



5515 – 44 Avenue  
Wetaskiwin, AB T9A 0C8  
Ph: (780) 312-0928  
Email: [cao@extremesolutions.org](mailto:cao@extremesolutions.org)  
Web: [www.itaska.ca](http://www.itaska.ca)

---

March 19, 2009

Dear Ratepayer:

**Re: Summer Village of Itaska Beach - Viability**

During the Fall of 2008, Municipal Affairs Minister Ray Danyluk held a series of province-wide consultations with municipal elected officials to gather information to assist him with the work of the Ministry of Alberta Municipal Affairs. During the course of those consultations and at subsequent events Minister Danyluk stated that he would be examining the ongoing existence of Summer Villages. He stated that the reason for that review was because of concerns that he had regarding the ability of some Summer Villages to meet the needs of their ratepayers, as well as the Villages' financial viability. On October 1, 2008, elected officials from the 10 Pigeon Lake Summer Villages met to discuss how to best respond to the Minister's concerns.

Following that meeting, the Pigeon Lake Summer Villages sent a joint letter to the Minister, indicating that our municipalities are fully viable and sustainable and that we are confident that we will remain so into the future. We advised the Minister that most of us have ample financial reserves which meet or exceed amounts required for us to deal with any emerging needs, and that the majority of our ratepayers are very satisfied with the services that they receive for their tax dollars. In addition, we pointed out that in each of our Summer Villages, our ratepayers look to their local Councils to provide responsive stewardship of the ecological health of Pigeon Lake. To this end, the Summer Village of Itaska Beach has even designated land adjacent to our Village for nature reserve.

Working with the surrounding Counties, private businesses, our First Nations communities and other interested parties, we are in the final stages of developing strategies to ensure the protection of the Pigeon Lake watershed and a comprehensive plan for a sewer system for the South side of the lake. On the North side, there exists a sewer system that has been in place for over two decades. The Summer Villages take responsibility and management to help ensure we preserve the integrity of the lake.

We advised the Minister that, as part of our continuing responsibility to be adaptive responsible, we provide strong administration through our Chief Administrative Officer. In addition, the Summer Villages surrounding Pigeon Lake provide shared fire services, bylaw enforcement, solid waste collection, policing and emergency services. We advised the Minister that we believe that all the Summer Villages of Pigeon Lake, and particularly Itaska Beach, will continue to be one of Alberta's most efficient and effective models of cooperative, sustainable and viable local governments.

Finally, we asked that he consult with us prior to contemplating the enactment of any changes to existing legislation or the creation of new policies that would alter the roles and responsibilities of the Summer Villages of Alberta, as it was rumoured that there was pending changes in the Spring's legislation.

The Minister's response to our letter was noncommittal. Discussions with Drayton Valley/Calmar MLA Diana McQueen resulted in responses indicating that the existence of Summer Villages as the status quo "is not an option." In later discussions with a consultant, it was suggested that Premier Stelmach had charged his Minister with responsibilities that every Albertan have viable and responsible government. As a result, rumours continue to circulate.

One rumoured scenario would see Summer Villages dissolved and the governance assumed by the local County. We now have strong reason to believe that this is going to move forward. If that were to

occur, many questions would arise: would property taxes increase? Would services be adversely affected? Would the County have the resources and/or interest in maintaining service levels? How would local interests be addressed? Who would represent those interests to the County? What would become of our financial and municipal reserves? These questions and many more remain unanswered.

As your Summer Village Council, we believe that if the Government of Alberta changes the role and structure of Summer Village governance, ratepayers must be apprised of why change is needed, and what benefits will arise from the proposed change. We believe that as a minimum, our ratepayers should be consulted first to determine if you feel that change is even necessary or desired. If Summer Village governance were to change, it would be out of your Council's control.

Your Council is committed to providing you with the very best services possible for your tax dollar. Our ability to determine the future direction and vision for the Summer Village of Itaska Beach is severely compromised if we are uncertain about our very existence in the future. Even after much formal and informal inquiry, it still remains unclear what the Ministry may be planning for Summer Villages.

As such, we have chosen to inform you of what we know so far, and, as this is an imminent change, we ask that you immediately discuss this matter with your MLA or members of the government Caucus.

We know that our Summer Village and Pigeon Lake are very important to our ratepayers, and our friends and families. We believe that any decisions made about the existence of Summer Villages must be made only with careful consideration, and consultation, in order to guarantee the best system of local government whose values and priorities are the same as ours.

To implement the action plan, five of the Summer Villages have joined together: Itaska Beach, Silver Beach, Sundance, Golden Days & Argenta. We have retained an experienced public relations consultant to assist with the networking with the ministers, members of caucus and advisors to the Premier. The Mayors and Councillors are making phone calls and networking, but we need your support as well. **We reinforce the need to do this immediately.**

As the Summer Villages on the South Side are taking no action or getting involved through their Councils – anyone you can reach to help over there would be greatly appreciated. This information will be posted on our website if you wish to share the information with other residents you know in other Summer Villages.

The Council of Itaska Beach endeavours to keep you apprised of this situation as it develops.

To find out who your MLA is, go to: <http://streetkey.elections.ab.ca> and there you can select to search by postal code.

As an example, when speaking to your MLA, you could have a conversation such as:

“I support the continued viability of Summer Villages in the Province of Alberta, and take great exception to the dissolution of Summer Villages from the municipal history of Alberta. We urgently ask you as our MLA to strongly voice your disapproval of this Provincial Governance redirection.”

Sincerely,

**Summer Village of Itaska Beach Council**

Mayor Ralph Johnston  
Deputy Mayor Jerry Rudnisky  
Councillor Ian Bradley