and Justice Minister. I encourage the ratepayers of rural Alberta to do so as well.”

Municipal Leaders Continue to Advocate for Ratepayers

The process that follows the October 15 deadline has not been made clear, but provincial messaging indicates that: “Feedback will signal to the Government of Alberta what aspects require further consideration. Information gathered from this written feedback will inform the next steps.”

A common concern shared by the County and its neighbours is that without any clarity on the scale at which municipalities will be charged, or the resultant effect on policing levels – it is nearly impossible to chart a course or manage ratepayer expectations. “The province’s vacillating stance on this important issue does not give us much room to maneuver,” continued Reeve Blakeman. “What we can do, however, is continue our dialogue among regional councillors, administrators and community members; share any information as it becomes available; and make sure our voice is heard loud and clear.”

“As this matter progresses, the County and its municipal neighbours will continue to advocate for the needs and priorities of ratepayers. We need to send a clear and consistent message to the Province regarding what appears to be an ill-conceived and poorly-communicated initiative.”

Impacts to the Lac Ste. Anne region of the contemplated police funding model are shown on the following page. News updates and related resources – including contact information for the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General and the MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland – are available on the Lac Ste. Anne County website at LSAC.ca/police-funding.

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE:

Regional Leaders Express Collective Concern Over Costs and Effects of Provincial Police Funding Model

Projected Impacts of Contemplated Police Funding Model at Proposed Contribution Levels

LAC STE. ANNE COUNTY

POP. 10,899

Contribution	Operating Budget*	Total Policing Cost	Budget %
15%	\$ 22,622,326.00	\$ 304,893.00	2.24%
30%	\$ 22,622,326.00	\$ 609,897.00	4.49%
40%	\$ 22,622,326.00	\$ 812,467.00	5.98%
50%	\$ 22,622,326.00	\$ 1,016,020.00	7.48%
60%	\$ 22,622,326.00	\$ 1,218,700.00	8.97%
70%	\$ 22,622,326.00	\$ 1,422,254.00	10.47%

TOWN OF ONOWAY

POP. 1,029

Contribution	Operating Budget*	Total Policing Cost	Budget %
15%	\$ 1,242,683.00	\$ 24,112.00	1.94%
30%	\$ 1,242,683.00	\$ 48,224.00	3.88%
40%	\$ 1,242,683.00	\$ 64,253.00	5.17%
50%	\$ 1,242,683.00	\$ 80,350.00	6.46%
60%	\$ 1,242,683.00	\$ 96,739.00	7.75%
70%	\$ 1,242,683.00	\$ 112,477.00	9.05%

VILLAGE OF ALBERTA BEACH

POP. 1,018

Contribution	Operating Budget**	Total Policing Cost	Budget %
15%	\$ 2,678,938.00	\$ 28,639.00	1.62%
30%	\$ 2,678,938.00	\$ 57,279.00	3.25%
40%	\$ 2,678,938.00	\$ 76,317.00	4.32%
50%	\$ 2,678,938.00	\$ 95,437.00	5.41%
60%	\$ 2,678,938.00	\$ 114,476.00	6.49%
70%	\$ 2,678,938.00	\$ 133,596.00	7.57%

SUMMER VILLAGE OF SILVER SANDS

POP. 160

Contribution	Operating Budget*	Total Policing Cost	Budget %
15%	\$ 369,640.00	\$ 6,646.00	1.76%
30%	\$ 369,640.00	\$ 13,292.00	3.59%
40%	\$ 369,640.00	\$ 17,710.00	4.79%
50%	\$ 369,640.00	\$ 22,147.00	5.99%
60%	\$ 369,640.00	\$ 26,565.00	7.18%
70%	\$ 369,640.00	\$ 31,002.00	8.20%

SUMMER VILLAGE OF SOUTH VIEW

POP. 67

Contribution	Operating Budget*	Total Policing Cost	Budget %
15%	\$ 181,207.00	\$ 2,419.00	1.33%
30%	\$ 181,207.00	\$ 4,839.00	2.67%
40%	\$ 181,207.00	\$ 6,447.00	3.55%
50%	\$ 181,207.00	\$ 8,063.00	4.44%
60%	\$ 181,207.00	\$ 9,671.00	5.33%
70%	\$ 181,207.00	\$ 11,286.00	6.22%

SUMMER VILLAGE OF YELLOWSTONE

POP. 137

Contribution	Operating Budget*	Total Policing Cost	Budget %
15%	\$ 287,126.00	\$ 4,799.00	1.67%
30%	\$ 287,126.00	\$ 9,599.00	3.34%
40%	\$ 287,126.00	\$ 12,789.00	4.45%
50%	\$ 287,126.00	\$ 15,994.00	5.57%
60%	\$ 287,126.00	\$ 19,184.00	6.68%
70%	\$ 287,126.00	\$ 22,388.00	7.79%

SUMMER VILLAGE OF WEST COVE

POP. 149

Contribution	Operating Budget*	Total Policing Cost	Budget %
15%	\$ 300,503.00	\$ 6,267.00	2.08%
30%	\$ 300,503.00	\$ 12,535.00	4.17%
40%	\$ 300,503.00	\$ 16,701.00	5.55%
50%	\$ 300,503.00	\$ 20,885.00	6.95%
60%	\$ 300,503.00	\$ 25,051.00	8.33%
70%	\$ 300,503.00	\$ 29,235.00	9.72%

SUMMER VILLAGE OF SUNRISE BEACH

POP. 135

Contribution	Operating Budget*	Total Policing Cost	Budget %
15%	\$ 237,040.00	\$ 3,716.00	1.56%
30%	\$ 237,040.00	\$ 7,432.00	3.13%
40%	\$ 237,040.00	\$ 9,903.00	4.17%
50%	\$ 237,040.00	\$ 12,384.00	5.22%
60%	\$ 237,040.00	\$ 14,854.00	6.26%
70%	\$ 237,040.00	\$ 17,335.00	7.31%

*In some cases, 2019 municipal operating budgets are being finalized and are subject to slight variance. These figures are shown for general comparison purposes only.

**The Alberta Beach 2019 operating budget amount of \$2,678,938.00 is inclusive of fees for water, sewer and garbage.

Ratepayers are Encouraged to Get Involved

Please visit LSAC.ca/police-funding for news updates; background information; Government of Alberta communications materials; and contact information for Shane Getson, MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, and Doug Schweitzer, Alberta's Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

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