

October 30, 2023

Minister Horner
President of Treasury Board and
Minister of Finance
Sent via email: tbf.minister@gov.ab.ca

Dear Minister Horner:

Please find enclosed the Okotoks budget submission for the Government of Alberta's 2024 budget deliberations. We know there are many challenges facing the Province as we continue to face the pressures of in migration to the Province. In Okotoks, we are ready to grow because of the Provinces commitment to our water pipeline project. Thank you for this investment. As growth pressures continue in our province and our region, we have two priorities:

1. Invest in affordable housing.
2. Prioritize construction of the Hwy 2 & 338 Interchange.

We are also in support of the Alberta Municipalities resolution to increase the investment in the Local Governance Fiscal Framework by an additional \$1B.

We thank you for your consideration, and request an opportunity to meet with you to discuss the priorities outlined in the enclosed submission at your earliest convenience. Okotoks and the Province need to be ready to grow. We want you to know we are ready to go when you are. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,



Tanya Thorn, BA, ICD.D (she/her)
Blackfoot Name: Óóhkotok Aakíí
Mayor

cc: Jesse Robertson: jesse.robertson@gov.ab.ca
Honourable Sigurdson, MLA: Highwood@assembly.ab.ca

Email: thorn@okotoks.ca

Telephone: 403-938-8904



READY TO GO. READY TO GROW.

Shovel ready projects to grow Alberta's affordable housing stock and enhance the safety of Albertans



OVERVIEW

The Town of Okotoks' major priorities at a local level are focused on providing safe, affordable housing and safe roads for our community. With the provincial contributions to our water pipeline solution, we are ready for growth, with a particular focus on growing our below market housing inventory. We need the Province's assistance to make this a reality. With provincial funding, Okotoks is ready to begin construction on 78 units that will begin to meet the urgent need for affordable housing in Okotoks for low-income seniors, individuals and families, as well as women fleeing domestic violence.

Since 2020, Okotoks has made significant changes to our plans and bylaws to prepare for growth, with an intentional focus on creating conditions to build and increase our inventory of affordable housing.

MDP CHANGES TO SUPPORT AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In 2021 Okotoks adopted the new Municipal Development Plan that:

1. Increased density requirements from 8 units per acre to 12 units per acre;
2. Required that all new housing be 40% multiple family;
3. Encouraged infill and redevelopment; prioritized and sequenced growth around employment corridors;
4. Prioritized water allocation to industrial, commercial, institutional (ICI) or mixed use developments; and,
5. Allocated Planning and Infrastructure funding to support growth.

LAND USE BYLAW CHANGES TO SUPPORT AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In 2021 Okotoks adopted a new Land Use Bylaw that reduced the number of land use districts from 34 to 9, eliminated all Direct Control (DC) zones, eliminated minimum parking requirements, eliminated DP requirement (in most cases), focused on site and building form, and the Town now allows up to 4 units per lot and accessory units as of right.

INCENTIVE PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Okotoks has also offered several incentive programs to encourage development of affordable housing, including the Accessory Housing Grant Program (\$10,000 per new suite) and the Below Market Housing Incentive Program (\$15,000 per door).

OUR PRIORITIES

1. Affordable Housing

Invest \$45M in capital funding for shovel ready projects in Okotoks that will deliver not only on the province's affordable housing goals, but also begin to address the critical need for rental housing and subsidized housing in Okotoks.

2. Highway 2 & 338 Avenue Intersection

Expedite construction of this interchange to alleviate significant safety issues and prevent further loss of life.

THANK YOU

\$30.1M water funding

Okotoks Council and Administration are incredibly grateful to the Province for the significant funding contribution to the joint water pipeline project. Thank you for quickly responding to the significant increase in costs with the additional \$16M in funds and helping the Town ensure the region has a reliable, quality water supply for years to come. We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the Province, not only on this project, but also as a partner on service delivery priorities for Okotoks into the future.

