

AR 17442

Speaking Notes:

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Minister of Justice and Solicitor General

AUMA Mayors' Caucus

Matrix Hotel  
10640-100 Avenue  
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## **Introduction:**

Thank you, for that very kind introduction and good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

I'd like to thank the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) for inviting me to be here today.

This morning I'm going to talk about police funding, ALERT, a little about the justice system and our vision as a government.

As municipal governments, you see first-hand the impact the drop in the price of oil is having on our province and communities.

Many of the challenges we face are impacting your family and neighbours.

That's why our relationship and partnership is key as we move forward on finding efficiencies to ensure stability for our key public services.

After all, we all want the same thing – safe, healthy, and vibrant communities that can provide jobs, homes, schools, and opportunities.

My role is to help to ensure our province continues to have a fair and innovative justice system with effective policing and supports for victims of crime.

That's important to me, and to our government.

## **Police Funding**

This fiscal year - Alberta is providing more than half a billion dollars for policing. (\$550 million) When compared to other western provinces, it is fair to say we are the most generous – especially when you consider the many ways we provide support. Police funding represents more than a third of my entire budget.

These investments include Municipal Policing Assistance Grants, Police Officer Grants, the Provincial Police Service Agreement, and funding for First Nations Policing.

We also contribute to policing through province-wide initiatives such as:

- The Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams (ALERT)
- The Alberta First Responder Radio Communications System (AFRRCS) – which is a new province-wide two-way radio network for first responders
- The Biological Casework agreement; and
- Alberta traffic sheriffs

Let me give you an idea of how this support is allocated.

For communities with a population less than 5,000, the province covers 70 percent of policing costs, with the federal government providing the other 30 percent. These communities are policed by the RCMP through the Provincial Police Service Agreement.

For communities with populations more than 5,000, the province provides Municipal Policing Assistance Grants, Police officer grants, and returns 73 percent of traffic fine revenue.

Municipal Policing Assistance Grants are determined based on a base number plus a per capita amount in most cases. The largest communities in Alberta are funded based entirely on population.

As one example - this fiscal year - Edmonton is receiving about \$98 million dollars.

Naturally, as an evidence-based decision maker, my first question about this system was how does Alberta compare to other provinces?

When you look at a city like Vancouver –B.C. returns 100 percent of traffic fine revenue – but does not provide any additional grants.

Obviously what percentage the province pays of a municipality's police budget is not the best measure since it reflects not only dollars per capita – but how the individual municipality funds its police budget – which is out of provincial control.

But, just by way of comparison, our combination of fine revenue and grants represents about 26% of Edmonton's budget, whereas BC's return of fine revenue only represents about % percent of Vancouver's police budget.

This fiscal year, we anticipate more than \$202 million will be returned to municipalities in traffic fine revenue. That's an increase of about \$54 million dollars or 27% than the year before – the jump is due to the increase in traffic fines.

As another comparison, in Manitoba, just 30 percent of all traffic fine revenue is returned to municipalities, and the province does not provide any policing grants.

On top of the funding I've already described, Alberta also provides funding for law enforcement which benefits all Albertans.

This includes \$11 million for First Nations policing and \$26.5 million to ALERT.

## **ALERT**

We know the work of ALERT and its partners help make our province safer each day.

Established in 2006, ALERT combats organized and serious crime in a regional manner.

ALERT has five established goals:

1. promote intelligence-led policing;
2. disrupt and dismantle organized crime;
3. address complex community crime problems;
4. support vulnerable victims of crime; and
5. provide law enforcement expertise.

The organization is comprised of several integrated teams:

The **Organized Crime and Gangs** team investigates, disrupts and dismantles organized and serious crime, such as drug trafficking and gang activity.

The **ICE unit** investigates the sexual exploitation of children through the internet and works to reduce harm through public education and prevention programs.

The **Integrated Threat and Risk Assessment Centre (I-TRAC)** assesses threats and develops risk reduction plans for domestic violence and stalking cases in Alberta.

**Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta** acts as a central hub for strategic analysis and intelligence sharing on organized and serious crime in the province.

**The Alberta Specialized Law Enforcement Training Team** supports police, government agencies, and other stakeholders by providing specialized training to enhance the ability of officers to detect, disrupt, and dismantled organized and serious crime.

**The Safer Communities & Neighbourhoods (SCAN) and Surveillance Unit** promotes safe communities by targeting and shutting down properties that are regularly used for illegal activities related to drugs, gangs, prostitution, and child exploitation.

The strength of the ALERT model lies in the integration of members from various police services with expertise in intelligence, enforcement, and support services.

This cooperative approach to policing has proven to be an extremely successful model, especially as the criminal landscape evolves and pushes beyond local boundaries.

In fact, ALERT, through the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit, is a key partner in addressing the continued growing rate of fentanyl-related deaths – which increased by almost 20 times in Alberta within a three-year period.

Last year, one of ALERT's largest fentanyl, cocaine, and cash seizures came following a year-long investigation into a Calgary organized crime group.

Almost 12,000 fentanyl pills and more than 40 kilograms of cocaine were seized, resulting in the arrests of 12 people.

