



ALBERTA
ENVIRONMENT AND PARKS

*Office of the Minister
Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
MLA, Lethbridge-West*

MAR 13 2017

Ms. Lisa Holmes, President
Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
300, 8616 - 51 Avenue
Edmonton AB T6E 6E6
president@auma.ca

Dear Ms. Holmes:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association's concerns about waste reduction in Alberta, as well as your letter on the Species at Risk Resolution. I appreciate the opportunity to respond and provide the following information.

In 2013, Environment and Parks consulted with stakeholders on proposed recycling policy changes, including expanding the electronics and used oil materials program, and designating household hazardous waste and packaging and printed paper to be managed under provincially-regulated recycling programs. My department is currently prioritizing our waste and recycling items and remains dedicated to this work. For further information, please contact Ms. Jennifer Martin, Senior Waste Policy Advisor, at 780-638-3070, or at jennifer.martin@gov.ab.ca.

To address your comments about implementing waste reduction strategies into the Climate Leadership Plan, the Climate Change Advisory Panel (which informed the Climate Leadership Plan) highlighted energy efficiency and community energy systems as important complementary policies to the economy-wide price on carbon. Energy efficiency and community energy systems were identified as a means for all Albertans to help contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to empower citizens, small businesses and communities to reduce their energy use and associated energy costs.

The panel made specific recommendations around new integrated energy efficiency and community-scale energy programs, implementing a regulatory agenda to support energy efficiency, and fostering municipal partnerships. New integrated programs will ensure collaboration with municipal programs that are already in place or in the planning stages.

With respect to the Species at Risk Resolution, Environment and Parks' approach to the recovery of Alberta's caribou population also seeks to preserve jobs and the local economy. If the Government of Alberta does not take action now, not only will Alberta have lost this important and culturally-significant species for future generations, but the federal government has the legal authority to halt all industrial activity in caribou ranges. We are therefore striving to ensure carefully-managed industrial activity can coexist with caribou on the landscape and that impacts of any new strategies and actions under the range plans are minimized.

As part of the range planning process, socio-economic impacts will be assessed, considered and minimized in option development. Our department's intention is to minimize all social and economic impacts to local communities, while meeting the direction required in the federal recovery strategy.

In addition to this, regional planning incorporates economic, environmental and social factors, providing the context for future, more detailed planning to ensure that land-use and environmental management are aligned and integrated. Previous plans identified conservation areas through the regional planning process, using key criteria and an analysis of constraints and information. Key criteria for identifying potential conservation areas in the province include areas that are representative of the biological diversity of the region, areas of sufficient size and that provide landscape connectivity with existing conservation areas, areas with little or no industrial activity, areas that support Indigenous traditional land uses and areas that are currently managed with conservation intent. Work has not yet commenced on the Upper Peace and Upper Athabasca regional plans; pre-planning activities have been initiated for the Lower Peace Regional Plan to consider potential issues to be addressed for the region, such as caribou range planning.

In relation to Alberta's forestry sector, the sector currently retains low amounts of structure within harvested areas, which results in the creation of young forests with fewer habitats for species that depend on tree cover, old and large trees and coarse woody material. The proposed structure retention Draft Directive aligns Alberta's forest management system with the principles of ecosystem-based management to reduce the differences between managed forests and forests that are considered natural. It implements recommendations from Alberta's science community and creates a level playing field where all companies in the province are expected to achieve a common minimum level of retention.

The Draft Directive provides industry with considerable flexibility in terms of implementation. The Draft Directive has not yet been implemented, and the department of Agriculture and Forestry continues to work with industry representatives on its development, with a projected date of May of 2017.

Thank you again for writing on behalf of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association regarding waste reduction and socio-economic impact assessments on species at risk recovery and retention plans. We appreciate the ongoing input of the Association and its membership.

Sincerely,



Shannon Phillips
Minister

cc: Honourable Oneil Carlier, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Jennifer Martin, Environment and Parks