1.8% SUPPORTED NON-MARKET HOUSING

Only 1.8% (191) of all homes in Okotoks are supported by non-market housing, compared to 3.6% in Calgary and 6 percent nation-wide.¹ More than half of non-market units in Okotoks are geared towards seniors.

2% CAN AFFORD RENTS OF \$500/MONTH OR LESS

2% (185) of households in Okotoks can afford \$500/month or less in rent, while 7% (770) of households can afford \$500-\$975/month in rent.

0% RENTAL VACANCY

The latest CMHC primary rental survey shows rental vacancy in Okotoks is 0.0%. This aligns with the experiences of local landlords and prospective renters.

1% HOUSING INVENTORY IS PURPOSE BUILT RENTAL

Only 1% of Okotoks housing inventory is purpose built rental, compared to 8.6 percent in Calgary and 8.9% in Alberta.

119 ON WAIT LIST

The Town currently has a wait list of 119 for affordable housing accommodation as of September 2023.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Invest \$45M in funding for two shovel ready projects in Okotoks

The Town has taken steps to support two shovel ready projects that will begin to address the severe shortage of non-market housing in Okotoks. The Town has invested nearly \$4.5M, including investing substantial staff time and financial resources, to design the site to accommodate the needs of our project partners. Not only has the Town donated the land, but we have also contributed to site servicing costs, and completed all site servicing (deep utilities, roadways, utilities) to make these projects shovel ready. The land is pre-zoned, subdivided and fully serviced. These shovel ready projects are ready and require provincial investment for construction to commence.

FUNDING NEEDS:

Brenda Stafford Project: \$29M + Westwind Communities: \$14-15M



RESULT: The Brenda Stafford Foundation project will offer a 39 unit (185 bed) affordable and transitional housing facility geared towards women and children fleeing domestic violence. There are no transitional housing facilities for women and children fleeing domestic violence in the Foothills Region. The Westwinds Communities project will have 38 affordable units split between two sites. Provincial funding will help manage the degree of affordability and ability to provide wrap around supports.

HWY 2 & 338 AVE. INTERSECTION

Expedite construction of this interchange to alleviate significant safety issues and prevent loss of life

Council members of both the Town of Okotoks and Foothills County continue to hear from constituents regarding concerns and fears about this stretch of Highway 2. As one of Alberta's major economic corridors, this portion of Highway 2 continues to see increased vehicle traffic, resulting in an growing number of motor vehicle collisions, injuries and fatalities. Most recently, there have been 2 fatalities in 2023.

The Town urgently requests that Alberta Transportation expedite construction of an interchange at Highway 2 and 338 Avenue. This also includes coordinating closures of the medians at 306, 338, and 370 Avenues; and, completing safety recommendations related to Highway 552.

This situation was studied in August 2020, and there have been no significant changes to the contributing factors. We ask you to avoid delaying construction with an additional study and instead get shovels in the ground in 2024.

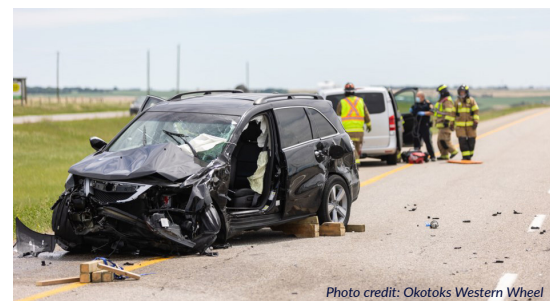


Photo credit: Okotoks Western Wheel

RESULT: Protect Albertans, increase road safety and significantly reduce the number of motor vehicle collisions, injuries and fatalities on this part of Highway 2.

1 Calgary Affordable Housing Service Plan <https://www.calgary.ca/service-lines/2023-2026-city-services/affordable-housing.html?service-line-budget-bar-chart-serviceplanbudget-xview=2023&service-line-budget-bar-chart-serviceplanbudget-view-open=> [Accessed July 19, 2023]