

City of Bowbells

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RE: **SUPPORT \$8 MILLION FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY**
 AMENDMENT TO ND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE APPROPRIATIONS BILL 1018

Dear Honorable Legislators:

Please accept this letter of support for state appropriations to support Regional Councils statewide. The Regional Councils have been partners in local and regional economic and community development for the past fifty years and are led by local elected officials and key partners.

While the Regional Councils were created by the state in 1973, **the flaw was the lack of a long-term consistent funding mechanism** to meet the purpose and objectives outlined in the North Dakota Century Code:

to establish consistent statewide policy for planning, economic development programs, operations, coordination, and related cooperative activities of state/local governments to resolve issues and problems transcending individual jurisdictions.

Today, 70% of the state's population growth is concentrated in only three counties: Cass, Burleigh, and Williams. Thirty (30) counties in North Dakota continue to lose population which is resulting in increased costs for basic governmental functions whereby increasing local property taxes and state funding requests. Existing Regional Council budgets support only a fraction of the necessary staff to address regional needs to elevate the entire state when compared to our urban centers' professional teams. These budgets come from numerous sources (including every county in the state), rely heavily on short-term grants, and do not provide long-term funding to address long-term needs.

Our Region 2 council, Souris Basin Planning Council (SBPC) , on which I have had the pleasure of serving on it's executive committee for the past 8 years, has been a valuable proponent and resource for our city, for Burke County and our organizations. SBPC has supported our city's efforts to access funding for a number of water and infrastructure projects, as well grant funding for local non-profits. The access to Bank of North Dakota PACE interest buydown which SBPC's Business Accelerator Funding Program provides the community match funding for qualifying borrowers is the only source for community matching funds which we have available for our local businesses.

Please support providing a long-term funding mechanism for Regional Councils.

Sincerely,



Anthony Pandolfo

Mayor, Bowbells, North Dakota