

March 17, 2026

Honourable Heath MacDonald, PC, MP
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
1341 Baseline Road, Tower 7, Floor 8
Ottawa, ON K1A 0C5

Re: Request to pause and reconsider the closure of the Lacombe Research and Development Centre and undertake a public impact assessment

Dear Minister MacDonald:

On behalf of Alberta Municipalities and our 263 member municipalities, I am writing to express serious concern regarding Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's decision to close the Lacombe Research and Development Centre (Lacombe RDC). The Lacombe RDC has operated continuously since 1907 and is a long-standing cornerstone of applied agricultural research and innovation. The decision to close the facility raises significant concerns for economic development, agricultural productivity, food security, climate resilience and the viability of communities in the region.

Given the size and geographic location of the City of Lacombe, closing the Lacombe RDC will have significant negative impacts in addition to the loss of employment, including to the housing market, services, suppliers, and overall community vitality. In addition to the local impact, the closure will:

- Lead to the loss of unique, irreplaceable research capacity and long-term data. The Lacombe RDC's work includes high-value applied research in areas such as integrated crop protection, climate-smart agriculture, livestock and crop genetics, and production efficiency. The facility includes unique infrastructure, a specialized land base, and long-term trials with decades of continuous data - assets that cannot simply be relocated or replicated without undermining their value. The Lacombe RDC is home to Canada's only federally operated meat sciences program, further emphasizing the national significance of the capacity at risk:
- Disrupt Alberta's research "cluster" and training pathways. The City of Lacombe has become an anchor within a broader research ecosystem involving partners such as Western Crop Innovations and post-secondary collaborators (including Lakeland College, Olds College, the University of Alberta, the University of Saskatchewan, and others). Removing the federal anchor risks weakening student training pathways, mentorship opportunities, and applied research collaboration that supports Alberta's agriculture and agri-food economy.

This decision to close the facility was made without meaningful engagement on the local municipalities and stakeholders. Alberta Municipalities supports their call for transparent engagement and an evidence-based assessment of impacts and alternatives. We therefore request that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada:

1. Pause the planned closure of the Lacombe Research and Development Centre.
2. Undertake meaningful consultation with affected municipalities and stakeholders.
3. Complete a public impact assessment that explicitly examines economic, agronomic, labour, and municipal effects, and considers alternatives to closure.
4. Reconsider the decision and maintain funding for this critical agricultural research infrastructure.

Minister MacDonald, Alberta's municipalities recognize the federal government's responsibility to manage public resources prudently. At the same time, the Lacombe RDC is a high-value facility with well-developed infrastructure that supports the City of Lacombe and surrounding communities, producers, and

the broader economy. A pause to allow for consultation, and a transparent public impact assessment would be prudent steps to ensure decisions of this magnitude are informed, evidence-based, and made with a full understanding of local, provincial and national consequences.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



Dylan Bresse
President, Alberta Municipalities

Cc:

Honourable Eleanor Olszewski, PC, MP
Blaine Calkins, MP, Ponoka–Didsbury
Jennifer Johnson, MLA, Lacombe–Ponoka
Thalia Hibbs, Mayor, City of Lacombe
John Ireland, Reeve, Lacombe County