

MEMBER REQUEST FOR DECISION

SPRING MUNICIPAL LEADERS' CAUCUS

DATE:

February 23rd, 2026

TOPIC:

Reconsideration of the federal decision to close the Lacombe Research and Development Centre (AAFC)

RECOMMENDATION:

The Council from the City of Lacombe requests that the Alberta Municipalities Board advocate to the Government of Canada (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada) to reverse its decision to close the Lacombe Research and Development Centre, and implement good policy development principles and to undertake meaningful consultation with affected municipalities and stakeholders, supported by a public impact assessment (economic, agronomic, labour, and municipal effects).

BACKGROUND:

In January 2026, the Government of Canada announced the closure of multiple federal agricultural research facilities across Canada, including the Lacombe Research and Development Centre. The Lacombe facility has operated continuously since 1907 and is a cornerstone of agricultural research capacity that supports producers, industry, and applied innovation.

While the Lacombe facility is located in Central Alberta, the impacts are provincial in scope and relevant to Alberta Municipalities members across Alberta for three reasons:

1. **Material local and regional economic impacts that smaller communities cannot absorb**
The closure would directly impact more than 100 employees and their families, representing a major employment shock for a small community and regional labour market. The Centre supports stable, professional employment and generates secondary impacts to local housing, services, suppliers, and community vitality.

2. **Loss of unique research capacity and long-term data supporting Alberta agriculture**
The Lacombe Centre delivers high-value applied research aligned with provincial and national priorities, including integrated crop protection, climate-smart agriculture, livestock and crop genetics, and production efficiency. It is also Canada’s only federally operated meat sciences program. Long-term trials and decades of continuous data cannot be replicated or relocated without significant loss of national research capacity and productivity.
3. **Alberta-wide “cluster” impacts due to a longstanding research ecosystem**
Over more than a century, the Lacombe Centre has become the anchor of a research constellation involving partnerships with organizations and post-secondary institutions (including Western Crop Innovations, Lakeland College, Olds College, the University of Alberta, the University of Saskatchewan, and others). Removing the federal anchor risks undermining that broader ecosystem, weakening student training pathways, mentorship opportunities, and applied research collaboration that supports Alberta’s agriculture and agri-food economy.

A key concern is the **lack of meaningful consultation** with host municipalities and stakeholders prior to the closure announcement. Given the scale and long-term implications, there is a strong public-interest rationale for a pause, transparent engagement, and an evidence-based assessment of impacts and alternatives. Alberta Municipalities can add value by coordinating province-wide municipal advocacy, aligning messaging with partners (e.g., Federation of Canadian Municipalities and western municipal associations), and formally requesting federal consultation and a public impact assessment that considers municipal effects alongside agronomic, labour, and economic factors.

ENCLOSURES:

1. Joint Letter on the Closure of Federal Agricultural Research Station – Producers Group