

DATE: July 12, 2016

WHEREAS: Increasing frequency and duration of wild fires outside the Forest Protection Area is negatively impacting municipal budgets and fire services; and

WHEREAS: These fires are beyond the scope of resources, training and financial capacity for many of Alberta's rural fire services; and

WHEREAS: Through the Mutual Aid Fire Control Agreement with the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, the municipality may request specialized resources such as air tankers and wildland firefighting crews, which come at substantial cost; and

WHEREAS: Municipalities may have mutual aid agreements with surrounding fire services that are also limited in capabilities and training; and

WHEREAS: Due to the costs of calling for the assistance of provincial resources, the required resources and expertise is often delayed, aiding in the spread of fires that could easily be contained if the proper resources and expertise were on the scene.

WHEREAS: The Provincial Government has access to both the resources and expertise to assist in the control and extinguishment of wildland fires.

**NOW
THEREFORE
BE IT RESOLVED** That the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties urge the Provincial Government to enter into mutual aid agreements with Municipalities outside of the Forest Protection Area that do not involve a fee for service for provincially-controlled and paid-for wildland fire fighting resources.

BACKGROUND: Increasing frequency and duration of wildland fires outside the Forest Protection Area is negatively impacting municipal budgets and fire services. These fire are beyond the scope of resources, training and financial capacity for many of Alberta's rural fire services. The typical grass or brush fires have been managed by most fire services over the years but increasingly these fires have become major events, lasting weeks. Many of these events have required extensive local resources and mutual aid assistance to effectively control and contain the fire risk. This extended wild fire occurrence is triggered from multiple factors such as drought, fuel conditions in developed areas, rapid fire growth, and limited firefighting resources.

Municipalities may have mutual aid agreements with surrounding fire services but they too are limited in capabilities and training. Through the Mutual Aid Fire Control Agreement with the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, the municipality may request specialized resources such as air tankers and wildland firefighting crews. These resource come at substantial cost and this is a major pressure to municipal budgets.

The increasing size of these wildland fires is a major risk to the municipal fire fighters who are often inadequately equipped or trained to manage such a large and protracted event. These fire services lack the ability to control and extinguish these large fires forcing departments to depend on costly external resources from Agriculture and Forestry and private contractors.

These large wildfires are major cost centres that exceed the municipality's financial resources. This forces the municipalities into a negative situation financially and places other municipal services under pressure to adjust for these events. Cost for one of these large events can be 10 times the annual budgeted amount.

Due to the costs of calling for the assistance of provincial resources, the required resources and expertise is often delayed. This delay contributes in the spread of fires that could easily be contained if the proper resources and expertise were on the scene. This delay, and the subsequent increase in the size of the fire, results in more expenses, more damages and more provincial resources being required to extinguish the fire.

The cost of utilizing these resources is a major factor in not utilizing the resources and expertise available. The Provincial Government has access to both the resources and expertise to assist in the control and extinguishment of wildland fires. These resources and expertise are paid for by Albertans and should benefit all Albertans. By charging these costs directly to municipalities outside of the Forest Protection Area, the government is putting the safety of Albertans at undue risk.