

September 7, 2010  
Letter to the Editor:  
Medicine Hat News  
[letters@medicinehatnews.com](mailto:letters@medicinehatnews.com)

As the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I felt the best way to respond to recent reports about the costs of the disaster recovery program was by answering directly to readers -- the people who are most affected and who deserve to have correct information. First of all, let me assure all residents that there is NO way that administration costs for the Southern Alberta Disaster Recovery Program will come anywhere near \$30 million.

Based on information and applications to date, we would expect to come in at roughly one third of that cost over the entire duration of the program.

My second and perhaps most important point is that these costs in no way affect the amount of assistance that goes to individual residents, small businesses or farmers. Whatever the costs, our job is to ensure that every applicant receives their maximum eligibility for uninsured and essential losses under the guidelines of the program.

Every province faces similar administrative costs in responding to disasters. While we always work to keep those costs at a minimum, we realize that the administration is essential to make the program responsive to the needs of applicants. The largest part of our administration costs so far have entailed keeping our office open seven days a week over the last two months to process and respond to applications. As many of you know, last month I also increased the number of both office staff and assessors in order to speed up the processing of cheques.

All administrative costs (training, equipment and office rentals, evaluators, staff, advertising, transportation, Registration Centres, Irvine office, etc.) would need to be incurred anyway and as such are recognized as costs that can be recovered by the federal government. They are itemized as part of the program breakdown because we want to ensure that Alberta taxpayers are reimbursed by the federal government for cost-sharing.

In the days to come, you will also learn how the disaster recovery team has been working to incorporate more flexibility. I will be the first to admit that this is not an easy process and that disaster financial assistance programs are not perfect. While this program follows the same basic criteria used throughout the province to help with uninsurable and essential losses, we realize that one size does not fit all and we will continue to look at improvements.

For this and other information, I invite readers to visit our website at <http://www.aema.alberta.ca> to learn more about the processes and the status of the program.