



Office of the Reeve

April 4, 2024

The Honourable Jason Nixon
Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Members of Executive Council
Executive Branch
227 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Via email: SCSS.minister@gov.ab.ca

RE: Concerns with Wheatland Housing Management Body Governance Review, Final Report

Dear Minister Nixon,

I am writing on behalf of Wheatland County Council to express our serious concerns following the release of the Wheatland Housing Management Body (WHMB), “Ensuring Everyone Has a Place to Call Home” Governance Review, Final Report, found here:

<https://www.wheatlandhousing.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/WHMB-Final-Report.pdf>

Our seniors are a cherished part of our community, having significantly contributed to the development of Wheatland County. Our collective responsibility is to ensure their well-being, and we are committed to partnering in this endeavour. This letter is a reaffirmation of our unwavering commitment to the seniors and vulnerable populations of Wheatland County, who have been the foundation of our community's growth and prosperity. We are dedicated to ensuring their well-being through collaborative efforts, but recent developments with WHMB have compelled us to seek your intervention.

Inaccuracies and Misrepresentations in the WHMB Report: The report inaccurately suggests that there has always been a waitlist for housing, which contradicts the actual scenario during the pandemic when vacancies existed. The report fails to distinguish between those immediately seeking housing currently and those indicating future interest. The current list is more indicative of future interest rather than immediate need, skewing the perception of housing demand and readiness. This misrepresentation of facts is concerning.

Overreach in Governance Review and Lack of Autonomy Respect: We observe an alarming overreach in the review's scope, particularly its unwarranted evaluation of Wheatland County's elected officials, which falls outside its purview. This intrusion into our autonomous governance raises serious concerns about the intent and scope of the review.

Issues with Board Appointments and Interpersonal Dynamics: The reappointment of a councillor to the WHMB Board, despite their removal by Wheatland County for a Code of Conduct violation, undermines our authority and decision-





making process. It reflects a lack of respect for our governance protocols, has strained the relationship between Wheatland County and WHMB, and is not conducive to a collaborative partnership.

Dismissal of Raised Concerns and Governance Deficiencies: Contrary to the report's claims, Wheatland County representatives have actively and repeatedly raised significant governance concerns at WHMB board meetings. These concerns have been consistently overlooked, leading to a growing sense of frustration and mistrust.

Conflicts of Interest and Public Trust Issues: The Board Chair's ongoing involvement in the performance review of family members serving as CAOs, notwithstanding the absence of direct pecuniary interests and not illegal, presents a serious conflict of interest that cannot be overlooked and appears to contravene the Board's own Code of Conduct. The consultant's dismissal of this concern is troubling; this practice has considerably eroded public trust in WHMB's governance integrity.

Bias and Selectivity in the Governance Review: The review's approach and recommendations, particularly concerning a specific Wheatland County representative and the legal actions against him, display a clear bias and a lack of comprehensive consideration of all relevant factors and incidents. The call for an apology from the Wheatland County representative, who has already apologized, and the selective omission of critical governance errors and incidents, including impeding democratic representation by weaponizing covid vaccination policy and lack of procedural fairness in the removal of a Wheatland County representative, in the report are particularly troubling.

Prior Engagements of the Consultant: The lead TSI consultant's involvement, who has had previous professional engagements with WHMB, raises questions about the impartiality and objectivity of the review process. His history with the body and the decisions made under his advisement warrant scrutiny for potential bias.

Fundamental Governance and Stewardship Concerns: The core issue is not merely interpersonal relationships, as suggested by the report, but a fundamental lack of commitment to strong governance and responsible resource stewardship within WHMB.

The conduct of certain members of the WHMB Board towards Wheatland County has been antagonistic and derisive, at times bordering on vilification. Questions or concerns we have raised are frequently met with either overt hostility and defensiveness or are entirely disregarded. This adversarial attitude has not only led to a misrepresentation of our Council's actions and intentions but has also resulted in misleading the public. Moreover, our efforts to address and manage public expectations have been consistently undermined by the WHMB's approach, further complicating our endeavours to maintain transparent and constructive communication with our community.

It is frustrating that the board repeatedly disregards collaborative efforts with Wheatland County. The Board's use of autonomy as a shield against transparency and accountability is a glaring abdication of its duties under the Alberta Housing Act.

Given these circumstances, we urgently request a meeting with you to discuss these issues in-depth and seek guidance on how Wheatland County can navigate a path forward with WHMB. If a resolution is not feasible, we would like to understand the process for Wheatland County to request removal from WHMB. We cannot, in good conscience, continue to appoint representatives to a Board that is actively undermining our Council and expose those representatives to potential personal liability.

Furthermore, we want to draw your attention to challenges within the Alberta Affordable Housing Partnership Program. Our recent resolution, Review of Affordable Housing Funding Programs,





<https://rmalberta.com/resolutions/9-23f-review-of-affordable-housing-funding-programs/>

endorsed by the Rural Municipalities of Alberta in November, highlights these concerns regarding inefficiencies and bureaucratic hurdles, and we urge your Ministry to review and address them to stanch the bleeding on tax dollars.

Thank you for your attention to these critical matters. We look forward to your response and the opportunity to discuss these issues further.

Minutes from the January 10, 2019, WHMB meeting include a welcome to the Town of Strathmore Mayor, CAO, and Doug Lagore and note that the

“Town of Strathmore is interested in a partnership with WHMB and Hospice Society regarding the possibility of a new Seniors Lodge build. They want to lend a hand and offer support in moving the agenda forward towards a new Lodge.

Town has land that they are interested in donating towards this build and would ensure the land is environmentally sound.

They would like to offer the pro-bono services of Doug Lagore on a short-term basis; future costs to WHMB would be discussed at a later date

The Town has faith and trust in Mr. Lagore and have used his services successfully

He could get things moving in the right direction and is able to head the program providing support, knowledge and experience to help the project be successful

An elected steering committee would be required to work together with Mr. Lagore towards the goal of a new Lodge.

Peterson moved to that Wheatland Housing Management Body support the Town of Strathmore contracting Doug Lagore for a period of 12 weeks, at which time Wheatland Housing Management Body and the Town of Strathmore, would move into further discussions regarding cost sharing of the position.

Carried.”

The position was discussed again at the November 21, 2019, meeting where Mr. Lagore’s work was ongoing. And again on September 10, 2020, where:

“Link moved to continue utilizing Doug Lagores services during the period of the potential new build at the call of the Building Committee, and to report monthly to the WHMB board.

Carried.”

Sincerely,

Amber Link – Reeve
Wheatland County

cc: Wheatland County Council
Brian Henderson, Wheatland County CAO

