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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Town Council meets with Premier Jason Kenney

Town of St. Paul, AB

Last night the Town of St. Paul Mayor, Council, and CAO Kim Heyman met with Premier Jason Kenney and MLA David Hanson, along with municipal neighbors County of St. Paul, Town of Elk Point and Village of Glendon.

With limited time to speak to the Premier, Mayor Maureen Miller addressed the local issues of crime, addictions and mental health. The mayor asked the Premier for assistance from Alberta Health Services in the formation of a Police and Crisis Team (PACT). This assistance would be in the form of an AHS mental health and addictions specialist that would work with the RCMP in dealing with these issues.

As a designated Mental Health Center, we have patients come to St. Paul from all over the region, either through physician referral or brought here by the RCMP. Officers often spend hours sitting in emergency waiting to have a doctor see the patient. Currently these sorts of duties take up half of our member's time. A PACT team would free our members up to deal with crime on the street.

The Mayor also addressed the lack of wrap around services for patients once they are released from hospital. Patients from neighbouring communities often have no way to get home.

The Premier thanked the Mayor for clarifying the issue for him. He said he was aware of our high crime numbers, but he was unaware of the correlation to mental health and addictions. He said he will have someone get back to us.

By 10:00 am this morning the Mayor was contacted by the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions as a follow up from the meeting with the Premier.

On behalf of Council, the Mayor also spoke in support of the County's opposition to the Assessment Review currently underway. Though the proposed significant reduction in the assessment of Designated Industrial Properties most obviously affects the County, the impacts of reduced assessment means Town residents would be paying more for seniors housing, and most likely school taxes. As was pointed out to the Premier, this will negatively affect every joint agreement within the newly negotiated Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework that encompasses everything from our joint fire agreements to the new recreation agreement. Mayor Miller said, "the proposed changes to this assessment model are so wrong on so many levels or our area. The least of which, is the lack of commitment from the larger oil companies to reinvest what amounts to additional profit back into our Province".

The Premier said that there may be problems with the current assessment model but the proposed changes were not intended to hamstring municipalities in their ability to serve their citizens. He will more closely review the proposed changes and inform our MLA of any changes, if any, that may occur.

Mayor and Council thanked the Premier for his insight, but will reserve judgement for when the results of the review are made public.

Council would like to extend their gratitude to Premier Kenney for taking time out of his busy schedule to speak to Town Council and our neighbors.