

B15: Creation of a Wildfire Prevention Committee

Moved by: Town of Hinton

Seconded by: Town of Coronation

WHEREAS Alberta Forestry and Parks is the principal agency responsible for wildfire management in the Forest Protection Area (FPA), and municipalities are responsible for fire prevention and protection within their boundaries;

WHEREAS municipalities are responsible for the management of wildfires as per Section 7(1) of the Forest and Prairie Protection Act, including all financial costs of suppression within their boundaries;

WHEREAS wildfire seasons are growing increasingly longer and more intense, placing a significant strain on provincial and municipal wildfire resources;

WHEREAS wildfire prevention strategies are a resource-intensive activity that requires resources, expertise, and funding to effectively prepare for and mitigate the effects of wildfires;

WHEREAS there are no Provincial initiatives which allow wildfire affected communities and industry to discuss practical and operational issues with Provincial wildfire authorities on a regular basis; and

WHEREAS it is in the best interest of all Albertans to ensure that municipalities are provided the resources and expertise to be proactive and resilient to the effects of wildfires.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta to establish a "Wildfire Prevention Committee" consisting of industry, municipal and provincial subject matter experts, elected officials, and senior municipal administrators.

BACKGROUND:

Alberta's wildland fire seasons are worsening, posing significant challenges to municipalities within and beyond the Forest Protection Area (FPA). Wildfires are starting earlier, lasting longer, and impacting larger areas of Alberta than ever before. This increase in wildfire activity places a substantial strain on municipal fire and emergency management resources.

In response to these challenges, the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association passed resolution 2023-04 aiming to collaboratively develop a long-term strategy for managing large wildland fires. This resolution underscores the need for coordinated efforts among government ministries, Alberta Municipalities, the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, and municipalities to address the escalating threats posed by wildfires.

As wildfire seasons across Alberta grow in length and intensity, they not only endanger lives and property but also place a significant drain on municipal resources and budgets. It is imperative to take proactive measures to ensure Alberta's municipalities are well-prepared and well-equipped to protect Albertans from the increasing threat of wildfires.

The establishment of a Wildfire Prevention Committee could serve to:

1. Inform and advise the Government of Alberta on municipal priorities.
2. Enhance communication between municipalities and Provincial agencies.
3. Encourage a proactive and collaborative approach to protecting Alberta communities from the effects of wildfires.
4. Promote advocacy and stakeholder engagement related to wildfire mitigation measures.

Through these collaborative efforts, the Provincial government and municipalities can align resources, expertise, and knowledge to enhance the resiliency and readiness of Alberta communities from the growing threat of wildfires.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis is currently participating on the Rural Municipalities of Alberta's recent Wildfire Working Group, which involves municipalities, the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association, the Government of Alberta, and the Alberta Forest Products Association and guest speakers. The purpose of the Working Group is to improve wildfire response in Alberta; however, the Working Group is scheduled to complete its work by fall 2024.

The Ministry of Forestry and Parks is also currently developing a Wildfire Mitigation Strategy to align with the federal government's Wildland Fire Strategy. Opportunities to participate in Alberta Forestry and Parks' review have been shared with ABmunis' members via our newsletter. The Office of the Fire Commissioner is also reviewing its mandate. Several engagement sessions have been held virtually and in person around the province. ABmunis emailed members directly about these sessions. This review is looking at the role and mandate of the Office of the Fire Commissioner, training standards, firefighter recognition and management of wildland fires outside of the Forest Protection Area.

If approved, this resolution will be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy recommended to ABmunis' Board by the Infrastructure Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.

RESOLUTION CONTACT:

Prior to the vote at ABmunis' Convention, any questions about this resolution may be directed to:

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