

CAO's REPORT

June 23, 2020

1. Correspondence received from Clearwater County Taxpayers' Association attached.
2. The Government of Alberta recently announced new funding for local transportation and waterworks projects across the province. In total, the province will contribute \$200 million in grant funding to municipalities. \$50 million will go towards the Strategic Infrastructure Investment Program to help maintain local roads, bridges, community airports, and other local priorities for small and rural municipalities. \$150 million of the new funding will go towards waterworks projects through the Alberta Municipal Wastewater Partnership and the Alberta First Nations Water Tie-In Program.
3. Work on Phase 2 of the County's Enterprise Resource Planning (integrated management of main business processes) Project continues, and a Request for Proposal for software is scheduled for release by end of June.

Upcoming Events:

July 1 – County Offices closed for Canada Day

Marianne Cole, President
Clearwater County Taxpayers' Association
RR #1
Rocky Mtn. House, AB T4T 2A1
Email: mcmajic@telus.net
June 17, 2020.

Honorable Kaycee Madu, Minister of Municipal Affairs
132 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Ave. NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6
Email: minister.municipalaffairs@gov.ab.ca

Dear Honorable Minister Madu:

I am writing on behalf of the Clearwater County Taxpayers' Association, a rural based non-profit society working to address concerns of rural residents. We have recently become aware of a letter sent to you by Mayor Tammy Burke of the town of Rocky Mtn. House, and are consequently sending you this response.

First of all, we do certainly agree with Mayor Burke's opening statement that, "Albertans are facing a very challenging time ahead and municipal and provincial funding is going to be strained in recovering from the Covid19 pandemic." We feel, however, that regional municipal government will do NOTHING to positively address that concern. In fact it may have a conversely negative effect.

Our position focusses on two main areas as follows:

1. Financial Considerations Mayor Burke's suggests that "specialized municipalities can achieve greatest efficiency of resources" and that "linear taxes would be better collected regionally, and thus dispersed to benefit both urban and rural citizens". These ideas are highly questionable.

First of all economic efficiency and well-being are primarily achieved through cautious, financially responsible, and wise decisions made by government representatives and administration. To adequately address the concerns related to "wealthy versus poor" (as noted by Mayor Burke) one must review the management practises of those involved, not change the way money is granted. Throughout Alberta, rural municipalities already assist their urban neighbors financially in various ways that are specifically suited to the jurisdictions involved.

Furthermore, in response to the suggestion that linear taxes be collected regionally and dispersed to benefit urban and rural citizens, we strongly maintain THIS ABSOLUTELY MUST NOT HAPPEN. It is widely known that, currently, rural municipalities are being seriously affected by millions of dollars of unpaid taxes of various kinds. To now suggest that monies they might receive from linear taxes be divided, is absolutely absurd.

Linear taxes were established in order to compensate the rural jurisdictions for the distinctly higher expenses incurred for road and bridge maintenance that resulted from heavier traffic generated by industry. In addition, those taxes also provided an indirect benefit to rural residents for the definite inconveniences they endure with increased industry traffic. These are issues NOT affecting urban residents so there is no need for financial benefit from linear taxes.

2. Representation Concerns Recent changes to electoral boundaries both federally and provincially have resulted in much larger constituencies/areas for elected officials to cover. This has made it increasingly difficult for the voices of rural people to be adequately heard. Changing now to regional municipal governance would aggravate that issue.

Furthermore, there are concerns over how representation with municipal governance would be arranged. There are distinct worries that an urban voice may dominate, a problem already existing with the other two levels of government.

Finally, the needs and wants of urban and rural areas are unmistakably different. For these issues to be adequately addressed, there must first be a clear understanding of their importance, and then, ultimately, there has to be a strong, correlative voice to promote them. This can be done most effectively by maintaining separate rural and urban municipalities.

In conclusion, we trust that **any consideration for regional municipal governance be immediately dismissed**. We suggest that the current practice of allowing municipalities to negotiate with each other on applicable regional issues, including revenue sharing, is most acceptable and should be maintained as outlined in the Municipal Government Act.

We look forward to your response on this matter.

Yours truly,



Marianne Cole

Cc:

MLA Jason Nixon

Mayor Tammy Burke

Clearwater County Council

Mr. Al Kemmere, President, RMA