ALERT is also heavily involved in the province's new integrated firearms trafficking working group.

This group that examines trace information, high volume buyer lists, buying patterns, and follows up with enforcement action.

In 2014-15, ALERT seized nearly 200 firearms; the highest total in six years.

### **Funding - Federal government role**

A part of the funding challenge ALERT currently faces has come due to reduced federal funding.

In the 2014-15 budget year the federal government's police officer recruitment grant – used within Alberta to help support ALERT – was fully depleted and this funding has not been renewed.

To try to address this I've been in close contact with my federal counterpart to discuss available funding options. I have personally spoken to federal Public Safety Minister



Ralph Goodale about our funding pressures with ALERT, and I raised our province's challenges with fentanyl at the recent meeting of federal and provincial Justice ministers.

The Liberal party's election platform included a commitment to provide \$100 million annually to provinces and territories to support guns and gangs' police task forces.

The federal government's funding commitment aligns with ALERT's mandate.

Alberta would benefit considerably from a portion of the \$100 million, and it is my hope that the federal government will follow through on its commitment at the earliest opportunity.

### **Next Steps**

We have, with the support of the ALERT board and the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police, conducted an audit of ALERT's operations.

The audit focused on administrative and internal management efficiencies, to ensure ALERT is running effectively, and that the organization is able to continue its operations.

The ALERT board has agreed with the audit's findings that ALERT could focus on its core mandate to effectively use

its existing resources and continue to create even safer communities for all Albertans.

Our government understands how emerging issues, such as organized crime and child exploitation cases, create a need for innovative policing that crosses standard provincial police service borders.

The ALERT model allows for continuing strategic sharing of resources and information across police units and jurisdictions.

It's important to mention the federal government provides 30 cents for every provincial dollar contributed to ALERT.

We are working towards achieving a stable funding plan in order for ALERT to continue focusing on its core mandate—addressing serious and organized crime.

My ministry is also convening a working group to develop a plan to achieve the nine recommendations of the audit.

## **Consultation**

I know our partners and stakeholders are watching this situation closely and have a high stake in its outcome.

This is why I recently asked for a round of consultations to get feedback on ALERT and its operations.

The Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police expressed strong support for the continued collaboration of specialized policing operations that bring together collective intelligence, investigational skills, and organizational strengths to combat significant threats to our communities.

I also heard your concern's regarding ALERT's budget and the uncertainty as to how any reductions will be managed.

I can assure you I am continuing to work closely with ALERT and my government colleagues to ensure stability for future funding to ALERT and effective operations are in place to address organized crime and drug trafficking.

I want to stress – we are fully aware of the vital work ALERT does in your communication and we are working hard to ensure that work continues.

We heard that you're supportive of the ALERT model and expect us to give careful consideration to the audit recommendations.

I'm here, in part, today because of your expressed interest in being further consulted and briefed as the department works through these recommendations.

I know the AUMA supports the work of ALERT to combat organized crime, drugs, gangs, and child prostitution.

The task of ensuring our local police services are able to help keep our communities safe can be a complex one.

Our role as a government is to look at the whole picture of policing in Alberta.

### **Crime prevention**

I'd also like to touch on the issue of crime prevention.

Crime prevention can be considerably more effective and efficient than dealing with crime once it has occurred.

Currently, \$2.8-million of investments in crime prevention and victims' services projects are supported through grants from the Civil Forfeiture program.

In addition our government is committed to ensuring services remain available to Albertans in these difficult times so we can address the underlying drivers of crime.

These include investments in mental health, human services, and working with all level of governments to address homelessness.

### **Victims Services**

We also must not lose sight of the need to continue to support victims of crime.

In February, the Auditor General released his report identifying a need to reevaluate the Victims of Crime Fund and the surplus that has developed in the fund – this surplus has been growing for the past 15 years.

We know the Victims of Crime Fund provides important supports in our communities for victims and their families.

We are committed to a responsible and transparent use of these public funds. I have met with many victims, as well as advocates and support groups. We will do a better job of ensuring this funding can be used to support victim services.

First and foremost, our goal is to maximize the fund's potential for the benefit of victims, which is key to better achieving the results set out in the *Victims of Crime Act*.

As part of doing this, an implementation plan will be submitted to the Auditor General that describes the work to be done to identify the needs of victims of crime, gaps in service, and a financial analysis of how much funding will be required to meet these needs.

The changes will also include a process to monitor, measure, and publicly report on the program's successes.

Our review will ensure we have a plan going forward to support victims as they travel through the criminal justice system.

## **Conclusion**

In this challenging fiscal time, we need to find innovative and more efficient ways to deliver the services Albertans rely on while ensuring the stability of our justice system.

I am proud to be part of a government that, while examining the data and looking to exercise prudent fiscal discipline, recognized the importance of protecting front line services, like police, as well as health care and human services that are fundamental in preventing crime.

I look forward to continuing to discuss ways to move forward together so we can all enjoy safe and resilient communities in Alberta.

Thank you.

I'll be happy to answer any questions you might have.