



REQUEST FOR DECISION (RFD)

MEETING: Regular Council

MEETING DATE: May 27, 2025

ORIGINATED BY: Sandra Satchell, Manager of Water and Wastewater

TITLE/SUBJECT: Support Letter Request – Village of Hines Creek Resolution for Water Testing Modernization

AGENDA NO.: F.1.

ISSUE

The Village of Hines Creek has put forward a resolution requesting the Province of Alberta modernize and streamline the process of bacterial water testing, particularly to address the challenges faced by rural and remote communities.

Under current regulations, municipal water samples must be delivered to provincial laboratories located in Edmonton or Calgary within 24 hours. This is a significant challenge for municipalities located several hundred kilometers from these labs.

BACKGROUND

While the MD experiences relatively few instances of test rejection due to transport delays, they do occur. The more consistent concern for our municipality is the high cost of compliance due to our geographic distance from the testing laboratories — approximately 500 km each way. We currently do pool with Grimshaw and Berwyn to reduce these costs for all three municipalities.

Current monthly courier costs for water sample delivery are estimated at \$400, translating into a recurring annual cost of \$4,800 of which the MD pays ~\$1,600. This does not include indirect costs such as staff coordination and backup logistics.

The Village of Hines Creek's resolution offers a common-sense, forward-looking approach to addressing these shared rural challenges. Their proposals include:

- Automated Remote Testing Technologies: Enabling municipalities to conduct certified testing locally using approved equipment.
- Shared Municipal Testing Pools: Regional testing hubs for sample consolidation and testing, reducing duplication of resources.
- Creation of Additional Provincial Labs: Establishing northern and southern rural labs to reduce transit distances and turnaround time.

These proposals have the potential to:

- Reduce costs and operational strain on rural municipalities
- Improve compliance and reduce rejected samples
- Enhance overall public health protection through timely results

OPTION 1 – Approve the Signing of the Support Letter

ADVANTAGES

- Advocacy Strength in Numbers: Shows solidarity with other rural municipalities and adds political weight to the request for change.
- Potential Long-Term Cost Savings: Supports initiatives that could reduce courier and operational costs (e.g., new labs, automated testing).
- Improved Public Health & Compliance: Aligns with efforts to modernize systems that reduce risk of delayed or rejected tests.
- No Immediate Financial Commitment: Signing the letter does not bind the municipality to any current or future funding.

DISADVANTAGES

- Uncertain Provincial Response: No guarantee the province will act on the resolution or fund the proposed initiatives.

- No Direct Control: Support does not give the municipality influence over how or where changes are implemented.
- Potential for Future Cost-Sharing Expectations: Although not currently a factor, regional solutions may evolve to include cost contributions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Short-Term: None.

Long-Term:

- Potential for Further Cost Reductions: While the municipality currently shares courier costs (approximately \$1,600 annually), adoption of remote testing technologies or creation of regional labs could eliminate or further reduce these costs.
- Improved Efficiency: Regional hubs or certified local testing may decrease reliance on third-party couriers entirely, freeing up staff time and reducing logistical complexity.
- If provincial funding supports infrastructure upgrades, municipalities may gain access to improved technology at reduced cost, or no cost.

OPTION 2 – Decline to Sign the Support Letter

ADVANTAGES:

- Maintains Neutrality: Council retains independence on an issue that may evolve differently across regions.
- No Association with Uncertain Outcomes: Avoids backing a resolution that may not yield provincial action.
- Focus on Local Priorities: Allows Council to focus exclusively on internal water testing protocols.

DISADVANTAGES:

- Missed Advocacy Opportunity: Lack of participation may be viewed as disengagement from rural municipal concerns.
- No Benefit from Collective Pressure: Reduced chance of influencing the province to improve the current system.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Continued Status Quo Costs: The municipality will likely continue paying its share of the courier fees (~\$1,600/year) with no reduction unless broader systemic changes are made.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the signing of a support letter for the Village of Hines Creek’s resolution calling for modernization and streamlining of bacterial water testing methods in Alberta, and that the Reeve be authorized to sign the letter on behalf of Council.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Goal A – Strategy 1 – Strengthen our lobbying efforts with local municipal, provincial and federal governments and representatives.

ATTACHMENT(S)

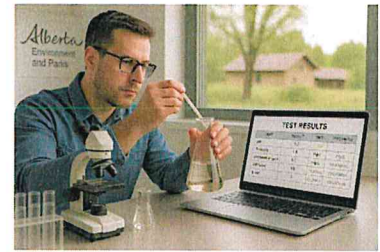
Sample support letter

Initials Show Support- Reviewed By:

CAO: 

Date: MAY 14/25

Support for Water Testing Modernization for Rural and Remote Alberta regions



[Your Community]

[Date]

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the [Council of Municipality Name], we are pleased to offer our full support to the Village of Hines Creek's resolution requesting the modernization and streamlining of bacterial water testing methods in Alberta.

Current regulations requiring water samples to be transported to provincial laboratories in Edmonton or Calgary within 24 hours. For rural and remote regions in our province this creates the following issues:

- Increased testing rejections due to delays in transportation
- Higher operational costs due to courier limitations and travel distances
- An elevated risk of non-compliance despite best efforts by municipal teams

We believe the resolution put forward by the Village of Hines Creek offers common-sense improvements that would enhance service delivery, protect public health, and ensure compliance across Alberta's rural and remote communities. We endorse the following proposals:

1. **Implementation of Automated Remote Testing Technologies** – To allow for certified local testing.
2. **Establishment of Shared Municipal Testing Pools** – Regional hubs to consolidate and process results.
3. **Creation of a Provincial Labs** – To serve the needs of rural Northern Alberta and rural Southern Alberta to reduce turnaround times.

We appreciate the leadership of the Village of Hines Creek and stand in solidarity with rural Alberta municipalities seeking a more efficient, streamlined approach that delivers a higher quality water testing approach that improves health and safety of rural Albertans water supply.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

[Your Email]