

ABmunis Key Messages and Policy Positions on Municipal Policing Costs and the Police Funding Model

Municipal Role in Public Safety

- Municipalities play a crucial role in public safety as they possess local expertise, understand community needs, and are accountable to residents.
- Municipalities have an intimate understanding of their communities, including their unique needs, challenges, and demographics. This local knowledge allows them to make informed decisions about the level of policing required to maintain public safety.
- Municipalities are responsible for allocating resources across various essential services, including policing. Consulting with them allows for a holistic approach to resource allocation, ensuring that public safety needs are effectively balanced with other community priorities.

Police Funding Model (PFM)

- ABmunis appreciates the provincial government's efforts to develop a more equitable funding strategy for communities served by the RCMP, as we have been advocating for a fair approach to police funding for over a decade.
- ABmunis continues to support the “everyone should pay” concept for policing services. This means keeping the current PFM formula based on population and property assessment and continuing to invest these funds in public safety.
- We would welcome data from Public Safety and Emergency Services that provides a full account of how funds raised through the police funding model (PFM) were spent. This would assist us in demonstrating the value of the PFM to local rate payers.
- ABmunis also believes in “no pay without say” – as local experts, municipalities need to have oversight of local police services and the ability to set local policing priorities. We appreciate Public Safety and Emergency Services' recent efforts to strengthen civilian oversight of policing.
- ABmunis believes that creating a new, stand-alone provincial police service would be prohibitively expensive and face the same recruitment challenges as every other police service in Canada.
- We also know that most municipalities and Albertans support keeping Alberta RCMP.
- However, we are deeply concerned that recent and significant increases in RCMP policing costs are being passed along to municipalities who cannot cover these increases without raising property taxes, cutting services or both.

Provincial Police Service Agreement

- The PFM was implemented in 2020-21, using cost estimates from 2019.
- Since then, the cost of the Provincial Police Service Agreement has increased by 39%, primarily due to salary increases negotiated through collective bargaining.
- Municipalities who receive policing under the PPSA cannot absorb this scale of cost increase without either raising taxes, cutting services, or both.

- ABmunis therefore requests that the provincial government provide additional assistance to municipalities that pay for policing through the PFM by:
 1. Increasing the total amount of subsidies distributed to municipalities through the PFM to offset their policing costs.
 2. Distributing fines and penalties under the *Traffic Safety Act* to municipalities receiving policing services under the Provincial Police Services Agreement at the same percentage that these municipalities pay in cost recovery.
 3. Adequately funding community infrastructure needs so that municipalities do not face competing demands for funding local infrastructure versus public safety.

Municipal Police Service Agreements

- Municipalities who contract the RCMP are already paying higher policing costs: four years ago, the collective salary increases negotiated through collective bargaining added approximately \$60 million to the total policing costs of the 47 municipalities in Alberta with Municipal Police Service Agreements.
- These costs were particularly difficult to absorb as municipalities were not at the bargaining table and did not have adequate notice of either the scale or timing of significant cost increases.
- Notably, Treasury Board Canada advised municipalities to plan for a 2.5% cost increase; however, the first collective bargaining agreement included retroactive salary increases that resulted in the salary for a First-Class Constable rising by a total of 24% over six years
- ABmunis therefore calls on the provincial government to:
 1. Enhance the total amount of assistance provided through the Policing Support Grant to better offset the rising costs of policing.
 2. Provide additional support to municipalities who are crossing the 5,000 and 15,000 population markers and therefore triggering changes to their policing arrangements and funding models.

Municipal Financial Pressures

- Rising policing costs, coupled with decreased infrastructure funding, increased provincial downloading, stagnant or declining social funding are cumulatively placing an immense strain on local budgets.
- With limited financial flexibility and no ability to run deficits, municipalities are forced to make difficult choices: cut vital services or burden residents with higher property taxes.
- The cost of providing essential services like policing continues to escalate, leaving municipalities struggling to balance budgets without sacrificing public safety.
- Provincial infrastructure funding to municipal governments has plummeted by 64% since 2011, exacerbating the financial challenges facing our communities.
- We urgently need the provincial government to step up and provide fair and sustainable funding solutions for municipalities.
- Provincial leaders must recognize the critical role municipalities play in delivering essential services and commit to providing adequate funding to address budgetary pressures and infrastructure deficits.